END PIECE

The purpose of this end piece is to provide a reflective summary of my research, reiterating the key themes that have emerged in the course of this inquiry, and bring closure to this thesis.

Introduction

In this thesis I have presented a study of singularity, in other words, a self-study of a tutor working in higher education. As a form of educational action research it is distinguished by the values that I bring to my practice and which I have clarified over the course of this inquiry. I have constructed a living theory thesis that is informed by my desire to live my values in practice and informed by a synthesis of knowledge that integrates the ideas of others into my thinking; ideas, in particular, that have resonated with my beliefs, values and educative purposes, informed my thinking and helped to move my inquiry on. I have presented an account that provides descriptions and explanations of my practice within a framework of action and reflection. This account has been self-critical of my practice, in response to experiencing myself as a living contradiction when I have denied or experienced the denial of my espoused values in practice, and furthermore it has taken a critical view of the wider context of the academy in which my practice is based.

Key Themes of This Thesis

In a living theory thesis, themes do not simply emerge from findings at the end of a research project. Rather, I suggest, they are woven into and through the very fabric of the thesis itself, and I believe they emerge in the conduct of the inquiry both in the purposes and intentions that underlie the values, history and knowing of the persons involved. My purpose here then, is simply to

gather the fragments and weave the themes into an end piece, rather like one might weave the pieces of a quilt together.

Weave And Mend

"So weave and mend,
weave and mend,
Gather the fragments
Save and mend the golden circle sisters
Weave and mend
Weave and mend.
Sacred sisters weave and mend."

These words are from the Native American women of Vancouver Island.[1]

Finding Voice

I first heard the above arrangement sung by a student on MAPOD 2, who was a member of Frankie Armstrong's women's choir. Frankie Armstrong is noted for her work with ordinary people as opposed to professional singers. She believes that everyone has the ability to sing and give voice. With her coaching, women who might otherwise still their voice, develop the confidence to create together the conditions whereby they are able to give outstanding public performances. The student in question was very quiet, someone you would not ordinarily imagine singing in public, yet at the end of the first block week on MAPOD she felt able to share this song with her cohort, telling the group that she had made a connection between her experience of finding voice in Frankie Armstrong's choir and the possibility space that she felt was being created on the MAPOD programme. Perhaps by coincidence, the evening before driving home from the course, I had turned on the car radio to hear Frankie Armstrong being interviewed. I was struck by the apparent connection between her work and mine in respect of finding voice and creating the space and conditions in which

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[1]   Arranged by Frankie Armstrong, on "Ways of Seeing", Harbour Town Records (1990).

individuals in the company of others could find their voice, and reclaim a sense of self, voice and mind. The metaphor of finding voice and the journey from silence to voice has been a constant theme throughout this thesis. The values which I have brought to my practice and clarified in the course of this inquiry have kept in the forefront of my purposes the aim of valuing and facilitating the learner to give voice to their lived experience, and in doing so, returning the knower to the known.

Women's Ways of Knowing and the Maternal Voice

The words of the Native American women have resonated with the journey that my inquiry has taken, in that it highlights the distinctive nature of women's ways of knowing. I began this study as a quest to find a way of being in educative relations that improved the rationality and justice of my practice, but significantly my journey has also embraced my lived experience as a knower, drawing on the experience of the maternal voice. In the process of this inquiry, I have come to recognise the difference that the voice of the mother makes in the academy, responding to the relational needs of the students with an ethic of care and with the distinctive discipline of thinking that promotes nurturance, preservation and growth. Thus, women's ways of knowing and the maternal voice have been key themes to emerge in this inquiry.

Listening: The Other Side of Silence

> "Listen….
> I do not know if you have ever examined,
> How you listen, it doesn't matter to what,
> Whether to a bird, to the wind in the leaves,
> To the rushing waters, or how you listen in a
> Dialogue with yourself, to you….real
> Communication can only take place
> When there is silence."
>
> *Krishnamurti*

"The listen" from Krishnamurti conveys what the qualities of reflective practice mean to me now, when I am truly attending to my practice and holding my students in an educative space in which they can be truly heard by their peers, by me and by themselves as they grapple with their learning, reclaim the integrity of their minds and find their voice. This quality of silent communication can, I suggest, touch the source of our humanity. Working with silence and exploring its oppressive nature has been a key theme in this thesis, both for me and for my students, yet it is the flipside of silence that has led me to discover a way of being in educative relations with my students. This way of being and doing I have described as an ethic of care in the teaching and learning relationship, informed by a way of knowing that is embodied in the aesthetics of my practice. This knowledge, born of the tacit dimension, has through this inquiry helped me to craft what I have called my connoisseur's eye. This way of knowing and being in educative relations with my students is infused with the personal knowledge born of my lived experience of what it means to be woman and a mother.

Community Building: Learning in Good Company

Like hooks (1991), I want to speak of homeplaces as a site of resistance, where care and nurturing prevails in the face of oppression. This is the context for

learning I believe the academy could create if the voice of the mother is heard in education. I believe that this is not only possible but desirable if education is to serve democracy in our time. I have carried such beliefs forward in the context of nurturing and building a learning community on the MAPOD programme, where in the company of colleagues and students we created a liberating educative space for individuals and the collective. It is with this good company, where each person is acting in the best interests of the other, that I undoubtedly did some of my best work.

Making a Difference

What does all this matter? Research that seeks to improve the practice of a tutor in higher education goes to the heart of what educative purposes are all about. In this thesis I have argued a case for education for democracy, one in which I have encouraged my students to take a critical stance to their work and recognise that their opportunities for freedom and development as individuals are interconnected with the lives and opportunities of others in their organisations and in the wider social sphere. In helping students find their voice and by returning them to their stories, so that they might experience themselves as more complete human beings, mended from those experiences that had been diminishing of their humanity, I believe I have made a difference to what it means to be in educative relations with my students. In taking this ethic of care forward in their own work through the process of critical action and reflection, they have in turn educated their professional and social spheres.

The work of MAPOD, I suggest, offers a business school an ethic of practice that would contribute to a new academy that is built on the basis of values concerned with freedom, democracy and sustainable growth that recognises the overlapping nature of the stakes we hold as individuals, workers, organisations and society. The challenge that remains involves educating the wider academy

to recognise the value of teaching and learning, and the importance of tutors researching their practice, thus recognising the need to value with equal measure the scholarship of such practice alongside traditional research activities. In a small way, I believe that this thesis can make a contribution to such educative challenge by bringing my research through publications into the wider academy and public domain.

APPENDIX 1

PAPER PRESENTED 1 JUNE 2001
AT EBEN-UK CONFERENCE

DRAFT WORKING PAPER IN PREPARATION

FOR FUTURE PUBLICATION

CRITICAL ACTION LEARNING: TOWARDS BEST PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF BUSINESS ETHICS

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Abstract

In this paper I seek to explore the case for 'critical action learning' (Wilmot 1994) as a 'best practice' intervention strategy for the teaching and learning of business ethics for management and professional development. In doing so, I draw on my own practice of applying this approach to the 'teaching' of ethics in business and professional practice with my own students on the part time ' MA in Personal and Organisational Development', (for practicing managers and professionals) to highlight what is involved for both tutors and students in applying this approach in practice.

My approach to the 'teaching and learning' of business ethics builds on Anthony's critique 'Management Education: Ethics versus Morality (1998), in which he acknowledges that there is an alienation problem between ethicists / philosophers and mangers. He argues that this is a problem for educators not least in respect of what and how we should teach business ethics. Indeed his argument goes on to suggest that we should leave well alone, avoiding any 'prescriptive' educational endeavour, rather, he suggests that we should look to our students to guide us, by helping them draw out and learn from real live work based issues that go to the heart of the matter asking the question, 'What is the nature of the ethical problem here'?

Anthony suggests that the real business of teaching ethics is "grounded in the mundane and material world of everyday management processes", where moral relations are to be found'. He further suggests that the role of educators be a facilitative one that engages with practitioner - student accounts of this world and recommends 'an exchange in a discourse of the old fashioned sense of the word' (1998:279) thus enabling theory to be grounded in the professional and organisational world that the manager occupies. It is this kind of discourse I believe that is central to the effectiveness of action learning, where fellow students and tutor facilitate the learning of the practitioner – student by providing both support and challenge to the thinking and quality of reflection on practice (action) to the practitioner – student, as he or she grapples with the problem or dilemma with which they are confronted.

Critical action learning as defined by Wilmot (1994) challenges the potential for ethical neutrality inherent in more conventional action learning interventions in that it depends on 'critical reflection on practice', which includes being prepared to challenge the status quo and or taken for granted assumptions, as well as drawing on critical theoretical traditions that question and uncover the assumptions or rhetoric inherent in much conventional management theory. Furthermore, it extends the 'curriculum' beyond the definition of the manager and the organisation to include in its scope society and the wider stake-holding community. As such, it places the 'management learning' and development agenda beyond the individual manager (student – practitioner), to one that is interdependent with the well being and 'learning' of society at large.

In reflection on my own experience and that of my students, I ask the question 'Is this approach to the 'teaching' of ethics in practice an aspiration or is it a model for good practice'?

Key Words

Critical action learning
Critical reflection on action
Communitarianism
Ethics in management practice
Management education
Management learning
Moral Agency
Moral relations
Stakeholding

Teaching business ethics

Introduction

I open this paper by providing a context for my 'teaching of business ethics' within the MA in Personal and Organisational Development, a programme that I lead at MUBS (Middlesex University Business School) for practicing managers, in which critical action learning is the vehicle for teaching learning and assessment. I proceed to explore the link between ethics, morality and management practice as described by Anthony (1998). In my descriptions and explanations of critical action learning I draw out a theoretical underpinning for this approach to 'teaching business ethics' and I advocate that critical action learning as a teaching learning and assessment strategy, as used on MA POD serves to bridge the gap or so called 'alienation problem' between ethicists and practitioners, Sorell (1998:17), in that it facilitates the teaching of business ethics in terms of the real issues and ethical dilemmas that managers face in their daily work.

In examining the process of critical action learning I highlight how it focuses the attention of the practitioner not only on the 'doing' skills of the manager but also on the very nature of their 'being'. Furthermore, I explore the importance of the 'maturity' of the practitioner manager in his or her endeavour to develop the reflective skills necessary to balance their actions, and the iterative process of action and reflection as they develop their own ethics of practice.

Finally I explore what the process of reflective practice entails and provide some supporting evidence from a student project to demonstrate that critical action learning can offer a viable approach to the teaching of business ethics for the practicing manager.

Teaching and learning context

As a teacher educator in higher education I work primarily with practicing managers and professionals in postgraduate and professional education on courses such as the MBA (Master of Business Administration) the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and a specialist Masters degree aimed at the development of people and organisations known as the MAPOD (Masters in Personal and Organisational Development). It is in the context of this latter programme with its students centred teaching learning and assessment strategy that the 'teaching of business ethics' has evolved in

response to the real live problems that the students draw on from their practice as managers and professionals in organisations.

The MAPOD - Who is it For?

It is aimed at experienced practitioners, senior managers, trainers, professional educators and consultants who aim to influence and shape the learning of people and organisations. MAPOD facilitates the learning of these students in developing the skills and knowledge to create 'learningful cultures' in their organisations. It helps students learn how to critically evaluate their own learning and that of others. The approach involves action learning of live personal, professional and organisational issues, with each person being supported and challenged in a tutor facilitated action-learning set.

The Programme Structure

The MAPOD is a two-year block release programme designed to support the process of action learning and 'reflective practice' of busy senior professionals. Each cohort consists of approximately 20 students per annum. The size of the group enables a close working alliance to be developed between all concerned. The blocks have a modular theme, which forms part of the whole programme and provides a framework for continuing – systematic development of the student's action learning projects. Students are encouraged to contribute to the design and delivery of learning events during the blocks and as such I foster a 'co-operative' approach to learning based on Herons (1989:23) model of facilitator styles. This supports a teaching and learning philosophy that argues that students learn best when they are engaged in live and meaningful learning and that they are capable of being self-directing. Furthermore, the assessment strategy incorporates a process of self, peer and tutor assessment. In my experience, such an approach provides for a formative learning process for adult learners and entails a degree of power sharing as well as a sense of shared responsibility for the learning of self and others. Rogers (1983:158) states that "The evaluation of one's own learning is one of the major means by which self-initiated learning becomes also responsible learning". Since the learning is based on their practice, this places responsibility for action and change and the development of an ethic of practice in their hands. Commonly on educational initiatives that move toward developing student autonomy on learning, Boud (1988:39) states:

> "What is important in my view, though, is the attitude of teachers towards their students. It is not any technique of reading method that is primarily needed, but an attitude of acceptance and appreciation of the views, desires and frames of reference of learners. Perhaps the single central quality which fosters autonomy is the quality of the relationship between teachers and learners which develops through this acceptance".

In recognising the potential debilitating affect of traditional learning experiences on student autonomy the co-operative approach provides a happy medium drawing on the 'expertise ' of the tutor and at the same time sending out the message to the students that I appreciate that they have a good deal of skill and knowledge to contribute, as well. By the end of the first year students are generally driving the design of the blocks.

During the blocks we take the opportunity of learning from our own 'personal and organisational' processes as a group. One of the unique features and strengths of MAPOD is that it nurtures and fosters the spirit of a 'learning community' that symbolically engages in collective and collaborative process reviews of our own learning as specific timetabled events during the blocks and in the action learning sets. Thus encouraging the continual building of dialogue in the collective learning environment and the individual skills of self-reflexive inquiry.

In between the blocks we meet by mutual agreement in action learning sets comprising of approximately 5 people. This provides each individual with support and challenge, in order to progress and produce individual written work for assessment, based on written accounts of live work issues and projects. It is in the action learning sets that students draw out and learn to critique their own 'practice knowledge and working theories' and explore the models and theories of others through literature, from which individuals develop a new synthesis for practice.

Whilst the teaching and learning curriculum is not overtly concerned with the teaching of business ethics the underlying philosophy of the programme and its teaching learning and assessment strategy all serve to promote a stakeholder approach to the teaching and learning agenda, within a framework of communitarianism and which reflects the relational and human face of organisation. I would argue that students draw on this experiential process as stakeholders in their own learning as they reflect on their own management

practice and work based problems/dilemmas. According to Winstanley and Woodall:

> "Communitarianism is one philosophy that focuses on the shared values of individuals in a community of purpose. As with stakeholding, this is a philosophy for life, the individual, group, organisational, and societal level" (2000:15).

As members of overlapping communities managers begin to appreciate a connectedness between the personal, professional, organisational and social contexts of their lives, through critical action learning.

> "We are all members of overlapping communities and the workplace is one such community of interests, communities of purpose emphasise shared values, a sense of belonging and inclusiveness" Etzioni (cited in Winstanley and Woodall 2000:15).

Ethics Morality and Management Practice

Drawing on Smart's (1996:xv1) definition of ethics, Anthony argues that ethics is a theory or philosophy, which serves to systematise moral values. As such, he describes ethics as 'the control desk of society' in that it legislates and codifies moral behaviour, creating social order out of potential chaos. He describes the expectation of moral behaviour as coexistent with the survival of communities. Furthermore, he argues that moral imperatives lie at the heart of 'concrete productive exchange'. Anthony (1998:274). Not only is this true for society but also I would argue for communities of practice, such as managerial and associated professional communities.

Anthony regards managers as moral agents, their role being based on an acceptance of moral relationships. He disagrees with those who argue that management is no place for moral relations, if it was he argues we could assume that the world was 'going to hell'. Though he does not favour the traditional teaching of ethics, he is in no doubt that managers need to be educated. Indeed, he goes as far as to suggest that 'the world requires it' and he points to the dangers of according power without responsibility.

> "Power without responsibility is notoriously dangerous both for those who exercise it and for those who have to submit to it, and the consequences of not addressing the danger go far beyond the confines of the managers immediate perception of their role. So, whether the mangers know or

like it or not, the rest of the world require them to be educated". Anthony (1998:270).

What he proposes is an ethical education based on critique of the live 'real' practice context that managers work in. The quality of critique that he suggests necessary is more than that commonly practiced in Western education. Rather, he suggests a critique that exposes 'the unreality of management pretensions and the falsity of the texts on which they rest'. He argues that business schools are guilty of playing a duplicitous game, on the one hand offering consultancy on so called 'best practice' frequently through culture programmes and on the other, engaging in post modern critiques of the same. 'Critical management' he states, ' is not helpful to mangers. It's stance is essentially derisive to the purpose of their enterprise and to their performance in its pursuit' Anthony (1998:273).

> "The education of mangers must concern their reality, the practice of their complex craft, more art than science, akin often to acting in a play which they have plotted under an uncertain direction toward an unknown conclusion. Their education must help them to understand their reality and, if it is fiction, like all fiction, it must reveal its moral content". Anthony (1998:274).

Action learning as a process is geared toward understanding and insight for effective action rather than underpinning knowledge and skill that are the primary focus of traditional management education programmes. The founder of action learning, Reg Revans developed a learning equation: $L = P+Q$. Revans (1982) believed that managers learn best from and through each other as they grapple with their real live problems. He coined the phrase 'comrades in adversity' to describe the process of shared – social learning that takes place in the action learning sets as managers provide each other with support and challenge to see their unique organisational or practice problems from the perspectives of others. The 'Q' in his equation stands for questioning insight, in other words, the lever for critical and reflective practice. The 'P' represents programmed knowledge, what we traditionally think of as teaching and learning. Whilst Revans did not dismiss the use or need for some programmed knowledge, he was quite clear that on its own it was not enough to facilitate effective learning in practice.

Anthony reminds us that 'reality' is neither 'finite' nor necessarily 'reliable'. All 'reality' has both it shadow (Plato) and is reflective of the constraints of our mind (Kant).

By focusing on what happens in management practice argues Anthony, we can see what is going on as opposed to what ought to be going on and we will see that management practice engages in political process that require the exercise of moral judgment. When we apply this in the conduct of our own practice we ask the question 'How can I improve my practice'? Similarly we might notice the gap between our own rhetoric and our practice. Whitehead (2000) calls this a 'living contradiction'.

> "All I am meaning by 'I' as a living contradiction is the experience of holding together two mutually exclusive opposite values" Whitehead (2000:93). He further suggest that when we have an experience of this kind we tend to imagine a way forward to resolve that contradiction in our practice.

Why is Action Learning an Effective Vehicle for the Teaching of Business Ethics?

Only by action can one test ones ideas, beliefs and their underlying assumptions. The relationship between theory and practice is of significance here. It is not uncommon in H.E. to find theory and practice viewed as polar opposites, as though they were separate entities, the emphasis being on the academic (theorising). In industry the reverse could be said to be true of the managerial tendency to action. Freire (1985) argues that we need to respect the unity between theory and practice and he draws our attention to the limits of taking one position.

"Verbalism Lacks Action – action lacks critical reflection on action"

Clearly we need both action and reflection to develop a critical view and thus take effective action. Thus knowledge becomes a dynamic commodity and not static or pre-packaged one; and thus opens to reconfiguration.

In facilitating student learning in this way it is important to understand that the application of theory to practice is inadequate, as it does not guarantee the testing out process central to action learning. On MAPOD, I encourage students to draw out their own 'living theories' Whitehead (1989) from the ground of their own experience and in the first instance to subject them and their practice to public scrutiny. The idea of a living theory is that each person has a conception

of what they do, what works and where they stand on issues, in other words, developing or reflecting on, their ethical position.

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that each organisational practice context is different and as such, students are encouraged to pay attention to their 'position, purposes and context' as frame of reference for their work. Only after they have done this do I encourage them to explore relevant literature. The aim here, is to facilitate students develop and find their own voice, using literature as appropriate, to inform, illuminate and critique their practice. Thus they develop an awareness of what others have to contribute whilst learning not to be terrorised by the literature.

The action learning process builds on the Kolb learning cycle commonly used in 'management learning' e.g. which has four stages: experience, reflection, abstraction and testing. In contrast, the Revans cycle begins with experience (an activity or an event), the reflective phase includes a commitment and decision to experiment; the next stage being experimentation; this is followed by reflection and analysis; and finally new actions. (Cited in Weinstein, (1995:57). In addition to this 'outer process' action learning involves an 'inner process'. The reflective process not only addresses our actions but also our thinking, beliefs and ideas. Stuart and Logan (1987) in a critique of models of action learning that overemphasise 'the action' point out that many managers are already overly inculcated in organisational cultures that privilege action and ignore reflection, thus demonstrating the enormity of the task in developing 'reflective practitioners'.

Furthermore, they differentiate between action and experience:

> "Activity is focused upon and enacted in an outer world,
> whilst experience is located in an individual's inner world…"
> Logan and Stuart (1987)

Weinstein (1995:54) describes the inner experiential cycle as beginning with insight or unease; the development of or a desire to change; a stage of risk taking, developing courage or responsibility; the development of understanding and insight; and finally, transformation. Weinstein argues that:

> "The challenge for action learning is to enable people to be
> effective, not simply for the duration of the programme but
> for the rest of their lives". Weinstein, (1995:55).

I would describe this approach to action learning as a 'critical' approach located in praxis.

Willmott (1994:105-136) in his critique of 'modern' management education views conventional approaches to action learning as problem solving technologies and where self-development/professional effectiveness is of primary importance. By contrast, he distinguishes critical approaches to action learning in a wider context in which self and social development are interdependent. Not only do tutors/ facilitators bring their influence to bear but other stakeholders do as well. In addition to 'problem solving' critical action learning involves an interplay of reflection upon practice and the application of ideas drawn from critical traditions, as such received wisdom is subject to critical scrutiny.

In my experience as students learn the skills of action learning as a form of critique to practice they develop the skills and discipline necessary to undertake a systematic and rigorous approach to their management practice.

Vince and Martin (1993) argue that action learning developers need to go 'behind and beyond' Kolb's learning cycle to appreciate the political and emotional nature of this type of learning intervention. This is because the Kolb cycle focuses on the rational cyclical process of learning from experience and fails to mention the emotional and political aspects of this experiential learning process. The development of an ethic of practice is thus not only a cognitive learning process but also, one that requires the development of emotional intelligence as well, placing the manager in a relational world.

This emphasis on emotional intelligence is not just a fashionable point of view. But rather it offers a perspective, which is particularly important where the practitioner decides to question current organisational practice, and with matters like ethics in business, this may involve pointing out the gap between organisational rhetoric and reality. This can be a risky endeavour for the practitioner. For example, suppose the practitioner facilitates a process of employee empowerment and participation in the workplace, a strategy common to organisations trying to embrace organisational learning seriously. Suppose this organisation also has a policy or code of business ethics and it emerges that the employees are dissatisfied with the code, suppose they recognise it to be rhetoric (this is what Willmott (1998) describes as descriptive ethical codes), what is the professional practitioner to do if in the communication of the employee perspective they risk putting themselves (careers) at risk.

Willmott (1998) describes three ethical perspectives from which codes of ethics are drawn up and used. These are: descriptive, normative, and analytical. In descriptive codes, which are often used as rhetorical devices, they provide a descriptive account of the organisations approach to business and ethics, often included in mission statements. These can be positive educative tools for employees to know where the company stands on these matters, thus proving benchmarks and standards for good practice. However, the downside can be that it absolves the employees from thinking about these issues for themselves, typically, this leaves the majority of employees believing what they are told to believe, whether it is true or not. Where the codes are simply rhetorical devices, this may result in no debate (normative ethics) where what is right and what is wrong is open to debate and different interpretations. This is where employees or customers as stakeholders might influence change towards a normative position in business practice. Analytical ethics will question the normative yardsticks themselves. This is what a company really committed to the development of people and organisations (organisational learning) would be prepared to do.

Vince and Martin, observe that experiential learning initiatives like action learning that 'place emphasis on the responsibilities of the learner, create anxiety', Vince and Martin (1993:208). In my experience this is absolutely true. Furthermore, it places additional demand on tutors to model the process and engage in their own journey of reflective practice. It further requires them to develop the emotional capacity to facilitate a 'deep' process of student centred learning that honours both the emotional as well as the cognitive learning process. In practice, this involves paying attention to a 'living learning contract' with individuals so that they can determine their boundaries around their personal professional and academic development goals. In the same vein, Schön (1987:94) suggests that the student 'must make a willing suspension of disbelief' and place his 'trust' in the tutor.

Doing and Being

Drawing on Clarkson's definition of organisation "An organization is human relationships writ large" Clarkson (1995:26), we can see that we have a hand in the world that we create and that our lived realities do not exist in isolation. Management learning and Professional development traditionally engages in the transfer of skills and knowledge for the acquisition of technical competence for the 'doing' self. In comparing professional and personal development, Clarkson (1995:63) notes that personal development by contrast serves to integrate skills

and knowledge both old and new with the self and is as concerned with 'being' as it is with the 'doing' self. Furthermore, she notes that professional development tends not to engage feelings whereas engaging feelings is she argues, at some stage fundamental to the process of personal development.

Such a critique toward an ethics practice is thus not just about the rhetoric of management but of our lived reality. Given our part in constructing our realities, developing the capacity for critique in respect of our own view and understanding of our world does in my experience requires a certain maturity on the part of the practitioner. In my experience as educator it is not a capacity or practice that relatively inexperienced practitioners are ready for in educational / developmental terms, this is not to suggest that inexperienced practitioners are necessarily unaware of the moral basis of the work that they are engaged in but there would seem to be a certain naivety about the difference between espoused theory and theory in use and a defensiveness regarding the degree of anxiety and uncertainty that this possibility and understanding of self and organisation provokes.

Rogers believed that significant learning came from experience that could not be taught one by another.

"Anything that can be taught is inconsequential and has little influence on behaviour. Such learning. (Significant learning) is self discovered, self appropriated learning" Rogers (1967:226). For Rogers this involved a reconstruction of the person, in effect, his outlooks attitudes and values.

> "This would be a true reconstruction of experience, it would
> be learning in a real sense" Rogers (1967:302).

What is a Mature Practitioner?

For Rowan (2001:10) maturity involves a shift in consciousness. He argues that we go through a series of transitions in our lives from symbiosis with the mother to separation, and from body-self as child to adolescence to mental ego. The next stage he argues is one of mature ego, which he also calls the 'real self'. In each transition Rowan suggests that we have to revise our conceptions of self.

> "The actual experience of real self is, I have argued a
> mystical experience. This is the feeling of being in touch
> with my own center, my inner identity, my true self, my
> authenticity – that self which lies behind or beyond all self-
> images or self-concepts or sub-personalities. It is what

Assagioli (1975) calls the 'I'- the center point of the whole personality. It is what Wilber (1996a) calls the complete bodymind unity. It is a developmental step, principally discontinuous, involving step-jump rather than gradual form (Boydell and Pedler, 1981). We can now say 'I am I', and it means something to us". Rowan (2001:115).

This is an existential self and central to existential insight is the belief that we are responsible for being ourselves. It is this quality that makes us fully human. Rowan suggests that this implies a commitment to 'get inside ones own experience'. It is this commitment that is at the heart of humanistic action research, critical action learning and self-reflexive inquiry. Rejecting post-modern accounts that deny the existence of self or reduce it to a mere text, Rowan (2001:120), states that 'the real self is not a concept but an experience'. Critical action learning enables us to own our experience in a new way.

The shift from mental ego to the mature ego involves a change in our relationship to power. Citing Rogers (1978), Rowan contends that power for the mental ego is associated with 'power over' others, whereas, power at the stage of a mature ego involves 'power with others' or power with-in. It is this difference in consciousness that is central to a humanistic – participative worldview and which underpins the philosophy of humanistic action research and I would argue, critical action learning, facilitating the (student) manager to construct an ethic of practice.

Critical action learning as a form of human inquiry can be understood within cycles of action and reflection but it is more than a project, it involves a 'dialectical engagement with the world' Rowan (in Reason and Rowan, 1981). Taking such a stance toward the development of people and organisations has profound implications for practice such as the participation of others both at the project planning stage and the communication phase, changing the nature of power relations in the organisation.

Reflective understanding and responsibility towards an ethics of lived professional and management practice.

Developing the skills of reflective inquiry is central to this approach. Recognising that each persons approach will be different and distinctive, Marshall (2000) offers some insights based on her own experience as researcher and educator of what self-reflective inquiry might involve. Marshall considers how one might do self-reflective inquiry well and how one might give rich sense making accounts, which avoid the ego collapsing into defensive routines.

The process of inquiry itself involves judgments, which I would argue are themselves based in moral relations. Skilful inquiry thus takes time, commitment and practice. Marshall describes a dynamic process of inquiry that is framed by inner and outer arcs of attention (Marshall, 2000:433). Inner arcs of attention would include noticing the self engage in processes of meaning making, framing and speaking out. Like Marshall, these have been important for me for example, in facilitating my inquiry in the conduct of my own practice and appreciation of life history in my practice and in the adoption of heuristics such as 'the maternal voice in the academy' as I come to notice and name a practice toward an ethics of care. Therein, lies the educative challenge for tutors to develop their practice as facilitators of student learning in the 'teaching of business ethics' as they enable their students to clarify and work through their 'position' on ethical human relations at work and on their own 'moral agency'. Marshall suggests that inner arcs of attention can help us notice our taken for granted assumptions and our ways of knowing. By contrast, outer arcs of attention involve "reaching outside myself in some way" Marshall (2000:434). These arcs may include processes of 'continuing education'. I use this term loosely, for example, it may involve getting to grips with the ideas of others or taking an aspect of the inquiry that is causing some perturbation or curiosity into another iterative cycle of action and reflection. (Critical action learning does not need to be located in a formal education programme as it is a vehicle based on and through reflection on practice. It can be used as a planned approach to management learning in organisations).

In my own case feedback from critical friends including fellow tutors and students has caused me to work with felt perturbations such as my struggle to find voice and come to the public domain, pushing my inquiry onward and deeper.

Marshall locates self reflective inquiry within the cycle of action and reflection as described by Rowan. Commenting on the rhythm and discipline of moving back and forth between action and reflection she argues that each inquiry has its own 'momentum' and so calls for different forms of attention and experimentation.

It is she argues a 'choiceful' activity, moving around the cycle of being, project planning, encounter and communication, as described in Rowan's (1981) action research cycle – 'dialectical engagement with the world'. "It can become a way of life, a form of inquiring (professional) practice". Marshall, (2000:434).

Marshall identifies how her inquiring self is facilitated by different ways of being. These she describes as being based in Bakan's (1966) 'duality of human existence', known as agency and communion. Narrowly defined these are representative of masculine and feminine ways of being.

In my own case my agency was assertive in shaping the context for my PhD inquiry on the MA in Personal and Organisational Development and I have been exploring what an 'ethic of care' might involve by a strategy of being in communion with my students as I seek to get along side them as I listen to and seek to hear well their accounts of their practice inquiries.

Marshall describes these two different ways of being as being both active and receptive. Marshall, (2000:435). Additionally, Marshall highlights the importance of inquiring purposefully and with intent. Determining purposes is essential in developing a strategy towards one's self-directed learning, providing students with a framework, which can guide their reflection on and in action. Developing an ethics of practice is in my view an emergent process, which students come to embrace as they develop and hone their skills as reflective practitioners. Her own account suggests that research needs to be generative taking account of the interpersonal, social, political and organisational contexts, as appropriate. Thus knowledge of the outside world, i.e. 'What is going on in the wider business and social environment, what issues are in the forefront of public concern'?

Finally, Marshall describes 'inquiry as a life process', not just a personal – professional process, drawing on her own account she notes how her inner reflections on her career enable her to look outward and act. Marshall's account is a product of a reflective sense of self and provides a generative map for facilitating reflective inquiry skill and management development.

What evidence can I show you that Critical action learning facilitates the teaching of business ethics?

I asked myself the question, to what extent is this approach to the 'teaching of business ethics' aspirational or a model for good practice? To highlight the potential of this approach, I offer the following example drawn from the project of a student recently presented for Master's dissertations and from my tutor assessment report on his work, as evidence in support of my claims. I have purposefully chosen this example from a student who is a practicing senior manager working at the hard edge of the 'for profit' sector to illustrate what developing moral agency means for him in practice

Stone N. (2001) 'Journey of an Active listener'

The context

"I enjoyed this dissertation account very much as it conveys a practitioner's journey of purposeful and planned practice improvement. Nigel sets out his stall to become an 'active listener', by which he expresses a desire to develop his own practice and leadership style to listen to what his colleagues (500 subordinates) need from him and his management team, in the context of a period of long term change in the business at **** Bank - offshore investments, where a strategy of 'value based management' is to be pursued, with the aim of increasing the bottom line substantially over the next few years. Nigel's role is that of Operations Director for this business unit.

Confronted with a piece of secondary data by way of an employee opinion survey, Nigel determines a need to dig deeper to understand the responses to the survey, which indicated a dissatisfaction with some aspects of: management practice, leadership and organisation culture/support. Nigel decided to following up with his own local focus group in order that he and his management team could both understand better the feelings behind these responses and begin to create a supportive culture of employment during the coming 4 years, during which time the revised operating model for the business will be developed. Nigel undertakes a classic action research intervention, with his emphasis on practice improvement and continuous improvement. He further develops his framing by reference to the work of Senge *et al.*'s (1994) disciplines for organisational learning, focusing on personal mastery, shared vision and team learning, all of which are clearly relevant to his vision and goals.

Nigel opens his dissertation with a poem from Moreno (1969) conveying a 'position' - and intentions in this project which he describes as 'putting yourself in the others shoes for mutual benefit' in order to develop a more human centred leadership approach. The moral of the poem being to see each other through each other's eyes.

The first two chapters set the scene clarifying the purposes of this account and his reflection on practice, considering what it means to be a leader that listens 'active listener' and the implications that has for coaching and developing people at work. Nigel sets out who his stakeholders are in this research and identifies his

colleagues as significant stakeholders, as well as the shareholders whose primary concern is profit. He further points out there are overlapping stakeholder interests between employees and shareholders. Using the framing of 'me us and them' (Reason and Marshall (1987), Nigel includes himself, his action learning set, and the banks management team, as well as his operational team as potential stakeholders in the outcomes and learning from this project.

During this scene setting Nigel reflects on his early career with the bank, his early experience of education and his perceived transition from manager to leader. He suggests that his own career development was shaped by a pedagogical approach to learning which equipped him to follow the rules. He draws on Knowle's (1985) comparative model of pedagogy and andragogy in learning, to illustrate his argument, PG 28. He reflects on how this earned him early promotion in the ranks at the bank but how it was achieved at a cost to his personal and work-based relationships, earning him the reputation as 'Hitler' amongst his colleagues. He describes how his style tended to be one of 'over management'.

> "I was clearly being responsible for taking ownership for delivering the results but at what cost to my reputation as a human being? Was I becoming simply a tool of the organisation, being led and clearly not listening to others?
> I had not considered the need to share my thoughts about what was to be achieved either for me, or collectively, or more fundamentally consulted about the systems I felt were appropriate".

As he reflects on his early leadership style:

> "I believe that my natural style has in the past been built around the 'coercive/authoritative style of manager, as distinct from leader, coupled with a strong tendency to 'over manage'. This did not create the space for individual growth and personal development amongst my team, or perhaps for me as an individual" PG 39. He goes on to suggest that he has shifted toward a 'democratic, pacesetting and affiliate style', today.

He also discusses his experience of being invited to apply for redundancy a few years ago and his shock at the lack of regard for him as a person in the way this matter was handled, despite his years of loyalty and the fact that at the time he had tackled perhaps the most challenging operational management task of merging six branches together.

He concludes this section by reflecting on his personal values in his quest to be an 'active listener' and draws on the work of Lewin and Regine (1999) on

paradoxical leadership, that requires, 'a different way of being that leads to a different way of doing'. Nigel is clearly aware of and has utilised relevant literature and current concepts of best practice, e.g. organisational learning to illustrate and frame his purpose and position.

His research chapter restates clearly his purposes and the focus of this research in following up and delving deeper into the feedback that was given in the employee opinion survey and to take action on the basis of the feedback given in the focus group. Nigel invites his management team to form a focus group to explore the initial survey findings, which Nigel augments with a number of questions of his own and by 'cutting the original data' and setting comparative and benchmark score for the responses, the benchmarks indicating positive and negative levels of satisfaction. He gives a very fulsome account of how he invites his senior local manager to facilitate this focus group with him, encouraging 'buy in' from him to ensure that action and outcomes are followed up on the ground. He describes this as a journey of shared visioning in which there is a need to create a culture that is supportive and he says, ' a very strong belief that I have to take the team with me on the journey of success'.

He gives a rich picture of the process and arrangements made to frame and set the tone for this event. He draws on Morgan's (1997) work on focus groups to support his method and McNiff *et al.*'s (1996) work on action research to demonstrate that his approach is concerned with 'improving practice in his workplace', see pg 97. In presenting his account of research-based practice, Nigel offers us an insight into a very natural process that he is developing as he shares with us this reflection:

> "I remember that it did not feel like a formal meeting at all but as a group of individuals holding a conversation about something that was important to all parties".

Using a pragmatic management template to record his data, he later identifies key words and themes from it drawing out a 'needs analysis' as described on page 113 which highlights areas of need / attention in communication, performance, team learning and leadership. Following the focus group there was a communication event by each manager with their immediate teams and Nigel outlines his plans in his conclusion for a continuing 'active listening' approach in his work with people in the organisation, in particular, he outlines his plans to follow up the coming employee opinion survey and a process of continuous growth for me, us and them. The conduct of Nigel's research approach is clearly fit for purpose in that it responds to a shortcoming identified in secondary data,

which is followed through by way of a focus group (new primary data) and a strategy / action plan for continuous practice improvement" (Extracts from my tutor assessment report).

So what are the ethical issues that Nigel is working through and emerging for him in his dissertation?

1. There is recognition that employees have been used and treated in the past as 'human resources'. Based on his experience of facing redundancy, he knows as a result of his own experience, that employees, no matter how effective and loyal, are expendable and that the psychological contract does not look after the employees interests in the event of major change and job reductions. What is Nigel doing about it? It would seem from the evidence that he provides that Nigel has adopted a humanistic stance toward the relationship between him as leader and the employees whom he has responsibility for by ensuring that the psychological contract is based on a greater degree of equity. To this end, he favours a leadership style that supports coaching and personal development, so that in the event of future change those employees are more equipped to find alternative employment in side or outside of the bank. These are important pragmatic issues where organisations cannot guarantee jobs for life and which goes to the heart of the psychological contract. Explicit recognition by employers of such issues would be exemplars of good practice in 'human resources' in the employment relationship.

2. Nigel's overall approach is one of stakeholding. Appreciating that employees have as stakeholders in the firm, rights and expectations that go beyond a utilitarian approach to employee relations. Nigel's stance in the face of 'Value Based Management' is to go beyond the bottom line, enacting through his leadership a process of social accounting and not just one that is based on profit. As the EBEN (European Business Ethics Network) conference at Cambridge September 2000 suggested, going 'beyond the bottom line' is a mark of good practice in a contemporary approach to business ethics. That he recognises that the employees have 'overlapping' stakeholders interests as employees of the bank, shareholders, and as citizens, is also significant in that his 'critical approach to action' has an impact beyond the firm, to society, facilitating the long term prospects of these employees as employable citizens who ultimately can continue to contribute to the wealth of the nation. His

action, inviting his managers to engage in a focus group to understand better what the employees need of him and them, towards a leadership style of shared vision, is evidence that he is prepared to act on his espoused values.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have sought to draw out a case for critical action learning as a vehicle for the teaching of business ethics as it enables student managers to draw out their learning from real live work based issues that go to the heart of the matter asking the question 'What is the nature of the ethical problem here and what can I do about it'?

It is a teaching and learning strategy that is a challenging process to both tutors and students alike, demanding a stakeholder approach to the teaching and learning relationship. Critical action learning locates the work of managers beyond the organisational context thus potentially benefiting society at large. The course promotes a stakeholder approach to action research drawing on the work of Reason and Marshall (1987) who identify three key stakeholders, the first being 'for me' the personal process in action research as exemplified by Nigel in his journey as manager towards an ethics of practice; 'for us', in Nigel's case, the us being his organisation and his subordinates; and finally, 'for them' in this case the academy as his work contributes to enhancing the body of knowledge.

As an approach critical action learning and action research with people and organisations requires a degree of 'maturity' in order to bear critique of one's practice, demanding the development of self-reflective skills in management practice.

Like any teaching strategy the proof of the pudding is in the eating and I would suggest that the quality of insight, action and change brought about in the student project illustrates the quality of their learning and thus their ability to facilitate an ethic of practice.

If the crux of teaching business ethics through critical action learning requires the exercise of moral judgment, then the example of the student project offered, I suggest, demonstrates the development of a practitioner in working out his position and purposes in relation to his practice context.

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APPENDIX 2
INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF THE CD-R

Viewing The CD-R Files

The purpose of this appendix is to provide instructions for the use and viewing of the CD-R files, which are intended to provide an alternative and complementary form of visual representation to the narrative contained in Chapter Nine.[2] You may wish to read the narrative accounts first and then view the accompanying CD-R files, or view then at the points highlighted and return to the accompanying narrative later.

There are three CD-R files: file 1, file 2 and file 3.

To view file 1: named "Louise's check-in"

Click onto the CD-R and prepare to view parts 1 to 3. The clip is in three parts. To begin, click onto "Louise's check-in part 1", where you will hear Louise checking in very briefly (approximately 20 seconds), after which Margaret begins her check-in. Margaret's check-in continues in parts 2 and 3.

To view file 2: named "Louise's Dissertation"

Click onto the CD-R and prepare to view parts 1 to 3. Part 1 begins with Margaret asking Louise to clarify her intentions regarding a proposed future search intervention. In parts 2 and 3, I can be heard summing up feedback that I and another tutor have prepared for Louise on her draft dissertation, with the intention of helping her bring further clarity to her account

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[2]   Entitled "Developing a connoisseur's eye: exploring the aesthetics of my teaching and learning relationships on MAPOD".

The second series of clips on this file are named "section two parts 4 and 5". Click onto part 4, where I can be heard framing a question to Louise about when she first noticed that her inquiry had taken a reflective turn, linking the personal to her organisational research. Continue viewing parts 4 and 5 to see how this opens up a different perspective in the conversation of the learning set.

To view file 3: named "Marcia Change Agent"

Click onto the CD-R and prepare to view parts 1 to 5. These clips provide an insight into the action learning set meeting with Marcia and Sue, in which Marcia is describing her work as a health visitor and exploring what it means for her to be a change agent in her daily role.