

An Examination of the Use of
Drama Based Training

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation looks at the use of drama based training in organisations, in the context of adult learning theory and some organisational thinking that advocates creativity in organisations. It presents the hypothesis that drama based training in its existing form mirrors the variety of experiential learning styles. It explores a variety of practices using reflective research methods and raises issues for drama based training in practice based on discussions with five practitioners in the field. It explores the potential for growth within the context of new organisational paradigms that combine organisational thinking and creative methodologies and concepts. It proposes a model as a framework for viewing the spectrum of drama based training for development and offers a cycle of generic good practice.

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CHAPTER ONE

‘All the World’s A Stage and all the men and women merely players’

(As You Like It II:vii)

Introduction & Research Methods

This dissertation is an exploration of the use of drama in training. It will examine the contemporary training context and look at what drama based training is offered on the market, how it is presented and where its use could be extended. In a sense, what is being asked is whether certain uses of drama have been accepted into the normative world of training, why, and whether there is space for different uses of drama, and by implication, other creative training techniques. There are many existing companies offering drama based training and other creative training techniques. This dissertation will be examining the rationale behind these techniques - the benefits, the problems and the scope. What happens when the culture of creativity meets the culture of organisations?

This route of research has a theoretical base in the work of Foucault (1984) and Bourdieu (1984). Foucault’s concepts of ‘normalisation’ and ‘disciplines of power’ are implicit in the examination of what is permissible in the cultural context of learning (for this dissertation, the current commercial training environment). For Foucault, power and knowledge are inseparable, but rather than being restrictive, he suggests that power can open fields of possibility. The individual is an active subject, and therefore self regulates according to the ‘norms’ within society. These norms are set by social exclusion, and Foucault illustrates this using the example of the birth of the mental asylums in eighteenth century France, when the concept of madness and unacceptable behaviour became formalised and legalised. For Foucault, truth is the product of rules of the dominant discourse - i.e. what is decided at any point in time to be ‘mad’. These rules are themselves arbitrary and relative. Foucault questions the validity and order of history and in doing so highlights the function and randomness of different discourses that are dominant in society. He encourages a re-examination of these discourses in order to challenge the assumptions implicit within dominant ideologies. Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ develops this line of thought by suggesting that people learn the language of socio-cultural norms:

‘Through *habitas*, we produce on the appropriate occasions skilful social activity that embodies, sustains and reproduces the social field that in turn governs this very activity’ (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1993: 37)

These philosophical traditions have major implications for this research. Firstly, when examining the context of the existing practices, one can see the swift emergence of normative ideologies. The uses of drama in training are still emerging – the practice is still relatively young and dynamic, therefore the ‘norms’ are themselves evolving. However, training, and certainly adult education, is more established and has its own rules of normative behaviour and practice. The subversive challenge implicit in Foucault’s thoughts compel one towards looking at what is not there, why, and whether or not the dominant ideologies could tolerate a different approach. A second implication of this line of thought for this research is the examination of assumptions, which exist within the cultural context. Using Foucault’s encouragement to challenge such assumptions as a basis, one can then turn to the work of Schon (1983). Following the model of a critical reflective conversation, one could look at the existing use of drama in training, challenge the assumptions being made, and attempt to develop and re-evaluate the practice. Thus reflective practice itself becomes a valuable research tool.

It is at this intersection of what already exists in the training market, and where the use of drama in training could develop, that this dissertation is placed. The hypothesis being presented is that drama in training has a style spectrum which mirrors that of the training world in general. On the one hand there is ‘hard’ objectives-led training, and on the other, the ‘softer’ more process-led approach. Both are inter-linked and sometimes inseparable. Currently, much of the commercial drama based training available focuses on outcomes, thus placing itself at the ‘harder’ end of the market. Such practice has as its theoretical source a cross between behaviourism and experiential learning. The focus is on the ‘concrete’ elements of Kolb and Fry’s experiential learning model (1984), whereby learning is cognitive and occurs by repetition and practice. This research will also be looking at process- led training in an attempt to identify its position in the commercial world. Standing at the edge of what is currently commercially viable as training practice, one can at once gain an overview, whilst exploring the horizons of what is ‘acceptable’. Forming a research base for this position will be personal reflective practice. Following in the tradition of

Schon (1983), Brookfield (1987) and Kolb (1984) amongst others, for whom, 'reflection and critical thinking are processes rather than outcomes of learning' Hanson (1996), I will use my own processes as a research tool to assess the validity and worth of some aspects of drama in training.

Bassey (1999) describes research thus:

'What is research? Research is systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom.' (Bassey 1999: 38)

Using this as a starting point for research immediately explodes further questions; what is knowledge? What is wisdom? And how can we frame research in such a way that opens not closes such discourse? Bassey, like Kelly (1963) would suggest that no researcher will be approaching their enquiry neutrally. Kelly's personal construct theory hypothesises that 'A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events', moreover, 'All thinking is based, in part, on prior convictions.' (1963: 6) Bassey stresses the need to acknowledge ones' paradigm in order to be aware of the type of research being carried out as this can have an effect on the analysis and perhaps even the findings. It is in this spirit then that this research is placed in what Bassey calls the 'interpretative research paradigm.' (1999: 41) In his description of what an interpretative researcher has as a starting point, he evokes a hermeneutic philosophy where the interpretation of knowledge is key. It is an approach that is entirely relativist, wherein:

'The interpretative researcher cannot accept the idea of there being a reality 'out there' which exists irrespective of people, for reality is seen as a construct of the human mind. People perceive and so construe the world in ways which are often *similar* but not necessarily the *same*. So there can be different understandings of what is real.' (1999: 43)

Bassey also acknowledges the reality for such an interpretative researcher that by simply observing and certainly by asking the questions, s/he may influence the outcome of the research itself. Therefore the purpose of the research is in part to describe and analyse but also to find 'shared meanings with others.' Bassey advocates the use of what he terms 'fuzzy generalisations' (1999: 48) which encourages the use of open language: for example, 'can' instead of 'will' in a

statement or conclusion. This process of enquiry and discursive, interpretative research is the framework of this research and it is from this paradigm that I will draw my own 'fuzzy generalisations'.

It is also useful to evaluate reflective practice as a research tool. Schon (1983) when writing about his concept of 'reflection in action' refers to the element of surprise which is crucial to his ideas:

'When intuitive, spontaneous performance yields nothing more than the results expected for it, then we tend not to think about it. But when intuitive performance leads to surprises, pleasing and promising or unwanted, we may respond by reflecting-in-action.' (1983: p.56)

This approach views training itself as a continuous creative process, and as such, when a trainer experiences a hunch, or a key moment of successful learning, curiosity - a desire to know why - will inevitably follow. This is training / teaching as a learning process itself, whereby the constant observation, evaluation and analysis is ongoing. Consequently reflective practice is synonymous with exploration and with taking risks. Each situation is seen in its own context above and beyond any existing theory or practice. It becomes: 'experimenting as a kind of action, implementation is built into...enquiry.' (1983: p.68) Such a viewpoint sees reflection-in-action as a non-stop process of research which:

'may be rigorous in its own right, and links the art of practice in uncertainty and uniqueness to the scientist's art of research. We may thereby increase the legitimacy of reflection-in-action and encourage its broader, deeper, and more rigorous use.' (1983 p.69)

Schon goes on to suggest that reflective practitioners are by their very nature reflective researchers for whom 'research is an activity of practitioners' (1983: p.308) He suggests three types of reflective research starting with 'frame research'. This is when a practitioner becomes aware of the frames s/he is setting, thereby becoming aware of the possibility of alternatives. This again is reminiscent of Foucault, where everything is relative to its time and context. It is crucial to challenge existing (often internal) assumptions, and re-frame the questions being asked and the ways of looking at things. For example, if I pose the question 'Is drama an effective training tool?' I am looking at existing provision and attempting to evaluate it in a training context – probably using existing conventionally received evaluation tools as my criteria.

However as a reflective researcher, I will look at the cultural norms surrounding the specific training context, and I will ask a question based on my own practical experience, such as ‘What happens when I convert my experiences of drama into a learning tool in the context of organisational training?’ Here I am looking at the context and at my reflective experience and opening up a new field of enquiry based on my knowledge of both. I am no longer using evaluation tools written by anyone else, or forming my judgements based on existing criteria. I am putting the question, the practice and the research into its own individual context. By continuing to challenge my own assumptions and those of the learning culture I am operating in, I start the process of ‘frame analysis’ in which I never lose awareness of an alternative way of seeing.

The second of Schon’s recommended research methods is ‘repertoire-building research’ which is intended for situations which do not fit an existing theoretical framework but nevertheless occur repeatedly. In a sense this research tool is to provide reassurance to practitioners that they are not alone, and provides an archive of informal case studies which may aid wisdom and experience to reflection-in-action. This is the more pedestrian evidence gathering on which theories can be based. From his first two named reflective research methods, Schon constructs a third: ‘Research on fundamental methods of inquiry and overarching theories.’ This is a category which is intended to accommodate the information gathered by the first two research methods and provide an ‘overarching theory’ which allows reflection-in-action a generic theoretical base, and the ability to be flexible to any situation. This is particularly useful for the use of drama based training where the reaction of clients is rarely ever the same, and is often unpredictable. The trainer can therefore practice with the reflective knowledge that the reactions will be diverse, and often original, and will have an ‘overarching’ theoretical base on which to draw in order to process these reactions when they come. Thus ‘the theory fits the situation’ (1983: p. 318)

Schon’s research methods provide a license for discovery which is both subversive and liberating. At his more poetic, he places reflective practice in the context of ‘artistry’ and in language again strongly reminiscent of Foucault claims:

‘As we consider the artistry of extraordinary practitioners and explore the ways they actually acquire it, we are led inevitably to certain deviant traditions of

education for practice – traditions that stand outside or alongside the normative curricula.’ (1987: p.15)

This assessment inspires a quest for the not known, for the unconventional and perhaps less tangible areas of practice. By exploring the existing terrain and seeking to see what lies beyond it, reflective research gives freedom and authenticity to risk-taking as a research tool. Such a view is echoed by Scott and Usher in their analysis of what they term ‘action research’. Whilst they acknowledge that the most common practice of action research is the case study, they suggest that one of the most significant characteristics is flexibility which allows alternative ways of doing research, and indeed of writing itself:

‘This flexibility is no coincidence, particularly if one sees action research in a more post-modern way as a hybrid, as a ‘boundary-dweller’ and border crosser. To see action research in this way does greater justice to its rich diversity. It allows working with post-modern notions of multiple selves and economies of difference whilst still allowing participants to free themselves from the oppressive certainties of positivist theory and the tyranny of technical – rationality.’ (1999: 40)

‘There’s Method in’t’ (Hamlet II: ii) Research Design

Having laid out above my own research paradigm, and marked the theoretical route of my research methodology, I structured the research design itself around an eclectic combination of advice from Kelly, Bassey, Scott & Usher and Schon. This path is outlined below.

The ‘Frame Research’ (Schon 1983)

My questioning began from the position of a drama based training practitioner. The aim of the research was to explore the range and scope of drama based training and its benefits and problems. I wanted to uncover some of the complex issues that emerge when drama based training meets different organisational settings. To do this I looked at a sample of existing practice, starting from my own and looking outwards to five other professionals in the field. From this point I aimed to locate where drama based training is currently positioned in the world of organisational training and development, both theoretically and in practice and from here to look ahead to some

of the possibilities for the future. As a result of my findings, I also hoped to locate areas for further research.

Existing ‘Overarching Theories’ (Schon 1983)

In order to be able to make my own ‘overarching theories’ as a result of this research, I needed to examine the context of existing theory. This process built on the ‘interpretative research’ (Bassegy 1999) position and the enquiry was useful both to set the scene, and to develop my thinking in relation to other theory. Thus I conducted a literature review initially of drama as an educational tool, and subsequently of some organisational theory which explores creativity as a model or paradigm. This served to contextualise drama based training (itself a relatively young practice) within some of the contemporary thought about creative training. Much of the theoretical base for drama as an educational tool was written for entirely different settings, and not much research or literature yet exists looking directly at drama used in organisational culture. I then conducted a literature review of experiential learning, as drama based training places much of its rationale and value on the fact that it is experiential. Here I looked at the spectrum and variety of experiential adult learning theory, as an illustration of the scope of drama based training itself. As far as possible I attempted to give practical examples for each theoretical base to illustrate this. These literature reviews were essential to the research process, and helped me to establish Schon’s concept of ‘overarching theories’ (1983). Drama based training has reference and relevance in such a wide range of divergent theoretical sources, that it was useful to pin down the literary base for this dissertation. It was particularly useful to locate material referring directly to drama based training, in part to see what gaps there were in existing literature and research, so that I could clarify my own route of enquiry.

‘Reflection-in-action’ (Schon 1983)

The next stage was detailed and thorough reflective practice. Using Schon’s model of ‘reflection-in-action’ it was intended to ground some of the theory, and sprang from my desire to challenge my own assumptions. I posed the question ‘Why use drama at all?’ This question started as a general challenge and subsequently formed the basis for a rigorous enquiry into my own practice. Carl Rogers suggests that:

‘We cannot expect an accurate description of the creative act, for by its very nature it is indescribable.’ (1961:355)

We can though, give examples. I attempted to locate some key critical incidents from which I could extract learning. They were not intended to be representative of all types of drama based training, but as examples of the reflective process itself and its role in both practice and research. I looked at my own understanding of what drama based training is, then I located six popular methodologies and gave examples of critical incidents from each one. These are written in the spirit of ‘action research’ (Scott and Usher 1999) in which a single event is used as a means by which one can explore the benefits, difficulties or simply issues within practice. These critical moments are then balanced by a SWOT analysis of the methodology itself to summarise some of the issues explored and to provide a frame for later discussion with other practitioners.

‘Repertoire-building Research’(Schon 1983)

The next stage was to talk to other professionals using drama based training. This was particularly important because the practice is so new and still being refined by practitioners in the field (there is certainly no sense of a single standard of practice.) The interviews were both collaborative reflective research, and ‘repertoire building’ (Schon 1983), and the experiences of others became mini case studies in which I could further develop some of the themes that had already begun to emerge in my reflections. The interviews provided the opportunity to discover different theoretical viewpoints, and to witness a variety of practice. I chose to interview five practitioners in the field. This was clearly not a sample, or even representative of all the different types of drama based training. The research could have focused on gaining an overview of this, or could have conducted an audit of what is available and who the clients are. Equally the research could have focused not on the practitioners but on the organisations requesting and using drama based training. In choosing five drama based training practitioners as interviewees, I was consciously selecting a qualitative research method which allowed longer discussion and a deeper enquiry into the prevalent issues facing some practitioners, and what they perceive the difficulties and benefits of drama based training to be. I attempted to select practitioners who had a variety of views and experiences to provide a sense of balance and scope, but it is likely that some of the findings of this research could have been different had I spoken with different people.

As a research tool, the interviews were designed as democratically as possible, and I suggested an agenda for discussion rather than choosing to conduct a formal interview. Each interview subsequently became a 'collaborative enquiry' (Reason & Rowan 1981) in which the framework was the same, but the discussion was free to develop. This method was selected in order to allow a free-flow of ideas and to provide space for discussion of issues that I had not previously thought of. All of the discussions did indeed challenge some of my assumptions or ideas; many agreed with some of my reflective findings and some sent me back to look at new theories that I had not come across. Thus this research tool was dynamic, involved risk-taking and required me to be open to the possibility of re-framing my thinking, and indeed this dissertation many times. The method of recording the interviews and then transcribing them allowed me to immerse myself in the data which was useful as a research tool. I subsequently wrote a preface of all the interviews before recording the results of the data thematically as they now appear in this dissertation.

'Fuzzy Generalisations' (Bassey 1999)

The discussion part of this research drew on the data of the reflective practice and of the interviews. I located the variety of drama based training within the context of the different organisational requirements and settings. In presenting a 'Spectrum of Drama Based Training for Development', I also proposed areas for development of practice. I also suggested a good practice drama based training cycle, which is based on the collective experiences of all the research methods, but which was not intended to be specific to all types of training (the SWOT analysis could provide better guidelines for that.) The discussion also looked at the future development of drama based training in the context of new organisational theories and began to suggest a theoretical frame for new developments.

The research ended looking ahead, both to new possibilities for drama based training, and to areas for future research. The research design for this dissertation focused on what exists and one of the findings of this research was that there are many gaps that need to be filled in order to present a complete picture of drama based training and its future potential.

CHAPER TWO

‘My library was dukedom large enough’ (The Tempest I:ii)

Literature Review

Drama & Organisational Theory

‘Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.’ (Boal 1992 p.xxxi)

‘We must change the concept of creativity from being something that is ‘added on’ to education, skills, training and management and make sure it becomes intrinsic to all of these.’ (Rt.Hon Chris Smith MP 1999 NACCCE report)

As the quotes above indicate, the literature for drama based training has two focus areas. Firstly, the literature of theatre as a means to effect change and learning, secondly, the organisational context in which the drama based learning takes place. These two strands combine to create the very existence and rationale for drama based training – that is, drama as an effective tool within an organisational environment. Certainly, drama is used to great effect as a learning tool outside of organisations – indeed, the roots of drama to effect change and learning are rooted firmly in socio-political contexts. The Medieval church in Europe used it to teach Bible stories to illiterate people, and subsequently others have realised the potential for learning within theatre as Polly Wright points out:

‘The power of theatre as an educational medium has been grasped by propagandists, health educators and the writers of soap operas.’ (2000: 20)

But looking at drama based training within organisations, it is important to look at the relationship between the two potentially different cultures and paradigms. Furthermore, seeking an overview, the increasing success of drama based training is due in part to the emergent organisational preoccupation with creative thinking and innovation. It is hard to disentangle which came first in this chicken and egg scenario, creative training methodologies or the popularity of the concept of creative thinking in management. Looking at some marketing claims of drama based training

companies and of some organisations, it is arguable that the two things are now coexistent, and feed off each other both in theory and in practice.

The use of drama in training is more often than not practised by those who have been, and indeed still are, professional theatre practitioners. It is hard then to pin down the exact theorists who have influenced the practice. The power of theatre as an educational medium has been used for centuries in the Western tradition and has its roots in diverse traditions - the Ancient Greeks, the Medieval church, Shakespeare, and Brecht to name but a few. These roots influence the way theatre developed as a means by which society expressed itself, and for some, this connection remains the essence of theatre:

‘Theatre is a place of information as well as entertainment and the more it cuts itself off from society...the more it is doomed to glamorous irrelevance.’ (Michael Billington, theatre critic, *The Guardian* 17/02/01)

Firmly placed in this ideological tradition is Augusto Boal; a Brazilian director and politician whose work has a huge influence and has informed those using theatre as a tool for change. In his first work ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ (1979) he ‘points to the revolutionary potential of transforming the spectator into the spect-actor’. Boal was a contemporary of the educationalist Paulo Freire, and much of their agenda is the same; a process of ‘conscientization’ in order to ‘perceive social, political and economic contradictions and take action against oppressive elements of reality’ (Freire 1972). This theoretical book is followed by ‘Games for Actors and Non-Actors’ (1992) in which Boal outlines his method of ‘Forum theatre’ which has become one of the most popular drama tools for practitioners using drama for training or education.

‘Forum theatre is a theatrical game in which a problem is shown in an unsolved form, to which the audience, again spect-actors, is invited to suggest and enact solutions. The problem is always the symptom of an oppression, and generally involves visible oppressors and a protagonist who is oppressed. After one showing of the scene, which is known as ‘the model’ (it can be a full-length play), it is shown again slightly speeded up, and follows exactly the same course until a member of the audience shouts ‘Stop!’ takes the place of the protagonist and tries to defeat the oppressors.’ (Boal 1992 p.xxi)

Forum is an important model for drama based training for several reasons. Firstly it is always facilitated by what Boal calls the ‘joker’, who encourages the audience to dissent. Secondly, it encourages an audience to participate by being vocal, but not necessarily expecting them to perform. Thirdly, using professional actors who are able to improvise, means that an audience can immediately get a sense of what their suggestion might look like, and how likely it is to succeed. It is interesting that Forum theatre is so popular as a tool beyond the strictly political setting for which it was invented. There are many practitioners who still use it in this way, but many – some within organisational training climates, who have appropriated the tool and taken it away from its politics, using it instead for a tool to demonstrate change and influence. Perhaps the reason that Forum is so adaptable and so popular is that the learning comes from the group of spect-actors themselves. It is a form of collaborative learning and encourages lateral thinking and problem solving.

The impact of drama and arts based training within traditional educational settings has been well researched and documented. The DfEE commissioned ‘All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education’ (1999) to assess the function and delivery of creativity in schools, with weighty political backing and a grand vision:

‘Our aim must be to create a nation where the creative talents of all the people are used to build a true enterprise economy for the twenty-first century.’ (The Prime Minister Rt.Hon.Tony Blair MP)

Creativity here is seen beyond the context of the arts activity itself and becomes conceptual – a frame of mind. This has resonance with a recent study ‘Champions for Change’ made in Chicago by the Arts Education Partnership, (Brice Heath 2001) who found that ‘while learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the arts regularly engage multiple skills and abilities.’ These findings focus on the far-reaching influence of the learning beyond the specific art form or skill itself. This idea of creativity as a way of thinking has theoretical and conceptual implications for organisational thinking. Bolman and Deal (1991) base their entire book on the metaphor of organisations as theatre.

‘Artistry is neither exact nor precise. The artist interprets experience and expresses it in a form that can be felt, understood, and appreciated by others. Art

allows for emotion, subtlety, ambiguity. An artist *reframes the world to help us see new possibilities.*' (p.19 my italics)

The language here is post-modern where re-framing perceptions becomes an essential function of art – and the ability to do this is something that Bolman and Deal recommend organisational leaders and managers develop. 'We need versatile and flexible leaders who are artists as well as analysts.' This concept of artistry and creativity as a mental state suggests an organisational paradigm shift in which improvisation, flexibility and innovation are the new priority values.

The idea of a creative organisation may appear paradoxical. For organisational theory is traditionally based on models, yet creativity is essentially freeform and unpredictable. The very concepts that are being heralded as being necessary for the new business environment do not fit neatly into patterns because they focus on the capacity to be reactive, spontaneous, open, flexible – in short, to improvise. It is here that we return to the function of drama based training. For whilst such qualities cannot be taught, they can be experienced – and the more that they are practised, the more they develop into a way of thinking, a perceptual understanding and perhaps most importantly of all, a reactive instinct. Crossan, White, Lane and Klus see this model of chaos as a necessary paradigm shift that organisations have to make in order to survive in the ever changing business environment.

'The key task for managers is to explore and innovate in chaotic conditions. Essentially an organisation must be flexible enough to adapt, creative enough to innovate, and responsive enough to learn.' (1996)

They call this new paradigm, 'The Improvising Organisation', and set 'old assumptions' against 'new assumptions' in an attempt to re-frame organisational thinking. Taking examples of improvisation from theatre and jazz music, they suggest that by experiencing improvisation an organisation can change its value structure based on 'story development (strategy), cast (organisation members), ambience (culture), and audience (customers).' Crucially for this research this new way of thinking is dependent on participating in theatrical improvisation, which, it is suggested, can lead to core changes in organisational culture.

What is it then about improvisation that is so appropriate for organisational learning? Viola Spolin (1990) suggests spontaneity is the key to good improvisation, when

people are immersed in a moment beyond memory that provides a freedom to react solely to the situation they are in. Keith Johnstone in 'Impro for Story tellers' (1999) outlines not just exercises but a whole approach to performing and improvisation which inspires in participants a similar sense of the freedom, energy and sensitivity. By being engaged with their imaginations, they are open to more possibilities. Such skills are being recognised within organisations as valuable for managers and employees to have.

'Tolerance for change, initiative, and belief in teamwork and collaboration, as well as a culture of innovation, flexibility, risk-taking and adaptive learning. Training in improvisation could help prepare people for their new conditions and roles in horizontal management structures.' (Crossan et.al. 1996)

Looking at the current (limited) literature on using drama based training it becomes clear that there are two levels of discourse. The first is the practical application of drama as a training tool where participants learn experientially. (The theoretical foundations for this are explored below.) The second is arguably more idealistic, and certainly farther reaching in its suggestion that drama and creativity are not values to add to business, but to re-frame the very core of organisational thinking:

'Making room within an organisation for creativity is one thing. Designing an organisation around creativity itself is quite another. This is not simply to advocate an increase of the role of creativity in business. It is to advocate creativity as the principal role of business.' Hirshberg (1998)

This research will focus primarily on the former, as it is more concrete and accessible. However, it may be that the findings of this research will point towards further work to be done in exploring the potential for realising the vision of an 'improvising organisation'.

Experiential Learning Styles

Drama in training as suggested, crosses the spectrum of learning styles, and there are practitioners drawing on a range of adult learning and training theories. Outlined here are some of these theoretical positions in adult learning, which will provide a context for the reflective practice to follow. Significantly for this research is the choice of learning style, which will inevitably inform practice. I will give examples of some

existing drama based training which occurs within each divergent leaning style, in order to better place my own reflective practice and enquiry.

Learning can be seen as: 'experience, as defined by long periods of practice which builds up an automated knowledge base producing expertise in just about anyone' (Griffey and Kelleher 1995), or, conversely as: 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (Kolb 1984). Whichever view one takes, the bedrock of learning here is experience itself and this is a good starting point when examining the major theories of adult learning. Weil and McGill (1989) locate various theoretical 'clusters' as Villages, not dissimilar to Boud's 'traditions' of adult learning (1989) and these provide a good guide to the plethora of theories available.

Village One crosses over with the 'training and efficiency' learning tradition. It covers work-based learning, APL, and focuses on the behavioural, skills based learning that is so often targeted within employment, or for 'employability'. Theoretically this draws on the work of Skinner, and focuses on the 'concrete' skills in Kolb and Fry's experiential learning model (1975). The learning style is cognitive, and this is often applied to skills which can be tangibly assessed and monitored - for example IT skills. This can also be seen in terms of human capital, as the work environment changes to make flexibility and 'transferable skills' more desirable. Learning here, is technical, impersonal and outcome led, where the main focus is on self directed skill acquisition. Learning occurs by repetition and practice, with any distractions to the efficiency of learning being taken away. This 'village' is an impersonal, de-contextualised place. Although it has been criticised for its prescriptive, 'banking' emphasis on knowledge acquisition (Freire 1972), it is ironically egalitarian in its total disregard for the status of the learner. APL, for example provides the opportunity to accredit informal learning which has an important impact on learners who have no formal training. A behaviourist approach can also be useful when working in environments where the learners need to see concrete, applicable outcomes, for example, training in non-verbal communication, or 'social skills'. It is interesting to note the importance of language here. By breaking down the ability to interact in terms of soft *skills*, communication *skills*, life *skills*, one can be quite pragmatic and systematic about learning the 'rules of the game' within society - the 'habitus' that Bourdieu talks of, enabling people to 'speak the language'. This is a slightly cynical approach and it is

debatable how much everybody has the ability to learn everything simply by repetition. Griffey and Kelleher in their research on 'How do people learn?' (1995) suggest that 'the acquisition of knowledge involves the combined action of basic motivational/affective processes and basic mental operations', which indicates that learning is a more complex process requiring a more holistic approach. Despite misgivings about the manipulative elements of this behaviourist tradition, much of the current drama based training operates in this place. The use of role-play, especially role-play using professional actors to stand in for say, potential clients or employees, has its theoretical base here. By 'learning the rules', having a 'practice run' with feedback supplied, the implication is that interactive behaviour can be learned. It is understandable to see why, in a corporate training climate where 'Return on Investment (ROI)' is paramount, that such a heavy emphasis has been placed on drama practice leading to tangible outcomes. It could be however, that many practitioners use the language of this village, and give disproportional weight to the outcomes in order to get business.

Village Two is 'post school' education; a broad term looking at andragogy and self-directed learning. This is perhaps the most influential in terms of traditional adult education drawing on the work of Knowles (1978) and Kolb, where the learner is defined as a individual adult with unique needs, and where the process of learning is valued as highly as the outcome. Stylistically it is the opposite of the approach taken in village one, with the focus being on the self direction of the learner who is striving via experience to find an authentic understanding away from the constraints of an impositional curriculum or an authoritative body of knowledge. The teacher here takes the role of co-learner, and the learner is actively participating in not only the learning, but what will be learned: ' the learners accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating a learning experience.....and participate actively in the learning process.' (Knowles 1996) Learning contracts and learning diaries are key elements of this form of learning, and the learner is encouraged to continually evaluate the experience as a primary source for the learning itself. This provides a useful context in which to run workshops with adults who are uncertain about learning and nervous of the process. It is useful for participants of a one day workshop for example, to outline what they expect from the day, both in order to clarify in their minds what they want to achieve, and to set out the learning as

empowering - a collaboration and mutual exploration. Criticisms levelled at andragogy (e.g. Hanson 1996) point out that not all adults are able to be self-directed, and that the 'individual' in the theory is actually white, middle-class male with high motivation and few blocks to learning. Whilst there is a sensitivity to the learning needs of the adult, perhaps previously ignored, there is little space for otherness - or for adults who are in the more complicated position of wanting to learn but who do not know how to. There can also be a high expectation of failure and of exclusion, which andragogy does not fully accommodate. The assumption is that learners who want to learn, know how to and what direction they want to go in. However, in some contexts learners actively voice a desire NOT to learn, and yet benefit enormously when they do engage in the workshops. Drama based training here exists for example, to teach assertiveness and confidence building techniques. In certain contexts, some learners who take part in such training may be disaffected due to unhappy early learning experiences. For example, such courses operate in drug rehabilitation centres, with 'New Start' for young unemployed people, and with single mothers groups to name a few. There is certainly a demand for non-threatening, learner-led training, and often drama, or creative techniques are perceived (ironically perhaps) to be a gentle way in to learning. Whilst andragogy claims to remove restrictions to learning, it is limited in its assumptions of what those restrictions are. In its essentialist approach to experience, andragogy arguably fails to see the external socio-cultural, constructs of selfhood. These are examined in Village Three.

The tradition of critical pedagogy and social action is diverse and perhaps inevitably has as many theories as there are opinions about the political function of learning. Theorists emerge from a variety of backgrounds and include educationalists (Freire, Mezirow), philosophers (Bourdieu, Foucault, Habermas) and economists (Marx). Obviously this village is vast in its theorising, and is united by its critical overview of learning within the socio-political context whereby

"adults come to recognise their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and the reasons for them and take action to overcome them." (Mezirow 1983: 125)

For Freire, learning is a process of conscientization in order to 'perceive social, political and economic contradictions and take action against oppressive elements of reality' (1972). Freire stresses the experience of co-learning as opposed to the

'banking' approach of more formal educational forms. Implicit in his thinking is the need of the learner to become aware of his or her situation, so that they can articulate it, own it, challenge it and ultimately transform it. Learning is contextualised and ultimately emancipatory through the process of critical reflection in action. This is not dissimilar to Habermas's belief in the transformative power of communicative learning where the ultimate goal is human understanding in an 'ideal speech situation' (1976) from where the learners can critically reflect and thus be emancipated from their socio-economic situation. It is through critical reflection, he argues, that learners can gain a more objective view, thereby releasing them from their narrow vision of the world and their place within it. This is a philosophy firmly rooted in modernism, and draws on the Cartesian assumption that there is a meaningful, authentic truth to be found which will lead to a freedom from oppressive social relations. Without doubt this approach to learning has a powerful appeal, especially to the disenfranchised voices marginalised in village two. Drama based training is extremely popular and powerful in this area, and is particularly bound up with providing transformative possibilities to a client group largely made up of people who society has excluded. However there are criticisms to be levelled at this approach. Much the emancipatory language contains assumptions, which somehow ignore the multiplicity of the modern world and are idealistic about the opportunities available to people once they have experienced learning. That being said, drama based training doubtlessly draws on this tradition especially in the use of Forum theatre to effect change.

The fourth 'village' is humanistic, focusing on personal growth and development. Drawing on the work of Rogers, Maslow, Kohlberg and Erikson, the emphasis of this village is the progress towards a 'healthy personality' (Tennant 1997) and individual autonomy. For Kohlberg, learning is growth towards autonomous and principled morality, for Erikson it leads to inner unity and for Maslow it is a hierarchy of needs with the ultimate goal of a self-actualised personality. Learning is seen as personal development 'providing opportunities to explore new ways of being in the world' (Weil & McGill 1989) and the style is one of facilitating learning - giving each learner the space to explore, find a voice and be heard. There is an underlying assumption within this theoretical approach that inner knowledge and experience is inherently good and authentic, and that by accessing the essential 'self' a learner will 'develop.' Douglas Frame (1996) has highlighted some of the difficulties within

Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs', which challenges the above assumption. He points out that there is no logical cause and effect link between the five needs which are:

‘1: the physiological needs of food, clothing and shelter, 2: the need for security of life and person, 3: the need for a loving relation with others, 4: self-esteem, 5: self actualisation.’ (Maslow 1973)

Whilst Maslow has clearly identified essential needs within the human condition, there is no reason that the fulfilment of one should facilitate the attainment of the next one. Maslow also had difficulty actually finding anyone who fitted his criteria of a self-actualised personality, which highlights the (perhaps inevitable) idealism of such theorising. However, the emphasis on facilitation and providing space does give value to personal experience, and this is useful when work involves issues such as assertiveness training and identity politics. Within process-led drama based training there is a need for giving space to such confidential emotionalism. By prioritising individual experience in a non-judgmental, inclusive way, participants are encouraged to value themselves. This is important when working with people who are self-conscious or unused to using creative techniques, which may require a greater amount of self-disclosure and risk taking than they are used to.

It is clear that each one of the 'villages' of experiential learning serves as a useful and applicable model to different areas of learning. Indeed, not only are there examples of drama based training in each one, but I draw on aspects of all of them in my practice. However, all of them imply an apparently linear, modernist approach. Each of the traditions assume that learning is about growth as a result of experience based on a notional idea of life as 'stages' (Piaget, 1978) or phases of development (political or personal) towards an ultimate concept of maturation. I find the terminology of developmental stages constricting and inappropriate for use in many of the contexts of my practice – especially those which involve work on personal development and growth. The empirical assumptions seemingly behind all the theories is that there is a hidden truth, an authentic voice, or a valuable experience to be unearthed and held up as the result of the learning process. That each learner is on a journey towards a received concept of truth, where they will discover a pre-ordained and inevitable sense of knowledge. This use of language seems to ignore the randomness and unpredictability of the learning process. In my attempt to find a bridging strategy between theory and practice, and to find a more appropriate theoretical base for

process-led drama based training, I turn towards a post-modernist vision of learning. Rather than see learning as linear, I choose to look at it as a series of eclectic experiences. Using the metaphor of chaos theory, the emphasis for this practice is on providing a dynamic space where collisions can occur. This way I can take some parts of the theories from each of the villages, rather than adopting a strategy based around just one. As Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997:10) put it:

‘ The modernist search for a true and authentic self and the fulfilment of a pre-given individual autonomy gives way to a playfulness where identity is formed (and re-formed) by a constantly unfolding desire that is never fully and finally realised.’

Framing this search for an eclectic, post-modern learning space are Foucault's concepts of 'normalisation' and 'disciplines of power' (as previously discussed). Returning to Schon's concept of framing and re-framing practice, the theoretical and practical approaches converge in giving priority to creating 'space', a process that the New London Group describe thus:

‘To make a space available so that different lifeworlds - spaces where local and specific meanings can be made - can flourish.’ (1996: 70-1)

Similarly Oasis, a human-centred, personal development training organisation describe creativity in training as a process:

‘The whole point of art, culture and intimacy is not to get anywhere but to be there. To take part is enough. Such experiences are among the most powerful that we can have, and change us whether we like it or not.’ (Taylor 1993: 16)

This puts the post-modern concept of space into practice, where outcomes are unpredictable, and emerge from the process itself, dependent on the participants and their contributions. The risk here for participants is simply to join in, and the challenge for the facilitator is to make such participation plausible.

Having explored some of the theoretical literature for drama, creativity in organisations and experiential learning, this research will now turn towards practice, so that it can locate and test some of the theory. We have already seen examples of what practice can happen in relation to theoretical models, and the next chapter will explore experience and reflective practice more fully in order to see some of the theory in action.

CHAPTER THREE:

‘To thine own self be true’ (Hamlet I:iv)

Personal Reflections

Why Drama?

Using drama in training clearly covers a range of training theories and methodologies, but why use it at all? Why should drama be taken out of the context of theatres, rehearsal rooms and professional actors and used in other ways? Why and how does drama usefully become a learning tool? In an attempt to answer these questions I will examine my own practice and experiences so that I can start to locate not simply the rationale, but some of the issues embedded in the delivery.

I will start with some reflections on acting itself. I trained as an actor and worked for eight years before I became involved in training, and it is from this setting that my belief in the transformative power of acting emerged. As an actor, one is often poised between text (theory), technique and action (practice). During a rehearsal process one researches the part, learns lines, works on technique (vocal and physical) as well as the essential experimentation, improvisation and creative act of developing the character and production. Then, during performance, one ‘loses oneself’ in the part, feeling the feelings, re-living and exploring the experience, at the same time as being conscious of the stage craft – the delivery of lines, the response from the audience and the other performers. It is a strange state of suspended experience, of being neither oneself nor the character, but aware of both. Most acts of creativity mirror a similar suspension of self – of total immersion in the task involved, but with acting one is also encouraged to feel and experience emotional realities of someone else. It is this combination that is so transformative. If a person is able to suspend their own reality and imagine that of another person, they experience – however briefly, a different perception of the world. The learning potential is in the very act of experiencing a different reality, which can then be analysed and assessed leading to a different or deepened understanding. Indeed, such a process is akin to John Heron’s concept of holistic learning, where one is, ‘dipping down into the deeper reaches of yourself in order to learn something.’ (1993) For him it is the meeting between self and subject that allows deep learning to occur.

What is it though, that encourages the cross over from the more abstract experiences I just described, to the learning environment? For me, like Heron, it is the integration between self, experience and learning which is so appealing. It is not simply the methodologies of drama which make it useful for training, but the transferable skills as well. My experiences of presentation, of improvisation and playful discovery, of running theatre workshops and of detailed work on body language are directly useful for training. This combination of knowing the impact of performance, and having already developed the generic skills to deliver training of it, is what makes the cross over so organic.

However, a difficulty lies in the conversion from acting to learning environments; how are the optimum conditions for such high risk activity created when the participants are non-actors? Again, many of the techniques that are used in training come directly from the experiences of actors in the rehearsal room. In my experience, the start of every rehearsal day was a warm up, which involved physical stretching and often theatre games involving trust, team building, awareness of the space and of others. This was essential in order to focus body and mind, but also to create a safe space which everyone in the room is a part of making, and responsible for maintaining. Without this, the risk taking and experimentation necessary simply would not happen. In the theatre company I worked in, we also used a lot of improvisation, a kind of actor's brainstorming, in which we would explore different options for characters by performing them. Improvisation also depends upon two key ingredients: the ability to take risks – to get up and try something out even if it might not work, and the ability to be spontaneous - respond immediately to other people's actions. Significantly it is the desire to learn or develop these abilities that marks out drama as a learning tool. For underlying all the fun and games (and I am a believer that learning should be enjoyable!), there are key competencies such as flexibility and spontaneity that are increasingly valued by organisations (as discussed in Chapter Two).

It is unnecessary to outline the full range and variety of exercises and processes I used when working as an actor. However it is interesting to see which acting exercises have been adopted, developed and to some extent standardised by the drama in

training movement. I will focus on the six that I perceive to be most popular within that setting:

1. Theatre games (warm ups) & improvisation
2. Role-play with participants
3. Role-play with actors
4. Working with text (pre-written scenes)
5. Using theatre techniques – body language etc.
6. Forum Theatre

Having used all these techniques with a wide variety of clients, I will take some key moments from my training practice – both successful and problematic, and give examples of some of the issues that arose for me in the field across a range of activities. The variety of client groups cited gives a sense of the scope of interest in using drama, and also raises the issue of what may be appropriate for different groups. To summarise the learning points from the instances of my reflective practice described, and the type of drama based training itself, a brief SWOT analysis was carried out for each of the training methods at the end of each account. This was specifically connected to use of drama in training in an attempt to clarify what I perceive to be good practice and thoughts on the potential for its development. Some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are generic to all drama based training and I have attempted to be specific to the precise training tool discussed in order to avoid repetition.

1. Theatre Games: Creating A Safe Environment

The first example is from an issue-based workshop. Participants have all registered individually (therefore do not know each other) and are aware that drama will be used to explore issues around gender. In the main the participants are non-actors, and want vastly different things out of the day. All are required to participate, give honest feedback and to explore issues that can be very personal. Therefore the sense of safety in the room, and between them is crucial – not only to protect the participants, but in order to allow the training itself to be successful. To establish this I spend the first two-hour session of the day using theatre games and icebreakers. As the participants may be nervous about performing, I start with a children's game, which many of them are already familiar with, which involves the whole group but during which no one is singled out. This is important, because the participants feel safe

when they do something that they already know. The use of drama stops being frightening and instead is familiar and possible. There then follow four pair work trust exercises – deliberately placed so that participants do not have to take risks in front of the whole group yet. I remind the participants that the focus of this work is to develop a sense of trust, and frame all the exercises using the model of introduction, action, feedback, which encourages the participants to talk to each other and start taking small risks. If a group is ever to take risks the participants must feel safe to do so – safe to fail. It also has a theoretical base in group dynamic theory (forming), and psychodynamic theory (containment). On other occasions when I have had to cut short the warm up process due to time constraints, the results have been vastly less successful. The participants have felt slightly self-conscious throughout the session, never fully engaged in the subsequent exercises and all felt slightly frustrated that they had somehow just missed the essence of what they were trying to learn.

Theatre Games: SWOT summary

Strengths:

- Good, effective icebreakers.
- Encourage groups to work together in an enjoyable relaxed way. Aids the ‘forming’ process.
- Create energy and focus concentration.
- Encourage participation in a relaxed, informal way.
- Wide variety of games for different situations. This can accommodate differences in style for different participants (some sedentary etc.)
- Establish a sense of trust and safe space which can enable higher risk activity to follow.

Weaknesses:

- Games depend on full participation to work.
- Do not work particularly well in isolation – as icebreakers for team meetings etc.
- They are by necessity very informal, and do not fit into all cultures. Using them in an inappropriate setting without pre warning the group, can prove disastrous.

Opportunities:

- Can start training days with high energy, informal feel and set the tone for creative training.
- Can be adapted to fit specifically into the context and culture of the participants.

- Can be sold as part of a whole day of training using drama – theatre games can provide part of the rationale behind more time investment for drama based training.
- Encourage participants to take part in a non-threatening way.

Threats:

- Used inappropriately they can be counter-productive and put participants off using drama altogether.
- Used in isolation, they do not serve as a real training tool, and are sometimes mishandled.
- Bear the accusation of being ‘childish’ – which needs to be addressed when used in a corporate setting.

2. An Accidental role-play: Role-play without actors and the Need To De-Role

This example comes from an experience that I had as a participant when involved in a peer learning exercise with a group studying group dynamics and facilitation styles. Two of my peers led a session on communication within teams and used several practical, experiential exercises. The final exercise involved each group member putting on a hat on which was written an instruction e.g. ‘treat me as a leader’, or ‘disagree with me’. The rest of the group was asked to respond to the instruction, at the same time as repeating a team exercise that we had just done together as ourselves before. The aim of the exercise was to explore team working, and to look at how communication can create roles within a group. It was ostensibly a role-play, but neither the facilitators nor the group were fully aware of this. During the exercise I realised that everything I said was either ignored or dismissed, and I began to feel upset by this. Although I knew it was just an exercise I was not prepared for the emotional impact of my peer’s reaction to me and felt that the boundaries were blurred for the whole group. Equally I was uncomfortable with the idea of following some of the other instructions. At the end of the exercise I was not the only group member to feel shaky, and the feelings within the group were running high. The facilitators tried to elicit feedback, and dealt well with the rather shell shocked group, encouraging us to destroy the hats. But I was still overwhelmed with the feelings that had been brought up in the role-play, and needed to de-role, to reassert my own identity within the group. The group too needed to re-form in its ‘real’ state. Neither

of the facilitators was familiar with the concept of de-roling, and we subsequently did not do it. I left the session feeling vulnerable and angry.

The learning that I gleaned from my reflections on this event was incredibly valuable to my own practice. The over riding learning point for me was the enormous impact that using drama and role-play can have. I was profoundly affected by this event, and did indeed experience how it must feel to be constantly ignored. This re-confirmed to me the power and the potential for deep learning that drama has, precisely because it involves individual feelings. Yet there were elements of the practice which were dangerously wrong – dangerous precisely because of the powerful impact of using drama. Firstly, because the facilitators were unaware that the exercise was a role-play, not just a training game, they had not prepared the group for the task. There was no warm up, no sense of safety to return to after the risk taking and significantly, no sense of containment, so we all felt uncomfortable with the boundary blurring that was happening. The instructions for such an exercise should acknowledge that people will not be speaking as themselves, but as their role dictates; this can often be a physical thing – moving to a different space in the room, so that participants step into their role. Similarly it is essential to end a role-play in which participants have adopted roles with a de-brief followed by a de-roling exercise. This can be as simple as everyone in the group stating in turn, ‘I am (name) no longer (name of role)’. I had been using de-roling with groups before this experience, but I had not been aware of how important it is. I use role-play to work with a diverse spectrum of clients, some of whom have fragile boundaries already (e.g. ex-substance mis-users, young women at risk). To have experienced first hand the precarious balance between effective learning and emotional damage has made me very careful of using role-play – of creating the right conditions, and crucially leaving enough time to de-brief and examine the impact. In this instance, it was not the exercise itself that was at fault, but the delivery of it, and this in turn has implications for good practice when using drama in training.

Role-play without actors: SWOT summary

Strengths:

- Provide an opportunity for participants to explore both sides of a situation – or a different experience of working life.

- Can be used to re-work / re-visit situations and change the outcomes, explore other options.
- Has a high impact, especially when looking at behaviour and communication patterns.
- The experiential learning is emotional, and therefore a profound learning experience.

Weaknesses:

- In order to do well, all the participants have to be able to use acting techniques (however rudimentary.) This can be included as part of a warm up process.
- Used irresponsibly, or in an uncontained way it can have very damaging effects.
- Its direct approach can evoke unexpected emotions that not all trainers are qualified to deal with (potential cross-over with psycho-drama.)
- If the participants are not used to doing role-play they may focus more on the acting than the learning points.
- It takes a lot of time and space to create really fruitful conditions for good role-play – this is often not taken into account.

Opportunities:

- The potential to develop over time deep-seated learning through exploring behavioural alternatives to situations.
- Can be used for larger groups, exploring team dynamics – again with carefully monitored boundaries.
- Because of the impact it can have, it can be used to tackle difficult issues and explore the perimeters.

Threats:

- Bad role-play experiences can put participants off ever using drama, and can be very damaging.
- That role-play is used by a lot of trainers who do not account for its impact which can be dangerous and destructive.
- Role-play is overused as a tool by non-experts, thus a lot of people do not experience its full potential.

3. Using Actors in Role-Play

Actors are used in various ways for role-play, depending on whether an in-house trainer has written a programme that uses actors, or whether the external training provider has devised a programme using drama including some actor role-play work. Depending on the style of the company's training policy, some clients choose to set up very formal interview style role-plays where the actor has a rigid character brief and no contact with the delegates apart from the role-play itself. Others use the actors as co-facilitators and adopt a more developmental approach.

This example comes from work with a haulage company who was training senior staff in their new staff appraisal scheme. The day was structured so that after a morning of discussion about the scheme and good practice surrounding it, (including watching a scripted scene), the afternoon would be spent in small groups. Each group worked with an actor, who would adopt the role of a real member of staff and the management team could practice. At the start of the day it emerged that all the participants were extremely nervous about the prospect of having to act. This was a mandatory training, and clearly many of the participants did not want to take part, particularly in something that they perceived to be high risk and undesirable. It was with relief then, that they realised that they simply had to be themselves practising the appraisal, while the actors would perform their colleagues. Furthermore, they began to realise how nervous they were of the appraisals themselves, and had an opportunity to practice 'worst case scenarios', with peer feedback, and feedback from the actor about how it had made him/her feel. Inevitably many of the participants still found the experience nerve racking – partly because they were being watched by peers, but partly because they were still performing in a sense. As the afternoon progressed, and the participants had second and third opportunities to 'act' the staff appraisal, their nervousness faded and confidence clearly grew. They could observe themselves and their colleagues becoming better at dealing with difficulties, and began to relax into the role-play structure. Ironically, the participants were clearly playing the role, but because they were 'being themselves' it was not frightening, and allowed them to analyse what they were doing, and be creative in their approach to the staff development itself. Essential in this process is the actor as facilitator, who leads on the feedback, and also feeds back on how it felt to be appraised and on the style of the appraiser.

Role-play with Actors: SWOT Summary:

Strengths:

- Working with actors means that the participants can concentrate on the learning points, not on the acting.
- The actor can give objective feedback and supply the participant with alternative ideas for communication.
- The participants can rehearse their role safely and practice different strategies.
- The role-play can mirror the professionalism and of the real situation.
- Actors can be versatile in their responses thus providing a wide variety of realistic situations.
- Actors provide a short cut to good effective learning – good for participants who are nervous.

Weaknesses:

- Without good, constructive feedback from the actor, many of the learning points can be missed.
- Its success is dependent on good actors who are also trained in giving effective, constructive feedback. Bad feedback can be devastating.

Opportunities:

- Actors can develop their role to become trained facilitators who can then explore the full range of learning possibilities within the situations, and challenge any assumptions made by the participants.
- The participants can learn how to cope with unexpected reactions, so are not surprised when they occur.
- The participants can engage in genuinely experiential learning, and apply their learning in a safe environment.
- The actor is in a position to raise his/her emotional responses, thus allowing for a discussion about the consequences of behaviour without it becoming personal.

Threats:

- There is currently no best practice standard for companies trading in actors for role-play. This has implications for the long-term success of it as a useful concept in business. A bad experience is a strong deterrent.
- Actors are not always good at analysing the situations – this is a necessary requirement for a good quality role-play. Feedback is part of the learning.

4. Working With Scripts

Working with scripts that are pre-written to incorporate the issues and the appropriate culture and tone for a particular organisation, is a different way of working with drama. This time, the participants themselves are required to be active spectators, as opposed to participants in the action. This example is taken from a series of workshops delivered to a department in the civil service as part of their equal opportunities training. The company I was working for had scripted five scenarios, and had three actor/facilitators and one trainer to deliver the programme. As well as some other exercises and discussions, the format was that the actors would perform a scene which showed an example (oblique or direct) of prejudice or discrimination within the work context. After some of the scenes the trainer would elicit from the group what could have changed, and how – thereby using some Forum techniques. For example, at what point could a character intervene? How would the other characters have reacted? How much power does a character have? Other scenes were written to focus on one character alone, after which the spect-actors could ask him/her questions in role. The group was also asked to think about what they would do in a similar situation. Throughout the day, the challenge was constantly put back to the group – do you recognise this behaviour, have you been in similar situations, and what can you do about it?

This use of drama was undoubtedly effective. With an issue as sensitive as equal opportunities, people can be reluctant to talk about their own experiences or even to voice their opinions so, it was important to keep the discussions away from personalities. The use of scenes enabled issues to be flagged up in a more general sense and the discussions focused instead on the characters and the behaviour patterns. So, drama served as a shield – a means of making a difficult subject non-direct. As active observers participants engaged in the exercise in which they were encouraged to suggest alternatives for the characters in a scene, which was then re-enacted with their suggestions in place, after which the group discussed whether it had been more or less successful. This gave the group members complete power and influence over events, which had a lot of impact with this client group – a lot of whom were frustrated at their lack of it in such a hierarchical work structure. For employees in a relatively formal and high-pressure organisation, issues such as equal opportunities are often left undiscussed, apart from policy documents setting out

rather general mission statements. To address these issues creatively, but safely (the only risk taking in this form of using drama is stating opinions) was remarkably fruitful. A lot of the participants were cynical about the reality of anything changing organisationally, but by using drama were able to explore how change could occur individually or within their direct team.

Working with Scripts: SWOT Summary:

Strengths:

- A large number of participants can be involved in the training.
- Participants are able to empathise with the characters (emotional response) at the same time as focusing on other issues. This can have a profound effect.
- The scenes are relevant to the culture and organisation.
- Live theatre has more impact than video because of the inevitable contract between audience and actors. This encourages real engagement from participants.
- Issues can be explored that mirror those of the participants, but are not direct – thus giving participants a safe way to discuss them.

Weaknesses:

- It is possible for some participants to opt out, and not take any learning from the situation.
- It is dependent on a well-researched and well-written script – this is time consuming and expensive.
- Delegates do not have to participate or experience the situations – therefore the learning can remain superficial and low-impact.

Opportunities:

- Each scene can be specifically written for the organisation, thus making it directly relevant and useful to the participants.
- The metaphorical approach provides a useful tool for discussion without being specific to the participants themselves – this provides an opportunity for openness.
- Participants can be entertained, intellectually challenged and emotionally engaged – not always a common experience in training!
- It is potentially more palatable and useful in some corporate sector settings (specifically in senior management).

- Because the scenes are so thoroughly researched, they can explore issues in more subtle and complex ways, thus providing an opportunity for more analytical and deeper learning.

Threats:

- It is time-consuming and expensive to deliver, and therefore takes a lot of selling and setting up.
- It is not as high energy or as experiential as some other drama based training tools, thus making it less fashionable.

5. Adapting Drama Techniques & Improvisation For Use In Training

This area of drama in training is ironically one of the easiest to sell (it fulfils very clear objectives) yet hardest to do well. Its success, in my experience, depends entirely on a few crucial factors. Firstly that the group are willing to participate. Secondly that there is time for a warm up (see point 1 above). Thirdly, that they are prepared to accept that theatre techniques involve a lot of work and development, and that the process of getting there may take time. I have come up with this list after experiences of the absence of these factors, when the training has been deeply unsatisfying. My first experience of this was working as a speaker trainer to coach employees in a large organisation who were about to speak at a large important conference. The culture of the organisation was formal, and the employees involved had little time to give this training. Therefore the training manager set me up in a room, and I had a stream of people coming in for half-hour slots. All I had time to do was rehearse the speeches, little else. I left feeling that I had not achieved what I could have. This was my first experience of what I now term the ‘corporate stranglehold’, where organisations want results without time investment. I am careful now to recommend much more time, and if possible a group session in the morning. Another experience of teaching assertive body language for a well-known and rather traditional training organisation was similar. I was asked to conduct a workshop in an hour, which meant that by the time the group was relaxed enough to benefit, the session was over.

My learning points from both these experiences revolve around being exactly clear about what my recommendations and conditions for training are. Inevitably, as a practitioner, one has to compromise to an extent, but it is essential to know what the

necessary conditions for any success are, otherwise the training will not work at all. This leads to the issue of evaluation. From my experience the meaningful, deeper learning that may occur in drama based training can take weeks, if not months to process and integrate. It is hard to assess this at the end of a short course (often just one-day), when participants are often feeling good after the training, but not able to be particularly analytical. Again, over a longer training period this is much easier to achieve, and as a practitioner, I find working with technique much more satisfying if it is seen as a developmental training over several weeks. (E.g. assertiveness training for women, improvisation for decision making, social skills training, speaker training.)

Theatre techniques: SWOT Summary:

Strengths:

- Theatre techniques are designed to train actors in body language, voice production, presentation and stagecraft. They are therefore directly transferable.
- Given time and commitment, real changes can occur – therefore they will fulfil hard objectives.
- Improvisation teaches many of the new values in contemporary organisational thinking.

Weaknesses:

- These skills are perceived to be quick to acquire which they are not. Subsequently enough time is not made available.
- The process of learning these skills is time-consuming and therefore expensive.
- Many of the techniques require an openness and lack of self-consciousness for them to become effective; not all participants will give this.

Opportunities:

- Done well, using theatre techniques can transform presentation style and delivery, and have many secondary results too, such as confidence raising.
- Professionals who are trained in a field, but not in people management or presentation, can benefit enormously from theatre techniques.
- There is clearly scope for marketing and packaging theatre techniques, especially as they fulfil so many hard objectives.
- To develop programmes focusing on creative thinking for organisational managers, and even become involved in creative strategic thinking.

Threats:

- That theatre techniques are compromised so much in order to be sellable, they lose their real learning potential.
- That they continue to be perceived as either too alternative or conversely too easy to achieve.
- That enough time is never given to the training, rendering it superficial and unsatisfactory.

6. Forum Theatre

This is another of the uses of drama in training that uses professional actors. Boal invented Forum Theatre for work with oppressed groups, so it may seem strange to see it appearing in the context of drama-based training in business. However, Forum was devised as a way of using theatre for change, and so it makes a perfect training tool. For Boal all audiences are ‘spect-actors’ or ‘active spectators’ (1991: xx) in which they hold as much responsibility for the action as the actors themselves do. This means that they can change the action in the scenes they witness. I have used Forum in many settings and the example cited here used Forum as a model, adjusting elements that did not seem appropriate (for example, conventionally ‘spect-actors’ take part in the scenes themselves, which they did not do in this instance.)

The setting was a leadership training day for team leaders. The trainer who had written the day had invited the company in for just one session of the day. As such, there was no opportunity for the drama based training company to introduce their methods. The delegates seemed quite stiff and formal, and I was not at all certain that the session would be a success – depending as it does on audience contribution.

The central character was the team leader, and she entered and presented the scene from her point of view. She described the setting and the dilemma she was in (something she had to tell the team that she knew would not go down well with all of them.) Three other characters then came in, and as soon as a difficult situation arose, the central character stopped the action, and asked the audience for help: ‘What shall I do now?’

Because the audience had been immediately plunged into a work based situation that was larger than life and slightly comic, they had begun to laugh, and had subsequently engaged with the issue. They began to offer suggestions very quickly, and the immediate reaction from the actors fed into their enthusiasm for the game – almost as if they were heckling. If the suggestion did not seem to work, the actor waited for

another one. The audience was enjoying the improvisation skills of the actors, which in turn relaxed them enough to participate fully, and they really began to discuss the issue, and debate strategies for dealing with each issue as it arose. This was a high-energy event, and very popular with the participants. However, as the aim of the exercise was to find solutions, this happened very quickly, which led perhaps to a 'quick-fix' approach as opposed to a deeper analysis of the issues.

Forum Theatre: SWOT Summary:

Strengths:

- Forum is easily accessible, and encourages safe participation.
- As a tool for effecting change (and by offering immediate solutions) it is empowering and illuminating.
- It can be used for large groups of participants (and is therefore cheap!)
- It is high energy, and an enjoyable interactive method.
- It is versatile and can be accommodated to match any situation.

Weaknesses:

- It can be seen to be didactic – i.e. following a formula pre-set by the actors.
- Its learning can tend towards quick solutioneering, rather than a deep look at the issues involved.
- It has a broad stroke style (characters are often caricatures in exaggerated situations) which some participants can find patronising.

Opportunities:

- Forum in its original incarnation (pure Boal) is experiential – the participants join in. There is potential for this to be used in training, and therefore perhaps making the processes and learning more profound.
- With good actor / facilitators almost any issue can be tackled, thus it could be sold into any learning situation.
- Scenes can be run and re-run with different outcome, or permutations. If this is well facilitated then a wide range of learning points can be covered.
- Forum was designed directly as theatre for change. It is therefore an ideal tool for companies who are genuinely interested in changing.

Threats:

- That the reason for which it was invented (learning empowerment to effect change) will be lost in the laughter of clever improvising and witty situations.

Whilst this can make it palatable, it is also in danger of sacrificing the real learning.

- That by not using it experientially (where the participants themselves replace the actor who is not saying what s/he wants to hear), the major impact is lost.
- Without well-facilitated follow up, the impact of the training will die out with the laughter.

This chapter has explored a variety of reflective experiences, and looked at the range of drama based training tools that I have used. Inevitably the SWOT analyses have thrown up issues which are contradictory, and this will hopefully go some way to indicate the scope and complexity of using drama based training. Some strong themes have emerged across all the methods explored, and these will form the agenda for the interviews with other practitioners in the field, in the spirit of a 'collaborative enquiry'.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘Take each man’s censure, but reserve thy judgement’ (Hamlet 1iv)

Interview Results and Analysis

In selecting five interviewees, I deliberately sought practitioners who used different techniques and had divergent approaches to using drama based training. All the interviews were recorded (subsequently transcribed), and each took an hour. The questions asked were presented as an agenda, which was used as a springboard for discussion – a deliberately informal technique to encourage a sense of collaborative enquiry. Each interview added to the momentum of the last, and I could cross-refer and begin to widen the collaborative approach by developing ideas that had emerged in the previous discussion. This in turn helped me to first explore and then begin to formulate my ‘fuzzy generalisations.’ (Bassey 1999) This chapter will present a collated version of the discussions, and the emergent themes will then be analysed in more detail in Chapter Five. [The full interview questions and one of the full transcripts are included in the Appendix.]

The interviewees were:

- Rachel Griffiths from the Royal National Theatre’s Education Department (hereafter referred to as RNT) who is project manager of their corporate training programme ‘Theatre Works’. These are theatre workshops held at the RNT facilitated by trainers who also actors/ writers/ directors.
- Jill Connick and Edward Harbour – directors of Actors in Management (AIM) – a drama based training company that specialises in researching and writing scripted scenes. They work using professional actors for role-play and performing scenes. Their focus area is change management.
- Robbie Swales a director of Steps Role-Play, a drama based training company using professional actors. They specialise in role-play and Forum Workshops – their adaptation of Forum theatre using professional actors who improvise scenarios and elicit feedback.
- Claire Maxwell – an independent organisational development consultant, she has started to incorporate drama based training into her developmental programmes by running improvisation workshops for senior managers.

- Robin Chandler, a director of the Impact Factory, a drama based training company that focuses on personal and professional development and communication skills. All their trainers must have experience in acting and therapy, but they do not use professional actors as a training tool.

The agenda that was used is outlined below, and the analysis of the discussions will be structured around these broad themes:

1. Why drama?
2. Practice – what do you do and why?
3. Marketing & modification? How do you sell what you do, and how much do you have to compromise to fit into the organisational culture you are working within?
4. Evaluation
5. Best Practice
6. The future of drama based training.

In quoting any of the interviewees initials will be used as a reference.

Why Drama?

Unanimously in the interviews there was a sense that theatre and drama can have great impact (unsurprisingly, as all the interviewees have been involved professionally in theatre). However asking ‘Why drama?’ elicited diverse reactions – often informed by the particular practice used. The difference, as was so often the case in these interviews, was between the practitioners who work primarily by *showing* (using professional actors) and those who facilitate *doing* (where the participants act). For the former grouping, drama is an ideal tool for reflecting back to an organisation some of the crucial issues confronting it. ‘Using actors one can show one side to the other in all its complexities.’(JC) For Robbie Swales, this has a post-modern basis:

‘The job of an artist is to help people to re-frame the context in which they see their world – that a great painting, or piece of writing, or performance, if it works on you, makes you re-frame your perceptions. And we do that in a minuscule way in a three hour session.’ (RS)

In an interesting parallel to this concept of re-framing, Rachel Griffiths suggested that theatre workshops can also be seen in post-modern terms, for they blur the boundaries between audience and actor, theatre and learning – ‘the audience and the actor are in

the same space making it happen together.’(RG) This can be the case in generic theatre workshops, but is also useful when using theatre workshops to explore specific themes such as ‘anxiety management, change management, difference & diversity work or developing lateral thinking.’ (CM) In exploring such topics, drama can allow participants to be free to improvise – to make mistakes, to be spontaneous and in the moment. Robin Chandler at the Impact Factory took a more objective led approach whereby drama is a means by which one can rehearse life – ‘to stop and start and have another go.’ (RC)

Practice

Each interviewees response to the question ‘Why drama?’ seemed to articulate the basis and rationale for their practice – the framework in which they operate. Moving onto descriptions of practice provided the most divergent responses from the interviewees. This was perhaps inevitable because every practitioner has their own preferred methodology – moreover, in a competitive market, they are all keen to illustrate that their practice offers something original and different. Obviously practice also varies according to what practitioners set out to achieve, and what their chosen learning style is. An interesting distinction again emerged between those practitioners using drama in order to change or develop the way people *do something*, and those using it to influence the way people *think*. Where the focus is on vocational training such as presentation skills or a staff appraisal package, the emphasis is on instruction. Where the focus is themes or generic theatre practice such as difference & diversity, the emphasis is on exploration. This illustrates the variety and scope of drama based training that ranges from concrete training needs to the more abstract demands for creativity in business. Some of the practitioners have a formula that is adaptable to either, whereas others are more firmly located in one place. The RNT’s programme for example is ‘purely theatrical’ offering a package where delegates go to the RNT, take part in a theatre workshop and see a show. Claire Maxwell’s work is firmly rooted in the concept of developing creative thinking as an approach, which she places alongside self-development. She works with improvisation as a way of identifying and removing blocks to creativity and then making links back to work. The Impact Factory’s work is less abstract and focuses on running workshops largely within the service industry on ‘soft skills’, and again, this is part of personal and professional development. For them it is about taking useful dramatic skills and

transplanting them into the personal environment of the client groups. AIM prefer to use carefully written scripts as a starting point for a process of analysis and comparative reflection. For them a script is the best way of showing the complexity of a situation, and offers a safe way to discuss issues without becoming personal. Steps Role-Play also use performance, but Forum – as previously discussed – which feeds off the audience in an interactive learning environment. Steps are consciously non-directive, and acknowledge that this method only draws out of the audience as much as they are prepared to give at that time. ‘It’s a methodology that supports emergent and team learning.’ (RS)

All of the practitioners agreed that in order for their practice to work, the participants had to sign up to the methodology being used in order for the experiential learning process to be effective.

Marketing

The marketing issue is directly linked to this essential need for participants wanting to take part. How do the interviewees sell what are sometimes abstract, and nearly always perceived as ‘different’ training concepts to organisations, and the participants within them? How much do they modify their practice to accommodate the various organisational cultures they encounter? For some of my interviewees this was not a problem. For the RNT and Steps, their marketing strength lies in their difference.

‘The thing that attracts a corporation is the fact that we are radically different – we aren’t like them, we are a theatre, and they want it to feel like a theatre environment – whatever that is, and they want it to feel different, because they’re paying for it to be different.’ (RG)

They feel that they have permission and almost a requirement to provide a new training perspective that other companies and certainly internal trainers do not offer. Other interviewees felt that the answer lies in making the links between what they experience during drama based training and the working situations of the participants so that the learning and the drama happen simultaneously – this is especially important with sceptical participants. It is also important to make the links clear for those delegates who do not take part in the dramatic processes, choosing instead to watch their team and engage in peripheral or vicarious learning. Here the ‘selling’ is part of the process – framing the learning firmly within the organisational contexts, so

that the participants are continuously reminded of what they are learning and why. Robin Chandler held the view that the key is in the language. His company deliberately avoids any 'luvvie connotations', refusing to use the term 'role-play' and they frame all their work within a language of pragmatism. They are also prepared not to use drama at all, but to extract some of the creative thought processes used in drama and offer them as team exercises in situations where the delegates are so resistant to the idea of drama, that it would be counter-productive to even suggest it. The consensus here for all interviewees was that the backing and support from within the organisation itself was vital, and that the more the organisations are involved in the planning and design, the better the work is.

Evaluation

Is it possible to gauge the impact of the work? Evaluation was a shared concern amongst the interviewees – most of whom only ever run one or two day training - and all of whom acknowledge that the 'happy sheets' at the end of the day are not adequate indicators of the learning. (There was a sense that it is a generic problem for one off training of any kind.) In part, the evaluation is left up to the organisations, and one company recommends that their training be timed to take place a month before the staff annual appraisals (or equivalent PPD process). There was a consensus amongst the interviewees that the more a training company is in contact with the organisation, the more it is possible to glean evaluation at a later date, but the experience of many was that this is not always possible and that not all organisations want it. Some important points emerged from these discussions. Firstly, that it is genuinely hard to evaluate learning that is not immediately visible. Robin Chandler told the story of Derek Jacobi's experience of playing Hamlet. Having seen a film of the first rehearsal and the final performance, Jacobi commented that they both looked remarkably similar. So the changes that had occurred were internal to the actor and to the group dynamic. This example can be used as metaphor for drama based training. For when the training companies are aware of the invisible internal changes, then the focus can turn away from trying to elicit evaluation from participants who may not yet be aware of what they have learned, and turn instead to evaluating their own practice. This leads to the second point raised by many of the interviewees; that reflective practice is crucial as an evaluation tool. There was a shared sense that the work was generally popular as it is different, high energy and often fun, so the immediate

response will be positive. This makes it essential for the practitioners themselves to be rigorous and self-critical to maintain the quality of their work.

‘We are always going to get good results because it is good fun. It is us as the practitioners who are delivering this that have to be rigorous, because no-one else will be.’(RS)

The third point addresses what is really required in terms of feedback from participants. Claire Maxwell suggested a challenging way of re-thinking evaluation, which hinges on the difference between training and development:

‘If it’s training and it’s on-going, so it’s one day a week for eight months, all you need at the end of it is *validation* – it’s not evaluation, because you are not necessarily going to change it, but you want to know if it is still OK enough to carry on. But a developmental process, or something that is brand new, you really evaluate it, because you may well change it as a result of that process.’ (CM)

This argument justifies ‘happy sheets’ as adequate for the level of feedback required for one or two day training. Used in tandem with reflective practice, it can provide a useful model of evaluation for drama based training programmes.

Best Practice

The issues of evaluation and best practice are closely linked, and many of the interviewees shared frustration that often bad and damaging experiences of drama based training serve as a deterrent for organisations. With Rachel Griffiths the discussion turned to the idea of a consortium for practitioners. This could provide a forum to discuss elements of practice, and shared experiences – something that could be useful in such a vastly expanding field. However, this is dependent on drama based training companies working together, and seeing themselves as part of a wider movement - and many of them do not. (Moreover, many companies are actively in competition with each other for similar business and are therefore cagey about adopting this kind of unilateral approach.) Another option as the practice grows is to set up an accreditation body, similar to IPD, which could serve as a quality control for prospective clients. Such an idea is looking to the future, and is unlikely to be proposed unless drama based (and perhaps other creative based) training grows a considerable amount. With most of the interviewees the issue of best practice led to discussions about their own rigorous training methodologies for their employees and

specific standards within their companies that ensure that their own practice is consistent and follows their value base.

The Future of Drama Based Training

With all the interviewees there was a mutual sense of drama based training as a developing and expanding field, and all but one shared a similar vision of its future. The divergent vision came from Robin Chandler who looked forward to a time when people development and the skills associated with it would be recognised and valued by a body with as much clout and reputation as IIP. Consequently organisations would begin to value and require experiential training in personal style. This view differed from the others in the specific nature of its vision. The others were arguably more idealistic, but were remarkably similar, both to each other and to the paradigm of an improvising organisation where creativity is recognised as a way of thinking at a strategic, developmental level, and where artists are integral to organisational management. This vision hinges on change – inevitably as to adopt a new paradigm or value base requires just that – and for artists to be included in the process:

‘Getting more into the cultural change of an organisation, and being at the heart of those changes – the resident advisor to the board.’ (RG)

or:

‘Eventually one would like to plant actors in organisations as sort of corporate fools. To sit on the board and reflect the truth.’(JC)

Even:

‘To set up dualistic training on MBA programmes. A drama and business school where the students would do all the acting classes as well as all the academic MBA stuff, and they would develop along these two lines together.’(EH)

These visions tap into a genuine sense of change in some areas of organisational thinking. The implications for this future development will be explored in the next chapter as I discuss all the data and start to form ‘fuzzy generalisations’ (Bassey 1999).

CHAPTER FIVE

‘The Play’s the thing, wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King’(Hamlet II:ii)

Discussion

This chapter will examine some of the emergent themes within the interview data in the context of this research in an attempt to draw some of the issues together.

Emerging from both my reflective practice research and the interviews is a sense of the gap between the existing practice and the vision of the future of drama based training. Another important emergent theme is the difference between those who use drama for training, and those who use it for development. This is crucial and raises the question of whether the terminology surrounding practice should in fact be the same. Does the term ‘drama based training’ accurately describe what is in fact a huge variety of divergent practices with vastly differing visions of future development? Certainly a broader umbrella term could be useful, ‘drama based training for development’, which itself is only a part of the vast term ‘creativity’. This concept of ‘creativity’, as Clare Maxwell pointed out, is laden with values and judgements. In the context of drama there is a distinction to be made between exactly who is being ‘creative’ – the participants or the actors they are watching, and there is perhaps a further debate to be had about how creative is the role of the spectator. Nevertheless, all interviewees are clearly involved in bringing creative practice into organisations, and the means by which they do it does not diminish the creativity itself. This is important, when examining the concept of creativity in the workplace, and brings us back to Foucault and definitions of language and meanings.

In order to begin to place the variety of drama based training practices discussed an axis of experiential learning has been constructed. (Figure 1) It seems an important lack in the field that there is no overview that organisations can view, and select the training method or approach that would suit their training and development needs. The assumption that any use of drama or indeed creative training is the same or even has similar outcomes is shown to be erroneous. If organisations could see and select from the variety of what is on offer, they could start to reflect on what they mean by creativity and want from its use. The horizontal axis focuses on the drama based training perspective along an experiential learning spectrum, moving from training to development where the term training incorporates ‘direct observation’, ‘external’,

‘short time frame’, and development incorporates ‘experiential participation’, ‘internal’ and a ‘longer time frame’. The vertical axis reflects the organisational influence moving from core – where artists or creative activity influences the strategic management, to periphery where the drama is used to train employees.

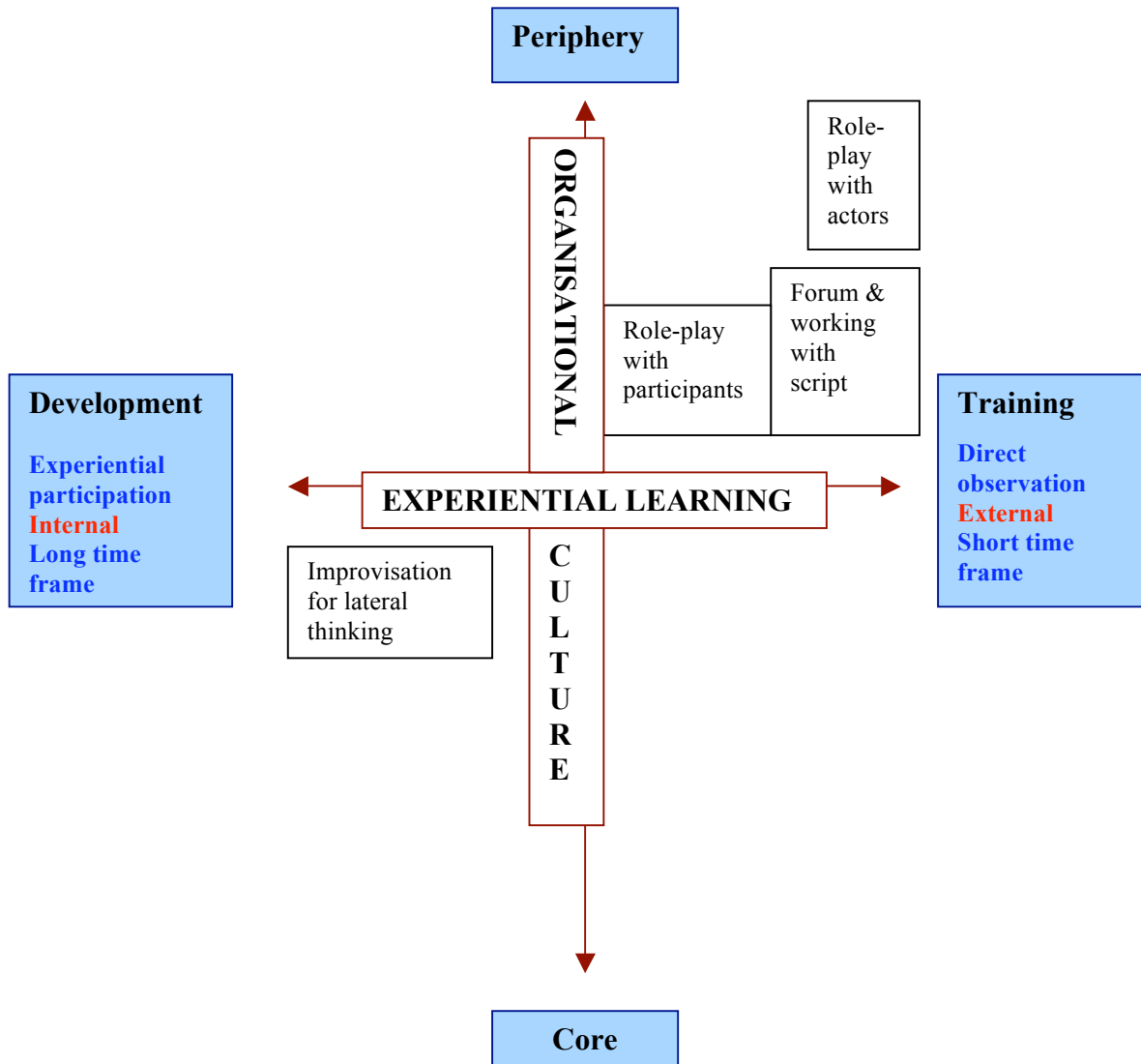


Figure 1: Spectrum of Drama Based Training for Development

I have been deliberately vague about exact placing of the practices, as each varies with the company that is doing it. What is interesting though, is that, despite most practitioners currently occupying a place on this spectrum near the ‘training’ end on the top right, all of them see a future where drama based work (and creativity in general) would begin to cluster and occupy space on the bottom left, moving towards strategic development. It is not a question of either /or. Drama based training has a

clear and well-established place in the training world, and offers high quality training with clearly quantifiable results. There are clearly two levels on which drama based training can operate, and the choice of level rests with the organisation that is selecting the training. The crucial distinction is once again between training and development, which goes beyond learning style and is more about depth of learning. Drama is clearly a tool for effecting change – the choice to be made is whether the focus of that change is internal (to the individuals first, which may then filter into the organisation) or external (with an organisational focus on behaviour at work.) Another important difference is that training has to have clear, relatively inflexible objectives, whereas for development the objectives can be left open. The objective in development can be ‘to explore’ and thus the learning outcome will emerge from the individual journeys within the group and not from a pre-set agenda of what will be discovered. Once again this is a post-modern understanding of the new paradigm in organisations, where the emphasis is on creating the space (and crucially giving the time) to enable people to explore undiscovered territory, with no knowledge of what they will find.

It is interesting to note, that I had anticipated exploring the pros and cons of various methods of practice and evaluating them against each other in order to select a ‘best practice’ model of drama based training tools. One of the findings of this research has been that all the drama based training methods are capable of being effective and useful, and that the best practice is an issue of quality control and generic professional standards. These standards involve practitioners taking responsibility for creating a safe space in which risks can be taken and contained. In an environment where there are no checks on practice, it is important that each practitioner and company takes a reflective approach to their work, in order to minimise the potentially damaging effect of using drama based training carelessly. This is a view held strongly by all the practitioners I interviewed. Rogers offers some clear advice on what the necessary conditions are for creative work in ‘Conditions Fostering Constructive Creativity’ (1961). He claims that creativity is dependent on psychological safety and the psychological freedom of the participant. To achieve this there are three processes:

1. ‘Accepting the individual as of unconditional worth.
2. Providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent.
3. Understanding empathically.’

Rogers claims that there is a peculiar type of freedom that is achieved through being allowed to be creative in these conditions, which echoes the findings of this study:

‘It is a permission to be free, which also means that one is responsible. The individual is as free to be afraid of a new venture as to be eager for it; free to bear the consequences of his mistakes as well as of his achievements.’ (1961: 359)

This permission to fail is vital on two counts. Firstly in order to contain the participants during drama based training who are being encouraged to take risks. Creativity depends upon a free flow of ideas, and Claire Maxwell pointed out that the three major fears of madness, stupidity and rejection are powerful deterrents. Therefore the practitioner has to remove the traditional blocks that so often stifle creativity, such as being given permission to fail in a safe space and in a way that is not humiliating (setting the stakes low). Thus we return to the post-modern concept of space and the essential role that drama based training plays in creating it. Secondly because this sounds remarkably similar to some of the new organisational values of which creativity is growing part. Without this sense of safety the drama based training that provides experiences of being spontaneous and flexible rarely succeeds (indeed it can become irresponsible and counter productive). Interestingly Handy (1997) discusses trust within organisations in a similar vein:

‘An organisation with trust at its core can be both creative and efficient. People work more creatively if they respect the people around them.’

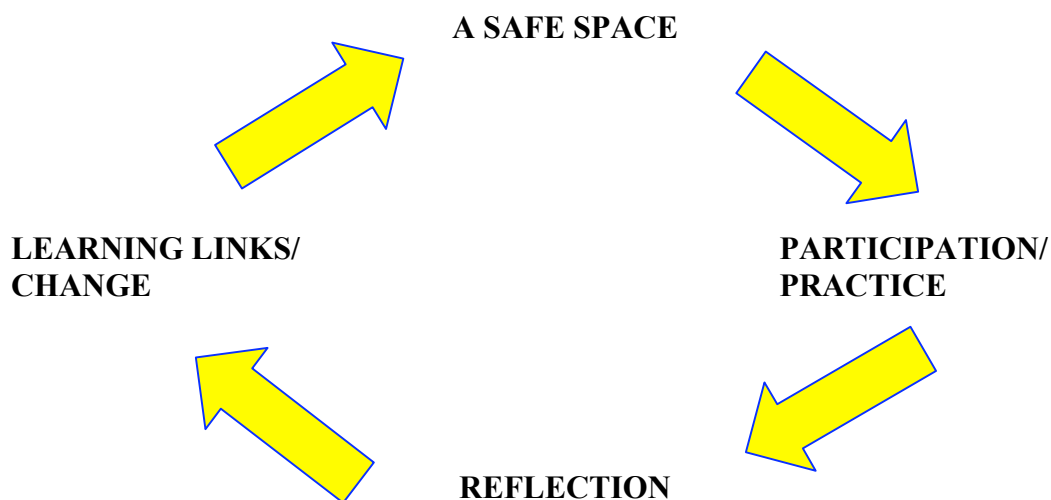
He goes on to outline seven cardinal principles of trust:

1. ‘Trust is not blind
2. Trust needs boundaries
3. Trust requires constant learning
4. Trust is tough
5. Trust needs bonding
6. Trust needs touch; a shared commitment requires personal contact to make the commitment feel real.
7. Trust has to be earned.’

Again, this list provides a comprehensive guide to those conducting creative training involving risk, but by naming it as a desirable *organisational* value, Handy implies that organisations could learn directly from creative processes.

It is possible then, to propose a model of the learning cycle used during drama based training (figure 2) based on the above advice and the findings from this study in an attempt to incorporate the crucial elements of good practice. Although I initially intended this to be a model of ‘best practice’ I have found that the range and variety of practice requires specific standards for each case. I am suggesting it instead as a more generic model for practitioners to place their practice within.

Figure 2: Good Practice Drama Based Training Cycle



Establishing a safe space is a necessary task in order to encourage participation (even vicarious learning). Reflection on the experience is reminiscent of Kolb’s (1974) learning cycle and is crucial as any part of experiential learning. Making the links to the workplace is perhaps the point at which real change or learning can occur, irrespective of whether the learning is training (objective led) or more developmental. Finally, arguably one of the impacts of good training can be the knock on effect of trust returning to the workplace, thus the cycle could become a spiral with each element of practice continuing to influence organisational life at a different level. In doing so, this cycle of practice becomes a way of thinking – once more reminiscent of the concept of creativity as a mind-set discussed in Chapter Two.

Having looked at present practice in its many forms, it is important to turn to the future and to examine the possible shift towards a creative organisational paradigm. How much is this a fantasy and how much a possibility? Amongst the interviewees there was dissension as to whether or not organisations really wanted the kind of creativity offered by drama practitioners, and indeed whether it works at all. One felt that:

‘Using theatrical creativity process as a model - you go in and try and do some work with people, and the more I do it the more removed I get, the more I think, this can’t work. It is impossible because you can’t recreate the same understanding of the process. The more you try the more confused people get, and it becomes such an unsatisfactory process, that I think that it is just impossible, because we don’t mean the same things.’ (EH)

Another questioned whether organisations really wanted deep developmental change: ‘They are not asking for major transformation, they are really not.’ (RC)

Both of these are key points – the first reflecting a caution within the drama based training market itself, the second highlighting that the crucial ingredient for culture change has to be the desire of the organisation. Another view suggested that drama based training had actually gone as far as it is likely to arguing that using actors short circuits deeper learning points – and necessarily so because organisations do not want to risk having a workforce demanding real changes. Again this debate revolves around the difference between training and development. Perhaps it is a mistake to confuse the two – organisations wanting training, as indicated in the views above, do not necessarily want development which does involve making deeper changes.

So is Hirshberg (1998) wrong when he argues that ‘the prime job of an organisation now is creativity’? Are organisations really keen to change? As it stands, it is clear that the client will only change as much as the client wants to change – a significant conundrum facing artists in organisations. ‘Do you have the right to call yourself artistic or creative if you are actually being sponsored to bring about the learning that the organisation wants?’ (RS) This last question raises the issue of who is driving change. Is the paradigm of the improvising organisation the invention of artists, keen to use their skills in business? Not entirely, (the phrase itself was coined by Crossan et.al (1996) who are a management consultancy) and there is evidence that in some areas the arts and business really are enjoying an increasingly growing collaboration,

which is mutually beneficial. A recent survey of eighty-one corporate members of the organisation Arts and Business showed that:

‘Business can derive a wide range of benefits from working with artists. Seventy-two per cent of the respondents said that the partnerships they had forged with arts organisations involved more than one department or business unit, while 37 per cent said that these partnerships had improved collaboration between teams. Forty-five per cent said that working with the arts had raised staff morale and 58 per cent confirmed that it had improved the standing of their business in the community.’ (Pollock 2000)

This indicates that amongst certain sectors of the business world, there is a desire for changing thought patterns and an acceptance of the arts as making a valuable contribution. However, is it the contribution that artists want to make? How far are organisations prepared to go, and how many share the vision of the interviewees that there is a place for artists at a strategic level to influence real change? This is an area for future research, but there are real indications that some organisations are taking the concept of creativity seriously. Many businesses have a resident artist, and Cranfield University School of Management has the Praxis Centre for Developing Personal Effectiveness that runs ‘Mythodrama’ – a drama based training programme at the Globe Theatre. It is significant that such an influential management school clearly values the concept of creativity:

‘Organisations are turning to the emerging field of arts-based training to give their managers the competitive edge in an increasingly unpredictable business world’ (Cranfield University publicity 2001)

It is unsurprising perhaps, that this boundary between real and meaningful change and training does keep becoming blurred when using drama based training. For the potential, and in many cases, design of the practice is to provide challenge in order to bring about change – therefore to stop at the acquisition of skills will inevitably become frustrating. If employing a drama based training company for one day sessions is as wacky and creative as an organisation is prepared to get, it is perhaps worth asking the question, are they really being creative at all? The answer to this question lies in further research – returning to Foucault, the very concept of creativity is debatable, and clearly relative. However as the drama based training movement expands and develops, so will its impact, and if it continues to grow in tandem with

new models in organisational thinking, as Robbie Swales suggested it is feasible that the visions of greater developmental input and influence could be realised.

Looking again at the cross section of practice on figure 1, there is a clear distinction between drama based training companies that bring in actors to be creative *for* organisations, and those practitioners who encourage employees within companies to be creative. But the third scenario – and the one which follows the model of an improvising organisation, could be one in which the drama based training companies engage the organisations themselves in the creative processes. So that, for example companies, instead of researching and writing scripts to fit the context and training needs of a company, could lead a team of senior managers who write and research it with them. They are engaging in the creative processes, and have a developmental learning experience, whilst writing the training material which could be used at another level within the organisation. If the future development of drama based work really is moving towards a re-framed, creative concept of organisational thinking, then it has real potential to move into long term developmental consultancy. The conundrum for drama based training companies at present is that the market-led model of their work wants the training that they currently offer, and the organisational change model requires development. As the environment shifts and changes, there is the potential for drama based training to inhabit all the spaces proposed in figure 1. If organisations really are prepared to re-frame their thinking and approach business in more creative ways, then they could begin to realise exactly how vast the scope is for using drama based training and development from the boardroom down.

CONCLUSION

‘Be Bloody, Bold and Resolute’ (Macbeth IV:i)

This research has examined the existing uses of drama based training within organisations and has looked at areas of benefits and difficulties within the practice. It has attempted to locate drama-based training within the theoretical context both of organisational thinking about creativity and models for experiential adult learning. The research used reflective practice as a methodology, in order to describe and locate benefits and difficulties, and to examine some of the philosophy and thinking behind the use of drama as a training tool. These discoveries were useful as they provided a framework in which to conduct the interviews with other practitioners and a means by which to explore some of the more complex issues of using drama based training with other professionals. It emerged that drama based training can be seen in various ways. Firstly as a training methodology, secondly as method of bringing about change in a developmental way and thirdly as part of a movement that brings creativity and creative thinking into organisational culture.

By approaching the research methods as an interpretative researcher, this research has been placed within a reflective paradigm, with an emphasis on the discursive rather than the scientific. Reflective research is by its very nature a subjective methodology and has value in exploring existing practice, but could be restrictive if the research were to continue to look to the future. In this case, more quantitative data could be useful in order to present a feasibility study for the growth and potential for drama based training in organisations. Equally, by selecting existing drama based training practitioners for interview, this research has been exploring practice within a particular paradigm – one that values creativity at its core. This has been very fruitful and relevant to this research in its aim to examine the benefits and difficulties of using drama based training in organisations. Using qualitative research methods has given me the opportunity to really immerse myself in the themes and issues arising from genuinely exploratory discussions. However, to gain a fuller and more balanced view, further research within organisations could be helpful, and this could also be of a more quantitative nature. At the start of this dissertation I invoked a research methodology that would accommodate questing for the not known, risk taking, and the subversive challenge of looking beyond what already exists. Such ‘action

research' (Scott & Usher 1999) has indeed meant that I have been a 'boundary-dweller and border crosser' (1999:40). Thus the research methodology has given me the flexibility to explore new territory, which has seemed appropriate in such a dynamic and emerging field of practice. The next stage of research would probably need to be however, more pragmatic in its mapping of the territory.

This research set out to explore drama based training in the present; what the current theories and practice are. What emerged was a view of a diverse collection of practitioners and companies who are working with some shared ideologies and some ideas and methods singular to their own practice. The practitioners do not necessarily see themselves as part of the same movement therefore, but those within organisations seeking to bring creativity into business certainly do. By setting drama based training within some of the current trends in organisational thought, the current practice and the future potential seemed a long way away from each other. In assessing the future of drama based training and development therefore, this research has only scratched the surface of some of the many complex issues surrounding what may emerge, as organisational thinking begins to marry itself with creative thinking. There are many areas for future research. One would look at organisational cultural change and the implementation and feasibility of the 'improvising organisation' paradigm. Where creative culture meets organisational culture, what really happens? Another area for research is around the concept of creativity itself. What does it mean for organisations, and do people mean the same thing when they talk about it? A thorough discourse analysis could be useful and an assessment of terminology to ascertain and unpack what organisations mean when they discuss value laden issues such as 'creativity' and 'innovation'. A further area for research could look at using drama based training with different client groups. How does practice change to adapt to different cultural settings, and what is the difference in learning style and depth of learning. The axis of figure 1, could become a 3-D model to accommodate various client groups, moving from corporate to disenfranchised client groups. This research has not looked at the variety of adult client groups in detail, nor fully explored what happens when tools for socio-political change (such as Forum Theatre) are de-contextualised and used for other means.

The variety of ways in which drama can be used for both training, development and organisational thinking have been explored in this dissertation. The range of practice and approaches has made it difficult to construct specific guidelines for practice. However, generic themes have emerged which made it possible to propose a cycle of good practice. These focus on creating a safe space, in containing participants and removing blocks to creativity. This means making sure that the genuine fears that participants might have of humiliation in front of colleagues for example, are addressed not ignored. Reflective practice both for practitioners and participants has been identified as a crucial check on practice and as a key to learning. Examples of this are found in Chapter Three. Finally the issue of evaluation has been addressed, and it has been suggested that the evaluation of one day training programmes depends in part on validation from participants, and on individual reflective practice. More detailed evaluation from participants is only needed if the work is ongoing and developmental.

Exploring the benefits and difficulties within drama based training has revealed many of the complex issues facing practitioners using a high-risk creative training methodology. An intricate balance needs to be struck every time drama meets organisational culture, and this involves a constant re-negotiation of style and delivery. Thus the use of post-modern terminology and models suggested at the start of this research can provide a language and a paradigm within which to operate such a constantly changing practice. Turning again to another powerful metaphor for practice - chaos theory – it can be suggested that every time a drama based training company enters an organisation, the outcomes are uncertain and unpredictable. The ‘collision’ between the practitioners and participants is always various, and dependent on the group dynamic created. Given the correct conditions this creative coalition can lead to profound results.

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Appendix

1. Agenda for Collaborative Discussions

**2. Transcript of Interview with Robbie Swales of
Steps Role-Play**

Appendix 1:

Agenda for Collaborative Enquiry

These questions are intended as a springboard for discussion. I have based them on a series of observations and reflections that I have made about my personal practice. I am exploring the benefits and difficulties of using drama in training. (The 'why, what, how, where and when' of using drama methodologies in a training environment.)

1. Establishing a common ground:

What are your definitions of drama-based training?

What is your client base?

What types of drama do you generally use in training?

2. Why Drama?

What is it about drama that you feel lends itself to the training environment?

Why use it at all in training?

3. Practice:

In my practice I have found that warm ups serve essential functions as icebreakers and nerve smoothers. However, participants are often too self-conscious for them. Perhaps it is a truism that learning and development comes about when participants take a risk, but until they do, it won't. How do you create the safe space and trust needed for drama based work with non-actors, some of whom may be hostile to the idea?

Often the training that has the most impact is the hardest to quantify and assess.

Do you experience this as a problem?

Possible strategies for addressing this:

- Generic list of benefits from working with drama.
- Evaluation sessions after training has finished. (Especially for longer-term training projects.)

Clearly there are times when using drama in training is inappropriate, but there are also times when I have been asked to come into what I call a 'corporate stranglehold' environment. What are your strategies for breaking through this?

Following on from that, my experience is that unless participants have actively signed up to taking part in a drama based workshop, they will be hard to pull in. Do you think that using actors in forum and role-play situations is the optimum solution?

4. Marketing: How to sell drama-based training.

In my experience, practitioners using drama will all speak of its impact and learning potential, and cite many examples of its success. However, in the hard, objectives led training environment this can be hard to sell. How do you balance integrity of your work with the (very real) demands of the market?

Are there aspects of drama based training that you would like to work with but feel restricted to? How flexible are your clients to different creative experiences?

I like to focus much more on process led exploratory days where the experience, exploration and discussion are the crucial ingredients. This can be hard unless participants are completely comfortable with the idea (not always easy when a lot of corporate training is mandatory), and when the outcomes are so hard to quantify. I usually adapt and include objectives and learning points that are sometimes in my mind secondary to the real, deeper learning. Is this something that you share?

5. The future development of drama as a training tool:

In your experience, are more people accepting the 'different' training methods, and willing to experiment more (especially at management levels where the key competencies themselves are less tangible.)

If this is so, are people more or less willing to believe practitioners who advocate the use of drama and its effectiveness for deep seated learning?

How would you like to see the field develop?

6. Best Practice:

Sort of implicit in all the above questions is the issue of best practice, and I accept that every training professional will have their own standard. What do you expect from quality drama based training? Do you think that your clients have a similar view?

Appendix 2:

Transcript Interview with Robbie Swales – Steps Role-Play

13/02/01

RH: I am conducting these interviews in the spirit of a collaborative enquiry, based on my reflective practice...

Start with a definitions base: what are your definitions of drama based training?

RS: For me it means the use of a skilled, sophisticated, professional actor. Now you ask the question of course, I realise it doesn't have to, but I think it does.

RH: Why do you say that?

RS: Because I am so wrapped up in transferring professional acting skills into training. We only employ professional actors. So immediately I realise that my definition is extremely narrow, because of course if you use drama as the basis for professional training you wouldn't need to have professional actors and it would still be drama based training.

RH: Why did you come across that as your definition? Was that because you were an actor and transferred your skills to training, or because you tried lots of methods and decided that this was the most successful one?

RS: The former, because I can't do any other training. I am a professional actor and had been one for twenty-two years when I started doing role-play at Guys Hospital for medical students. I realised that it was great experiential training. I was also at the time looking around for another string to my bow, as most professional actors do most of the time – who haven't hit the big time. I had done some Forum theatre, but realised straight away that it was a more marketable business selling one actor into a role-play situation, than to sell an organisation the concept of an interactive Forum theatre piece. So it was a business decision at first. Then we did extend it into what we call a 'Forum Workshop', so I am only interested in training using sophisticated, skilled acting skills in combination with good facilitation skills. If you combine the ability to improvise and take on role with some good facilitation skills you've got a pretty powerful dynamic to run a lively session.

RH: Yes, and having been an actor doing role-play I would say that it is much more satisfying doing a job which involves both. So do your actors do the feedback and facilitation, or do you have a separate trainer for that?

RS: It depends on the programme, but on the lowest level, for example for the assessment centre at the Royal College of Anaesthetists there will be no feedback, they just go in, play a patient and leave. There may be a little bit of written feedback to the examiner from us as a company. Then you get on to a development centre, for example at Roffey Park we supply role-players for a programme called, 'Harnessing the positive power of Conflict'. It's a 3-day course, and on day two we send actors who are given a role on the spot by the participant, who describes the behaviour and personality type. They do the role-play and then we give them feedback, through a very rigorous process, where we ask the participant what they did well, we ask

observers to comment, and then the role-player feeds back. Then we ask what could they have done differently – as an organisation all our role-players if they are asked to feedback, are told to do it in that way.

RH: And that's a formula that you have evolved is it?

RS: No, I think it's called Pendleton Rules. He was a doctor who evolved it in another context, but it is an established methodology – all to do with putting the affirmation in first. Our discovery is that a lot of trainers are hopeless at giving feedback, and our actors sit there and know how to be much more sensitive and constructive than some trainers.

RH: I came into training having done lots of drama workshops as a professional actor going into different settings before the show. A lot of my training skills I honed while directing and running Shakespeare workshops, where it is essential to keep people's confidence up whilst providing them with helpful comments so that they can move on.

RS: Would you use acting while training? You yourself go into role in some way to facilitate a session?

RH: Not really no. I'd be very careful of that, unless there was another trainer in the room because I think that someone's got to contain the group. I think there is a lot about containment that is needed when using creative methodologies. I might as an anecdotal example, if I was introducing an idea or concept, but I wouldn't as a sole trader do that.

RS: But are you interested in using drama alongside your facilitation and training skills?

RH: I'm interested in exploring what works, by using drama. As a freelancer I have come at it in an ad hoc way really. I've used pretty much every technique in the book; I've run days where I use improvisation and process based drama techniques, like in a rehearsal. I've worked as an actor doing role-play. I've worked as an actor/facilitator where I do scenes and then facilitate discussion around those scenes.

RS: But who does the scenes, the participants?

RH: No, in that situation it was actors. I've worked where the participants do the role-play, and I've worked in Forum in two ways. Firstly where actors do the Forum and you glean suggestions from the audience, and I've used Forum where the participants create the scene and stand in to the action where they want to see it change. And across that spectrum – clearly that is not all within a business setting, everything I've done has obviously been accommodated to fit the client group I am working with, and the culture. Part of what I'm looking at is how the client group and the culture effects and modifies practice, whether or not you have to compromise, how you compromise what you want to do for the client culture, (if you do), and also what I perceive to be bad practice. What I am trying to locate in this huge mire which could all be called drama based training, and there are practitioners using all of those,

what do I personally perceive to be best practice, for each of those fields, but also to be honest, looking for a direction for myself how I want to develop within the field.

Discussion about BOAL – in town next week – Forum background.

RS: Yesterday we worked for HM Treasury. We had Sir Andrew Turnbull, the first secretary – Gordon Brown’s right hand man and we did an hour and a quarter around diversity skills. It was great because we were due on for forty-five minutes. We had said that it wasn’t really long enough to let what we do breathe, because we do the scenarios and go out in role (using the Forum technique) – and we’d been going for fifty minutes, and I said we would draw what we can out of this scenario and then wind down and stop for lunch. And the woman who contracted us, the head of training came round and said, ‘Sir Andrew wants you to carry on it doesn’t matter about lunch!’ So we carried on.

RH: Great! So, in terms of best practice, how have you evolved your own concept of best practice? Because there are a lot of practitioners in the field and yet no clear standard which means it is hard to prevent, or even monitor who is doing what and how well.

RS: Very good question. It is one of the reasons that I am going to see other practitioners myself as part of my own MSc, because I don’t know. The reason we believe we have succeeded is because we believe in honesty and we believe in a set of values. Now that’s serendipity that Richard and Janet and I ended up running a company together – well maybe it isn’t if you want to get into some of the new physics of organisational development and post modernism and synchronicity!

Ref: Joseph Duwarski’s book on Synchronicity. So there’s a whole lot of stuff there. But personally what I did was when I realised it was something I’d like to work in as a business, I can’t see any point in doing it unless I do it with honesty and passion – and the other directors are exactly the same. My personal path was that I enrolled at Greenwich university to do a Cert. Ed., so that between 1991 – 4 which was when we started the business (1992) I was going to college one day a week. So I was being given best practice concepts around education and training, but as it was a vocational degree, I would write units about role-playing for Lloyds TSB, what was going on, what everyone was getting out of it etc. So there’s a self-administered attempt at best practice by sharing our understanding of what we’re doing, and by having a moral sense of what you can’t do. For example, a guy rings up the office from the Sunday Times, and asks for an actor to go around GP clinics in North London with the symptoms of cancer. So I asked if it was training for doctors, but it wasn’t, they wanted an actor to pretend to be really ill so they could attempt to see how many diagnoses they would get. So we refused point blank – we will not go into a situation unless it is training and the participant knows that we are actors who will try to help them draw and learn from that experience. So ego-centric actors are no good to us – they have got to understand that their skills are there to provide a service to enable someone to come about with some experiential learning for themselves. So I think it gets back to the fact that we as a company have a strong sense of value.

Ref: De Capo – Forum Company in Denmark Preband Fries?? (cross ref: Claire Maxwell)

There are other practitioners, for example Andrew Bagluley who runs ‘Role-play for training’. He shares our sense of values and we work in alliance and share a lot of

actors. And he is extremely conscientious and customer focused. And there are other people who I won't mention who I wouldn't want to have anything to do with!

RH: There are a lot of people in the field aren't there, and it's about knowing your product maybe, knowing exactly what you do. You come across people – a bit like me in the past – which do a bit of everything, and that is not very helpful perhaps. If you are very clear about what you do, and then you've got a value base from which to work.

RS: Another thing about best practice, is that for me, I feel I need to interact with people to check my sense of reality, and this in sense relates to best practice. In that sense I'm a post-modernist. I go to church but I would say I'm an existential Christian – this gets back to values – the Jesus story is the value, and whether or not it is true or not doesn't matter to me, we live with our myths. And if that's a myth that helps you make your life work better, then that's fine. So in terms of best practice I try to check my sense of reality against other peoples, and to me that's the only way you can reach best practice. It's not a Holy Grail – it's practitioners saying, 'what are you doing and how?' (And we haven't done enough of it, but it's an emergent field.)

RH: And it's exciting, that's part of what I find so exciting about this field and the people within it because we are all searching to find a way of working. And there's no right way, or one way. (I'm a post-modernist too) For me so much of what is done is about creating the right space – the space of possibility. A model that I came across from my reflective thinking informs where I came from with acting and where I come from in training. When you are acting you are neither yourself nor the character, but you are aware of both and notionally existing in between those realities, and you are neither one thing nor another but in the sense you are encompassing both. When you are learning experientially that is in part what can happen – that in a state of heightened reality and total absorption you are neither in a position where you know what you know or what you are learning but you are moving in between the two.

RS: Is that during the course of the training session that you might be in this space?

RH: In some training sessions you can set up a situation where people are prepared to suspend themselves (as happens when involved in any creative act in which one is immersed). In a training session you can experience it – I don't think it is essential for the success of the session, it depends on what the training is and what kind of learning it is. If a non-actor gets to a position where they are suddenly acting for the first time, the exhilaration of that might fit my model. If you are in a training session and you are watching actors and you are engaged with them, then the learning is different – equally as valid, but not the same thing in the post-modern frame work.

RS: It's interesting when you were describing when you go into role and there's this mid-way point, one thing that I've discovered about myself is that I am quite facile as an actor, which is why I feel blessed in what I am doing now. Because I just do it, and I don't think about it. All I think about in training when I am using my acting is what the issue is and what I am trying to draw out from the audience. In a sense when I train my actors to deliver this training, I say to them, 'Forget about the acting, you're only here because I know you can do that already. But when you are in

a room running a Forum workshop, it's the issues that should interest you, and the going out into the audience and drawing out the answers from them.' When I train them, they start an impro and I am trying to find a point where they stop and go out to the audience and say, 'I don't know what to do, what shall I say now?' And they just carry on acting. And of course they are enjoying improvising with the other actor, and I have to say, 'You can do that we know, but your job is to serve the audience in a different way.'

RH: And use acting in a completely different way.

RS: Yes and they found it a shock. One actor came in here and said, 'I've just got to get the whole rehearsal process of rehearsing for a play out of my head, because this isn't it, it's all immediate and responsive.'

RH: What about marketing. How do you marry the culture of the places you go into with what you are offering? You obviously go into high-powered places, are you perceived as wacky? Do you have to persuade people to accept your methodologies or do you have to accommodate their style within your own? Do you have to compromise, and if so how?

RS: Our first brochure says on it 'no luvvies here', because we wanted to appear to be business like, and on the stand at the HRD we would always wear suits and be corporate. And Matthew De Launch who's head of training at Pryce Waterhouse Cooper who was one of our very first clients, said to us in the early days, 'You're actors, you don't want to appear like business people surely. If what you are offering is acting, I am only going to buy you because you are actors, I am not buying you because you are corporate. So maybe you should be wackier!' That was interesting advice and I'll always remember that conversation, and funnily enough I am working for PWC and I am going to be a mediaeval knight! They are having a training day with all their in-house trainers, in a day when they get together to throw ideas around and three of us are dressing up as knights and they've got to sell us mobile phones and we won't know what on earth it is. So it's about selling something when the buyer has no concept of what it does. So here are PWC and the guy who's employing us used to be a TV producer of 'The Highway', and his remit is to liven the place up. It's interesting that whole arena around how you present yourself. I think that in the early days we just supplied role-players to enhance existing programmes, and we so enhanced them that they felt comfortable with us. And you have to gradually get into organisations. Some of our clients have been using us for six or seven years now, so we don't have to prove the case anymore. But in a sense I am interested in how far you can push all that. Because there is a theory out there which is that the prime job of an organisation now is creativity. It's the only way to stay in the market place.

Ref: Hirshberg, Jerry (1999) *The Creative Priority: Putting innovation to work in your business* Penguin

The job of an artist is to help people to re-frame the context in which they see their world – that a great painting, or piece of writing, or performance, if it works on you makes you re-frame your perceptions. And we do that in a minuscule way in an hour and half session, but I am the slave of my client, and I'm not going to do anything to upset my client. So there is another piece of work to be done about do you have the

right to call yourself artistic or creative if you are actually being sponsored to bring about the learning that that organisation wants?

RH: Well you are using a creative methodology, but yes I can see that. Are your sessions always an hour and a half then, do you ever run longer training?

RS: Yes we write one-day courses, I wrote a facilitations course for District Audit for sixty people by five actors. It was a completely wonderful success.

RH: How do you evaluate what you do? Are you under pressure to evaluate what you do?

RS: We get the Happy Sheets in!

RH: Yes, but apart from them – or as well as them?

RS: You're right; we should go in in six months time and ask for some more evaluation to see if the training then, actually worked.

RH: I'm coming at it from the point of view where I've got a hunch which is that at the end of the day you've got the happy sheets, which usually at the end of a good drama based training will be good, because everyone is exhilarated and excited and has had a nice time. But my hunch is that there is a lot deeper learning process that is going on, that drama based training specifically gets to – perhaps more than other trainings, which is almost intangible - because it is experiential and usually involves empathy or some sort of emotional involvement.

RS: Well emotional learning we would say is a deeper learning.

RH: Yes, and if you've watched a scene, and you have really got wound up with the protagonist, or have felt sad, happy etc, or even if you have taken part in a role-play which has gone well and therefore you have had to take a risk...you may feel that the learning is more profound.

RS: Well there's a whole issue around that. Yesterday's training on HM Treasury; they are all very smart, intelligent people – the country's top statisticians. And originally we were told, 'Do you think this will work, this drama based training because they are very intelligent people!'

And I went to the national audit office and again they said the same thing – and my response is just, 'I'll give you your money back if it doesn't work!'

And what happened yesterday in this arena with all these intelligent people was this. We were doing a role-play about gender. About a female going to her boss and saying, 'I'm not on the team, I don't understand why I'm not on the team.' Now he hasn't put her on the team because his client is all male and he's colluding – he doesn't want to upset his internal client, so he hasn't put any women on the team, so he has discriminated against her, but he can't tell her that. But it was interesting because she was going into the role-play and then going out to the audience and asking them, 'How am I going to unpack this? Because I think that there is some discrimination going on.' And they kept saying, 'Ask for the evidence.' But nobody

said, 'Well tell him how you feel.' Because in our methodology the audience tell the actor what to do. But nobody, throughout the whole session explored feeling.

RH: And did someone point that out to them? So do you have an external facilitator?

RS: Well in this particular case no. It's interesting because our methodology only draws out as far as that audience can go at that time. It's a form of team learning, because every time anyone comes up with a suggestion it's therefore being shared by the whole group and then we act it out so it's being revealed to the whole group. And in a sense our methodology supports emergent learning. Yesterday, after we had done three scenes one on race, one on gender and one on Oxbridge snobbery, one of the participants said, 'I've seen this, but none of the scenarios reached a satisfactory conclusion, so I think that maybe it is best to leave it all where it is.' Which was alright, because at least he's said it, so everybody in the group heard him say that, which in a sense is more honest – so honest perhaps that he might now start exploring it. One of the women in the group then said, 'Well maybe they weren't satisfactory, but that's alright, you'd started some sort of dialogue going, and in some cases you did talk about your feelings, and that's what we've got to keep on working at.' So what it brought up was the head heart split in the group itself.

RH: And that sounds very appropriate for equal opportunities issues, because in many cases there are no neat solutions, about behaviours and unspoken agendas.

RS: What we do on many occasions is go straight into the shadow side of an organisation.

RH: Consciously?

RS: Well as soon as we come out and enact these scenarios and then face the audience and say, 'Tell me what to do'; because we are in role they can be honest to me without it being threatening. So we are immediately releasing people's ability to talk openly, because of course they are only talking about a fictitious situation and character.

RH: So do you always have your actors who perform this scene and then approach the audience directly?

RS: That's what we call our Forum Workshop. It's a derivative of Forum Theatre and it is marketable and easy. Two actors turn up to run a three hour session, and we can do any issue – appraisal skills, upward assertion, assertion, feedback with feeling – you just play the scenario and one of the actors goes out. We have honed it down to one actor only going out, and the other says nothing, because we are saying to the audience – 'how am I going to get through to this person?', so they can't work on this person other than through this actor here, so they have to tell him/her what to do. And then sometimes, for example yesterday, we would hot seat the other actor. So back to the gender scene, when the actress was getting no-where in challenging this boss, we decided to hot seat the boss, which gave the audience direct access to his brain. So someone in the audience asked him, 'Why hasn't she got the job?' and he replied, 'Well she's a woman.' So they heard his inner thoughts, after which we then went

back into the role-play and instructed the audience now they knew what he was thinking, to direct the female characters' questioning to see if she could change anything.

RH: So, how do you see drama based training developing? Where do you think it will go?

RS: It'll expand over the next fifteen or twenty years, and then they'll all get sick of it and find something else!

RH: Do you think it is just a flavour of the month trend then?

RS: No, we're going to build a bigger organisation here. There are two big things going on in organisational development. There's the acceptance of the importance of people's emotions in the work place that they have to be valued and honoured and understood. They've now identified that the culture of an organisation is only based on behaviour and relationships. So if you want to work on the culture, there's no point coming in with all the intellectual stuff, you've got to work on the behaviours. So, who takes on behaviours so we can see what they look like? Actors – and for me, that's the key. So you can explore in a safe environment, how we might adapt our behaviours, because you cannot force anybody to change their behaviour, but you might persuade them. Organisations have to be creative, then there is a lot of work to be done around that. We booked the HMS Belfast last October and put on a 'Creativity for Development' day, and we were there with two musicians, two story tellers and Peter Feroz who does art all in organisations. I think it will be a burgeoning area, because organisations have to be flexible, they have to be creative, innovative, and we can in some way help them towards that. And the key thing is, helping people to think in different ways – we try to re-frame experience.

RH: How do you think you do that?

RS: In drama, what happens in a Forum Workshop is that you enact a scenario and it is theatre. So you have to go back to why does theatre work, in a sense. Here's my understanding of why theatre works. Being a human being is so unbelievably complex that you have to put some benchmarks down for yourself. And we get onto Irving Goffman a bit with his 'Presentation of Everyday Life', where we have our roles – some more intense than others. Whether one acknowledges that or not, the reason drama works is you're taking a bit of life, and I don't have to emotionally feel all the feelings, I can empathise. I think that is why drama works because we are interested to see something being played out, and once we know it's drama we are prepared to suspend our disbelief and get involved.

RH: So people can identify emotionally with somebody they don't have to invest in. But using drama in a training environment is different, because we are saying, 'We firmly believe, not just that drama and theatre are enjoyable and you can empathise etc. but that it actually is a force for change, and that it is something that can enlighten, or instigate change.' Does this always work do you think?

RS: Going back to what you say about happy sheets, one thing I've identified is that we are always going to get good results because it's good fun, but I as the practitioner who is delivering this has to be the rigorous one, because nobody else is

going to be. And this goes back to best practice. I know that the happy sheets are going to be great because they've had a good day and there have been actors there – and we use a lot of comedy to ensure that what we do is accessible and appealing. So I've got to say, 'Yes, but are we doing what we really should be doing.' I think that one of the proofs would be going in six months later and assessing the change or impact (and we haven't really done that.) I am doing a lot of work in Wales at the moment with doctors on appraisal skills and I think I will have the opportunity to monitor that more closely because they've all got to deliver their appraisals, and I can get some feedback by asking them whether they felt the training assisted them in their ability to deliver the appraisal.

RH: From my experience of trainings, some of the most valuable things that I have learned have come from key moments – almost sense memories, which I can recall later and I carry with me. In a similar way perhaps to a memory of a great moment in a production that may continue to inspire me in different ways. But this is intangible and certainly unquantifiable – exactly what it is that I have taken from these experiences. But perhaps that is enough, and I think that with the evaluation issue I am caught between wanting to say, 'Yes this works and this is why it works' and the other part of me that thinks, 'It works because people are affected by it, and how can we ever quantify that, and why do we feel we have to?'

RS: Well it's the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. For me I think that a lot of our work is successful because of us and our contacts – it is all in the relationships and that's what the new paradigm of organisational development talks about. Life is self-organising. I am trying to have a bit more faith that as an organisational developer there are bits that you can try and change and there is stuff that you have to leave to self organise.

Ref: 'The Simpler Way' – Margaret Wheatley.

RH: Yes, it is interesting you talking about the prospect of someone taking over Steps, because part of what I perceive to be happening, is that people are talking about creativity but they don't know what it means. And people are cottoning on to the fact that drama based training can make money – and use it rather carelessly. So it is growing in a rather haphazard way, and then there are people who are leading the field – such as you. And one of my concerns is that within this growth there is no concept of a standard of practice, and of practitioners who are just jumping on the bandwagon but not concerned with the work itself.

RS: Well we always sensed that that was going to happen, and once actors realised that it could make money...

RH: And is that a danger to established practitioners?

RS: We don't think so, our client list is so long and established that our work largely self-perpetuates.

RH: So we are back to what you were saying about personalities, because the work does depend on the practitioners starting from a value base and an ethical sense of

what they are doing, and of what the learning might mean, and that's where I am coming from as an actor/facilitator.

RS: Interestingly we are beginning to be used as a consultant as much as anything, and people come to us for advice on how best to use drama based training. We've done enough work now to call ourselves a drama based training consultancy and we put programmes together for people. We have seven full time employees and 160 actors on our books. One of our problems is that all our actors are freelance and many of them work for other role-play agencies and then get identified with them, so it makes it hard for us to build a corporate identity. So the difference has to be in the front-end stuff – in how we present ourselves and offer the original consultancy.

RH: Well you can't employ all the 162 actors on your books.

RS: But we could employ a core team of actors. One of the transferable skills that experienced actors offer is a combination of passion and resilience, which is very important in difficult training situations. That's a quantifiable asset, which comes from emotional learning, because as actors we are used to taking knocks, being rejected, and still coming back for more because we believe in what we do.

RH: Yes, that ability to get up in the morning after yet another rejection and still believe in what you are doing, and that it can and will work – and that is a great strength, especially in the business world.

Ref: Guy Claxton 'Wise up' all about learning – emotional learning etc.

Another skill good actors have is this ability to not be too precious about their work, and come up with idea after idea after idea until the right one comes along, without taking it personally.