

**How do I create a living theory of
leadership development for
e-learning as an explanation of
educational influence in improving
training practice?**

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partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Leadership, like so many issues, is in the relationships. Leadership is not leading out, leading to, leading from – like power, it does not exist as a ‘thing’. Leadership is what people do in relation with one another. We can develop theories of leadership by offering explanations of how we influence the quality of learning for others. This is most effectively done by sharing our own learning and inviting a creative response. This is also the process of education, the kind of relationship that encourages people to develop mutually respectful autonomy.

(McNiff 2000, p.218)

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Abstract

How do I create a living theory of leadership development for e-learning as an explanation of educational influence in improving training practice?

Yvonne Emmett

In this thesis I outline my living theory (Whitehead 1989) of leadership development for e-learning as an explanation of educational influence in improving training practice. This proceeds from a four-year action research self-study of my professional development as a civil servant in the context of my participation in the Professional Doctorate in Education (Leadership) programme at Dublin City University.

The study involved a systematic enquiry into the development of my knowledge and practice as I addressed myself to the question: ‘how do I integrate my studies in the field of educational leadership research with my work as a civil servant in order to improve it?’ In this manner the study bridges the theory-practice gap, exploring the nature of professional development through reflection on the actions undertaken to interrogate theoretical and conceptual ideas from study within training practice and vice versa, and on how new knowledge was produced through this dynamic interplay.

The study also develops conceptual understanding about the nature of e-learning as an *educational* leadership issue in the context of three action research cycles in which I tried to support training colleagues to explore the educational potential of information and communications technologies for the development of their practice. This represents a lacuna in the research literature, which has largely treated e-learning in instrumental terms, as an issue of technical innovation or top-down strategy.

My claim to knowledge is that I can explain the nature of my professional development and my educational influence in my own learning. The originality of this contribution lies in how I re-conceptualise leadership development for e-learning as an epistemology of professional development in which ontological values are transformed into living standards of accountability. Potential significance lies in its contribution to the development of a knowledge base of practice for training and development.

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List of Abbreviations

ARieL	Action Research in e-Learning
CBT	Computer-based Training
DeLF	Developing an e-Learning Framework
DCU	Dublin City University
DBG	Delivering Better Government
Ed.D.	Doctor of Education
EOLAS	Electronic Online Learning Accessible Services
HEO	Higher Executive Officer
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
SMI	Strategic Management Initiative
SPS	Senior Public Service

Prologue

In his account of the history of human fascination with mountains and of their impact on the psyche, Robert MacFarlane (2003, p.57) observes that advances in geology in the nineteenth century disturbed many: *“There was a widespread feeling that geology, like other sciences, had in some way displaced humanity.”*

It seems to me that this feeling has a parallel in present day dissatisfaction with the increasing technologisation of our lives. We may be knowledge workers but we are experiencing information overload. We may live in a globally, connected age but we increasingly feel disconnected. Thus, re-writing MacFarlane one might say:

Not everybody, it should be said, is exhilarated by the advance of information and communications technologies in the twenty-first century. There is a widespread feeling that technology is in some ways displacing humanity.

I appreciate the concerns of colleagues in my organisation who recognise the potential of e-learning to displace the humanity of the face-to-face encounter of the classroom. However, I do not accept this as a given, nor do I accept as a given the presumed humanity of classroom training, which in my experience tends to a deficit view of the employee and presumes to impose a one-size-fits-all curriculum with instrumental aims. I appreciate the insights of Senge (1992) who argues that learning is fundamental to organisational renewal and adaptive capacity and should be fostered at every level of an organisation, and Argyris and Schön (1974) who argue that this must be ‘double-loop learning’, which

continually questions the very assumptions that underpin practices. Moreover, I appreciate the insights of McNiff (2000) who makes a moral and ethical connection between these ideas and the realisation of values of justice, freedom and democracy in the workplace through collaborative action research.

As a result of my own educational experiences I have come to value the potential of new forms of information and communications technologies (ICT) to compensate for the limitations of the training classroom, to make training more educational by increasing opportunities for significant personal and organisational learning through dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection on what we are doing in organisational life and why we are doing it – improving learning for improving action. However, I also recognise that this potential may only be realised if these are the sorts of values underpinning use, so that it is used in educational ways. We may continue to experience technologies as dehumanising if the values that underpin their development and use are not specifically humanising, and the standards of accountability for their use are imposed in terms of managerial targets or performance measures. E-learning, like other technological developments, is always suspended between different possibilities, making it a scene of organisational struggle (Feenberg 1991; Selwyn 2007; Friesen 2008) in terms of whose values count and consequently a leadership issue, for as Hodgkinson (1991, p.11) observes: *“If there are no value conflicts then there is no need for leadership”*.

Chapter One – Introduction: *What was my concern?*

1.1. Introduction

Barnett (2000b) highlights a shift in epistemologies in the twenty-first century from knowing-in-theory to knowing-in-action. This is perhaps one reason for the emergence and growth of professional doctorates, which Lee et al. (2000) argue are in the business of producing new kinds of knowledge and knowers – professionals with formal research skills and contextual understandings and dispositions, who can undertake advanced workplace research. Despite this growth there has been limited exploration of how these kinds of knowledge and knowers are ‘produced’ and how, for example, such knowers might struggle to take up position within the field of educational leadership (Gunter 2001).

In this dissertation I account for a four-year self-study of my professional development as a student on a Professional Doctorate in Education (Leadership) (Ed.D.) programme as I undertook action research in my workplace. In this chapter I explain the nature and aims of the research, the questions it sought to answer, and the ‘knowledge provinces’ that it occupies (Gunter and Ribbins 2002, 2003). I also briefly discuss the originality and significance of the study.

1.2. Research Focus

My research bridges two boundary contexts that I found myself negotiating: my full-time professional context as a Higher Executive Officer (HEO) in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners (hereafter referred to as the Revenue Commissioners); and my part-time educational context as a student on the Ed.D. programme at Dublin City University (DCU) (see Appendix A). It began with the question: ‘how do I integrate my studies in the field of educational leadership and research with my work as a civil servant in order to improve it?’ It aimed to develop conceptual understanding of e-learning as a leadership issue in the context of action, which was aimed at influencing training colleagues to explore the educational potential of ICT for the development of their practice. Through the research process I aimed to generate my living theory (Whitehead 1989) of leadership development for e-learning, as an explanation of my educational influence in my own professional development, comprising the descriptions, explanations and analyses that I offer as I explain how I hold myself accountable for what I do (McNiff and Whitehead 2009).

1.3. Rationale

I value the potential of ICT to improve access to training and development, and to make it more educational in the sense of increasing opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection on what we are doing within organisational life and why we are doing it – improving learning for improved action. However, I experienced the negation of this value in my organisational

context, which had hardly engaged with the idea of e-learning beyond the use of computer-based training (CBT) packages, which were in no sense dialogical. This was the object of action – influencing the use of ICT for dialogic collaborative learning (Farren 2005). Concurrently, the object of knowledge lay in clarifying the nature of e-learning as an *educational* leadership issue. This represents a lacuna in the research literature which has largely treated e-learning in instrumental terms, as an issue of technical innovation or as an issue for top-down strategy (see for example: Jones and O’Shea 2004; Sharpe et al. 2006; Luckin et. al 2006).

The study extended my commitment to understanding the nature of my own professional development, building directly on previous research undertaken as part of the M.Sc. in Education and Training Management (e-Learning) at DCU between 2006 and 2007. This was concerned both with integrating my studies in e-learning with my then practice as a Training Officer, and with finding ways to share my learning with training colleagues in order to increase opportunities for professional development. In addressing these concerns I introduced a number of them to e-learning for the first time in 2007 as part of a six-week online trainer professional development course (see Emmett 2007).

The enquiry incorporates a pilot study undertaken during 2009 as an assignment within the taught component of the Ed.D. programme as a first action research cycle. Within this cycle I worked directly with three trainer

colleagues in the Revenue Commissioners' Training Branch as part of what was authorised as a 'proof of concept for distance learning', supporting them to adapt two training programmes for delivery using videoconferencing and the online learning environment, Moodle (<http://moodle.org>). My experience of the pilot was that trainers found it relatively easy to use Moodle at a technical level, however, they were challenged to consider how and even why they should use it at a pedagogical one. It also became apparent to me that training personnel tended to equate e-learning with electronic delivery of content rather than with extending opportunities for communication. It struck me that they were conceptualising e-learning as a deterministic 'thing' that was 'less effective than face-to-face training', rather than exploring it as relational practice, that is, exploring how they could exercise agency in the way they used ICT, and how achieving effective interaction with trainees requires it to be used in communicative ways.

It is on this basis and on the basis of the other experiences that I describe and explain through this thesis that I saw the development of a living theory of leadership development for e-learning as having educational rather than instrumental concerns. I realised that it should, in Gunter and Ribbins' (2003, p.263) terms, "*be intrinsically educative*", creating a space for trainers to approach e-learning as a site of struggle (Bourdieu 1990), to identify the normative influences on training practice, to clarify their own values for use of

ICT, and especially to collaborate in the use and production of leadership knowledge for e-learning (Gunter 2001).

1.4. Research Questions

My enquiry can be seen to embody three interrelated research questions:

What is the nature of my educational and professional development?

This is explained through reflection on the actions undertaken to interrogate theoretical and conceptual understandings within practice, and how new knowledge was produced through this dynamic interplay.

What is the nature of the challenge experienced by training personnel confronted by e-learning as a disruption to their practice?

This knowledge was developed through the intersubjective experiences of training personnel as we engaged in action, and through reflection on that action and our relationships, as well as the normative influences on thinking and action.

What is the nature of e-learning as a leadership development issue?

This understanding was progressively developed through reflections on the experiences of participants in counterpoint with my own and with insights from the literature, informing my ongoing action.

1.5. Research Aims

The research aims crossed several of the ‘knowledge provinces’ of educational leadership research identified by Gunter and Ribbins (2002, 2003), being concerned with:

- Conceptual clarification as to the nature of e-learning as an educational leadership issue; and re-conceptualisation of e-learning as relational practice (conceptual research);
- Providing a description of actions taken to integrate educational leadership and research studies with my practice and to influence training personnel to explore the potential of ICT for the development of their practice (descriptive research);
- Gathering and theorising from my own experience and the experiences of the participants involved with me in these actions (humanistic research);
- Exploring critical perspectives on leadership and technology; identifying the normative influences on organisational practice, including leadership discourses, and challenging the common sense, instrumental view of e-learning (critical research);
- Clarifying the educational values motivating my own action and encouraging participants to clarify their own values for use of ICT in e-learning (axiological research);
- Evaluating my professional development (evaluative research).

1.6. Re-framing Accountability - Bringing My Educational Values to Work

Accountability is a significant theme in contemporary leadership discourse, especially as it relates to public service. Consequently, it has been an important theme in this self-study of my professional development as a civil servant.

Through the Ed.D. programme, in particular Module ES 604 Research-Based Educational Leadership, I came to reflect on the influence of this discourse on civil service structures, policies and practices, especially for training and development. This is evidenced in Chapter Two, where I reflect on the normative influences of my professional context on the development of practice.

I understand the need for accountability, especially within public service; however, I question the validity of imposed quantitative targets, which tend to be inimical to creativity and innovation, and especially to democratic renewal. I do not wish to leave my citizenship behind within the organisation, nor the values which give my life meaning. Like Biesta (2004, p.250) I see a need to *“reclaim the political dimension of accountability ... as taking responsibility for that which is of common concern”*. Also, like Whitehead (2002), I insist on the right to participate in the creation of my own self-set values-based standards for my practice, values which I believe carry hope for transformative learning and democratic renewal within organisations (McNiff 2000). I am

accountable for these standards in the explanation I offer through this research account of learning how to live my values more fully in my practice.

The values-based standards that I set for my practice-based research I describe as authenticity and connectedness. These are influenced by Farren's (2005) 'pedagogy of the unique through a web of betweenness', and reflect the fundamental dialectic I experience between self and other within organisational life. They incorporate a growing understanding, influenced by the ideas of Buber (1923) and Arendt (1958) that we can only become self-knowing subjects in dialogic action, where we engage with the 'otherness' of the other and recognise it as part of ourselves.

Authenticity as an ontological standard is central to existential psychology and signifies genuineness or authorship, such that authentic living is concerned with choosing to act in ways that accord with the values one recognises as worthwhile (van Deurzen 2002). Our authenticity is always at risk from social pressures, such as the pressure to conform within organisational life to a set of corporate values. As a standard for my practice, authenticity contains a commitment to originality of mind, which will be evident in my research account in my explanation of how I have come to reframe my practice in terms of my educational values. Authenticity also rests on a foundation of natality (Arendt 1958), that is, the realisation that each being is entirely singular and that we are only alike in the sense that we are all different. This carries

implications for training practice: individuals must be allowed to ‘intervene in the curriculum’, that is, to respond in their own unique ways to the opportunities that it presents (Biesta 2006) and live their own authentic lives. If we recognise each being as singular then we must also recognise that each individual’s learning proceeds in an entirely distinctive context, informed by their unique experiences, knowledge and values. A ‘pedagogy of the unique’, argues Farren (2005), represents a commitment to a democratic process that provides opportunities for the individual to take responsibility for their own learning. My research account will show how in my work I tried to provide opportunities for training personnel to take responsibility for their own learning.

While I believe that individual learning always proceeds in a distinctive context, I also believe that this is a fundamentally social process, always occurring in relationship with others (Vygotsky 1978). Connectedness as an ontological standard reflects my belief that ICT can increase opportunities for meaningful dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection on what we are doing and why we are doing it. I believe that these processes are fundamental to organisational learning – connecting individual learning to collective learning for social and democratic renewal. My research account will show that the direction of my work has been towards influencing the use of ICT to support dialogically collaborative learning (Farren 2005). This standard also reflects my commitment to working in more educationally relational ways. This is

evident in the attention I have paid to creating new opportunities to learn in relationship with my colleagues so that I could share my learning about e-learning with them and in the process they could teach me about educational leadership.

In articulating these standards in terms of what I claim to know, that is, my claim to know my professional development and educational influence, these ontological standards become epistemological standards which can be used to test the validity of my living theory of leadership development for e-learning.

1.7. E-Learning Form of Representation

Habermas' (1987, p.2) social criteria for the validation of knowledge claims include comprehensibility, that is, the requirement that one presents the claims for research in a form that can be understood:

The speaker must choose a comprehensible expression so that the speaker and hearer can understand one another.

This, argues Whitehead and McNiff (2006) has implications for democratic evaluation processes, which include validating and legitimising research claims, and is an issue I explored as a professional practice problem within my third and final action research cycle during 2011-2012 (see Chapter Seven). In that cycle I engaged with the irony of presenting ideas about e-learning in the traditional dissertation form (O'Neill 2008), which remains the printed word (Whitehead 2005). I also engaged with the problem that academic formats

present to accessibility for a wider professional audience, including my own co-workers and practitioners in other contexts. Addressing these concerns and resolving the contradiction between my espoused values for dialogic collaborative use of ICT and the practice of using a purely printed form required that I engage with multimedia forms of representation to support e-learning. This resulted in the development of a website to accompany the dissertation (see <http://webofenquiry.org/moodle>), influenced by the ideas of Eisner (1993, 1997) and Whitehead (2005), as well as the example of O'Neill (2008).

Two ideas, in particular, are pertinent to understanding the development. Firstly, there is the idea expressed by Eisner (1993) that different forms of representation make different kinds of experiences possible, which in turn lead to different forms of understanding. Thus representation, the transformation of the contents of consciousness into a public form, which can be “*stabilized, inspected, edited and shared with others*” (ibid., p.6), carries a meaning both constrained and enabled by the form of representation used. An implication, subsequently developed, is that alternative forms of data representation can enhance our understanding of complex educational phenomena (Eisner 1997). It is this latter point which underpins the second key idea as elaborated by Whitehead (2005, p.82), that is, that video, for example, can help us to clarify our embodied values by providing visual records of the practice in which our

values are expressed, a process which, he argues, is impossible to show through text alone.

Following Eisner's (1993, p.7) logic that poetic meaning and understanding requires poetic forms I would say that it is a similar case with e-learning. In developing the website I have re-presented the thoughts, ideas and insights developed in this text as e-learning forms to advance 'e-learning meaning and understanding'. I also use the website to share artefacts developed as part my action research work as records of practice containing the expression of educational values. In line with valuing the potential of ICT to increase access to education and training I am making these artefacts available for re-use as open educational resources under a Creative Commons licence (<http://creativecommons.org>).

1.8. Originality and Significance

I believe that my research makes an original contribution to educational knowledge, developing new insights about the nature of e-learning as a leadership development issue from critical engagement with the disparate literatures of leadership and e-learning and with the socio-historical influences on training practice. Its originality also lies in the unique constellation of ontological values that act as explanatory principles for my educational influence, allowing me to re-conceptualise leadership development for e-

learning as an epistemology of professional development for training practice, comprising a living form of accountability.

I believe that this carries significance at a number of levels. Firstly, it has direct significance for education and training practitioners approaching e-learning as a disruption to practice within imposed performance-based accountability frameworks. Secondly, it carries significance for organisations seeking to develop e-learning practices in which education and training practitioners are employed. Thirdly, it carries significance for universities and other educational institutions engaged in supporting the professional development of these practitioners. Finally, it carries significance for those engaged in educational research in terms of how these subjectivities, relationships and processes may be understood, and how this knowledge may be represented.

1.9. Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter Two is concerned with the educational and professional contexts in which this study is situated. It contributes to explaining my professional development by showing how, as part of my studies and research, I have engaged in an examination of the historical, political and socio-cultural influences on my professional development, and indeed on the professional development of the training personnel with whom I worked through three cycles of action research. It also shows how I engaged in examining the

personal experiences and commitments that motivate discovery and validation (Polanyi 1967).

Chapter Three is concerned with elaborating the conceptual framework underpinning this enquiry. It shows how, through the doctoral programme, I have engaged with the substantive literature, interrogated it from the base of practice and integrated key insights into the development of my living theory. In particular the chapter shows how I developed ‘epistemological curiosity’ (Freire 1998) with regard to the nature of leadership, and the nature of e-learning as an educational leadership issue.

Chapter Four is concerned with explaining the methodological framework underpinning my claim to educational knowledge. It shows how I have engaged with the philosophical and practical issues that ground research design and the generation of different types of educational knowledge. In it I discuss and justify the living theory approach to action research that I adopted for this study as consistent with my ontological and epistemological understandings, and with my research question. I also explain how data was collected and analysed throughout the study, and how issues of ethics and validity have been addressed.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven I show how educational knowledge was developed through three action research cycles in which embodied educational

values emerged and were clarified as explanatory principles for the actions described. The individual chapters show how knowledge and practice was developed incrementally, with each action-reflection cycle building on the previous and responding to changed circumstances. This began in Cycle One (Chapter Five) as I supported three training colleagues to experiment for the first time with the use of videoconferencing and an online learning environment to facilitate distance learning. This helped me to understand the nature of the challenge experienced by trainers confronted by e-learning as a disruption to practice, which underpinned my work in Cycle Two (Chapter Six) in developing and facilitating a professional development programme for eight trainers. In turn, the experience of supporting trainers to undertake their own e-learning development projects as part of the programme helped me to understand the nature of the top-down support environment required to sustain this bottom-up innovation. This knowledge underpinned my work in Cycle Three (Chapter Seven) as I supported a team of five training personnel to develop a managerial, administrative and technical support framework and strategy for e-learning in the Revenue Commissioners, and to identify and address their own development needs in the process. Concurrently, I reflected on the challenge I experienced throughout to communicate my developing theoretical and conceptual understandings to colleagues, which underpinned the development of a website to accompany the thesis.

In Chapter Eight I summarise the claim to knowledge, which is concerned with the nature of educational influence in the development of professional practice, that is, in my own learning. I explain how the educational values that were clarified by study are transformed into epistemological standards of judgement, which can be used to judge the validity of the explanations offered. I also discuss the contribution that my knowledge claim makes to the development of a knowledge base of practice for training and development.

Chapter Two – Research Contexts: *Why was I concerned?*

... my story arrives belatedly, missing some of the constitutive beginning and the preconditions of the life it seeks to narrate. This means that my narrative begins in media res, when many things have already taken place to make me and my story possible in language. (Butler 2005, p.39)

2.1. Introduction

For Levinas (1989) responsibility for the other is part of our human constitution that precedes consciousness: the other calls us into question and we come into being in our singular response. Drawing on Levinas' ethics of responsibility, Biesta (2006) invites us to consider learning as response – as reaction to being called into question by what disturbs us. He (Biesta 2003) sees that Levinas is not providing us with any answers that we can apply to practice but is calling us into question and inviting us to respond within the dialogical space that he opens up. In this chapter I try to 'respond responsibly' to several summonses that have challenged me, in which response, I hope, is evidenced much learning. These include the idea that action research must include dialectical critique with regard to one's present position and mode of thinking (McNiff and Whitehead 2009), and the idea that all acts of knowing are charged with personal commitments which arise from one's experiences (Polanyi 1958). In particular, I respond to Butler's (2005) caution that in giving accounts of ourselves the 'I' cannot fully know the social conditions of its emergence - its pre-history, and to her idea, which follows, that the basis for ethics must, therefore, include social and political critique:

If the 'I' is not at one with moral norms, this means only that the subject must deliberate upon these norms, and that part of deliberation will entail a critical understanding of their social genesis and meaning. (ibid., p.8)

My account of professional development is inscribed by other accounts, and other spatial-temporalities, including global processes of economic, social and cultural change in what has variously been described as late, liquid or second modernity in influential accounts by Giddens (1991), Bauman (2000) and Beck (2000). It is also inscribed by accounts of the 'Network Society' (Castells 1996) and transformations aligned to the spread of networked, digital ICTs. Within these meta-narratives another account is given of the influence of neoliberalism on economic policies worldwide since the 1970s (see for example, Harvey 2005), and another of the related influence of 'New Public Management' (NPM) on public administration since the 1980s (see for example, Hood 1995), especially on managerialist reforms in the Irish public service since 1994. Both of these narratives come together in the account of the 'Audit Society' and the dysfunctional effect of an 'explosion' in bureaucratic monitoring through audit, evaluation and inspection (Power 1997). There is also the more recent and still unfolding account of a global financial crisis nominally beginning with the crash of Lehman Brothers in the U.S. in 2008 and having drastic consequences in the Irish context for public finances and expenditure on public services, with knock-on effects for the positioning of those, like me, working in the public service. And there is the account linking all of these - the account of training as a set of position-practices (Giddens

1984) within the organisational field of Human Resource Management (HRM), which is central to understanding what was actually possible in action research in this context at this time and contributes to understanding how subjectivity is constituted in the professional field.

I begin by reflecting on the trajectory of my professional development in the period preceding entry to doctoral studies, that is, in the period from 1992 to 2008. Thereafter, I reflect on the context-for-action in my action research self-study, including the macro and meso influences on field practices, with reference, first of all, to developments in the Irish public service as a whole, and thereafter to developments in the organisational field of HRM, both of which impact on training practice. This analysis is influenced by critical management studies, which question the assumptions and relevance of mainstream management thinking and practice (Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Alvesson et al. 2009), and the practice theories of Foucault and Bourdieu, which help us understand the interplay between individual agency and social structures (the patterned social arrangements that both enable and constrain action, including language, institutions and norms). This is crucial, I think, to understanding how the actions of my colleagues and myself are related to the structural features of the context in which we come to be professionally (Elliott 2010).

2.2. Biographical Note – Professional Development 1992-2008

Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) practice theory includes the concept of the field as the social site, structured by principles of domination, in which individual actors (agents) take up positions in a struggle for distinction, and the concept of habitus as one's positioning or learned disposition to act, which emerges through relation to the social conditions that one moves through. To understand, he argues "*is first of all to understand the field with which and against which one has been formed*" (Bourdieu 2007, p.4). In this note I try to develop an understanding of my own habitus and of the field in which I have been professionally formed.

My professional context is that of the Irish Civil Service, a Whitehall-style system inherited by the Irish Free State from Britain in 1922 (Millar and McKeivitt 2000). This follows a politico-bureaucratic model characterised by Page (2010) as having a number of distinctive features, including political neutrality, a generalist cadre, and life-long career paths. This was distinguished by the OECD (2008) as following a 'classical career-based model' with restrictions on external recruitment to specific grades through competitive examinations and progression 'through the ranks'. This model, Page (2010) notes, has been challenged *inter alia* by new HRM practices. However, these were the conditions that prevailed when I joined in 1992 at the then lowest entry grade of Clerical Assistant, a grade at which many women entered

(Public Appointments Service 2007) and which was later abolished in 1997, with post-holders re-graded as Clerical Officers.

The completion of doctoral studies then, also marks the completion of twenty years of public service, the last ten at the management grade of HEO in the Revenue Commissioners, moving through the organisational domains of ICT, HRM (training) and, most recently, Corporate Governance (internal audit).

Figure 1 illustrates the current grade structure in the Civil Service and Table 1 my own career path during this period, a period characterised by top-down ‘reforms’ (see section 2.3) and rapid technological change, including the explosion in personal and networked computing and the growth of the Internet, which has been constructed as a digital or information revolution comparable to the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century in terms of its wide-reaching effects (Castells 1996; Stevenson 2010). Of course, I experienced this revolution in a much smaller way such as when the first personal computer arrived in the office in 1995 and I began teaching myself word processing at lunch times. However, I am certain that these developments exercised an influence on the path my professional development has taken and on the personal commitments underpinning this research.

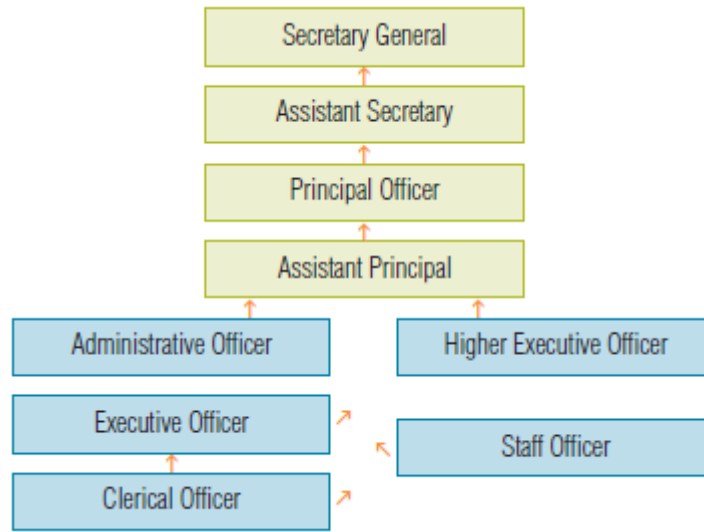


Figure 1: Career Structure in the Irish Civil Service (Public Appointments Service 2007, p.11)

Table 1: Career progression 1992-2012

Period	Grade	Department/Office	Domain
1992 to 1997	Clerical Assistant	Department of Social Welfare	Administration
1997 to 1999	Clerical Officer	Department of Social Welfare/ Social, Community and Family Affairs	Administration
1999 to 2000	Executive Officer	Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs	Administration
2000 to 2001	Executive Officer/ Junior Systems Analyst	Revenue Commissioners	ICT
2001 to 2004	HEO/ Systems Analyst	Revenue Commissioners	ICT
2004 to 2009	HEO/ Training Officer	Revenue Commissioners	HRM
2009 to date	HEO/ Internal Auditor	Revenue Commissioners	Corporate Governance

Of course, agents belong to multiple fields simultaneously (Hodkinson et al. 2008) and my account of professional development also entails an account of my experiences of higher education (see Table 2). These have all been as a part-time student, enabled by the ‘Refund of Fees Scheme’ that operates in the Civil Service under Department of Finance guidelines. This provides financial support to staff, within the limitations of the overall training budget for each department, to undertake approved professional, technical or third level qualifications deemed relevant to the work of that department. Thus in 1996 I was able to enrol on the Diploma in Information Systems in Trinity College Dublin, a decision sparked both by my nascent interest in the possibilities that personal computing presented, and by a strong sense of ‘lack’. This sense could be described in Bourdieusian terms as being about a lack of cultural capital as an impediment to career development (Bourdieu 1986), but it was also about the idea of a higher education as an internal good (Warde 2004).

Table 2: Higher Education in Professional Development 1992-2012

Period	Programme	Institution
1996 to 1999	Diploma in Information Systems	University of Dublin, Trinity College
2000 to 2002	B.Sc. in Information Systems	University of Dublin, Trinity College
2004	Certificate in Training and Further Education	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
2005	Certificate in Assistive Technology	Enable Ireland / Dublin Institute of Technology
2005 to 2007	M.Sc. in Education and Training Management (eLearning)	DCU
2008 to date	Professional Doctorate in Education	DCU
2011	Certificate in Audit Studies	Institute of Public Administration

The Diploma/B.Sc. programme was I suppose a conventional undergraduate experience with a large student cohort, teaching through formal lectures, and assessment primarily on the basis of performance at end-of-year written exams. I would say at this time that my view of learning was reinforced by the teaching approach taken, thus I saw learning as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, something that exists prior to the act of learning (Biesta 2006). I make sense of this in relation to Postman and Weingartner's (1971, p.30) observation that "*the critical content of any learning experience is the method or process through which it occurs*". It was not until carrying out the research for my undergraduate thesis that I saw myself as a producer of knowledge in my own right, examining accessibility issues in relation to the attainment of the European Computer Driving Licence by people with learning difficulties (Emmett 2002).

In 2000 I moved to the Revenue Commissioners, which is Ireland's tax and customs administration. My educational experiences and qualifications did, I suppose, play a factor in my appointment here as a systems analyst and my subsequent promotion to the grade of HEO in 2001. Ultimately, however, the experience of working in the ICT domain was less than satisfactory, the tasks rarely offering the sense of autonomy, creativity and achievement that programming projects had provided during study. That ICT work could feel

intensely creative (Pacey 1983), however, was an experiential understanding I later carried into my action research work with training personnel.

In 2004 I moved to the organisational domain of HRM, taking up a position as a Training Officer into which I carried my interest and experiences with ICT and began thinking about the possibilities for e-learning, which was then organisationally limited to CBT. At this point I was making extensive use of the Internet to support my enquiries. It was also in this context, in the position of presenting computing knowledge for the other to acquire that I began to question my ideas about learning and in particular the trainer-trainee dualism that positioned me as expert and the other as novice. I was sure that whatever I knew, I was always learning and that in no sense could the act of training, that is to say presenting information, be equated with the act of learning. In hindsight I locate part of the problem with the ‘Train-the-Trainer’ training I had received, which employed what Reddy (1979) describes as the conduit metaphor of communication to posit a view of training as involving the encoding and delivery of messages rather than the sharing and interpretation of meaning (Vanderstraeten and Biesta 2006).

Again, it was both my nascent interest in e-learning and a sense of lack – this time a lack of pedagogy – that led me to enrol on the M.Sc. in Education and Training Management (eLearning) programme at DCU, an experience which had a transformational effect on my thinking and practice. In particular,

because of the distinctive teaching approach (see Farren 2009), I came to realise the singular context in which each person's learning occurs at the intersection of their unique experiences and values and the relational dynamic in which they are captured. I came to see learning, not as acquisition (Biesta 2006) but as dialogic and collaborative, and to see the possibilities that ICT presented for the co-construction of knowledge. These are understandings I have been trying to share in the Revenue Commissioners through my action research work with training personnel since 2006.

The Revenue Commissioner's mobility policy encourages staff movement after five years and in 2009 I moved from training to the organisational domain of Corporate Governance, taking up a position as an Internal Auditor. Clearly this move affected the trajectory of my action research, the possibilities for action but it also provided rich grounds for critical reflection on training practice. The move coincided with the second year of the Ed.D. programme and *inter alia* Module ES604 Research-Based Educational Leadership, during which I undertook case study research into the system of evaluation of training and development used in the Irish Civil Service (see Appendix B). Influenced by Power's (1997) work on the practice of audit in dialogue with my experience of internal audit and training evaluation I began to deconstruct training as a disciplinary practice (Garrick and Solomon 1997).

2.3. Reform? Whose Form?

Intra-organisation relations in civil service departments are, as elsewhere, embedded in hierarchy (Duberley and Johnson 2009), despite the “*appealing invocation of ostensibly de-politicized programmatic rhetoric of ‘partnership’*” (Alvesson et al. 2009, p.16). This is assumed to be natural or at least unavoidable so that change initiatives are expected to flow top-down, exacerbating “*the agency problem*” (Child 2009, p.507). In this and the next sections I reflect on the rolling programme of top-down reforms since 1994 that came to be called the ‘Public Service Modernisation Programme’. In particular, I reflect on more recent developments during the period 2008-2012 – the period covering doctoral studies – as shaping the context-for-action in this action research study, which can be seen as an enquiry into the possibilities for agency and bottom-up innovation. In a very real way these constituted the social conditions for professional development. I also reflect briefly on how, what Gunter (2001) calls knowledge production work, has been used to legitimate particular positions and positioning, and on how, in particular, the ‘leadership’ signifier is employed (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003b) to reinforce an individualistic, binary template of leader-follower(s) (Gronn 2000). This coincides with Foucault’s (1980) ideas about the power/knowledge nexus, which contributes to the apperception of reform as a discursive formation that limits what can be seen and said. The analysis reflects my growing anxiety about performativity in working life and the domination of social relations by an instrumental rationality and economism that deny our constitutive

vulnerability and the centrality of love, care and solidarity work to human flourishing (Lynch et al. 2007).

In February 1994, less than two years after taking up my first civil service post, a Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) for the public service was launched, an initiative which Hardiman (2010) describes as bottom-up. By this she means that it was developed by senior civil servants without consistent political direction, however, viewed from within the civil service it was certainly a top-down initiative, reflecting the managerial interests of those at the head of departments. The initiative was necessary suggest Wallis and McLoughlin (2010), because the adoption of a more quasi-corporatist approach to policy from 1987 through ‘social partnership’ had in effect dispensed with the ‘indispensability myth’ on which this group had relied. Thus a new ‘potentiality myth’ was required, which in SMI took the form of a ‘modernisation myth’ (ibid.), that effectively recognised a ‘Co-ordinating Group’ of Departmental Secretaries as the primary suppliers of the ‘transformational leadership’ required to advance it (Wallis and Goldfinch 2010).

Such power relations shape discursive practices, which rely on knowledge that is intimately bound up with considerations of power and control (Foucault 1980) and the transformational leadership models on which this group drew constituted a functionalist “*knowledge for management*” (Alvesson et al. 2009,

p.4), prescribing strategies to deliver organisational outcomes (Gunter 2001) and doing important signification work. These emerged contemporaneous with the growing influence of neo-liberal economic thought and the doctrine of NPM, and traded on a narrative of “*environmental uncertainty and instability*” (Storey 2004b, p.16) as well as a new binary distinction between management as being about predictability and control and leadership as being about adaptive capacity (see for example, Yukl 2002). The reform discourse was also shaped by the knowledge work produced by a group of Assistant Secretaries participating in the M.Sc. (Strategic Management – Public Sector) programme at Trinity College Dublin, who visited New Zealand and Australia as high intensity adopters of NPM ideas (Byrne et al. 1994). Theoretical underpinnings for the group’s dissertation, which informed the Delivering Better Government (DBG) framework (Department of An Taoiseach 1996), drew selectively on aspects of public choice theory, agency theory, transaction cost analysis, managerialism and NPM. This and other legitimating intellectual work produced by supra-national bodies, the government-funded Committee for Public Management Research and a range of private sector consultancies is dominated by neo-positivist understandings, which are rarely made explicit or reflexively critiqued but ultimately “*concerned with the operation and enhancement of managerial control*” (Deetz 1992, p.21).

Changes in the public service in the period to 2008 roughly coincide with Ireland’s so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ period of rapid economic growth. These

changes are summarised in Appendix C and included a range of new performance measurement and monitoring mechanisms. Additionally, in my own organisation, there was a major restructuring in 2003, which saw *inter alia* the dismantling of separate specialist streams for customs and tax staff and staff re-deployment with under-explored implications for the dissipation of knowledge and skills, intensified by a civil service programme of decentralisation announced later the same year. Internal hierarchy also changed in this period, with an increasing proportion of civil service staff at higher grades (Hardiman and MacCarthaigh 2009).

Changes from 2008 stem in part from the publication of a much heralded review of the Irish public service by the OECD. This benchmarking report, commissioned by government, also drew significantly on the leadership signifier – invoking it approximately 80 times as being central to “*supporting and driving a renewed reform agenda*” (OECD 2008, p.14) that includes increased open recruitment and greater ‘internal labour market flexibility’. It also recommended the creation of an elite leadership cadre – the Senior Public Service (SPS) - which is now in place. On foot of the OECD review, a working group was tasked with drawing up an action plan for implementation of the OECD recommendations, published as the ‘Transforming Public Services Report’ in November 2008 (Department of An Taoiseach 2008a). By this time, however, Ireland was facing a banking crisis and a collapse in the public

finances for which government strategy included, as McDonough and Dundon (2010, p.558) put it:

... a comprehensive and generous rescue of the banks and their bondholders, and the establishment of fiscal rectitude through deep cuts in spending.

In this context there has been a renewed attachment to reform as a discursive resource, drawing on a chain of equivalences (duGay 1996a) that includes 'customer service', 'delivery', 'channels', 'quality', 'innovation', 'flexibility' and 'high performance'. While social partnership was abandoned as the government unilaterally imposed pay cuts across the public service, a sectoral agreement – the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Department of Finance 2010) - was subsequently reached, with a tentative commitment to avoid further pay cuts or redundancies on condition of the implementation of a wide range of cost cutting measures. A new government elected in 2011 announced itself to be 'a reforming government' (Howlin 2011) and established a new Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to oversee the implementation of the Public Service Agreement and the Public Service Reform Plan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011a) through the SPS. Reform at this point is explicitly about rationalisation, with numbers in the public service as a whole being reduced by 37,500 by 2015 (a reduction of almost 12% from 2008). Leadership in this context, as it is invoked, is top-down and technological.

2.4. The HRM Field

Steffy and Grimes (1992, p.181) describe HRM as the “*strategic and tactical actions undertaken by organisations to manage its employees*” by regulating the ‘internal labour market’. Alongside leadership and strategy, HRM has emerged as an important signifier in the discourse of public service reform in Ireland, reflecting an international, though North-American originating, trend in the “*transmogrification of personnel into “human resource management”*” (Townley 1994, p.ix), which Keenoy (2009) links to the spread of neoliberal ideas and in particular to global capital’s demand for increasingly flexible, mobile labour. While its analytic priority is the managerial problem of improving employee performativity (ibid.), its symbolic power lies in its capacity to escape the traditional association of personnel practices with procedural control and to secure higher levels of commitment and involvement by promoting the “*mutuality’ of goals, influence, rewards and responsibility, which are said to produce benefits in terms of productivity and individual development*” (Thompson and McHugh 2002, p.332). It replaces a pluralist framing of issues with a unitary one (Keenoy 2009) and enacts a more individualistic employment relationship (Thompson and McHugh 2002).

HRM entered the public service lexicon later in Ireland than elsewhere, emerging with DBG, in which the Co-ordinating Group of Secretaries declared an intention to ‘modernise’ the personnel function through ‘a-typical recruitment’ and by introducing a performance measurement and management

process. In the OECD Review, Transforming Public Services Report and the Public Service Reform Plan, commitment to HRM as a ‘key enabler’ of change is again renewed, for example:

Increased levels of flexibility, mobility and staff development are enabled through a strengthened HRM capability to put into practice the processes required to implement the Task Force’s recommendations. (Department of An Taoiseach 2008a, p.29)

Townley (1993, p.518) argues that HRM can best be understood as both “*a discourse and set of practices that attempt to reduce the indeterminacy involved in the employment contract*”. She draws on Foucault’s conceptual tools of governmentality and disciplinary power to explore how the HRM field of position-practices constitutes a matrix of technologies that aim to make employees’ behaviour more predictable, calculable and governable, practices which are shaped by the ontological curriculum of biologically-oriented personnel/organisational psychology that makes a science of the individual (Steffy and Grimes 1992). In the context-for-action these technologies include: (1) the competency framework; (2) the performance appraisal; and (3) training and development (discussed in Section 2.5), which coincide in the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) introduced in 2000 as part of SMI/DBG. This was a knowledge product of consultants, which Steffy and Grimes (1992) say frequently mediate knowledge and practice in the field. Following Townley (1994), we may understand it as a matrix exercising disciplinary power on the employee by making her knowable in particular ways, rankable within the organisation, and amenable to interventions that will make her more self-disciplining. My anxiety, which I will return to in later

chapters, is about how this structures training practice and the possibilities for the development of dialogic forms of e-learning.

Competency frameworks constitute a taxonomic form of knowledge that exercise power by inscribing the behaviours that are desirable in employees and using this knowledge as the basis for recruitment and selection, appraisal, and training and development (Townley 1994; Finch-Lees et al. 2005; Carroll et al. 2008). The PMDS framework prescribes seventeen generic competencies across four clusters as relevant to work carried out across the civil service (see Figure 2). Figure 3 illustrates the behavioural indicators for the leadership competency, for example, which as Townley (1999, p.288), notes is “*silent on any ethical evaluation of action in relation to ends chosen or the means for attaining ends*” and entirely neglects the affective domain (Lynch et al. 2007). Moreover, it reflects a methodological individualism (Carroll et al. 2008), producing a self that is autonomous from the other and the context (Townley 1999).

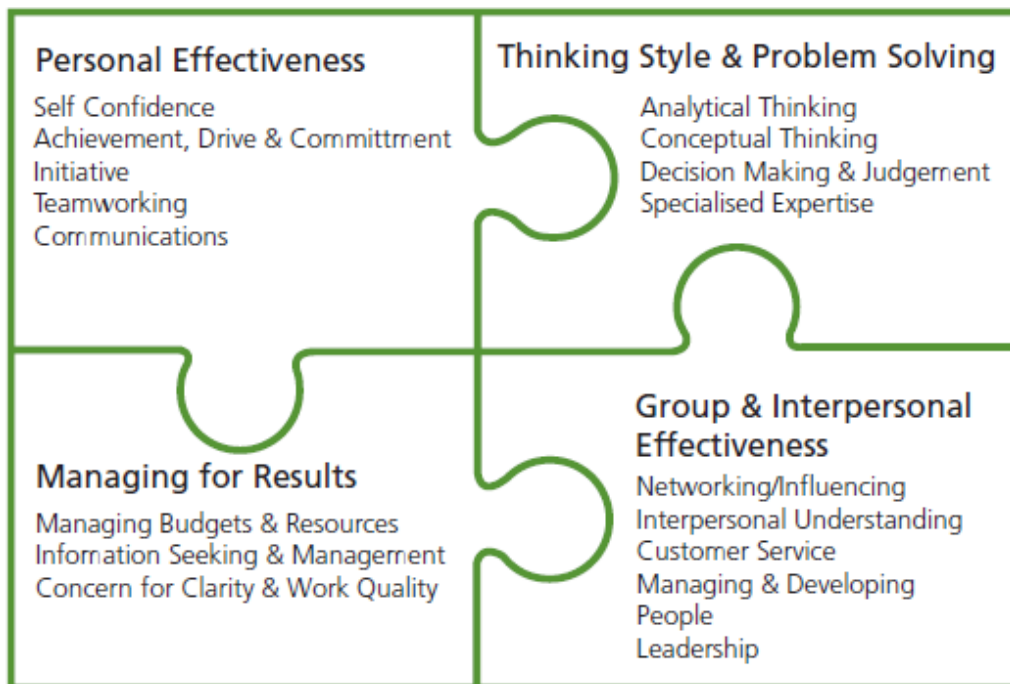


Figure 2: PMDS Competency Framework (Centre for Management & Organisation Development 2002, p.2)

Competency	Description The job requires me to?
<p>Leadership <i>The ability to take a role as a leader inspiring or guiding a team or other group. (This does not have to derive from position or rank)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manage a group or team. ➤ Keep people informed about developments. ➤ Guide the performance of others. ➤ Make choices and decisions, which take the organization forward in a changing environment. ➤ Develop a vision for the future.

Figure 3: Behavioural Indicators for the Leadership Competency in the PMDS Framework (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011b, Appendix 3, p.6)

The employee is further known through the performance appraisal, which constitutes an examinational and confessional practice in which she participates in an assessment of the self in relation to these norms (Finch-Lees et al. 2005) and the performance targets she is assigned. (For trainers the key

performance indicator is the number of training days delivered.) PMDS is described in managerial terms as:

... a tool to Managers and Jobholders which will help them to manage and improve performance. The key elements of PMDS, i.e. goal setting, competency selection, learning goals and formal reviews of performance, are all fundamental aspects of managing performance. Effective performance management requires constant and ongoing review and feedback on performance throughout the year. (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011b, p.3)

In effect it serves to classify and order the employee (Townley 1994) through an annual rating of her 'performance' on a five-point rating scale, where a rating of 1 is labelled 'Unacceptable' and 5 is labelled 'Outstanding'. Since 2005, these ratings are integrated with other HRM functions such as discipline, reward and promotion, potentially serving to increase "*the competitiveness between individuals who are seeking to improve their position*" (Steffy and Grimes 1992, pp.192-193) and to hinder "*collective action teamwork, or cooperation*" (ibid. p.193).

There is renewed focus on the ratings system under the Public Service Agreement and Public Service Reform Plan following the conclusion of a Comptroller and Auditor General's (2011) report that the distribution of ratings did not reflect the norm set out for it by consultants in 2004, a norm, which it acknowledged was not based on any empirical data (see Figure 4). This has stimulated a technicist response (Townley 1994) to increase compliance with procedures and encourage lower ratings, including the sanction of managers and the development of an IT system to capture appraisals – a new knowledge

base to enable further intervention. Additionally, changes to the form encourage staff to see themselves and each other as a cost. So, for example, employees must now include information on their salary “*to increase the focus on the value for money that the Jobholder has given for the salary that he/she is paid*” (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011b, p.5), while managers must include information about cost centres, annual budget, and the salary element of their budget to help them “*link the outputs of their staff with the overall cost to the taxpayer of the resources*” (ibid.). Any training and development activity proposed by the individual must also be costed.

Rating	Description	Suggested rating distribution
5	Outstanding: the role holder has substantially exceeded standard in all role requirements and performance has been consistently exceptional	0 -10% of staff
4	Exceeds required standard: the role holder has fully met all role requirements to the required standard and significantly exceeded the standard in some respects	20-30% of staff
3	Fully acceptable: the role holder has met all of the role requirements to the required standard and performance is at a fully acceptable level	40-60% of staff
2	Needs improvement: the role holder has met some role requirements to the required standard but performance has fallen short in some respects	10-20% of staff
1	Unacceptable: the role holder has met few of the role requirements and performance falls clearly short of the required standard	0-10% of staff

Figure 4: Distribution Norm for PMDS Ratings (Comptroller and Auditor General 2011, p.121)

2.5. Training and Development Practice

Training and development extends the HRM matrix by which the individual is seen, and encouraged to see herself, in terms of supposed unitary ‘organisational needs’ and which locates ‘performance problems’ with her

(Townley 1994). In PMDS, this diagnosis coincides with the appraisal, and the competency framework in the 'Learning and Development Plan', which is described as:

... an opportunity for the Jobholder to consider how s/he could do the job better by identifying their learning and development needs and how these can be provided.

(Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011b, p.8)

Power (1997, following Rose and Miller 1992) argues that any practice can be characterised by both programmatic or normative elements and technological or operational ones, a distinction which I have found valuable in focusing analysis on the programmatic dimension of training, and its relationship to the technological dimension, so that I might understand why e-learning is treated as a technical problem for practice.

The programmatic elements of training practice relate to the ideas and values which shape its mission - the managerial desire to shape employee behaviours and increase productivity - and attach it to strategic objectives, thus authorising or legitimating its performance. Therefore, at the level of strategy and goal formation it is more or less assumed that training practice has the potential to serve these goals, and it is at this level that training is resourced. The 'Learning and Development Framework for the Civil Service (2011-2014)' (Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2011a) establishes the programmatic ideals for training practice in the context of the Public Service Reform Plan:

The Government is committed to the ongoing training, up-skilling and development of the staff of the Public Service to ensure that the changes envisaged by the Public Service Agreement are implemented.

(ibid., p.1)

The technological elements of training practice are the tasks and routines that training personnel perform that render programmatic elements operable, including undertaking 'training needs analysis', designing and developing programmes and materials, 'delivering' courses, and conducting assessment and evaluation. These constitute stages in the training life-cycle (see Figure 5), a pseudo-scientific organising concept around which the functionalist body of knowledge for training is codified and formalised as a basis for management, and for trainer formation (see for example, Garavan et al. 2003). It is at the technological level that practitioners legitimate interests are circumscribed, limited to debate about the efficiency or effectiveness of particular methods in meeting 'business needs' and it is at this level that e-learning as a disruption to practice enters the picture.

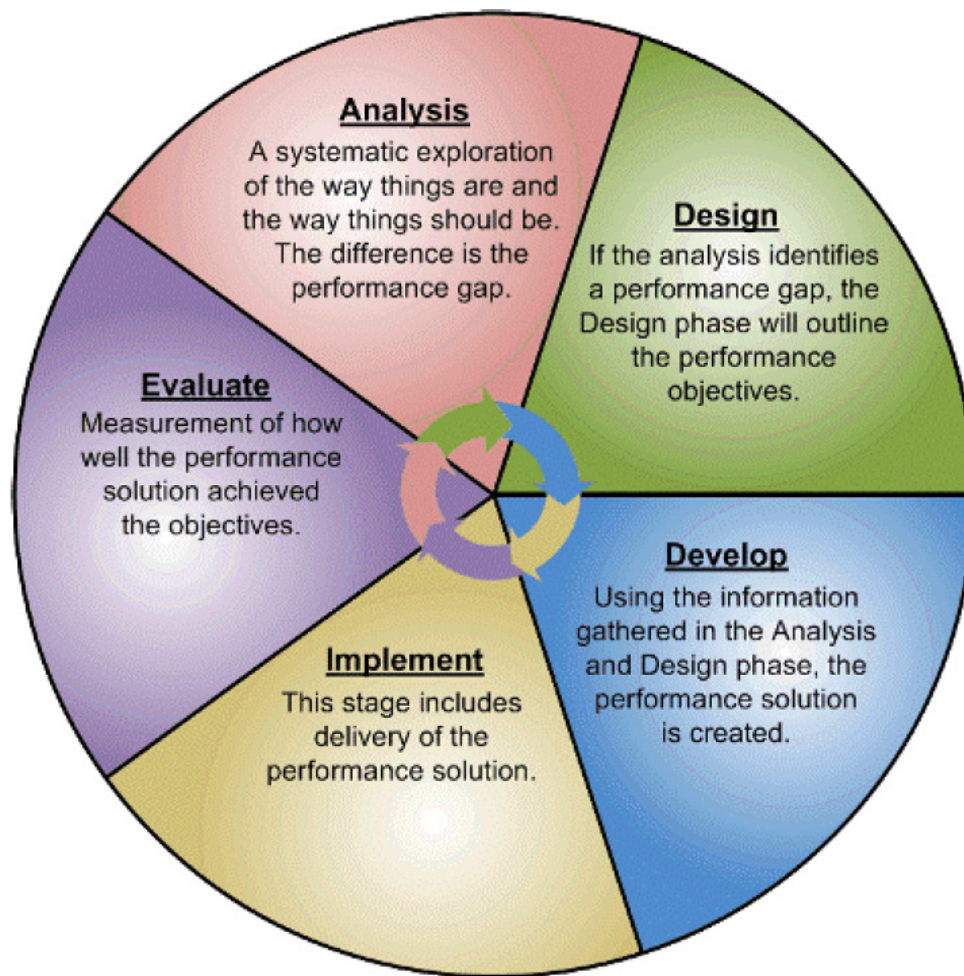
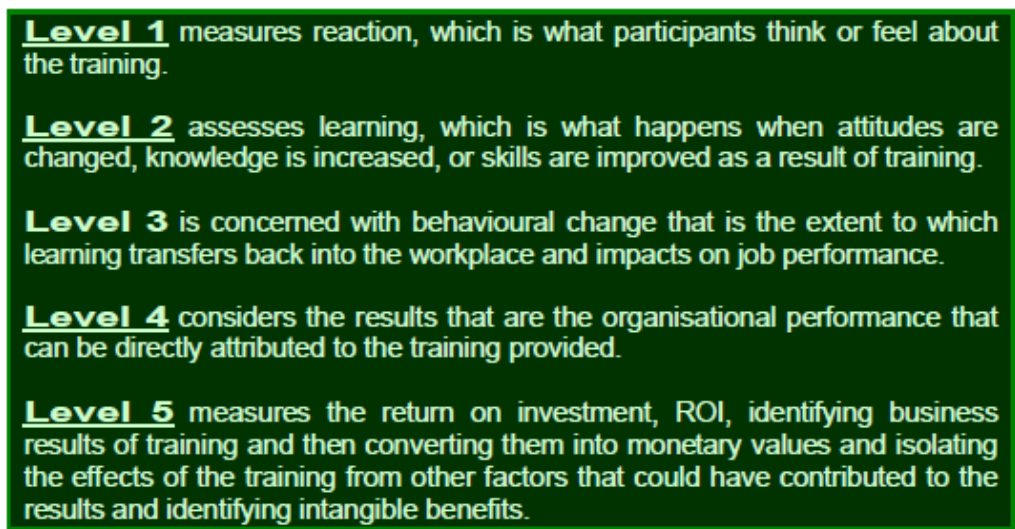


Figure 5: The Training Life-cycle (Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2011a, p.14)

It is clear from SMI/DBG onwards that training and development was and is viewed instrumentally as a tool for helping to ‘deliver change’. Indeed DBG recommended that in order to support the programme of reforms set out in SMI, departments/offices increase their spending on training and development from a then average of 0.75% of payroll to 3% - later increased to 4%. However, as Power (1997, p.9) reminds us: “*programmatic expectations may be created in excess of those that it can really satisfy*”, generating an

‘expectations gap’ which must additionally be managed. In this context, disciplinary power is exerted on training practice to account for itself through evaluation, that is, “*to provide evidence of an increase in the level of the performance of the public service*” (Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2011a, p.2) and to prove ‘value for money’ through subscription to a deeply reductive evaluation model (see Figure 6) that assumes a causal chain of impact between training, individual performance, organisational results, and a ‘return on investment’. Critically, this model, which has been naturalised, reinforces a view of training as transmission (Vanderstraeten and Biesta 2006) and learning as individual cognitive acquisition (Hodkinson et al. 2008), with significant implications for how e-learning can be conceptualised.



Level 1 measures reaction, which is what participants think or feel about the training.

Level 2 assesses learning, which is what happens when attitudes are changed, knowledge is increased, or skills are improved as a result of training.

Level 3 is concerned with behavioural change that is the extent to which learning transfers back into the workplace and impacts on job performance.

Level 4 considers the results that are the organisational performance that can be directly attributed to the training provided.

Level 5 measures the return on investment, ROI, identifying business results of training and then converting them into monetary values and isolating the effects of the training from other factors that could have contributed to the results and identifying intangible benefits.

Figure 6: Model of Training Evaluation (Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2009, p.4)

2.6. Conclusion

I understand professional development to be fundamentally intersubjective, to take place in an interactional field in which are implied histories (personal and social), cultural and discursive resources, and locations in material-economic arrangements and exchanges (Kemmis 2010). In this chapter I have tried to take account of my own position and its evolution and to understand the field effect on the development of practice (Bourdieu 2007) by exploring how the dispositions and position-takings of field agents are related to the exercise of power, in particular through discourse and knowledge (Foucault 1980).

This has been challenging and risky. By calling into question the norms of the field within which I am formed professionally I am calling into question myself, my identification with the idealised images produced through reform discourse and managerial knowledge, my mimesis of its language. But I am also coming to see this challenge, this risk as vital, an important dimension of ethical practice because I am coming to see the limits of my self-knowledge, my relational dependency and vulnerability and to recognise this as human (Butler 2005; Lynch et al. 2007). Thus, I find myself more willing to become undone and “*to vacate the self-sufficient ‘I’ as a kind of possession*” (Butler 2005, p.136), and I find the courage to try and counter the distancing from the other that training as a disciplinary practice enacts (Townley 1999; Garrick and Solomon 1997).

Chapter Three – Conceptual Framework: *What did I think I could do?*

Subjectivity is an objective fact ... conscious thought has a legitimate and essential place among the causal factors that work in the world. (Migdely 2004, p.79)

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the key conceptual resources on which I draw to underpin the development of my living theory of leadership development for e-learning. This framework was emergent during the study, having a direct relationship with action and the process of professional development as enacted through reflexive and dialectical critique (McNiff and Whitehead 2009). In this sense, it constitutes a significant part of the evidence base for my claim to know my professional development, drawing attention to the development in my thinking as I engaged with ideas and influences outside of training and ICT - in education, public administration, psychoanalysis, social theory and philosophy - in order to make sense of experience and to understand the relationship between motivations, actions and consequences. This contributed to my dialogic learning as the interplay between research, knowledge and the development of practice. In particular, the chapter reflects the shift from ‘ingenuous curiosity’ to ‘epistemological curiosity’ (Freire 1998) with regard to the concept of educational leadership as the subject domain for doctoral studies, and a growing understanding of the ways in which concepts, such as

those of leadership, not only guide our thinking and actions but, in the stronger case, form our culture (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Miggely 2004). It also reflects a growing awareness of the ‘double hermeneutic’ that is at play (Giddens 1984) as concepts from leadership research enter and shape practice.

The framework is presented as a set of responses to three central and interrelated questions, which were clarified during research. Its emergence was underpinned by a realist ontology and a constructionist epistemology, which I explain in Chapter Four. It holds in tension the subjective and the social, viewing reality as experienced in action, that is to say, in the transaction between self, other and a material and social world about which meaning can be shared and in which concertive action is a possibility (Biesta and Burbules 2003; Cavell 2006). Drawing on practice theory it explores how this reality is constituted in a socio-historical context in which structures that both enable and constrain agency are enacted in and reproduced by social practices.

3.2. What is the nature of professional development as an educational phenomenon?

To enquire into the nature of professional development as an educational phenomenon has primary significance, addressing the fundamental possibility presented by this self-study that one can develop a theory of professional development as an explanation of one’s educational influence (Whitehead 1989). In dialectical engagement with the question throughout research I have

drawn on a variety of conceptual resources to frame professional development as a temporal-relational process of becoming: a process that is fundamentally dependent on interaction within the professional field, and in which subjectivity and agency are central but always at risk. In this view I have moved from the common sense understanding of professional development as an individual process explained by the acquisition of knowledge and skills for practice. Instead, drawing on Dewey's transactional realism (Biesta and Burbules 2003) I view professional development as emergent in action, that is to say, in the transactions between self, other and the shared material and social world, which relations are mediated by subjective dispositions (Billett 2010). This is also consistent with a view that mind (or self) is constituted intersubjectively (Cavell 2006).

I should, perhaps, begin by arguing for the use of the description 'professional development' in an employment not associated with the professions, which are traditionally defined with reference to claims of distinctive bodies of knowledge and expertise, self-accreditation and self-regulation (Kemmis 2010). In its use I am self-consciously caught between the argument that professionalism constitutes an ideology (Eraut 1994, following Johnson 1972, 1984), and the argument that the extension of the discourse of professionalism into other employments is a disciplinary mechanism to facilitate control at a distance by creating appropriate work subjectivities and conduct (Fournier 2001). Nevertheless, I would wish to assert for a more educational training

practice the professional value of client-centredness (Eraut 1994) in a moral commitment to the client of training, to her subjectivity and agency.

In moving from an individualistic conception of professional development I have been influenced by Kemmis (2010) who argues against the view that practice can be best understood from the perspective of practitioners' knowledge, and for a greater focus within education on developing understanding of the ways in which practice is constructed socially, discursively, culturally, and historically. This calls attention to how practice prefigures action. Following Kemmis, we can say that understanding professional development requires that we look, not only at individuals, but at the extra-individual features of the context that are implicated in the developing practice, that is, how practice gives meaning in the cultural-discursive field in which it is understood, solidarity, legitimacy and a sense of belonging in the social field in which it connects people, and practical efficacy and other forms of satisfaction in the material-economic field in which they act. Thus, a multi-dimensional view of practice (and the development of practice) can take at least five different perspectives: (1) individual behaviour; (2) social interaction; (3) intentional action shaped by meanings and values; (4) socially structured, shaped by discourses and tradition; and (5) socially and historically constituted and reconstituted by human agency and social action. Additionally, it should pay attention to the idea of practice clients as 'knowing subjects' who are co-participants in the practice.

This understanding is enhanced by my reading of Hodkinson et al. (2008) who also pursue a practice turn in conceptualising learning, which I see as constitutive of professional development. They argue that we need to move beyond the dualist views of learning that dominate the literature as either individual or social, which give rise to the metaphors of 'learning as acquisition' or 'learning as participation' (Sfard 1998), and to combine elements of the participatory or situated view with elements of Deweyan embodied construction within a cultural approach for which they suggest a new metaphor of 'learning as becoming'. Like Kemmis (2010), they see a need to decentre cognition and, following Dewey, to see the individual dimensions of learning as involving an interrelationship of the mental, emotional, physical and practical. They draw attention to four problematic limitations in the learning literature, which under-theorise the effects of structure and power, and which they relate to the retention of dualistic ways of thinking in terms of mind-body, individual-social, and structure-agency. An explanation of professional development that overcomes these limitations needs to integrate the dualisms as follows: (1) individual learning is embodied; (2) individuals learn as social individuals that contribute to the cultures in which they participate; (3) agency is always structured but structures are constructed and reconstructed partly through agency, and these interpenetrate individual and group dispositions and cultural practices.

In constructing professional development as an educational process, in which I try to move towards the articulation and embodiment of a more educational training practice, I am also influenced by Biesta's (2006, p.68) philosophy, which argues that we should view learning as 'response' to the plurality and difference that are a condition of our existence:

... we can say that someone has learned something not when she is able to copy and reproduce what already existed, but when she responds to what is unfamiliar, what is different, what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs. Here learning becomes a creation or an invention, a process of bringing something new into the world: one's own unique response.

Biesta is critiquing the technological view that education can or should produce particular ends, the creation of a particular type of subject, and the effects this has on freedom – on the freedom of the individual to become, to act, interrupt, to begin something new, something unforeseen (Arendt 1958). This is a view that I see intensified in training, which explicitly tries to create particular subjectivities, such as those inscribed in competency frameworks; and, I think, it underpins ideas about professional development as insertion into an existing social order, an adaptation to 'what is' through induction into a culture, the acquisition of an extant 'body of knowledge', and the cultivation of particular values. Such views construct education and training as an asymmetrical and instrumental relationship.

Following Biesta, any articulation of the pedagogical should be concerned, not with an *a priori* idea of what a subject is or should be, but with her singularity and how this can come into presence, in other words, how she can become a

free subject of action and responsibility – an agent. This ‘subjectivity as event’ he constructs as political and risky because it can only happen in action within the intersubjective domain, which provides the conditions both for its possibility and impossibility, being dependent on how others would react to my beginnings (Arendt 1958). Thus, he sees the educator as having a responsibility both for the subject, and the creation of a dialogical, worldly space in which encounter with otherness and difference is a real possibility, in which ‘difficult questions’ summon us to respond responsively and responsibly to otherness and difference in our own unique ways.

In taking the view that professional development might be understood and explained in terms of subjectivity, and in trying to understand the constitution and role of subjective dispositions in learning (Billet 2010) I have also drawn on the field of psychoanalysis to make sense of the idea of the self as vulnerable (Lynch 2010b), a defended rather than rational unitary subject (Hollway and Jefferson 2008) whose self-knowledge is limited (Butler 2005), and of the idea that subjectivity is not stable but constituted in and by power relations, through processes of subjectivation (Foucault 1982) or interpellation (Althusser 1971). This has drawn me into exploring how it is thought that the child first comes to recognise herself as a subject distinct from the other through entry into a world of symbolic communication, through language which is not of her making, a world in which she learns to take a third person view on herself (Cavell 2006) by moving through a postulated ‘mirror stage’ -

coming to see herself as a coherent whole through reflection in a mirror (Lacan 1977) or in the reflection that constitutes the other's response to her (Winnicott 1971). It is my contention, that these ideas, which I have used in exploring personal biography, continue to have valence in reflecting how the professional subject is always engaged in a process of 'becoming', that the process of distinguishing 'I' from 'not-I' is in fact re-played in the insertion into the history, culture and language of the professional field, and in the space between becoming a subject and being 'subject to' (Foucault 1982). In particular, I am interested in the personal history that is not available to conscious thought, the ongoing effect of primary relations on our sense of 'ontological security', our relationality, and how this might leave us vulnerable to identification with ideas that are alienating, ideas that move us away from freedom, self-knowledge, mature inter-dependence and political action.

3.3. What is the relationship between leadership research, knowledge and the development of practice?

In asking this question throughout I have been conducting a first-person enquiry into the nature of the relationship between leadership as object of enquiry and leadership as knowledge object, both encountered within higher education studies, and between these and the development of workplace practice. This question has central significance in my self-study of professional development in the context of a professional doctorate in education leadership, which aims to contribute to the knowledge of professional practice through

research. It also relates to the conceptual and critical aims of research, as set out in Chapter One, that is, to clarify the nature of e-learning as a leadership issue (see section 3.4), and to explore critical perspectives on leadership in terms of the normative influences on workplace practice. In this venture I have taken Kelly's (2008) advice and treated leadership as a 'blurred concept' within a dialectical engagement between theory and practice in which 'leadership knowledge' is constructed as an object of enquiry, an 'epistemological curiosity' (Freire 1998). This challenges the linear, uni-directional relationship and positivist assumptions underpinning common sense thinking about leadership research, knowledge and professional development, which implies that practice is technical.

Following Barnett (2000a, 2000b, 2009) I have come to view the question of this relationship against the background of societal and global shifts that call into question the adequacy of our frames for understanding the world and acting in it in an age of 'supercomplexity', an age characterised by uncertainty and a multiplication of competing interpretive frameworks; as well as against the background of the critical realist challenge regarding the limits of human knowledge (Reed 2009). I have also come to view it against the background of Lyotard's (1984) apperception of an epistemological transition that sees knowledge increasingly legitimated in terms of its use value, an external value he describes as 'performativity', or a more efficient input-output equation (Rhodes and Garrick 2000); and against the backdrop of Schön (1983, 1987)

and Eraut's (1994, 2000, 2007) scholarship on professional knowledge, learning and the significance of epistemologies of practice.

A significant conceptual resource on which I have drawn to make sense of the competing frameworks for understanding the leadership research-knowledge-practice question is Gunter and Ribbins' (2002, 2003, 2005; Ribbins and Gunter 2002) extended work on mapping the educational leadership research field, which shows it to be a deeply contested space. This presents six interrelated typologies of knowledge production to help understand "*the interplay between researching, theorising and practicing in educational settings*" (Gunter and Ribbins 2003, p.254). It problematises knowledge and locates its production and use within the dialectic of structure and agency, drawing attention to the interaction between: those who produce and use what is known about educational leadership (Producers); the place and events where knowers produce and use what is known (Positions); the claims to knowledge regarding the ways leadership is conceptualised and engaged with (Provinces); the practice in real-life/real-time contexts of those involved in leadership (Practices); the research processes used to generate and legitimate knowledge, knowing and knowers (Processes); and the understandings of those involved in leadership created as processes and products from the inter-play of producers, positions, provinces, practices, processes (Perspectives). In particular, the typology of knowledge 'provinces' (or domains), summarised in Table 3, distinguishes eight differentiated approaches in field research, each of which

may be understood as asserting a 'truth' about the intention behind any leadership activity, with varying emphasis and disclosure of purpose with respect to theory and practice (Gunter and Ribbins 2003).

Table 3: Typology of Knowledge Provinces in Educational Leadership Research (Gunter 2005, p.170)

Activity			
Challenge	Understanding meanings	Understanding experiences	Provision
	<p><i>Conceptual:</i> challenging and developing understandings of ontology and epistemology.</p> <p><i>Descriptive:</i> challenging and developing understandings of activity and actions.</p>	<p><i>Humanistic:</i> gathering and using experiences to improve practice.</p> <p><i>Aesthetic:</i> appreciating and using the arts to enhance practice.</p>	
	Working for change	Delivering change	
	<p><i>Critical:</i> to reveal and emancipate practitioners from injustice.</p> <p><i>Axiological:</i> to clarify the values and value conflicts to support what is right.</p>	<p><i>Evaluative:</i> to measure the impact of role incumbents on outcomes.</p> <p><i>Instrumental:</i> to provide strategies and tactics for organizational effectiveness.</p>	
Actions			

I have further made sense of these competing frames with reference to Gunter's (2001, 2004, 2005) solo work, which draws on Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field and habitus to explore the power structures underpinning knowledge production. In this she presents leadership as "*an arena of struggle in which researchers, writers, policy-makers and practitioners take up and/or present positions*" (Gunter 2001, p.1) in a struggle for distinction as symbolic capital and for economic capital in the form of funding, which is linked to whose knowledge claims are accepted as legitimate, and which, through the relationship with the field of power, generates a politics of preferred knowledge and knowers. Through this lens she makes historic sense of the emergence of leadership as a discursive formation, with changing labels in the field from 'administration' to 'management' and 'leadership' (Gunter 2004), and a narrowing of knowledge claims oriented around a politically-sponsored model of generic organisational or performance leadership from the private sector as a means of securing public service reform (Gunter 2006). This illuminates the dominance of instrumental knowledge claims, or what Gronn (2009a, p.391) calls "*normative leadership advocacy*", and the staking of positions around "*conceptually grounded leadership models, approaches or styles*" (Gronn 2009b, p.17) such as transformational or distributed leadership.

This mapping and intellectual history work has helped me to envision the triangular space between leadership research, knowledge and practice as a critical one; a space which research knowledge can serve by providing

different interpretations and understandings of practice (Biesta 2007b), but where using research knowledge always means, in effect, doing research (Elliott 2001 citing Stenhouse 1979) and where research knowledge can never determine the ends of a good practice (Hammersley 2001). This is a space that I make further sense of in relation to Dewey's transactional realism, which views knowing - arising in the transaction between an organism and its environment - as understanding the relationship between actions and consequences, on which view research knowledge can only ever provide knowledge about the relationship between past actions and consequences (Biesta 2007a).

It is within this critical space that I have come to differentiate between research knowledge claims that posit leadership as either an individual or a relational property (see Appendix D), and to view as problematic the privileging of leader agency in the accounts of 'generic' leadership that pervade the mainstream literature, including that which is now informing Irish public service 'reform' (see for example, Alvarez-Antolinez 2007; Boyle and MacCarthaigh 2011; Cawley and McNamara 2008; Garavan et al. 2009; McCarthy et al. 2011; Wallis and McLoughlin 2007). These imply that it is what an individual 'leader' is or does that constitutes leadership, conflating leadership with headship (Gronn 2000) and reflecting what Meindl (1995) terms 'the romance of leadership', an attributional bias that privileges leaders

in explanations of organisational effectiveness, contributing to what Gemmill and Oakley (1997) have termed leadership as ‘alienating social myth’.

In this critical exercise I have moved from a substantialist to a relational ontology of leadership (Collinson 2005; Glatter 2004), which Emirbayer (1997) distinguishes as the choice between conceiving of the social world as consisting primarily in substances or in processes, in static ‘things’, or in dynamic unfolding relations. In this view I have been most influenced by Gronn (2007) who questions the validity of the binary leader-follower template for understanding leadership, which he says emerged from pioneering small-group studies, and has been subsumed without much critique into organisation-scale studies. This, he argues, makes two erroneous assumptions: that the relationship is a simple one-to-one relationship; and that influence is uni-directional, that is, the leader leads and the follower follows. This is clearly not the case as influence can be exercised by different organisational members at different times – not only by the leader, who may frequently be led. It also neglects to say what is qualitatively different between what each does. One of the problems then with taking leader as the object of enquiry is that leadership can ‘disappear’ (Alvesson and Svenningsson 2003a), because the tasks of leadership can transcend role-space occupancy (Gronn 2000) and “*leaders may or may not engage in leading or leadership [while] those who are not prescribed leaders may de facto be doing so*” (Ribbins and Gunter 2002, p.380). Leader as object of enquiry also neglects the socially constructed

nature of leadership, its shifting meaning (Storey 2004a; Chapman and O'Toole 2010), and the role of leadership discourse as a technology in maintaining asymmetrical power relations, such that Ribbins (1999) observes that an increasing focus on leadership in the UK has been a key means by which Government has pushed through reform agendas in education. It is, observe Serpieri et al. (2009, p.211), defined as “*one of the most relevant levers of change*” within the neoliberal discourse of NPM.

My view, following Gronn (2000, 2002) and Spillane et al. (2004) is that in as far as leadership has to do with the exercise of influence it makes sense to see this as emergent within a network of actors. Both draw on Engestrom's (1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2000) elaboration of cultural historical activity theory as a means to bridge the objectivist-subjectivist dichotomy and ‘visibilise’ the cultural, social, historic and economic influences on practice. Leadership, then, moves beyond a simplistic leader-follower dualism, permitting its analysis as motive-laden, goal-directed activity, which always forms part of a collective labour process and is always mediated by cultural and material tools and rules, revealing how agency and structure are in continuous interplay. This addresses a persistently reported fault in leadership research, that is, that leadership is taken out of the cultural and historical context on which it is dependent, and is broadly consistent with Carroll et al.'s (2008) argument for a practice turn in leadership study - to pay attention to praxis, practice and practitioners.

Finally, I make sense of the question in relation to Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) distinction between propositional and dialectical theories and logics, and their outline of the inclusional and relational logic of living theories, which admit both propositional and dialectical forms. It is on this basis that I frame the relationship between leadership research, knowledge and the development of practice as a dialectical engagement with propositional leadership knowledge in practice, at the disjunction between competing frameworks (Barnett 1999), from which can emerge an epistemology of professional development. In this endeavour I also draw on McNiff's (2000) work on action research in organisations, which she reframes as "*people in developmental and collaborative relationship with one another*" (ibid. p.243), and management as "*an educative practice which aims to help people develop the kinds of relationships which will help them to learn and grow*" (ibid. p.246) to reconceptualise leadership theory as a form of educational theory such that leaders come "*to position themselves as teachers, and work towards providing contexts that encourage education*" (ibid. p.85).

3.4. What is the nature of e-learning as an educational leadership issue?

In posing this question I have been framing e-learning as problematic, an 'issue' for educational leadership, which I now see as having three dimensions: (1) the conceptual – having to do with how e-learning is conceptualised and how this affects practice; (2) the axiological – having to do with the different values competing 'stakeholder' positions present for e-learning, and how these

are implicated in knowledge products *for* practice; and (3) the political – having to do with power relations and how value conflicts are mediated, as well as with the distribution of organisational resources. In this approach I am drawing on the philosophically-oriented work that distinguishes an educational leadership as a moral practice or *praxis* (see for example, Hodgkinson 1991) from a managerialist one. I am also adopting the normative stance that training should become more educational. This frame arises through engagement with the practice problem of trying to communicate a dialogical collaborative view of e-learning (Farren 2005) and trying to understand its apprehension by training personnel as a primarily technical issue. In other words, it arises from reflection on why e-learning may be constructed as a ‘thing’, an object of technical action rather than a relational practice, and what this might mean for influencing thinking about the educational potential of ICT for training practice.

E-learning as a Conceptual Problem

Pring (2010) advocates explicit attention to the unacknowledged ways in which ideas shape our thinking about practice, and in constructing e-learning as a conceptual problem I have come to see this as related to the assumptions underpinning our thinking about training and learning, and technology. In particular, I make sense of the assumptions in relation to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) work on the metaphorical nature of our conceptual system, which plays a central role in defining our everyday reality, and in relation to Midgely’s

(2004) work, which draws attention to the entry of machine metaphors into our thinking about human nature and relations.

Two important conceptual metaphors that underpin thinking about training are ‘learning as acquisition’ and ‘teaching as transmission’, which I see as related to the programmatic values of training (discussed in Chapter Two), that is, the instrumental aim to produce particular outcomes. Sfard (1998), in particular, draws attention to the first, the metaphor of acquisition, which is arguably held most in the common sense and coincides with a view of knowledge as something external that exists prior to the act of learning, coming into the possession of the learner (Biesta 2006). This Sfard relates to the analysis of learning in terms of concept development, with concepts understood as basic units of knowledge that can be accumulated. For her, the terminology surrounding learning brings to mind the idea of accumulating material goods and of the mind as a container to be filled with concepts, which are made one’s own through ‘reception’, ‘internalisation’, ‘attainment’, ‘grasping’ etc., and which once acquired may be ‘applied’, ‘transferred’ and ‘shared’ like any other commodity. In e-learning this gives rise to the idea of reusable, ‘chunked’, digital ‘learning objects’ (Butson 2003).

The corollary of this is the metaphor of ‘teaching as transmission’ – the idea that the teacher can help in the goal of acquisition by delivering or conveying (Sfard 1998) – which gives communication a prominent role but conceives of it

as a mechanical, linear process (Vanderstraeten and Biesta 2006). In fact, this metaphor is related to what Reddy (1979) has termed the conduit metaphor of communication, which implies that language functions like a conduit, transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another. I also see a link between this and the Shannon-Weaver (1949) sender-receiver model of communication which was intended to describe radio and telephone technologies but is now incorporated into texts for training personnel to explain human communication (see for example, Garavan et al. 2003). The problem, it is argued, is that human communication (and learning) is not about information but about meaning, and the model assumes that meaning is attached to the information being transmitted, that it is something passively received rather than actively constructed (Vanderstraeten and Biesta 2006). Clearly, there is a risk that these 'metaphorical projections' (Sfard 1998) are carried into thinking about e-learning and give rise to a view of e-learning as electronic delivery of content.

E-learning as relational practice is also conceptually at stake in terms of common sense assumptions about technology and technological development, which are comprehensively addressed within Feenberg's (1991, 1999, 2002) ongoing project of a critical theory and philosophy of technology. He is clear that the question of how technology can be better redesigned to serve human interest is not primarily a technical question but concerns how we think about technology in relation to values and human powers, which thinking gives rise

to two contrary positions – instrumentalism and substantivism – and a binary discourse that Stevenson (2010) says obscures points of genuine ambivalence. The former position, says Feenberg is based on the idea that technologies are neutral (value-free) tools ready to serve whatever purpose the user intends, a position widely critiqued (see for example, McLuhan 1964; Postman 1992); and the second – often described as technological determinism - on the idea that technologies and technological development follow immanent laws that govern development and which humans merely follow. This subsumes the essentialist perspective that the character and capacity of technical artefacts is a given (Grint and Woolgar 1997). Both positions can be seen to derive from a belief that technology and social practices are separate rather than mutually encoded (Bruce 1996), a belief which obscures the social and political origins of any technology and the contingency of its development, which could have taken alternative paths (Feenberg 1991, 1999, 2002) even where dominant interests imply that only a limited number of trajectories may be legitimated as ‘progress’ (Howcroft 2009).

Following Orlikowski (2000), there is a need to see e-learning development through a practice lens as a “*recursive interaction between people, technologies and social action*” (ibid., p.405); to understand how, as people interact with a technology in their ongoing practices, they enact structures that shape their “*emergent and situated use of that technology*” (ibid., p.404), and

in which process they draw on existing institutional, interpretive and technological conditions. Such a perspective can visibilise how (ibid., p.405):

... interpretations, social interests, and disciplinary conflicts shape the production of a technology through shaping its cultural meanings and the social interactions among relevant social groups.

E-learning as an Axiological Problem

On the premise, following Feenberg, that what e-learning becomes is partly determined by the values and choices shaping its development, I locate e-learning as axiological problem at the interface between educational and managerial goals for e-learning, the latter which are related to the programmatic values that authorise training as an organisational practice (see Chapter Two). These translate into ‘value for money’ concerns with economy and efficiency, and to a lesser extent with effectiveness, which is more difficult to expose to ‘performance measurement’ (Power 1997). Thus managerial goals for e-learning are primarily expressed in terms of the potential to reduce costs, to increase reach or output, and/or to enhance flexibility.

The educational values for e-learning expressed in this text are influenced by Farren’s (2005) ‘pedagogy of the unique’. This recognises the unique experiences and constellation of values that each individual brings to the classroom and commits to a democratic process that provides opportunities for each person to take responsibility for her own learning. It also commits to the cultivation of a ‘web of betweenness’, which recognises how we learn in

relation to one another, how ICT can support this and how it can enable us to get closer to communicating the meanings of our embodied values. This approach reflects an underlying conceptual metaphor of learning as dialogue (Koschmann 1999), although this is not Socratic dialogue by which means we are brought to the 'right' response (Biesta 2003). Rather, it is concerned with opening up dialogic spaces in which differing perspectives can be held in tension (Wegerif 2007), spaces in which we can respond singularly to that which challenges us, to difference (Biesta 2003).

In effect, these can be seen as two value systems, having very different 'ends' in mind: the first, a particular subjectivity - the development of a skilled and knowledgeable worker who can and will perform in more or less regular and predictable ways; the second, a radically open subjectivity - the development of a thinking agent who can act towards ends that are more or less meaningful for her. Clearly, this value conflict takes us over into the political dimension, which I will shortly address, but it also draws us briefly back to the conceptual dimension and reflection on how technical and economic rationality dominates as a mode of thinking (Feenberg 2008). This also influences how e-learning is framed within knowledge objects *for* practice, e.g. books, articles, websites, manuals etc, as either an issue of technical innovation or one for top-down strategy, with both stances reflecting an instrumental concern. This is consistent with the mainstream ICT literature, which Howcroft (2009, p.393) notes is focused on "*delivery of technical solutions and instrumentalist*

prescriptions, such as 'best practice' guidelines ". It is particularly significant that the definitions of e-learning that practitioners encounter in mainstream texts tend to be technologically-oriented.

E-learning as a Political Problem

Given that e-learning development is socially contingent and given the potential for value conflict just addressed, I understand the political dimension of e-learning as having to do with the idea that its development constitutes a significant change in individual and institutional practice, a change which Whitworth (2005) argues occurs in both the cultural and technological environments of the organisation.

For some writers (see for example, Sharpe et al. 2006; McPherson and Baptista Nunes 2006), the complexity of this change suggests that e-learning should fall within the scope of organisational change management processes and strategy development as control mechanisms to minimise risk and maximise predictability. Here the top-down strategy is predetermined and the function of leadership is to 'guarantee buy-in' from organisational stakeholders. If communicative and participatory processes are proposed these are primarily as strategic actions, aimed at achieving 'consensus' (Whitworth 2005) as an endpoint, rather than engaging with difference as a means of continuous working out.

This exposes issues of power and control (Rossiter 2007), which also conflicts with the idea that innovation in e-learning requires a more flexible, reflexive, collegial and collaborative working environment than is the norm (deFreitas and Oliver 2005; Jameson et al. 2006). Bottom-up innovations, which shift the locus of control, may mitigate these issues but still need access to broader organisational resources (Whitworth 2005; deFreitas and Oliver 2005; Rossiter 2007).

Following Feenberg, we could say that were e-learning to be approached under different social conditions, where more democratic control over design and development was possible, then it could, perhaps, take on a more educational character (Feenberg 2008, p.13). In working towards this, ICT can be reconceptualised as political action by realising the potential of ICT to support original human agency through communicative action (O'Neill 2008). New forms of networked communication can and do enhance opportunities for social change (Castells 2009).

3.5. Conclusion

In articulating a concern for a more educational training practice, I am articulating a concern for subjectivity and agency – for the freedom to become and to engage in political action in the sense meant by Arendt (1958), to bring one's citizenship to work, to intervene in the curriculum.

I am arguing for a view of professional development as a process of becoming, a temporal-spatial and intersubjective enactment within the field of practice; for understanding how this process is shaped historically, socially, culturally, discursively, materially and economically; and for understanding how the field is constituted and reconstituted through human agency (Kemmis 2010). I act intentionally towards a more educational training practice, influenced by my subjective dispositions, including the meanings and values that I hold; I engage with the resources and boundaries of the field in which I am formed professionally; and I engage with competing interpretive frameworks for making sense of practice, including understanding leadership and e-learning.

Within this process I develop the view of e-learning development as a similar process of enactment within the HRM field, in which the use of technology by trainers is shaped by institutional, interpretive and technological conditions (Orlikowski 2000), including programmatic values for training and assumptions about the nature of technology and technological development (Feenberg 1991). On this basis I see the issue of leadership development for e-learning as having to do with creating a dialogical space in which these values and assumptions may be critiqued, in which the possibilities for a more educational practice are explored democratically, and in which the focus is on exploring how we can exercise agency in our use of ICT for training and development – constructing e-learning as relational practice.

Chapter Four – Methodological Approach: *How do I show the situation as it unfolded?*

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss and justify the living theory approach to action research that I adopted for this study, and the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning my methodological choice. I locate this choice within a brief discussion of the different traditions of educational enquiry and the types of knowledge they permit. I describe how data was collected and analysed in order to generate evidence of the claim to knowledge, which is to do with the nature of my educational influence on my own professional development. I explain the ethical standards guiding my work, and I explain the measures I have taken to strengthen methodological rigour and validity.

4.2. The Foundations of Educational Knowledge

Research is one means by which people seek to understand educational phenomena and to extend educational knowledge. This Bassey (1999, p.38) defines as:

... systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom.

It is distinguished from other forms of knowing by virtue of a commitment to controlled and rigorous data collection and analysis, theory-testing, and the

validation and legitimation of knowledge claims, which are open to public scrutiny (Cohen et al. 2007).

Becoming an educational researcher entails developing subjectivity in a field in which there is increasing methodological diversity. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Gunter (2003) likens the process to one of struggle for distinction that involves the "*staking of symbolic capital regarding what is and is not relevant knowledge and knowing*" (ibid., p.16) and which is "*linked to who is accepted as having legitimate views, who is listened to, who is published, who is read, and who is talked with and about*" (ibid., pp.16-17). While to some extent the 'paradigm wars' (Gage 1989) have abated, and mixed-methods, mixed-paradigm research posited as a pragmatic solution (Greene 2007), the field remains one in which enquiry stances, in particular validity criteria, are contested and in which realist research that produces generalisable results is favoured by policy-makers and funders (Gunter 2001).

As Cohen et al. (2007, p.7) observe: "*Educational research has absorbed several competing views of the social sciences*", incorporating positivism, interpretivism, critical theory and post-modern perspectives. These traditions or paradigms in Kuhn's (1970) terms, which are by no means fixed categories but represent a typology of distinctions, are underpinned by assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and the grounds for knowledge about it (epistemology). This holds practical implications for the 'what' and 'how' of

research: that is, what it is possible to discover through research; and how one may go about it. Choosing and justifying a methodology and methods, therefore, draws the researcher into reflection *vis à vis* her own enquiry on what educational knowledge is, how it can be acquired, who can acquire it, how it can be justified and what status it carries (Crotty 1998). In particular, argues Pring (2004), how one makes sense of and uses the concepts ‘objectivity’, ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ in educational research affects the significance attached to it.

Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p.5) suggest that epistemology and ontology can be crudely assessed “*along a fairly arbitrary continuum*” between objectivist and subjectivist perspectives. At an ontological level these perspectives are termed ‘realism’ and ‘idealism’ (Crotty 1998) and can be distinguished thus: a realist view contends with an educational reality that exists independent of our consciousness of it; while an idealist view contends with an educational reality that is somehow contained in the conscious mind – a result of cognition and the ideas and concepts that structure that reality. At an epistemological level objectivism implicates realism, assuming that an objective truth and meaning resides ‘out there’ in real-world objects that the researcher can discover. By contrast subjectivism holds that meaning is imposed upon objects: knowledge, therefore, entails discovery of this ‘meaningful reality’. Between these binary opposites, Crotty (1998) locates a social constructionist epistemology which views knowledge as being contingent on human practices that arise out of

interaction between human beings and their world, that is the interaction between subject and object. Educational reality, in this view, is socially constructed, a position that he argues is at once realist and relativist (ibid., p.64):

To say that meaningful reality is socially constructed is not to say that it is not real ... [however] What is said to be ‘the way things are’ is really just ‘the sense we make of them’. Once this standpoint is embraced, we will obviously hold our understandings more lightly and tentatively and far less dogmatically, seeing them as historically and culturally effected interpretations rather than eternal truths of some kind. Historical and cross-cultural comparisons should make us very aware that, at different times and in different places, there have been divergent interpretations of the same phenomena.

Table 4: Research Traditions

	Positivism	Interpretivism	Critical	Post-modern
Ontology	Objectivist	Subjectivist	Objectivist	Subjectivist
Epistemology	Objectivist	Subjectivist	Subjectivist	Subjectivist

Adapted from Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p.5).

Another dimension on which we can distinguish between traditions is the focus of research (Hammersley 2007), with different approaches used to answer different questions (Pring 2004):

Positivism

The focus of positivist educational research is on identifying governing variables, including people’s feelings, behaviours and attributes, to the extent

that they can be objectively observed or measured, so that causal relationships may be established with sufficient predictive quality that these can be generalised across a variety of contexts. This is the type of research usually invoked in what Bridges (2007) notes is an increasing demand for research to inform ‘evidence-based policy’ by identifying ‘what works’ as the basis of policy formation and which valorises the medical research model of randomised controlled trials and systematic reviews (meta-analyses) of research.

Interpretivism

The focus of interpretive research is on understanding individuals’ experiences of education and to explore the meaning of events or phenomena within educational contexts from the subject’s perspective. While reasons are accepted as legitimate causes of action (Morrison 2007a), these are not reduced to fixed relationships (Hammersley 2007).

Critical Enquiry

The focus of critical educational research is on revealing how social and institutional practices sustain asymmetrical power relations so that alternative ways of working can be revealed. Like positivism the critical tradition is underpinned by an objectivist ontology but this takes the form of critical realism, which argues that there are hidden structures at work that are not spontaneously observable (Buchanan and Bryman 2007).

Post-Modernism

Post-modernism critiques modernism and the enlightenment ideal of rational progress. This paradigm represents a radicalised interpretivism, such that there is a renewed emphasis on how different groups construct reality in different ways (Hammersley 2007). The focus of educational research in this mode is on exploring the role of discourse, including language, in generating not just our experience of education, but also what happens in it.

In the next section I will clarify the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning my research, however, I wish first to acknowledge Bassey's (2007, p.141) observation that there is no agreed definition of what educational research is, which is relevant to the foregoing discussion:

Some see it as research that focuses on educational processes; some as research that seeks to improve educational practice; others as any research carried out in educational settings.

Here, Bassey (ibid., p.147) distinguishes between educational research, as research that “*aims critically to inform educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action*”, and sociological or psychological research in educational settings, which aim to inform sociological or psychological understanding of phenomena in these settings. This implicates an axiological dimension to research, which conflicts with the normative idea that research should be disinterested. It demands attention to educational concerns and “*to what is distinctive of an educational practice*” (Pring 2004, p.6), at the

same time recognising education as an essentially contested concept that embodies values that are themselves contested (ibid.).

4.3. My Research Perspective

Following Bassey, my interest lies in educational research as the basis for developing new understandings of professional development, which can inform the further development of training practice (Biesta 2007b), and in the possibility that training practitioners can explain their own professional development through systematic enquiry.

Like Lakoff and Johnson (1980) I perceive that objectivism-subjectivism may be a dialectical myth with neither providing sufficient grounds for understanding professional development as an educational phenomenon. The question which methodology must address for me is:

What is the nature of my professional development as I study educational leadership and research, and work with training colleagues to support their professional development by encouraging them to explore the educational potential of ICT for training practice?

This embeds ontology and epistemology as follows. Firstly, it embeds a view that there is an educational reality 'out there' that can be studied and that this is emergent, being both experienced and transformed in the interaction between meaning-making subjects and their environment, that is within particular relationships and within a particular cultural-historical context (Biesta and Burbules 2003). Meaning, therefore, lies neither in the objective world nor in

the subjective mind but in the dynamic transactions between the two and the truth of the meaning is enacted in the consequences of the interaction (ibid.; Greene 2007). This reality includes social objects, such as organisational culture, structures and rules that embed power relations. These implicate consciousness being reproduced and transformed by human actors but at any point in time they are antecedent to an individual's subjectivity, constraining meaning-making and action, and constituting a basis for intersubjectivity and concertive action (Bhaskar 1989; Cavell 2001, 2006). To inquire about reality is to inquire about the construction of meaning within a situation that is being existentially transformed (Barone 1992, p.31). On this view, knowledge and action are interconnected: "*knowledge emerges from action and feeds back into action, and ...it does not have a separate existence or function*" (Biesta and Burbules 2003, p.15).

The enquiry stance diverges from the common sense view that professional development is a process of acquiring knowledge and skills that are foundational for practice and embeds a view that learning, which is constitutive of professional development, entails an active process of meaning-making. Propositional knowledge is encountered as objects mediating understanding of practice situations, which may or may not be useful for addressing the problems of practice. Educational knowledge as the result of enquiry emerges from the experiences represented by individual and social responses to the environment *in the context of action* and can reveal possible connections

between meanings, actions and consequences (ibid.). The enquiry also embeds a critical dimension in terms of understanding the limits imposed upon professional development with a view to identifying spaces for new ways of being, doing and thinking (Foucault 1992).

The methodological question, then, is to do with how I can study professional development as a temporal, interactive process that entails problem solving, and which is shaped and constrained by personal experience and understandings, the socio-historical context in which I am situated (including social structures and knowledge objects), and the subject-positioning of other actors in this context. For this reason and on the basis of the assumptions outlined I choose an action research approach, which I now discuss.

4.4. Action Research

Action research is in its broadest sense a research approach in which change processes and knowledge production are elided, the objective being both to generate change and a theory of change concurrently. It has a complex heritage, and while it is often identified with the critical tradition, it has also been used by those working out of the positivist and interpretivist traditions (McNiff 2000). My focus here is on the tradition of action research carried out by educational practitioners on their own practice with the aim to improve it (Koshy 2005). Here professional practice and its institutional context is treated as the site for enquiry (Cochran-Smith 2005), which involves an ongoing

dialectic between action and research (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Anderson & Herr 1999).

There are many models of action research but most are elaborations of a basic cycle involving four key stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Research design is emergent (Koshy 2005; Reason 2006): reflection on one cycle of action leads to a revised plan for the subsequent cycle. Each cycle is perceived as a temporary answer to the research question, which itself changes during the research process as deeper understanding is achieved and higher order questioning becomes possible.

There is usually a commitment within action research to work collaboratively with those on whom practice impacts – treating them as co-researchers (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Action research should be mutually beneficial for both practitioner and co-researchers, and it is these co-researchers who will testify whether in fact practice has been ‘improved’. Action research is often underpinned by a political commitment to realising democratic and emancipatory values through the change project. This political commitment includes developing awareness of how external conditions distort and constrain understanding and action (ibid.), as well as democratising research (Altrichter et al. 1993).

4.5. Critiques of Action Research

Action research has a long tradition within the field of education but is the subject of critique (Cochran-Smith 2005). This is often drawn along ‘paradigmatic lines’, reciting the arguments embedded within the enquiry stances advanced by those working within particular research traditions. In particular, action research is challenged on ‘epistemological and methodological grounds’. Surprisingly, it is also subject to challenge from within the action research community itself on ‘critical grounds’.

Epistemological challenges to action research - ‘the knowledge critique’ (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999) - centre on questions of validity and value (or relevance), which constitute persistent epistemic criteria in the assessment of research quality (Furlong and Oancea 2005; Hammersley 2008). However, these are not universal principles being construed differently within different traditions. The first contention – as a general principle - that action research does not produce valid knowledge, is primarily (though not exclusively) rooted in a positivist conception of validity as “*essentially a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure*” (Cohen et al. 2007, p.133), and the satisfaction of conditions of replicability and generalisability. This rests on a correspondence theory of truth and a foundationalism (Hammersley and Gomm 1997) that justifies knowledge claims *inter alia* on the basis of empiricism and methodological procedures that transmit validity, a stance which is itself widely contested. (Alternative

criteria for the justification and legitimation of knowledge are made by alternative paradigms, such as authenticity, plausibility, credibility, trustworthiness etc.) In particular, bias, as a threat to validity, is treated as inevitable in some accounts of action research on the basis that it is not value-neutral or interest-free (Cochran-Smith 2005). However, the possibility of a value-free science is itself also widely contested (Lather 1986), which by no means implies a disregard for minimising the distorting effect of personal bias in establishing the truth value or trustworthiness of the knowledge claim.

The second argument concerns what type of knowledge action research can produce and whether it can be as valuable, beyond the immediate research context, as that produced by disciplinary research. In this respect some, while acknowledging the contribution of action research to teacher professional development, seek to distinguish it as a category of practical rather than formal knowledge (Hammersley 2003, 2004; Fenstermacher 1994). This is based on the assumption that there is a “*formal, theoretical or scientific form of knowledge for and about teaching*” (Cochran-Smith 2005, p.219). Formal knowledge is deemed more valuable on the basis that action research doesn’t generalise across contexts, can be difficult to synthesise, and its cumulative effects difficult to assess (ibid.). In this sense, it is not seen to make a major contribution to the advancement of the body of educational knowledge (Hammersley 2003). While it is true that action research makes no claim to generalisability in the positivist sense, it does aim to generate educational

knowledge that can have wider relevance and significance beyond the immediate research context, contributing to a knowledge base of educational practice.

The principal challenge to practitioner research on methodological grounds, which also relates to validity, is that it is not rigorous. Anderson (2001) suggests that this may in part be due to a perceived lack of a formalised methodology – there are no specific methods or techniques distinguishing action research (Altrichter et al. 1993; Feldman 2007). Winter (1982 cited by Cohen et al. 2007), in particular draws attention to the lack of a prescribed methodology for the interpretation of data. This may relate to a contested view that validity can attach to methods.

Critical grounds of challenge encompass what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) term ‘the ends critique’, focusing on the purposes of action research. Thus versions which are perceived to be more or less instrumental and lacking in connection to a wider social or political agenda are criticised (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999; Kemmis 2006). Furthermore, Whitehead and McNiff (2006) describe some forms of action research as performance management.

Defending Action Research

The purpose of research is to generate new knowledge (Koshy 2005). The epistemological foundation of action research is that new knowledge can be

generated by practitioners who systematically research their own practice, generating descriptions and explanations for it. Like all research it seeks to build on existing knowledge and involves gathering data and generating evidence in order to test an emergent theory (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). It is rigorous - drawing on many of the same sources of rigour as other forms of qualitative research, e.g. multiple sources of information, multiple processes for collection and analysis, comparing interpretations to the literature etc. (Dick 1999). However, the cyclical, collaborative process itself also enhances rigour through continuous reflexive and dialectic critique (Winter 2002; Feldman 2007). The validity or 'trustworthiness' of the theory can be established through triangulation (Koshy 2005) and social validation (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). Triangulation involves collecting a variety of data and gathering the different viewpoints and perspectives of those involved in the research (Koshy 2005), while social validation involves submitting one's claims to the critique of critical friends and validation groups at different stages during the research process (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). The validation group also considers whether methodological procedures have been fulfilled and the research criteria satisfied. Moreover, the knowledge generated is valuable. Without action research I would not be able to answer the research question: 'how do I integrate my studies in educational leadership and research with my practice as a civil servant in order to improve it?' I would not be able to explain my professional development in terms of my influence in my own learning. The answers to these questions constitute valuable knowledge in my

own context and carries significance for others in similar contexts who grapple with the challenges that e-learning presents for education and training personnel.

Hammersley (2003, p.15) says that “*studies which do not address intellectual problems of general interest are likely to be ignored*”, but that these are difficult to resolve and must, through a division of labour, be broken down. The development of leadership for e-learning is, I think, an intellectual problem of general interest for education and training. This can be broken down and the labour – at least in part - divided by action researchers considering the problems from their own practice context and thus contributing to a growing knowledge base of practice. Action research can be considered a part of the ‘*multi-disciplinary and multi-methodological portfolio*’ (Cochran-Smith 2005, p.223) of research approaches required to address complex educational problems, and the knowledge it generates valuable epistemologically, technologically, and economically (Furlong and Oancea 2005).

4.6. Living Educational Theory

In using action research I follow the ‘living educational theory’ approach developed by Whitehead (1989). This approach reconstructs educational theory as an explanation of educational influence, permitting the practitioner-researcher to account for her influence in her own learning, the learning of

others, and the education of the social formation. The claim to knowledge results from an action research enquiry into the educational researcher's own practice, beginning with the question 'how do I improve my practice?' The starting point for research is the experience of oneself as a 'living contradiction' simultaneously holding educational values and negating them in practice. It is the tension caused by this contradiction that “*moves us to imagine alternative ways of improving our situation*” (ibid.). Accounting for these contradictions and the actions taken to resolve them contributes towards the account of the practitioner-researcher's educational development. Educational values which are embodied in practice are gradually exposed through the research to become epistemological standards of judgment, which can be used to test the validity of the practitioner's theory. The creation of a living educational theory contributes an individual epistemology of practice, “*which taken together contribute to knowledge more generally*” (Lomax 2007, p.156).

A living theory approach to research is a rigorous process. It involves the practitioner-researcher producing evidence to show that she has improved her practice, and having the evidence validated by others (McNiff et al. 2003). It also involves the practitioner-researcher explaining what she means by 'improved' and providing evidence to support the claims.

4.7. Research Design

Design for action research is emergent but is guided by the following action-reflection cycle developed by Whitehead (1989) to form an action planner:

- I experience problems when my educational values are negated in my practice
- I imagine ways of overcoming my problems
- I act on a chosen solution
- I evaluate the outcomes of my actions
- I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations
... (and the cycle continues).

The action planners that I developed to guide the three action-reflection cycles of this study are presented at Appendices G, K and M.

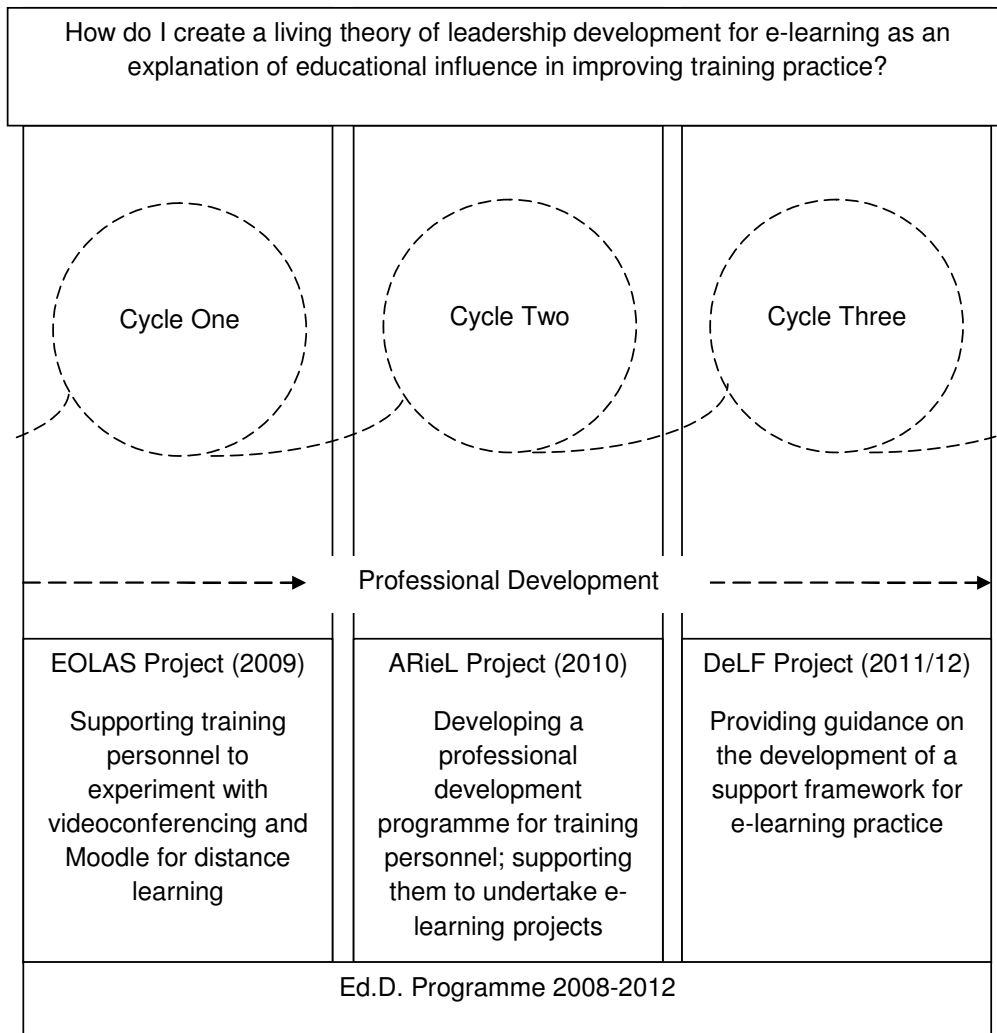


Figure 7: Action Research Cycles in Self-study of Professional Development

4.8. Research Participants

The research primarily focused on the development of my practice in relationship with training personnel in the Revenue Commissioners, whom I treated as co-researchers. In Cycle One I worked alongside them as a training colleague. However, in Cycles Two and Three I worked with them on a consultancy basis as by that time I was employed in another organisational function.

4.9. Data Collection

Qualitative data gathering focused on monitoring the development of my practice and research relationships, especially in relation to how I was exercising educational influence in my own professional development (McNiff and Whitehead 2009). This entailed monitoring the development in my own thinking about e-learning as an educational leadership issue and how it informed my practice with participants, as well as asking participants to reflect on their experiences and how these might have influenced their thinking and practice. Multiple methods and sources are used, as follows:

Ostensive Data

Ostensive means direct or clearly demonstrable and the idea of ostensive evidence relates to the demonstration of educational values in the process of their emergence in practice, whereby one can point to evidence that could be validated by the critical judgement of others (McNiff with Whitehead 2002).

Ostensive data gathering therefore related to capturing the action, which also relates to the development in thinking, and included the following:

- ***Moodle data*** as records of mine and participants interactions within the online learning environment, which I used to support the ARieL and DeLF projects. This included qualitative data in the form of a small amount of written contributions to discussion forums, wikis, glossaries etc., which inscribe meaning, and quantitative data in the form of usage logs that helped me understand which online resources were accessed by participants.
- Extensive ***e-mail correspondence*** with participants during the three action research cycles, which I maintained in an electronic archive as communicative artefacts that contribute to understanding unfolding relations, events and meanings.
- ***Documentary artefacts*** generated during research, including my own assignments as part of the Ed.D. programme, and texts that I produced and shared as part of the EOLAS, ARieL and DeLF projects, e.g. evaluation reports, training materials, meeting minutes etc.
- Selective use of ***video*** recording to generate observational data, which could be “*viewed and reviewed*” (Koshy 2005, p.104). This included

video of myself in the context of facilitating training sessions, action research participants' presentations of their own learning experiences to other training colleagues, and a validation meeting, each of which I could observe after the fact (ibid.) of my own participation in events, and use to reflect on practice (Moyles 2007). These contributed relatively holistic records of situations, albeit from the perspective of the camera, capturing movement (Altrichter et al. 1993) and the expression of embodied values and energy in the developing relationships (McNiff and Whitehead 2009).

Documentary Sources

Use was made of extant data in the form of official government and public service documents from the period 1992 to 2012, with particular reference to 'public service reform' / 'public service modernisation' initiatives and especially to changes in relation to the organisation of training and development. These contributed to understanding how my professional context evolved over the term of my employment as a civil servant (Cohen et al. 2007), the socio-historical influences on professional development, my own and my training colleagues', and to understanding how the agency of training personnel is structured. Fitzgerald (2007) is clear that such documents can provide valuable information about the context and culture of organisations, which can be triangulated with other data "*to read between the lines of official discourse*" (ibid. p.278). These documents are understood as historical

products (Scott 1990, p.x), produced for a particular, purpose, agenda, audience and context (Cohen et al. 2007), to facilitate interaction and having special effects in terms of shaping the practices and conduct of people (Dolan 2009, p.186).

Interviews

One-to-one, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with participants at the conclusion of the EOLAS, ARieL and DeLF projects, recorded in the MP3 audio format and subsequently transcribed. These were aimed at trying to understand the projects from the participant's point of view (Altrichter et al. 1993, p.101). The interviews are understood as intersubjective interactions or 'inter views' (Kvale 1996), where the form of discourse that emerged was jointly produced, shaped by the questions and answers (Mishler 1986). They are also understood, following Bruner (1985), as narrative forms of reasoning in which meaning was made of experience through its telling (Smith 2000), with the caution that this can only bring to light interpretations "*at the time and under the circumstances of the interview*" (Altrichter et al. 1993, p.101). This is consistent with the understanding that both interviewer (self) and interviewed (other) are "*constituted as subjects in the interface of discourses*" with specific historical and cultural conditions, including social and spatial relations, influencing narrative construction (Tamboukou 2008, p.104). It is also consistent with an understanding of each as a 'defended subject' that is not fully conscious to itself, and whose identity investment in subject positions

offered by discourses is biographically motivated (Hollway and Jefferson 2000).

Reflective Journal

Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) emphasise the importance in action research of treating one's own thinking as data that can be made available for re-interpretation, for which purpose the reflective journal is seen as an important research method (Altrichter et al. 1993) that can additionally, when combined with other data, contribute to "*ethnographic accounts of educational experience*" (Morrison 2007b, p.298). This I used to record and reflect on events, reactions, decisions, thoughts, ideas and feelings, which helped to chart the development in my thinking over the course of my study, and contributed to self-understanding (Cole and Knowles 2000). It also contributed to the development of the research by performing a level of initial qualitative analysis (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) and to my professional development as researcher (Koshy 2005) by making experience amenable to reflective learning processes (Moon 1999).

4.10. Data Analysis

Dadds and Hart (2001, p.169) signal the need for 'methodological inventiveness' where research serves the purposes of practice and the generation of new, valid understandings, which is "*more important than adherence to any methodological procedure*". This is the individual's unique

contribution in the creation of a living theory (Whitehead 2009), which must confront a tendency in qualitative research towards standardised analytical procedures that “*divide data into discrete fragments*” (Mello 2002, p.235) through processes of ‘coding’, which appear to serve the primary function of data reduction (see, for example, Miles and Huberman 1994) , and then re-organise it “*according to perceived connections or overarching themes*” (Mello 2002, p.235). These procedures are characteristic of what Bruner (1985) identifies as the ‘paradigmatic’ or logico-scientific mode of cognition, which “*operates by recognising elements as members of a category*” (Polkinghorne 1995, p.5). However, Bruner (1985, 1991, p.4) identifies a second mode of cognition – narrative reasoning – as the primary means by which “*we organize our experience and our memory*”, which “*operates by combining elements into an emplotted story*” (Polkinghorne 1995, p.5).

In generating my living theory of professional development I have iteratively synthesised data about actions, events, and happenings through narrative analysis (ibid.) in order to make meaning of situated experience. Formatively, this has generated new insights that have informed “*new episodes of practice*” (Whitehead and McNiff 2006, p.117), and summatively, it explains the transformation in my thinking and practice (McNiff and Whitehead 2009). This has been a recursive and reflexive process involving reading and re-reading data in its holistic forms and using narrative configuration “*to lay out happenings as part of an unfolding movement*” (Polkinghorne 1995, p.5)

through which connectedness (Bateson 1979) and subjectivity (Riessman 1993) could be explored. It addresses the three “*commonplaces of narrative inquiry*” (Clandinin et al. 2009, p.82): (1) temporality or transition over time; (2) sociality or the connection between personal conditions - feelings, hopes, desires, intentions etc. - and the social conditions under which experience and events unfolded; and (3) place as the boundary locations of enquiry and events. The “*thematic thread*” (Polkinghorne 1995, p.5) includes the clarification of educational values in their emergence in practice, which became criteria for transforming data into evidence of educational influence in professional development (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). This is underpinned by the use of theoretical resources, in particular Foucault’s work on power/knowledge, to interrogate the social, cultural and historical resources that influence self-understanding and narrative reasoning (Tamboukou 2008).

4.11. Ethical Considerations

For Mason (2002) such qualitative research must be conducted as a moral practice with regard to its political context, which, especially in ‘insider’ action research, entails political analysis of the research context and power formation within which the practitioner is located (Winter and Munn-Giddings 2001). In this study, ethical considerations are grounded first of all in the axiological basis of the enquiry outlined in Chapter One, and in the action research living theory methodology discussed above (Whitehead and McNiff 2006), and

remained to the forefront throughout. This required ongoing critical reflexivity with regard to possible tensions arising from *inter alia* my educational values versus managerial values for e-learning, my dual roles (standard organisational role and action researcher role) (Coghlan and Brannick 2005) and my positioning as an agent within working situations and relationships (Elliott 1991), my ethical responsibility to care for the wellbeing of colleagues (Winter and Munn-Giddings 2001) while navigating organisational politics, and my responsibility to produce good quality research (Mason 2002) and protect intellectual freedom – my own and others’ (McNiff and Whitehead 2006). While I was not in a formal position of power in relation to participants via the organisational hierarchy, my research clearly was conducted within a relationship of power in terms of the need to secure senior management support for its conduct, and in terms of secondary access to *political* information (Coghlan and Brannick 2005).

With respect to the ethical principal of beneficence I have tried to ensure that the experience of involvement in the action research was educational for participants, and for the social formation. It also entailed ongoing reflection on research design to ensure that research methods remained ‘*compatible with educational aims and democratic values*’ (Altrichter et al. 1993), which I hope will be evident in the forms and focus of data collection and analysis on developing intersubjective understanding. Additionally, I have worked within DCU’s ‘Guidelines on Best Practice in Research Ethics’ (DCU 2006) in the

conduct of my enquiry. The plain language statement and informed consent form, which I asked participants to sign, are included at Appendices E-F. These address issues of consent, withdrawal, confidentiality and the security of personal data, giving assurances to participants that I have observed in practice. A letter of consent from the Revenue Commissioner's Director of Training to carry out my action research work is also included at Appendix G. These documents contribute to the evidence-base of practice, which can be used in assessing the ethical validity of my research.

4.12. Rigour

I have incorporated Winter's (1989) six principles for action research to enhance methodological rigour as follows:

Reflexive Critique

The claims that I make for my research are modest, made with reference to personal experiences. They include critical reflection on the interpretations, assumptions and concerns that influence my judgements, as well as on the normative influences of the context in which I work.

Dialectical Critique

Dialectical thinking involves searching out contradictions within supposed unitary structures, which carries the possibility of change. My dialectical critique focused on an exploration of the apparent contradiction between my

espoused educational values and my practice, as I addressed myself to successive questions of the form ‘how do I improve my practice?’

Collaborative Resources

Project participants were co-researchers helping me to understand the nature of my practice through my work with them. I treated their insights and perspectives as contributing to an intersubjective interpretation of events. In particular, exploring the contradictions between viewpoints was a resource for further learning. This included contributions from the literature.

Risk

All change incurs risk. Exploring the possibilities for innovation and transformation through organisational use of e-learning required that I place myself at the centre of the change process and engage with risk: disturbing my understanding, practices and sense of competence as I moved outside my formal role; and submitting to the unpredictability of the process, the possibility of refutation and the critique of others.

Plural Structure

My research involved collaborating with others and engaging with their perspectives on the change process in which we were involved, as well as engaging with perspectives from the literature. My research account reflects this multiplicity of viewpoints.

Theory, Practice and Transformation

In my research I have treated theory and practice as interdependent. I questioned my practice in the light of theoretical understanding and modified it. In accounting for my transformed practice I have constructed a living theory of practice, which is capable of further transformation as practice is further modified. My living theory contributes to the development of a knowledge base of practice which may in turn inform the theoretical understanding of others.

4.13. Triangulation

Triangulation is attempted in this study, in the broadest sense, through the combination of multiple methods and sources to explore the research questions, situation and events in a multi-faceted way (Mason 2002), from different viewpoints, angles or perspectives (Elliott 1991; McNiff and Whitehead 2009), to help mitigate potential biases or limitations of individual methods/ sources (Greene 2007). In particular, this has been done to explore multiple interpretive perspectives (Vanderstoep and Johnson 2008) towards the development of intersubjective understanding, rather than in the classic sense of getting a 'true fix' on reality (Silverman 2000) through convergence or corroboration (cross validation) (Greene 2007), which both Mason (2002) and Silverman (2000) say is highly problematic. This is the distinction, in Denzin's (1970) terms, between data triangulation and methodological triangulation. This data

triangulation includes the idea of triangulation across time through longitudinal study to integrate the effects of social change, and triangulation through combined level analysis to integrate individual, interactional and collective perspectives (Cohen et al. 2007).

4.14. Validity

I have also incorporated the ideas of personal and social validity (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). Personal validation begins with accepting personal responsibility for the educational influences in my own learning, articulating the values that I say have guided my professional development, and testing the validity of the knowledge claim against these espoused values. In transforming these values into communicable standards of judgement for the research (see Chapter One) I also open the claims to processes of social validation and the critical judgement of others, including those with whom I have worked. This process I understand in relation to Habermas' (1987) four criteria for intersubjective agreement - comprehensibility, truthfulness, authenticity and appropriateness – which Farren (2005) articulates in dialogical form:

- Are the descriptions and explanations of the practitioner-researcher's learning comprehensible?
- Is there sufficient evidence to justify the claims being made?
- Are the values that constitute the enquiry as 'educational' clearly revealed and justified?

- Is there evidence of the practitioner-researcher's educational influences on the learning of others?

4.15. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the different traditions in educational research and justified the choice of a living theory approach to action research. This has allowed me to study my own professional development and to explain the nature of my educational influence in my own learning as I supported colleagues to explore the educational potential of ICT for the development of training practice. I have outlined the theoretical basis for the approach and described the form that it takes. This includes a description of the qualitative data collected and the data analysis process. I have also explained the bases on which my research can be considered ethical, rigorous and valid.

In the next section I show the development in educational knowledge over three action research cycles, which can be seen to implement the research design elaborated here.

Preface to Chapters Five, Six and Seven: *What kind of action did I take?*

The following three chapters show the development of my knowledge and practice over three action research cycles between 2009 and 2012 as I worked with training colleagues to explore the educational potential of ICT in the development of training practice. As this began, I was working alongside them as an IT Training Officer, however, in November 2009, following Cycle One, I moved to another function within the Revenue Commissioners. I wished to continue my work with them and so the projects developed in the following two cycles allowed me to act as a voluntary consultant. It is through these action research cycles in dialogue with participants, with socio-historical influences on practice, and with insights from the literature that I came to develop conceptual understanding of the nature of e-learning as an educational leadership issue and to re-frame e-learning as relational practice.

Chapter Five revolves around my work on the EOLAS project in 2009 during which I supported three trainers to experiment with delivering training using videoconferencing and Moodle for the first time, while learning experientially about the nature of the support required.

In Chapter Six I explain how the understandings developed through the experience of the EOLAS project provided the basis for the design of a

professional development programme, which I facilitated during the ARieL project in 2010. I explain the nature of my learning as I supported eight trainers to undertake their own enquiry-based e-learning projects.

Finally, in Chapter Seven I explain how knowledge of the nature of the challenges faced by trainers in the previous two cycles was integrated within the DeLF Project in 2011/2012, in which I supported a team of five personnel to investigate and develop elements of a support framework for e-learning. This chapter also deals with the development of the companion website for this thesis and the representation of knowledge developed through research in e-learning forms.

Chapter Five – Cycle One and the ‘EOLAS Project’ (2009)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a narrative analysis of my professional development between October 2008 and December 2009, which period includes my progress through the first three semesters of the ‘taught phase’ of the Ed.D. programme and the conduct of the action research ‘EOLAS Project’ in my workplace. This project was originally undertaken as a pilot study in fulfilment of the assessment requirements for Module FB602 Doing Research (see Appendix H). It extended my Masters-level action research in terms of my concerns with explaining my professional development, and with sharing my experience of dialogic collaborative forms of e-learning with trainer colleagues. You can see the tentative expression of these concerns in the action research planner for the EOLAS project at Appendix I.

I explore this process of professional development, in line with the ideas developed in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Three, in terms of emergence within intersubjective action or the always ongoing transactions between self, others and the material world (Dewey and Bentley 1949, Biesta and Burbules 2003), in which are implied cultural-discursive, social and material-economic conditions and relations (Kemmis 2010), and which process includes critical engagement with others’ knowledge claims. I relate this

process to Dewey's (1938) ideas about the intimate link between education and experience, and the central role of reflection.

5.2. Background

As in Chapter Two, this narrative begins at a time “*when many things have already taken place*” (Butler 2005, p.39), including: changes to the governance of training and development across the Civil Service since 2000 following an examination by the Comptroller and Auditor General (see Appendix B); grade integration and organisational restructuring in Revenue following the DIRT Inquiry (see Appendix D), and a service-level agreement with the University of Limerick in 2004 for the external accreditation of Revenue's ‘Modular Technical Tax Training Programme’ by the award of Diploma in Applied Taxation; the ten-year Towards 2016 framework for social partnership agreed in 2006, for which public sector pay awards were contingent on verification of ‘public service modernisation’; and a new phase of ‘public service reform’ announced in 2007 by the then Taoiseach (Ahern 2007) to include the publication of Annual Output Statements, an Organisational Review Programme, and the OECD benchmarking report discussed in Chapter Two. I draw attention to this report again here because I have come to understand its significance as a discursive resource on which many, including myself (see Appendix J), came to draw, and which I make sense of now in relation to the idea that power moves through discourse (Foucault 1980) to transform us into “*subjects whose sense of meaning and reality becomes tied to... [our]*

participation in the discourse” (Knights and Morgan 1991, p.252), which elaborates “*a view of the world in which problems are defined that the discourse can ‘solve’*” (ibid., p.253). The report marks a significant discursive shift, defining the ‘problem’ of public service ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ anew in terms of performance reporting and the focus on ‘inputs’ and ‘processes’:

As with many other OECD countries, the focus to date in Ireland has been on performance reporting, rather than managing for performance. Instead of focusing on inputs and processes, more information needs to be gathered on outputs and outcomes and what has actually been achieved, so that this can better feed back into measuring how the Public Service is meeting overarching targets and objectives. (OECD 2008, p.13)

This had the ‘truth-effect’ of re-constructing training and development activity as an input to ‘organisational capability’, the results of which must be measured through “*more rigorous evaluation*” (Department of An Taoiseach 2008a, p.31), and in Revenue, influenced the re-constitution of the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) Subgroup on Training as a Subgroup on Capability Development.

Of course, my professional development is also in *media res* and there is already the extant account of my experience of participating in the M.Sc. in Education and Training Management (e-Learning) at DCU between 2005 and 2007 and undertaking my first action research project in the workplace (Emmett 2007). In this I tried to share my learning in order to influence the response to the objective contained in Revenue’s Towards 2016 action plan to

develop distance learning for its accredited taxation programme. This was included on the basis of an anticipated ‘demand for access’ to the programme for ‘development purposes’ from staff who were not selected to undertake it for ‘business needs’, and for which purpose the possibility of facilitating self-study via distance learning seemed attractive to senior management.

Table 5 (below) includes an extract from the Revised Action Plan for Revenue, which I see as evidencing a particular cultural-historical conception of what distance learning is in its focus on the redevelopment of programme materials. This I make sense of in relation to Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2010) historical précis, which points to the foundations of distance learning in correspondence education that introduced ‘teaching through text’ using the new communications technology of mail (ibid., p.14), and to what Peters (1994) has termed the ‘industrial period’ of materials production in the latter half of the twentieth century, allied to the massification of education and the establishment of the Open University, for example. On this view, materials - whether text, audio or video etc. - bridge the distance between ‘teacher’ and ‘student’, simulating interaction by guiding internal, didactic conversation; but to hold onto such a conception is to miss the possibilities that Internet-based communications technologies, such as Moodle, present for developing new forms of genuinely dialogic interaction (Feenberg 2001).

In my 2007 research I was concerned about this conception and reflected that those involved in preparing for distance learning had never experienced an online learning environment, and that neither trainers nor trainees would be effectively supported by the systems and structures put in place if those implementing them did not themselves have a genuine understanding of the potential and challenges of distance learning mediated by ICT. In addressing this concern my action research work focused on creating experiential learning opportunities for those involved, but ultimately this work was not sustained as the ‘distance learning initiative’ was deferred because the budget was no longer available to meet the anticipated costs of outsourcing. It was to this idea, the idea of increasing access to training and development through ICT and supporting the professional development of training personnel that I returned to in the EOLAS project, this time in the context of doctoral studies in education leadership.

Table 5: Extract from ‘Towards 2016 – Revenue – Revised Action Plan’

Specific Initiatives/Commitments and corresponding Specific Actions to be taken over the duration of the pay element of the agreement	Performance Indicators
Development and implementation of a distance learning system for tax technical accredited programme	Feasibility study including costings completed by December 2006. Procurement process completed and programme material redeveloped to distance learning format by December 2007. Minimum of two distance learning groups established by September 2008.

(Revenue Commissioners 2007, p.3)

5.3. A Logic of Enquiry

At this time I was thinking naively in terms of how I might learn to ‘provide leadership’ for e-learning, which I see now reflects a ‘common sense’ understanding, discursively linked to the conception, criticised by Foucault (1981), that power is ‘something’ that can be held, given or taken. However, I was also beginning to engage with Biesta’s (2006, p.5.) ideas about democratic education and saw his central question as suggesting a logical form for a new action research enquiry:

... how we might understand and ‘do’ education if we no longer assume that we can know the essence and nature of the human being – or, to put it differently, if we treat the question of what it means to be human as a radically open question, a question that can only be answered by engaging in education rather than as a question that needs to be answered *before* we can engage in education.

Appropriating Biesta’s logic, which is influenced by Dewey’s pragmatist philosophy, I wondered what might happen to the ways in which we worked if I treated the question of what leadership for e-learning might mean as radically open, a question which could only be answered by engaging in dialogic collaborative action rather than a question which must (or even could) be answered before I/we began, and one which, in any case, would need to be asked and answered again and again in practice.

In Dewey’s formulation it is not the case that we first need knowledge about the world in order to act (Biesta and Burbules 2003). Rather, we are always already in interaction with an objective world in which we try to gain better control over our actions, and it is through these ‘organism-environment

transactions’, which for the most part are routine, that we ‘experience’ reality. Knowledge, therefore, arises in the transaction – firstly at the level of action and the way in which organisms respond to the environmental change that results from action, and only later revealed, in situations where habitual experience and ways of action are inadequate, through reflection “*in symbolic forms (like language)*” (ibid., p.11) and the development of knowledge objects that can help us to account for the relationship between actions and their consequences. On this view, we can only know the world – in terms of its response - by function of the ways in which we “*manipulate, interact with and intervene*” in it (Biesta 2009, p.37), and this knowledge of the possible relationships between actions and consequences can help us to plan and direct our subsequent actions more intelligently. In ‘knowing’ we are, in effect, constructing the world to account for the relationships between actions and consequences, and the world we construct will differ according to our approach. In other words, different aims – ‘to control’ versus ‘to care’, for example - will call into play different sets of relationships and produce different views of the world in which we act (Biesta 2009). Moreover, we never quite catch up with reality, which is always changing because of our interventions (Osberg et al. 2008) as knowledge emerges from and feeds back into action (Biesta 2009).

For professional development, the radical proposal, following Dewey, is that this is not accomplished by the “*acquisition of the organized bodies of*

information and prepared forms of skill, which comprehend the material of instruction” (Dewey 1938, p.3), that knowledge cannot, in fact, be separated from action, and that what is transmitted as “*knowledge of pre-existing practices, events, entities etc.*” (Osberg et al. 2008, p.213) are social constructions and merely material for hypothesisation. These can only be tested in action, which is also informed by the previous experiences through which the individual constructs her world (Biesta 2010). On this view, ongoing experiences provide the grounds for professional development, but may be miseducative – “*distorting the growth of further experience*” (Dewey 1938, p.13) - when, in Dewey’s words, “*dominated by the past, by custom and routine*” (Dewey 1910, p.156). This, for him, emphasises the importance of an experimental attitude toward testing the validity of our conceptual operations, including the cultural concepts, instruments or conventions that direct our hypothesisation and observation, which may be “*an obstacle for sensible action in the present*” (Miettinen 2000, p.63). This makes their re-interpretation, through the mobilisation of new concepts and resources, a central task of learning:

Learning can, therefore, be regarded as a relationship between culturally appropriated conceptions, ways of action and hypothesis and empirically new ways, deviating from previous and problematic elements in practical activity.
(Miettinen 2000, p.63)

The experimental mode that he describes, illustrated by Miettinen in Figure 8., prefigures the action research models discussed in Chapter Four and informs the logic of my own enquiry into my professional development and the

meaning of educational leadership for e-learning as enacted through three action research cycles, beginning here with the EOLAS project.

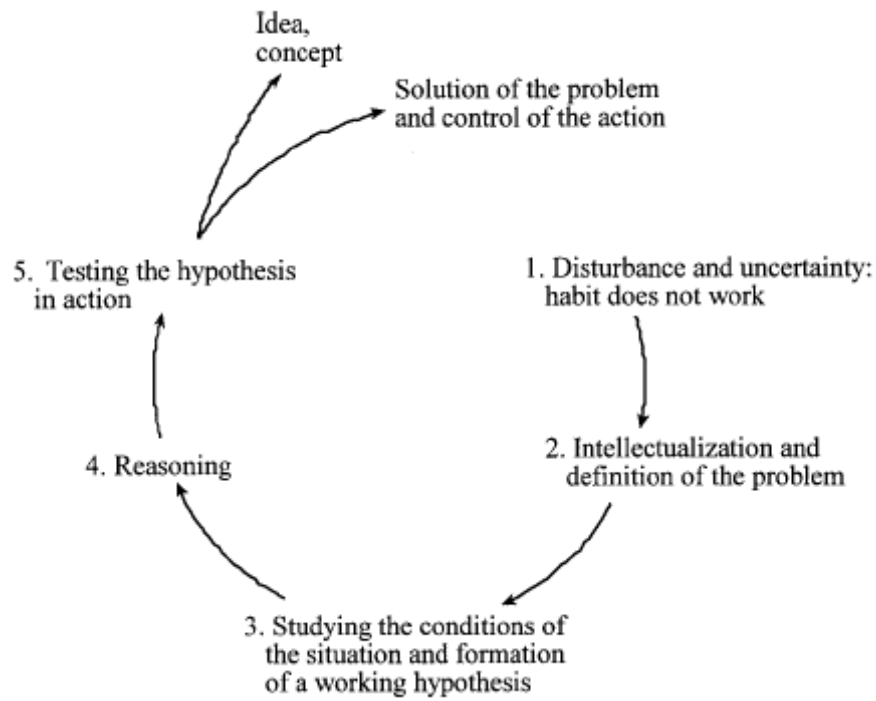


Figure 8: Dewey's model of reflective thought and action (Miettinen 2000, p.65)

5.4. Overview of the EOLAS Project: 'Learning from the Other'

I see the EOLAS project as underpinned by a desire to co-create a dialogic space with training colleagues in which we could collaboratively explore the educational potential of ICT for training practice and support our own professional development in the process, a space which could somehow mirror that which I had experienced during the M.Sc. programme. I include a short video clip from a recording that I made of the first of two workshops that I held

in Revenue Training Branch in November 2008 for Training Officers and Training Managers to introduce them to Moodle and to invite their participation with me in EOLAS. Prior to this I had set up my own website and installed Moodle in order to teach myself about site administration. I include the clip in light of Whitehead's (2005) advice about the communicative power of video to evidence the emergence of embodied educational values within practice. The full recording lasts for one hour twelve minutes, almost the full duration of the first workshop, of which just the first eight minutes or so taken up with a formal presentation using PowerPoint slides. I see the session, as a whole, as evidence of a growing discomfort with didactic instruction and of an emergent concern with supporting learning through experience. In the selected clip (see Clip 01, Appendix K), participants are responding to the invitation to explore Moodle for themselves using my site.

Table 6 illustrates the timeline for the EOLAS project, in which arising from these workshops it was agreed that I would work with three trainers, in what was authorised as a 'proof of concept' project for distance learning, to support them to experiment with adapting and delivering two training courses – Business Writing and VAT Module 1 (part of the accredited 'Modular Technical Tax Training Programme') – for delivery using Moodle and Revenue's videoconferencing suite, Polycom (see Project Plan – Appendix L). In this manner we co-created an experiential learning opportunity for ourselves, in which they came to experience at first-hand the multiple

challenges involved in mediated learning and I came to experience the challenges of supporting such an endeavour, not least the challenge of finding time and space for dialogue in the face of heavy training schedules and the additional pressure that the project schedule created. A formal project evaluation for the Director of Training provides evidence of our work (see Appendix M), although this is structured by a training and evaluation model I had yet to really deconstruct (see Appendix B.)

Table 6: Timeline for EOLAS Project

Date	Event
August 2008	– Project proposal
November 2008	– Introduction to Moodle Workshop (Group 1)
December 2008	– Introduction to Moodle Workshop (Group 2)
January-February 2009	– EOLAS Project Plan – Development of student distance learning handbook – Working with ICT&L Division to secure a Revenue Moodle installation for the project
March-May 2009	– Supporting re-development and delivery of VAT Module 1 for distance learning
April-May 2009	– Guidance note - ‘Supporting Distance Learners via Moodle Discussion Forums’ – Supporting re-development and delivery of Business Writing course for distance learning
May-June 2009	– Delivery of Advanced Excel course for distance learning – Developing Moodle resources for trainers - ‘Blended learning’, ‘Introduction to Moodle’ and ‘Moodle Sandbox’
June 2009	– EOLAS presentations
August 2009	– Interviews

November 2009	– Project evaluation report
December 2009	– Validation meeting

The EOLAS project plan included as an output the dissemination of knowledge and experience through some event, such as a workshop or seminar, which I hoped would contribute to ensuring that the collaborative work begun could be sustained by generating further interest in experimentation. Towards this end, in June 2009 I invited the EOLAS participants to share their learning with their colleagues through formal presentation, followed by question and answer, and invited all of the Training Officers and Training Managers in Revenue Training Branch to attend. I include here a video clip (see Clip 02, Appendix K) of one of the EOLAS participants – ‘C’ - as he gives an account of his experience delivering VAT Module 1 in terms of the problematic of diminished interaction with trainees and the disruption this presents to self-understanding of role and the established trainer-trainee relationship.

This, and later participant accounts through interview, have been central to my own learning about the ethical possibilities of a more educational training practice through ‘re-reading’ actual relations “*in terms of their engenderment of the ethical*” (Todd 2003c, p.3), that is, exploring what the encounter might offer in the way of understanding training as a site of implied ethics (Todd 2001). This has been an entirely different order of learning than anticipated, and exemplifies what Britzman (1998) calls ‘difficult knowledge’ – knowledge that one resists because it threatens the ego’s boundaries (Britzman 2000),

which character disrupts the possibility that the meaning of events can be set by their chronological order (Pitt and Britzman 2010). Here, affective force was felt long before events could be assimilated into meaning, which could only emerge through successive attempts at ‘working through’ EOLAS as a scene of subjective conflict for me (Britzman and Pitt 1996), between subject position and identificatory practices (Weems 2007). This exemplifies Todd’s distinction between ‘learning about’, which suggests a detachment between the learner and what is learned, and ‘learning from’ as psychological event (Todd 2003a) that

demands both a patience with the incommensurability of understanding and an interest in tolerating the ways meaning becomes, for the learner, fractured, broken, and lost, exceeding the affirmations of rationality, consciousness, and consolation (Britzman 1998, p.118).

Clearly, I knew that the action would unfold in anticipated ways but I believed that encounter with difference would be primarily intellectual (Oliver 2001), and I was quite unprepared for how I would be affected by it. Listening to participants’ accounts of problematic experience was suffused with anxiety about failure on my part, which I explore below in relation to my identification with the normative leadership ideal. Here, the unpredictability and singularity of the others’ meaning-making, which was not the “*self-reflecting mirror*” to my pedagogical desire (Britzman and Pitt 1996, p.121), was experienced as a rupture to self-identity that I initially tried to stabilise (ibid.) by identifying the problems ‘out there’ (see Appendix H) – the significant barriers to a dialogic collaborative meaning and practice that included, for example, an observed

tendency towards reifying e-learning as electronic delivery of content (see Analytic Memo – Appendix N). This resistance to the interruption of self-identity by the other (Todd 2003a) I observe to produce a moment of defensiveness in a video clip from a validation meeting with participants, in which I am addressing the value I attach to the possibilities ICT presents for increasing opportunities for dialogue and cannot fully attend to ‘C’'s meaning-making (see Clip 03, Appendix K). Neither can I attend to the dialogic opportunity that this rupture in meaning presents (Pinchevski 2005) for exploring the space between the idea of dialogue as interactive feedback in the transmission-acquisition process, which is diminished when the trainer is not co-present to mediate the content, and the idea that training content might itself become more dialogic and collaborative – to allow genuine space for trainees to ‘intervene in’ and co-construct the curriculum. Neither can I attend to the dialogic opportunity for exploring whether ICT could have been thought or used ‘otherwise’, that is, exploring the space for trainers to exercise agency in how they use ICT in line with their concerns and values.

For me, this underlines the ethical obligation that Britzman and Pitt (1996) signal, for teachers to explore their own conflicts in order to control re-enactment in pedagogical encounters, and their repetition of strategies for self-mastery, which can interfere with consideration of the needs or interests of learners. In ‘working through’ attachment to a leadership identity and how this might have been structuring my understanding of others, my capacity to attend

fully to the differences that marked their experiences (Todd 2002) I see, following Todd, that the disruption to self-identity that the Other brought marked the limits of knowledge and technique and therefore, inaugurated the possibility of learning (Britzman 2000) through setting the conditions “*for profound alteration of the ego*” (Todd 2001, p.445). In this sense I was ‘learning from the Other’ (Todd 2003a) who was calling me into response – “*an ethical demand in its relational aspect*” (Zembylas 2005a, p.62) – to the very place where Levinas (1974) perceives subjectivity to emerge, the place of responsibility.

It is in this space, in a place of vulnerability and susceptibility to the Other, that I come to think about the ethical implications of supporting trainers to explore the educational potential of ICT. Here, I realise the extent to which e-learning may constitute a ‘difficult knowledge’ for trainers because it disrupts established roles and relationships, and because the unpredictability of the Other’s response to changed practice poses a threat to accomplished trainer self-identity, which is also structured through performance management, for example. This, therefore, is the place of ethicality in training, within a pedagogy structured by demand for ‘learning to become’, which might not be as painless as we like to believe (Todd 2001), and we are obliged to attend to the experience of exposure or risk our training may provoke, the incitement to anxiety, to be receptive to what is unpredictably returned to us: “*the meanings that students make and the vulnerabilities that accompany them*” (ibid., p.439).

In responding to the ethical demand, then, I begin to draw on Oliver's (2001) concept of witnessing as the seat of subjectivity, through supplying "*the possibility of address that sustains psychic life and the subject's sense of its subjective agency*" (ibid., p.17); a process of witnessing that has the double meaning of eye-witness or bearing witness to what is unseen. This can only be sustained by response-ability, "*the condition of possibility of response*" (ibid., p.15), which engenders "*an obligation to respond but also to respond in a way that opens up rather than closes of the possibility of response by others*" (ibid., p.18). I try anew to take-up a position of witness to trainers' struggles to make e-learning meaning and to offer social support for signification so that they can take up their positions as speaking subjects (ibid.). I try to develop "*the capacity to listen and be moved by the other*" (Todd 2003b, p.41), to "*hear and respond to the difference upon which more just forms of relationality can be made*" (Todd 2002, p.410).

5.5. Reflection-on-Action: Reinterpreting Leadership

The conclusion of the EOLAS programme was, for me, a 'cessation' rather than a satisfactory 'consummation' (Dewey 1934), and there remained a significant need to make meaning of the content of the experience, in particular to resolve a felt conflict between experience and the socio-cultural meaning of leadership that had been structuring my action. For me, this was radically called into question as I recognised and engaged with a plurality of competing leadership knowledge claims through the Ed.D. programme, and as I 'suffered'

the consequences of action (Dewey 1916) through EOLAS in the sense of a perceived failure to live up to the normative leadership ideal. For Dewey, such states of “*perplexity, hesitation, doubt*” (Dewey 1910, p.9) guide reflective thought in which the central function is to make meaning of objects and events. This targets the beliefs that structure our hypothesisation, action, observation and interpretation, and entails consideration of the grounds or basis for these beliefs (including knowledge claims), as well as their consequences for other beliefs and actions. This is what Boud et al. (1985) call ‘returning to experience’ (see Figure 9), what Schön (1983) refers to as reflection-on-action, and what Dewey (1910) describes as the inductive-deductive, double movement back and forth between partial, confused data or facts and the entire situation, or the recursive movement between primary experience – gross experience that provides the material for reflection – and secondary or reflective experience, in which we develop ‘objects’ (theories, equations etc.) to help us understand primary experience. For Mezirow (1991), who draws on critical theory, this has an explicitly emancipatory aim towards transforming “*uncritically assimilated meaning perspectives*” (ibid., p.4) that constitute our frames for interpreting experience by means of the reassessment and correction of “*epistemic, sociocultural or psychic*” (ibid., p.168) distortions.

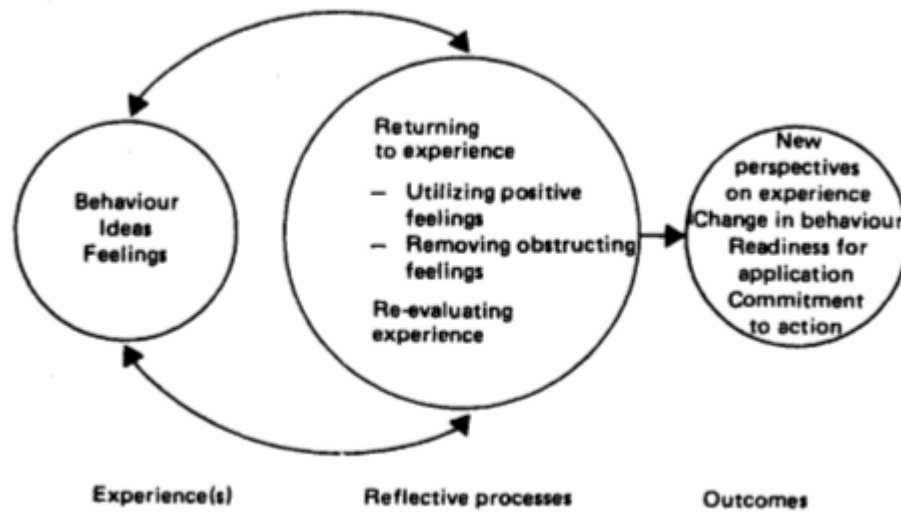


Figure 9: Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1985, p.36) model of reflection

Leadership concepts are bound up with the “*network of institutions, traditions and artifacts [that] precede the individual and offer tools for thinking and action*” (Erlandson 2007, p.31), and following EOLAS I saw a need to submit the socio-cultural concept that had informed my thinking and action to critical reflection in order to make sense of the experience. In this exercise, Foucault’s ideas about the intimate link between knowledge and power – always co-present in discourse - and the significance of ‘genealogies of knowledge’ for making explicit this link through uncovering the history of “*the constitution of knowledges, discourses and domains of objects*” (Foucault 1980, p.117) have provided new thinking tools, which add significantly to Dewey’s (and Mezirow’s) concept of reflection. These suggested the possibility of re-interpreting my understanding of leadership in terms of its historical formation within relations of power and power-knowledge effects, and, in revealing its contingency, showing the possibilities for thinking and acting otherwise

(Foucault 1988). Undertaking a preliminary sketch for a genealogical analysis of 'leadership knowledge' within the public service context, therefore, provided a frame for reflection on why I was reproducing a particular concept of leadership within my research proposal and action planner, and what the effects of such a concept are, in particular, the effects on (my) professional subjectivity.

The purpose of such analyses, says Townley (1994), are to disrupt 'self-evidencies' (what one might call common sense) in order to make intelligible the processes by which concepts become culturally accepted as apparently 'natural' or 'objective', and how these processes "*affect both what is known and what is done*" (ibid., p.2). A genealogical analysis of leadership, therefore, would constitute an investigation into the involvement of knowledge in the production by which objects become known, and the order these techniques create, in other words, the production of a technology of power.

The starting point for my analysis was my reproduction of a particular concept of leadership within my research proposal to DCU for entry to the Ed.D. programme (see Appendix J). This followed the OECD's report on the Irish Public Service in April 2008, which drew extensively on the leadership signifier, invoking it 84 times as part of the 'solution' to the 'problem of public service reform'. This, in essence, is how discourse - a set of ideas and practices - works: conditioning our ways of thinking and acting by "*elaborating a view*

of the world in which problems are defined that the discourse can solve”

(Knights and Morgan 1991, p.253). When we come to understand the world in these terms then we develop social practices that reproduce this conception as ‘truth’ (ibid.). We become subjects, formed through discourse, “*whose sense of meaning and reality becomes tied to their participation in the discourse and practice*” (ibid., p.252).

I began to see that the publication of this report had marked a discursive shift in the use of the leadership signifier, which had hardly featured at all in ‘Delivering Better Government’ just over a decade earlier, and that the report, as ‘knowledge work’, constituted an epistemological resource, which could be used to justify positions staked within subsequent documents, including Transforming Public Services (Department of An Taoiseach 2008a), the Public Service Reform Plan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011a), and the Learning and Development Framework (Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2011a), all of which framed the OECD report as authoritative. Significantly, the report also ‘cherry-picked’ the knowledge work of Wallis and McLoughlin (2007) to justify the claim that:

... improving leadership is not only a question of identifying and developing skills and competencies, but also of building incentives for “unleashing” leadership through the delegation of further responsibilities ... [which] should always go hand-in-hand with a stronger emphasis on performance management ...
(OECD 2008, p.118)

In fact Wallis and McLoughlin's research is underpinned by what Gunter (2001) refers to as 'laboratory epistemology', involving the deconstruction of leadership "*into behavioural and task functions such as visioning, and decision-making ...*" (ibid., p.55) and which, like the competency framework, is the product of organisational psychology. It claims to diagnose 'leadership effectiveness' in the Irish Public Service through deployment of a '360-degree feedback' survey instrument in order to:

... identify those behaviours that need to be developed since they are infrequently used or can moderate the liabilities associated with frequently used behaviours.
(Wallis and McLoughlin 2007, p.327)

Clearly, significant challenges have been posed about this type of neo-positivist leadership research (Alvesson and Deetz 2000), in particular the dominance of survey instruments, which "[force] *research objects to respond to prestructured, standardized, easily processed response alternatives*" (Alvesson 1996, p.461), and which assume/create leadership as a stable object (Alvesson and Deetz 2000) - what Berger and Luckman (1966) refer to as 'objectivation' - while neglecting the "*constitutive, perspectivating nature of language*" (Alvesson 1996, p.458). Here, the concern is that a complex and socially constructed phenomenon is 'reduced' (Alvesson 2011) through methodological procedures to 'control meaning' and explain structural and aggregated aspects (Alvesson and Willmott 2012) by "*impos[ing] definitions on ambiguous social reality*" (Alvesson and Deetz 2000, p.55). This is implicated in Gunter's (2001) analysis of 'transformational leadership', for

example, which she observes to tie leadership to behaviours – as Wallis and McLoughlin do - and is characteristic of what Gronn (2009b) describes as ‘normativist leadership advocacy’ and the prescription of conceptually-grounded models, underpinned by a concentrated view of leadership as personal capacity, which exaggerates “*the agency or ability of any one person to make a difference*” (Gronn 2010, p.416).

Given the plurality of leadership knowledges, genealogical analysis suggests why such a normative leadership model might constitute a ‘preferred knowledge’ (Gunter 2001) by drawing attention to the dependence of management as a ‘discipline’ on “*techniques designed to observe, monitor, shape and control behaviour*” (Townley 1994, p.5). In this light, the utility of Wallis and McLoughlin’s (2007) ‘leadership knowledge’, as opposed to others that might be more ‘accurate’, lies in its capacity to make leadership thinkable as a set of behaviours that can be measured, with the important consequence that the population of public service managers can become knowable and thus amenable to intervention through ‘leadership training’, for example. One sees earlier hints of such ambition in the OECD’s (2001) ‘Public Sector Leadership for the 21st Century’, which points to the desirability of public administrations defining competence profiles, identifying and selecting leaders, and training leaders continuously. The question of ‘why leadership and why now?’ is thus answered obliquely by re-framing the articulation of leadership as politically useful, producing a ‘truth’ that can ensure the creation/maintenance of

particular relations of power viz. the top-down implementation of reform objectives by inducing managers to incorporate power, which is to say power's aims, over their own attitudes and behaviours through identification with the leadership imperative suggested by the reform discourse.

In this vein, critical management studies confront a suspicion that contemporary leadership discourse is central to new forms of organisational control that manifest in the 'management of identity' (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) in order to secure greater levels of employee commitment and self-regulation (Roberts 2005), a suspicion which may be justified by the observation that contemporary leadership discourse targets and embraces a "*widening range of managers, including middle and junior managers*" (Sveningsson and Larsson 2006, p.203). The effect of this Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1163) conceptualise "*in processual terms as identity work and struggle ... [arising in the] interplay between organizational discourses, role expectations, narrative self-identity and identity work*", elsewhere noting that cultural change, which we can say characterises 'public service reform', provides "*a significant regulative context for identity work*" (Sveningsson and Larsson 2006, p.204). At issue here is how the normative leadership ideal articulated in the OECD report, *Transforming Public Services* and elsewhere works to enjoin the public service manager - like me - to position themselves within, and become committed to, the leadership discourse, to incorporate it into narratives of self-identity and to develop a leadership self-image that is

congruent with reform objectives (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). The leadership identity is potent because it has positive cultural valence and can be a source of greater self-esteem, significance and affirmation than a managerial one (Carroll and Levy 2008), but the risk to subjectivity is that such identification can narrow decision-making to alternatives deemed compatible with affirming the identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) and prove fundamentally alienating. This was my experience as, against the mirror of this leadership ideal, I struggled with a ‘deficit view’ of myself through EOLAS, a sense that I was failing to ‘communicate’ a dialogic collaborative view of e-learning and to ‘exercise influence’ in this direction, which I can now see reflected a distinctly strategic rationality at odds with my own educational values (see Chapter Seven).

For some (see for example, Cederström and Willmott 2007; Jones and Spicer 2005), however, the Foucauldian account of the subject formed through discourse is over-determined and we should recognise it as a “*congenitally failing operation*” (Rose and Miller 1992, p.190), just as it has ultimately failed here. For these, Lacanian psychoanalysis has potential for exploring the relationship between desire and subjectivity and for explaining why, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000) puts it, an individual might invest in a discourse, as I had.

The Lacanian subject, like the Foucauldian subject, is de-centred, which is to say not autonomous to itself, but also subject to unconscious desires (Cederström and Willmott 2007), having “*impulses and desires that compel action*” but that are not “*immediately accessible*” (ibid., p.2). Subjectivity is defined by an ‘ontological lack’ – or stated positively, a sense of fragmentation - that structures the subject, who desiring to compensate for the inability to achieve a state of unity identifies with images that suggest unity. The origin of this formulation is the ‘mirror stage’ in which the child, who is moving from a stage of unity with the primary care-giver towards individuation, comes to identify with a ‘specular’ image of herself in a mirror or the other’s gaze. This is, for Lacan, an act of misrecognition that will be endlessly repeated - there is nothing in the image “*that can guarantee a definite and stable meaning*” (Cederström and Willmott 2007, p.3) – and, for Roberts (2005), is central to understanding vulnerability to mechanisms of disciplinary power.

... the attempt to secure the self by seeking to make oneself into the object of the other’s desire and thereby to complete oneself in the gaze of the other. Here, the power of the other is the power of recognition: a power made more forceful by the difficulty of discerning quite what it is the other wants (ibid., pp.630-631).

In the civil service workplace, this gaze is institutionalised in the forms of performance management and competitive, competency-based promotions, in which are manifest the power of recognition. These individualise and set the scene for “*narcissistic preoccupation with how the self and its activities will be seen and judged*” (ibid., p.620) and for identification with ‘organisation

ideals', like leadership, which promise "*pleasures of competence and accomplishment*" (Casey 1999 cited by Roberts 2005, p.624) and the desired for recognition of oneself as valuable, lovable. The underside of this argues Casey (Ibid.) manifests in psychic distress and anxiety as the gap between ideal and actual performance reflect back on the individual, which has been my own experience. Here the frontier of control had shifted to myself and was "*played out in the form of ambivalence as to whether the organizational ideal should be rejected for misrepresenting reality or the self should be rejected for failing to live up to the ideal*" (Roberts 2005, p.625) and I endured anxiety about "*being seen and seeing [my]self as inadequate or incompetent*" (ibid., p.630).

5.6. Conclusion

I make sense of my professional development in this cycle in terms of the back and forth movement Dewey (1910, 1929) describes, between primary and secondary experience, in order to make meaning that can guide "*subsequent understanding, appreciation and action*" (Mezirow 1991). Here, the experience of EOLAS project represented a 'disorienting dilemma' (ibid.), which, though initially felt as personal failure and a threat to self-identity, ultimately provided the trigger for 'critical reflection' on the epistemological and socio-cultural assumptions (and distortions) governing my thinking and action (Brookfield 2009). In particular, it provided the grounds for investigation into the power dynamics that frame training practice and leadership knowledge production, and my collusion in the exercise of

disciplinary power through investment in leadership discourse (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) - attachment to a leadership identification (Roberts 2005). This carries ethical significance for a more educational training practice, for movement from identification with normative ideals to identification with my actions and their consequences for others, and a radical taking of responsibility that is possible when agency is not so absorbed by preserving self-image (ibid.).

Chapter Six – Cycle Two and the ‘ARieL Project’ (2010)

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I explain the development in my thinking and action during 2010 as I undertook a second cycle of action research in my workplace. This coincided with the end of my formal studies in educational leadership and research as the taught component of the Ed.D. programme drew to a close in June 2010 with the modules ES602 Leadership in Improving Learning Organisations and ES604 Research-Based Educational Leadership. It also coincided with a changed professional context for me as I ceased to be a Training Officer at the end of 2009, having transferred to Revenue’s Internal Audit function. Professional development at this time, therefore, also entailed developing subjectivity as an auditor in a new field of practice. The chapter deals with the development and implementation of a professional development programme for Training Officers in Revenue’s Training Branch, by which means I hoped to continue the work commenced during the EOLAS project (Chapter 5) and to collaborate anew with (now) former training colleagues. I hoped to encourage and support them to investigate how they could use the opportunities presented by new forms of ICT to enhance their training and development practice, at the same time as investigating my own capacities to do this.

I begin by reflecting on how my experience of the EOLAS programme influenced my thinking at this time and shaped the proposal for action, before explaining how I examined my “*culturally appropriated*” conception (Miettenen 2000, p.63) of curriculum as a prelude to development of a curriculum for the ARieL (Action Research in e-Learning) programme. Then I give a brief overview of the ARieL programme, and reflect on how a critical incident provided the spark for enquiry into the relationship between emotions and learning, and for my ‘emotional education’ (Crawford 2005).

6.2. Background

Challenging the view that learning is the acquisition of something external that exists prior to the act of learning, Biesta (2006, p.26) argues for an account of learning as a response “*to what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs us.*” The EOLAS project was an unsettling experience for me, one which entirely disabused me of the notion that I could in any ontological sense continue to think of myself as engaged in a process of learning how ‘to provide leadership for e-learning’. This experience was underlined by my epistemological investigation into leadership during research assignments for the Ed.D. modules, and in particular through an exposure to critical management studies, which challenge the managerial framing of organisational theory and practice (see for example, Alvesson and Willmott 1992). Following McNiff (2000), I could now say that leadership like power was not an ‘it’, and certainly not something that could be provided. Rather, I could see that it only made sense to

think of leadership as emergent, enacted within a network of relations, which are always mediated *inter alia* by culturally-derived rules, divisions of labour, and especially by “*artefacts or tools (including symbols and linguistic systems) which purport to represent experience, accumulated learning or solutions to previously encountered problems*” (Gronn 2000, p.237) and, therefore, constitute dominant interpretive frames within a field.

For me, what had been at stake in EOLAS was the possibility of a more dialogic collaborative form of e-learning than had emerged. However, it was only when I could begin to move from identification with a leadership ideal that exaggerates individual agency and had engendered a sense of failure, that I could begin to see the significance of the experience for learning in terms of recognising the social artefacts and programmatic values through which training practice is understood and authorised (see Chapter Two), and, therefore, the limits these might present to the possibilities for e-learning meaning-making. And it was only then, following Eisner’s (1993) logic, that I could begin to think about the kind of experience that might make possible the development of a dialogic collaborative understanding, which would require time/ place to try and explore the collective background of thoughts, beliefs, values and assumptions shaping training practices. This required, first of all, that I open myself to being educated by the difference that ‘C’'s meaning of dialogue represented (see Chapter 5) and to re-thinking my own understanding.

Part of the problem, Stewart and Zediker (2000) suggest, is that ‘dialogue’ has suffered from being defined so generally as to become synonymous with almost all human contact, and that it is helpful to understand the term more narrowly in order to preserve the distinction that it permits (ibid., p.224). They see that classroom encounters occur along a monologic-dialogic continuum, in which there are multiple, overlapping and shifting tensions to be continually negotiated, for example, between ‘letting the other happen to me’ and ‘holding my own ground; between ‘univocality’ and ‘multivocality’; and between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ . They see Aristotle’s distinction between poiesis and praxis as helpful to understanding how to move towards dialogism as a communicative ideal that signals a willingness to suspend one’s fixed position in order to understand the other’s standpoint and reasoning. This illuminates the difference between approaching e-learning as a ‘making action’ for which technical knowledge is required to bring a ‘product’ into existence, or as a ‘doing action’ where the end is not to produce a product but to realise some morally worthwhile good that is inherent to the action itself, and which relies on practical wisdom, embodying ethical considerations, to mediate cultural understanding and the specific situation at hand. This, to me, signals a space for agency and movement from monologic to dialogic modes of practice (see Table 7); a space in which trainers can clarify their values for use of ICT and approach e-learning as a relational practice; a space in which what constitutes ‘worthwhile ends’ can be negotiated dialogically rather than accepted programmatically.

Table 7: Constructing the Poles of the Monologic-Dialogic Training Continuum

	Monologic training	Dialogic training
Aim/purpose	To transmit certain values and meanings as authoritative	To support critical thinking and intersubjective understanding
Knowledge	Fixed; separate from people; a commodity that can be transmitted and acquired – not altered by the encounter	Contingent socio-cultural meaning-making; open to re-interpretation in the light of new interpretive frames, which may arise out of the encounter itself
Trainer	‘Expert’ who transmits knowledge to ‘less knowledgeable’ trainees but is not herself educated by the encounter; her ‘knowledge-base’ remains unaltered	Co-learner who brings different experiences and meanings and is open to being educated by the encounter and the experiences and meanings others bring
Trainee	Acquires knowledge transmitted by trainer but is not involved in knowledge creation	Brings personal knowledge to bear in co-constructing new knowledge through the encounter
Curriculum	Content is ‘univocal’, presenting a single interpretive frame	Content is multivocal, contemplating multiple interpretive frames
Texts/Materials	Serve as transmission or monologic devices: ‘the meaning is in the text’	Serve as resources to thinking: meaning is constructed ‘intertextually’ and intersubjectively

6.3. Concepts of Curriculum

Following the logic of enquiry outlined in Chapter Five, I saw the relevance of concepts of curriculum for the development of the ARieL programme and the

desirability of examining my conceptualisation in the context of re-examining the foundational texts of my trainer biography (McDermott 2012). In such an autobiographical manner, suggests Pinar (2004, p.25), might curriculum theory speak “*from the subjective experience of history and society, the inextricable interrelationships among which structure educational experience*” - for curriculum as a socio-cultural construction (Grundy 1987, p.5), framed by the context for curriculum (Barnett and Coate 2005). This examination has been aided by Smith’s (1996, 2000) discussion of the four major conceptual approaches to curriculum theory and practice, which has provided an important ‘thinking tool’ for reflection on practice in distinguishing between concepts of curriculum as: (1) ‘content’, which places emphasis on the transmission of a body of knowledge (or syllabus); (2) ‘product’, which places emphasis on the achievement of certain effects (or outcomes) in students; (3) ‘process’, which places emphasis on the dynamic, unfolding interaction of teachers, students and knowledge in situ; and (4) ‘praxis’, which extends the process model with an explicit emphasis on emancipatory aims and challenging structures of domination.

Reflecting on Smith’s typology, I would say that until recent years my understanding of curriculum related to the selection and sequencing of knowledge content for transmission through programmes or courses, which understanding was influenced by my experiences of education. This was later intensified by my trainer formation and the language of ‘outcomes’ and

‘organisational capability’, all within a technological view of training as concerned with the production of the skilled and knowledgeable worker - the ‘delivery’ of behaviour change, as emphasised in this learning outcome for the Train-the-Trainer course I attended:

By the end of this programme you will know ... how to design and deliver a training solution that gives participants the skills and behaviours for which the programme was designed.

And in Garavan et al.’s (2003, p.20) definition of training in their influential text, ‘Making Training and Development Work: A Best Practice Guide’:

We define training as a systematic process through which an employee is helped or facilitated to master defined tasks, or competencies for a definite purpose. It specifies the correct way of doing the task and identifies specific behaviours that should be demonstrated.

This, then, was my understanding of curriculum as both content and product, though, in fact, the question of curriculum is rarely engaged with in the training context, for while questions of educational aims, values and moral purposes are considered central to curriculum (White 2004), training is constructed as dichotomous with education, which serves the contention, repeated here by Kelly (2009, p.86), that content or product models that pre-specify objectives “*are fine for planning programmes of learning or instruction, activities which are quite appropriately linear and instrumental*”. This accords with the discursive framing of the ‘unitary organisation’ (Knights 2009, p.149) and the apparently natural and neutral position that training’s aims, values and purposes are, in any case, already supplied by corporate business strategy, HRM strategy and the Civil Service Learning and Development Strategy (see

Figure 10), and that neither these nor the knowledge claims that training seeks to reproduce are in any sense politically contingent. The concept of training curriculum then, such as it is, owes its ontological and epistemological foundations to industrialisation and ‘scientific management’ and to a line of ‘scientific’ curriculum-makers including Bobbit (1918, 1928), Tyler (1949) and Mager (1962). These constructed curriculum development as a technical process, central to which is the formation of behavioural objectives that can provide the basis for selecting content, sequencing and organising instruction, and evaluating attainment. These influences can be discerned in the context for action in the reproduction by the Civil Service Training and Development Centre of the ADDIE (Analyse-Design-Develop-Implement-Evaluate) instructional design model as the ‘Training Cycle’ (see Figure 5, Chapter Two), a so-called ‘best practice’ approach (CSTDC 2011b):

It is important for Departments to pursue a systematic, proactive approach to L&D. One such approach that is often used by organisations is the Training Cycle. It advocates a scientific approach to the analysis of L&D needs. The Training Cycle helps organisations to prioritise those needs and to express them in measurable terms that are linked to organisational objectives.
(CSTDC 2011a, p.12)

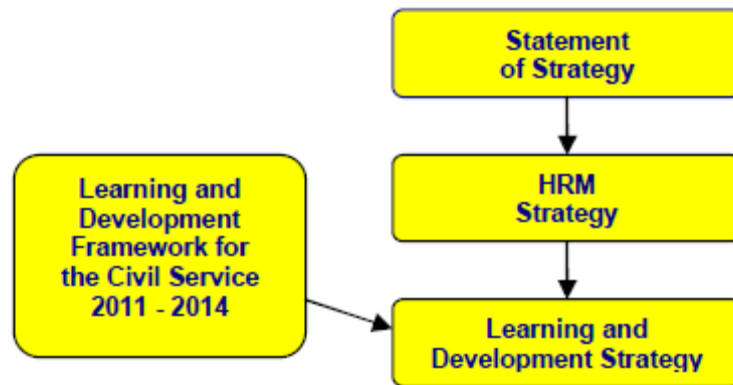


Figure 10: 'Strategic Alignment' of training and development activity (CSTDC 2011b, p.5)

For me, this 'common sense' concept of curriculum proved a near totalising discourse that was only disrupted by my experience of participating in the e-learning stream of the M.Sc. in Education and Training programme at DCU during 2005-2007, which I see as beginning the sort of learning process that Mezirow (1991) refers to as 'perspective transformation'. Here teaching embodied the concept of curriculum as praxis, being underpinned by an action research living theory approach that articulated a view of each (students and lecturers) as practitioner-researchers, co-learners in dialogic collaborative enquiry into our pedagogical practice, including the educational values sustaining our teaching and learning, and the development of e-learning artefacts to support and improve that practice. Thus propositional and procedural knowledge were de-centred and curriculum co-constructed:

The content of the e-learning programme is the students' own well-informed exploration of the teaching and learning process as it may be transformed by technology. Further, the programme demands and

provides multiple opportunities for reflection on the wider dimensions of the process.
(Farren 2008, p.1.)

It is through this experience that I have made sense of Dewey's ideas about the educational potentialities of experience as a foundation for curriculum committed to experimental philosophy (Dewey 1938), which can provide the bridge between the subjective and the social, "*between self-realization and democratization*" (Pinar 2004, p.17); of Biesta's (2006) ideas about challenging concepts of curriculum as presentation or representation of what already exists and instead constructing curriculum as about summoning engagement and response to difference that can bring forth something new; and, finally, of Barnett's (2000c) ideas about the need for curricula to embrace the triple challenges of supercomplexity, "*of understanding, of self-identity and of action*" (p.257) through integration of the "*three domains of human being ... of episteme (knowledge), praxis (action) and ontology (self-identity)*" (p.264). It informs my ideas about a more educational training practice and the possibilities it might present for participants 'to intervene in the curriculum', that is, to challenge their instrumentalisation through questioning assumptions, knowledge claims and programmatic values, and, in particular, through recognising the significance of their personal knowledge for their professional development.

Through the M.Sc. experience, I had come to a new embodied understanding of curriculum, which meaning I wanted to share with training colleagues

through the ARieL programme. I was knowledgeable about the consequences that particular interactions had for my learning, which I carried into this cycle as conceptions, however, what I could not yet know was what the consequences might be of trying to translate a curriculum developed in relation to the relationships and expectations of the higher education context to the civil service workplace (Smith 1996, 2000). Nor could I know the effects on learning of the interrelationship between our subject positions, dispositions and actions; the location and resources of the new learning site; the limited time we could spend together; our individual work contexts; management policies and support; socio-cultural values and interpretive frames; and last, but by no means least, the evolving implications of ‘public service reform’ (Hodkinson, Biesta and James 2008).

6.4. Overview of the ARieL Programme

The ARieL programme comprised six workshops over the period March to October 2010 for eight former training colleagues (see Action Planner – Appendix O). You can view an outline and timetable for the programme at Appendix P and a copy of the course space I created for it in Moodle at <http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/course/view.php?id=4>.

Here, the curriculum I developed was strongly influenced by my experience of the M.Sc. programme, which I tried to re-create for participants, albeit in a very condensed form. During the programme I tried to model a dialogic

collaborative form of e-learning, emphasising participants' active and critical engagement in the social construction of e-learning knowledge and skill acquisition, with ICT used to try and support dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection on the values, assumptions and meanings underpinning trainers' practice. This posed a challenge to the idea of e-learning as a technical practice for which trainers would need only to acquire technical knowledge and skills (see Table 8), and to the idea of e-learning (and any) knowledge as separate from people, awaiting discovery and application to practice (Grundy 1987) (see Table 9). Instead, programme 'content' was to be participants' exploration of the training relationship and how it might be enhanced through use of ICT (Farren 2008). This exploration took place at two levels: firstly, through structured group activities and discussion during each workshop, which engaged participants in guided, experiential enquiry, at the same time as demonstrating how Moodle could be used to support such a teaching and learning approach (see ARieL Teaching Approach - Appendix Q); and secondly, through each participants' development of an e-learning artefact related to their own practice over the course of the programme. These included e-Tutorials on Customer Service, Staff Mobility and the Tax Treatment of Employee Share Options and Health Expenses, a Revenue Museum and History microsite, and a Microsoft Word 2000 Moodle course.

Table 8: Extract from feedback conversation on Workshop 1

'L': It wasn't really what I was expecting.

ME: In what way 'L'? What were you expecting?

'L': Well, to be honest, I suppose I was expecting something – just kind of an introduction to Moodle.

ME: Which I didn't want to do because it's much more than that.

'L': I know. Yeah – no, that's where I'm getting it now, like - there is a lot more to it than I realised. I thought it was just, you know, you have your information and you kind of learn how to put it up and, you know, it's like the possibilities are endless for I suppose all of the things you can do.

Table 9: Extract from ARieL Interview

'G': I thought I was just coming here to do the technical side of it, i.e. set it up – set the course up, get it delivered. Get it issued and it's just going to be A, B, C – that's it: it's done. But when I came here initially for the ARieL project I didn't know where I was or what – I'd leave here so confused. I'd be going 'when are we going to be shown how to do - put the course up, issue it, put the participants on, put the que-' - nothing was happening and I'm thinking: 'how am I supposed to do this?' – like I've five or six courses now through this and I still haven't seen Moodle. I didn't know even know what it looks like, you know, but when it came to the end and I saw Moodle and then, sure, the Moodle side is nothing. It's only like using any system - you put it up and off it goes. It's what you

have to know before you do all of that and that's – at the end of it I copped to a certain degree that what I had done with Yvonne was – I knew indirectly but I didn't know. In other words that - I can do it because I do it everyday but I don't realise that I was doing it and Yvonne made it quite clear then that we have the skills and all on the training side as a trainer to do and set up courses and what's involved in the background more so than just doing the course, sticking it on Moodle.

...

I saw that clearly by the end of the Moodle. The course was nothing really to do with the technical side. The technical side is only a minute part. It's all what you need to know to set it up and do the whole course and devising a course, setting it up, what you have to do, your plans, the whole lot. Then you get the course set up, you devise the course and then Moodle is only a small part of it. It's really the last part.

It was through these activities that I endeavoured to co-create a dialogic space, a space which did not previously exist (see Table 10) in which dialogue could take place at a number of levels: interpersonally between trainers from different units and their subject domains – taxation, management/interpersonal skills and ICT; between higher education represented by my action research enquiry and teaching methodology and corporate training represented by participants and the 'training cycle'; between the discourse of critical reflection

and that of strategic objectives; between the past and the future of training in the context of ‘public service reform’; and intrapersonally (Rule 2004).

Table 10: Extract from ARieL Interview

<p>‘T’: That was one of the big things that I actually got from the group and I said it at one of the sessions is - one thing I actually got from it was me talking with other people.</p> <p>YE: That struck me. You said something along the lines of - this is the first time since doing your initial train-the-trainer that you’ve been in a room with all of these other trainers talking about training.</p> <p>‘T’: It doesn’t happen.</p>
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Of course, dialogue is a situated relational accomplishment between people and no one partner can ensure that a contact or event is experienced as dialogic, nor are there any ‘moves’ that can guarantee it (Stewart and Zediker 2000). I was cognitively prepared for the challenge that the exigencies of time and space would present, and for some of the ‘anti-dialogic noises’ that would impose from without (Rule 2004), such as hierarchy, corporate strategy, and performance management. However, I was entirely unprepared for how significantly the encounter would be structured by anxiety about *inter alia* the successful completion of projects (see Table 11), and for the challenge this would present to educational aims and the possibility of moving beyond the conception of training, and therefore e-learning, as transmission of content, from concerns with developing technical skills, and from my positioning as a

technical trainer. I was also entirely unprepared for how this anxiety would be communicated intersubjectively, and how I would come to feel unseated by a sense of guilt for ‘provoking’ anxiety, and the threat this presented to desired for affective bonds, as well as the threat to self-identity arising from a perceived failure to exercise educational influence, or indeed to meet participants’ perceived ‘training needs’. This set the stage for my ‘emotional education’, for understanding the psychodynamics of the teaching-learning transaction and ‘use of self’ (Crawford 2005) in exploring what is being communicated affectively and non-discursively (Clarke and Hoggett 2009), which I discuss in the next section.

Table 11: Objects of anxiety (ARieL interviews)

Object	Theme	Example(s)
Role	Anxiety about what e-learning will mean for the trainer role; anticipated loss of face-to-face interaction with trainees as a valued role dimension	<i>“I’d say I’ll have very little to do ... if there’s very little interaction then I think it’ll be time for me to move somewhere else”</i>
Knowledge and Skills	Anxiety about own knowledge, skills and capacity to learn	<i>“I didn’t feel I was good enough at what I was doing”</i>
Time	Anxiety about the time available for e-learning development in light of other training commitments, and the pace of the course	<i>“...worrying about would it be done in time” “I’m a long time out of a learning environment myself and I would have probably enjoyed the experience more if I had more time at each subject. I felt I was only getting to grips with something when perhaps we moved on and then I missed one or two</i>

		<i>due to training and I think it was due to annual leave”</i>
Support	Anxiety about the availability of technical support	<i>“We are still not technically at the point where we can set something like that up, so I’ve millions of ideas and I don’t see how I can bring any of them to fruition. I don’t have the time. I don’t have the resources. I don’t have the knowledge”</i>
Strategy	Anxiety about management’s commitment and strategy	<i>“My concern is about where Training Branch is going and I’ve raised it a number of times with [the Director of Training] as well as the whole strategic bit”</i>
Trainees	Anxiety about trainees’ response to e-learning	<i>“They were a bit negative. Well, that was where they more or less said they’d need time to have peace and quiet and they couldn’t see that happening in the areas they work in”</i>

6.5. Emotion and Learning

Earlier I addressed the conceptions that I carried into the development of the ARieL programme in relation to curriculum, but following the programme I also had to revisit my ideas about the self as ‘rational autonomous actor’ (Lynch 2010b) and about learning as a cognitive process. While I understood the significance of reflection for learning, I saw this primarily as an intellectual endeavour (Boud and Walker 1998) and emotion as something problematic, to be overcome. This is perhaps unsurprising: Moon (1999) says that the literature

is unclear on the role of emotion in reflection although it is often examined in terms of the potential for blocking the reflective process. There is also my location within a ‘symbolic order’ (Lacan 1977) that privileges rationality, viewing “*impulsive, emotional, desiring qualities [as] antithetical to rationality and cognition, a duality rooted deeply in traditional Western philosophy and science*” (Fineman 1996, p.547). Hopfl and Matilal (2007, p.198) refer to this as “*the therapeutic imperative of rationality*” that subjectivates women “*as the price of [organisational] membership and success*”, while Lynch et al. (2007) write about the routine symbolic violation of the feminine, and the political misunderstanding it engenders.

I point here to a critical incident that more or less coincided with the half-way mark of Workshop Three as illustrative for understanding my unfolding anxiety about my relationship with participants. My understanding at this point is that participants have the freedom to explore (or not) how they might use ICT to imagine more educational ways of training in line with their own values and concerns, but always within the boundaries set by our personal capacities, and the time and organisational resources available to us. I have emphasised that I have no performative expectations of participants, that the project is really just a ‘vehicle’ for enquiry-based learning – for experimentation - and that they may not finish it before the end of the programme.

In the week preceding the workshop I receive an e-mail from one of the participants asking if time can be made available within class to discuss a proposed system for scheduling 'technical support' time with one of the branch's IT trainers. I agree but the discussion, which runs for 20 minutes or so, becomes quite 'robust'. Part of the problem, it is suggested, is the location of a PC with e-learning software in a busy open-plan office, which precludes its use within office hours for audio recording. Another issue raised is with getting training and support for a particular software package. Ultimately, I feel the issues raised are beyond my scope or authority to address so I suggest that I contact the Director of Training and ask her to meet with the group, which she does. Following the meeting I receive an e-mail from her to the effect that she has had a "*mixed bag of responses*", that the group were of the opinion they would learn Moodle, how to develop and upload content and that to date they had not done so.

It may, perhaps, sound dramatic to you but I felt devastated by the critique, experiencing it as mis-recognition and a rejection of my efforts to share a dialogic collaborative understanding. I felt 'othered' and at a level of 'unknowing' this constituted a threat to self-identity as a valued and competent employee and colleague, an experience exacerbated by a recent failure to secure promotion, and at the same time as a threat to self-identity as an 'academically able' educational research student. While my initial instinct was to quit I somehow managed to 'stay with' the feelings and finish the

programme. However, the experience, as a whole, precipitated depression, which following Oliver (2002) I have come to understand as ‘social melancholia’ in terms of the loss of a lovable and loved self-image, the absence of social support for the articulation of such affect, and the foreclosing effect of a rational and rationalising order in forcing identification with an emotional self that the culture abjects and, therefore, its own shame. This I have made further meaning of in relation to Boler (1999) and Zembylas (2005b) analyses of discourses of emotion in terms of the norms and ‘rules’ they engender for expression and self-understanding, underpinned by the binary dualism of rationality-emotionality. This privileges reason over emotion (Zembylas and Fendler 2007) by equating the latter with irrationality (Zembylas 2002, p.187) and lends to the pathologisation and privatisation of affects (Boler 1999, p.xiv). This made sense for me in terms of the rules I had internalised for the trainer role (see Table 12) and my self-understanding of depression as reflecting weakness, which served to ensure that I hid the experience as a personal problem and, instead of recognising it as a psychic-effect of power relations (Butler 1997), called into question my own pedagogy, values and beliefs (Zembylas 2005b). In psychoanalytic terms, all of this meant that I could not “*complete a process of mourning*” for my missing positive self-image (Oliver 2002, p.63) in order to begin a process of substitution, but was stuck between identification with the normative order and unrepresentable affect (Kristeva 1995), which left me feeling empty, incomplete and flawed. In this very real

sense, I was '*feeling* power' (Boler 1999), which 'flattened psychic space' by 'attacking' my sense of self as a subject with agency (Oliver 2004).

Table 12: Emotional control - extract from Train-the-Trainer course notes

“... your focus in participants and your engagement with them, begin to highlight your professionalism and begin to create the right learning environment. You will reinforce this by observing the appropriate professional behaviours at all times ... No swearing, no opinions on politics, religion, or any other controversial issue. Why? Very easy to lose a learner. A learning programme is not a vehicle for you to share your opinions it is an environment for learners ... To be a rewarding person to talk to, you need to physically convey your receptiveness and interest ... Use encouraging facial expressions. Remember your face is your main vehicle for sending messages. We convey a great deal with our faces, often without being aware. Smiles. Raised eyebrows. Be aware; frequently, our facial expressions and speech are at variance with each other ... Keep your voice interesting by varying the volume and pitch of your voice and SMILE!! ... Be aware of how much your face communicates. A blank expression has no attractiveness, power or credibility”

This understanding did not come easily. There remained for a considerable time – more than a year - a circling desire to make meaning of the emotional experience – a desire to know' (Bion 1962) - and the impossibility of its

representation, which underlines Bion's position that thinking is a developmental activity that must evolve to cope with thoughts that arise from raw experience and the energy of affects, and that some affects are too difficult to think because they present a threat to self-identity and possibly to integrity. For Oliver (2004), this is what is at stake in 'depression of oppression', the ability to sublimate - "*to translate affects and bodily drives into words or other forms of signification*" (ibid., p.125) - which ability to make meaning she sees as the very seat of subjectivity and agency, of the possibility of transition from a place of loss to a place of 'revolt' and the re-claiming of psychic space through re-entry to the symbolic order. In other words, being able to name what is wrong and call for what one needs means that we do not have to remain silent and can challenge 'authority' and the 'rule of law' etc. For me, this suggests that the psychic-effect of regulatory discourses may be understood in the way that they work to foreclose the possibility of making meaning outside the meaning that they make. It also underlines the significance of Usher's (1993) metaphors of 'reading' and 'writing' for recognising that, in learning from experience, languages and discourses have a constituting power on our (pre) understanding, and that different understandings may be possible outside dominant discourses so that one can make a new 'text'. Of course, psychic effects can also be understood in the way that disciplinary HRM practices individualise employees and reduce the social space for resistance.

My experience also underlines for me the value of Oliver's interpretation of Kristeva's agency of the 'loving third' as a supportive space within the social, a positive image of oneself as loved and lovable, available within the dominant culture (Oliver 2002, p.50), which she sees as a form of idealisation that opens up the space for transition from identification with the 'punishing' normative ideal towards "*identification with the meaning that supports the transformation of bodily needs*" (Oliver 2004, p.157). In other words, this can counterbalance the abject emotional self and support a transitional movement from the emotional into the symbolic and social meaning. This makes salient Kristeva's (1982) view that Lacan's account of the mirror stage as the movement towards identification with valuable self-images must be preceded with an account of what the subject is moving away from. She terms this process 'abjection' - a process in which meaning threatens to breakdown as the borders between 'I' and 'not-I' fail in a manner that recalls the child's separation from the unity of the maternal body in order that she could enter the world of language and autonomy through the mirror-stage, and which required the intervention of a third in the relationship to provide a new point of identification.

For me, this 'loving third' was belatedly located in substantial part through a wide reading, including critical management studies texts that provided a significant counter-balance to the functional management literature, and in writing this living theory dissertation, which held open the possibility of assimilating my emotional experience into the social order and having it

academically validated. Together these offered a valuable image of the self as an educational researcher illuminating the effect of disciplinary practices in the workplace and suggesting alternative ways of thinking and acting, which allowed me, somehow, to live with frustration and stay in the tension between knowing and not-knowing (Bion 1962 cited by Petrov 2009, p.205), “*through processes of thinking and avoiding thinking*” (Hollway 2011b, p.55), so that the capacity for learning from experience could emerge. Of course, this was of a different order of thinking to that suggested by cognitive-analytical processes of logical deduction, “*a process of being changed by an emotional experience that can be thought about*” (Bion 1962 cited by Hollway 2011b), which altered my perception of inner and outer reality, a process which ultimately profited from admitting a ‘psycho-social’ subject, informed by psychoanalytic concepts:

The concept of an anxious, defended subject is simultaneously psychic and social. It is psychic because it is a product of a unique biography of anxiety-provoking life events and the manner in which they have been unconsciously defended against. It is social in three ways: first because such defensive activities affect and are affected by discourses (systems of meaning which are a product of the social world); second because the unconscious defences that we describe are intersubjective processes (that is they affect and are affected by others); and third because of the real events in the external, social world which are discursively and defensively appropriated” (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, p.24).

The implications of this learning from experience for the development of a more educational training practice are significant and begin with a psychosocial understanding of professional development. In the context of the training relationship this entails political attention to current discourses and

practices shaping professional subjectivity, as well as the subject positions, relations and understandings these engender, critique of which can inform a more educational curriculum. It also entails a more generalised awareness that emotional investment in any discursive position will be mediated by biographical histories of recursive positioning in discursive and material realities, including potentially conflicting positions, and that as anxiety/desire in relation to our worker identities and security infuses our positioning, some thoughts may initially be ‘too difficult to think’. This is especially salient in the context of an economic crisis and significant structural changes in the public service workplace.

It also requires that, as trainers, we learn to pay attention to our own emotional investments in subject positions (Hollway 2011a), and it suggests the value of learning about the dynamics of emotions, in particular about the mobilisation of unconscious anxiety-reducing defences like projective identification – the projection of unwanted feelings onto another – which may be more positively read as modes of affective communication about social relations inside and outside of the training classroom. In this way, through learning about “*how affect is managed in human relations*” (Clarke and Hoggett 2009, p.12), we may be more able to ‘contain’ our own difficult feelings without getting rid of them (Bion 1962) so that we can use “*the energy of the feeling in order to think about what the feeling communicates*” (Clarke and Hoggett 2009, p.12). Similarly, we may be able to act as containers for others’ projected feelings,

through listening for example, so that these feelings can be detoxified and returned to them in the form of good feelings of being understood. This capacity to acknowledge emotions and to ‘think’ them is central to learning from experience (Bion 1962 cited by Ramvi 2007, p.v.):

The opposite process is an anti-developmental one, where the person instead of “learning from” experience, is “learning about”, that is acting as a means of avoiding thought. Failure to learn from experience is linked to fear of thinking, a lack of capability to contain feelings. Which of the two processes a person is capable of in a frustrating situation is related to the person’s tolerance of the uncertainty that exists until a thought arises. If a person does not manage this uncertainty, it is denied by defence. This process of anti development is a process of repetition and stagnation.

In particular, therefore, my learning from experience suggests that the effectiveness (or otherwise) of a more educational training practice in supporting participants to challenge their subjection and bring their own subjectivity and values to bear - in other words, ‘to intervene in the curriculum’ - will depend, not alone on the articulation of educational values, but on the creation of adequately accepting and supportive social spaces; spaces in which difficult experiences and feelings can be interpreted and made meaningful, and which offer positive social valuations that can counter disciplined identifications. This seems especially significant in a context in which e-learning is encountered as a disruption to established training practice and experienced as potentially threatening to ‘accomplished’ trainer identity and role security.

6.6. Conclusion

This was an intensely emotional experience, which was not readily available for reflection and choice (Rustin 2003) and presented a challenge to the idea of learning from experience as the outcome of a cognitive-analytical process, and to the idea of myself and others as unitary, rational actors. Ultimately, making sense of affective meaning has profited from the substitution of a psycho-social subject, informed by psychoanalytic concepts that emphasise the place of unconscious conflict in human action, in particular, the presence of anxiety and the need to defend against it (Hollway 2001). This enabled me to overcome the dualism between inner and outer forces, between reason and emotion in order to understand “*the psychic form that power takes*” (Butler 1997, p.2) and how this might resist learning.

Vince (2001) proposes that organisational learning is visible in the organisational dynamics created from the interaction between politics and emotion, and that learning processes are directly mediated by power relations, moderating what learning can (or cannot) happen. While I was certain that there was no such relation between participants and myself and that participation was voluntaristic, I hadn't understood how our location within a work context, in which management 'sponsorship' was required for the programme in the first instance, would mean that power relations would always be present, nor how participants already related to organisational practices and the structural features that position them. Neither did I understand how these

might “*impact on what are possible (or legitimate) emotional responses*” (ibid., p.1338) arising from expectations for ‘successful delivery’, whether managed from above or self-imposed, and in the “*anxiety about ‘not achieving’ what one imagines one ought to achieve*” (ibid., p.1339).

Chapter Seven – Cycle Three and the ‘DeLF Project’ (2011-2012)

7.1. Introduction

This final narrative analysis explores my professional development over the period from January 2011 to August 2012, during which I collaborated on the DeLF (Developing an e-Learning Framework) project and worked on the representation of my living theory in this written, and its accompanying multimedia form. These activities are also located within the context of the ongoing critical and dialectically reflexive project to ‘deconstruct the texts’ of my professional formation. In this chapter the deconstruction focuses on ‘strategy’ and ‘communication’ as significant elements of the ‘public service reform’ discourse within which I and my colleagues locate our self-understandings as we try to collaborate to develop a strategy and support framework for e-learning through the DeLF project, and as I try to communicate my research knowledge. In this endeavour I draw primarily on Foucault’s (1979) concept of governmentality and on Habermas’ (1984) distinction between strategic and communicative forms of action to question the assumptions and conceptualisations governing my patterns of thinking and acting, my investment in strategy discourse. The analysis is presented in three parts. First, there is a brief account of the DeLF project, wherein I reflect on the movement in my own reasoning from an orientation to success to an orientation to understanding. Second, I explore the development in my thinking

as I interrogated my situated understanding of strategy through the analytical lens developed within critical management studies. Third, I discuss the impact of these learning processes on my thinking about the challenge of communicating a dialogic collaborative understanding of e-learning and e-learning research knowledge.

7.2. The DeLF Project – Developing an e-Learning Framework

The DeLF project emerged as my response to the experience of the ARieL project and, in particular, to concerns participants had voiced about the absence of a strategy for e-learning, as well as under-developed managerial, administrative and technical support. It was on this basis that I proposed to help a group of five staff to develop a ‘strategy and support framework for e-learning’ (see Action Planner – Appendix R), which I believe I saw as instrumental to ensuring that the work commenced through the previous action research cycles could be sustained. As during the ARieL project I was working outside of the training function and volunteering my services on a consultative basis to the Director of Training and her nominees, who included a new training manager, a training administrator, and two IT trainers. To these I framed the DeLF project as an opportunity for each to treat the development of their role as a personal action research enquiry into their own professional development, within an overall collaborative enquiry to develop an appropriate support framework in which they would all play out their roles.

Table 13: DeLF Project Timeline

March 2011	– Meeting 1, with Director of Training and training manager to discuss proposal
April 2011	– Creation of project workspace in Moodle
June 2011	– Meeting 2, with training manager and IT trainer to discuss proposal
July 2011	– Development of matrix and suggested outline for ‘e-Learning strategy and support framework’ document – Meeting 3, with full group to discuss how to proceed with project
November 2011	– Development of online survey of Training Branch Staff and analysis of responses for draft ‘Consultation’ section of framework document – Feedback to IT trainers on draft ‘Technology/Technical Support’ and ‘Professional Development’ sections of framework document – Meeting 4, with IT trainers to discuss ‘Technology/Technical Support’ and ‘Professional Development’ quadrants of the support framework matrix and document – E-mail to team with suggested headings for an IT requirements specification document
January 2012	– Feedback to training manager on draft ‘Introduction’ section of framework document
February 2012	– Interviews

Key to the proposal was the development of a Moodle workspace, which I hoped would help us to sustain dialogue and collaboration between formal face-to-face meetings, as well as provide an experiential opportunity for

participants to learn about Moodle and the possibilities for more dialogic collaborative e-learning forms through using forums and wikis to share and develop ideas and understandings. In this manner, I hoped to afford participants an opportunity to relate in a more embodied way to the challenges that electronically-mediated communication might present for trainers whom they would be supporting. I also wished, through sharing resources and contacts in Moodle, to emphasise the experience available elsewhere, particularly in higher education, in the development of support services for e-learning, and to encourage professional development through engagement with these and through participation in conferences and webinars etc. You can view a copy of the workspace here

<http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/course/view.php?id=5>, which includes the matrix I developed as an artefact to focus our exploration on the different support roles and relationships, oriented around four quadrants that correspond with these support roles (see Figure 11). A second important aspect of the proposal was to encourage democratic deliberation (Forester 1999) through consultation with Training Branch staff, including those who had participated in the EOLAS and ARieL projects, in order to understand their values and concerns etc., which eventually took the form of an online survey (see Appendix S).

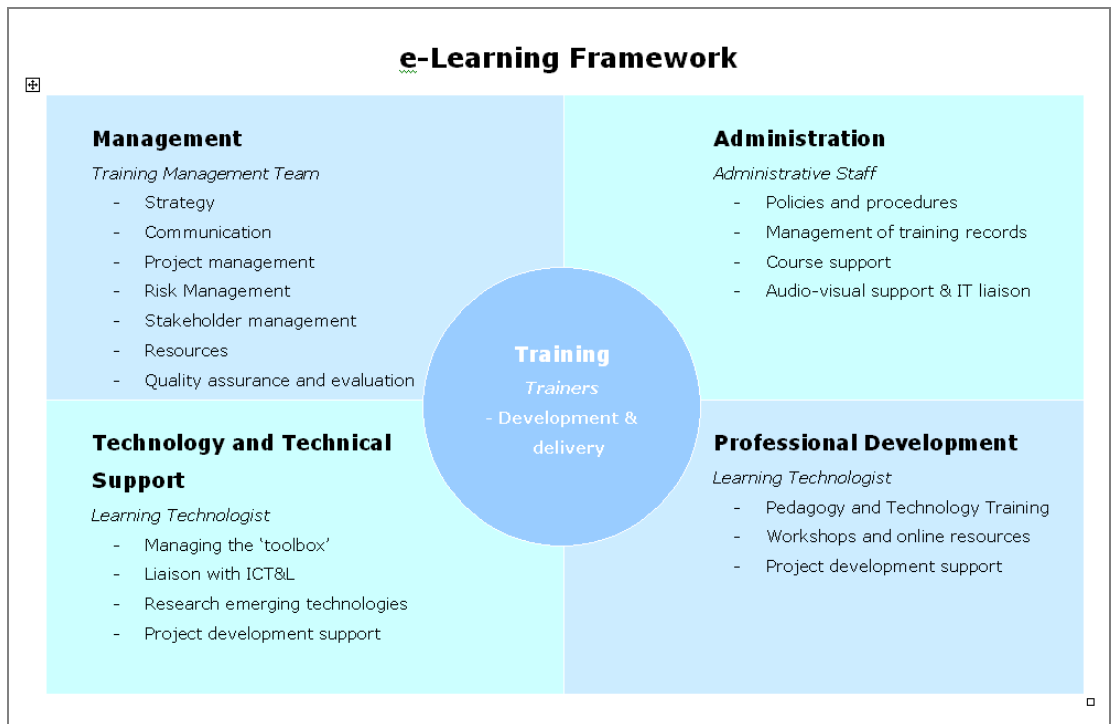


Figure 11: e-Learning Support Framework Matrix

The initial proposal was that the project would run between January and September 2011 but it was beset by a number of difficulties, not least the effects of a reduction in staff numbers by 25-28% (source: interview with Director of Training) through the imposition by Government of an Employment Control Framework and an Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement. This meant that, as remaining staff carried a heavier workload, it took much longer to get the project off the ground than anticipated, and, while I had offered to meet the group once a month, in the final count just four meetings could be scheduled, only one of which was with the full group (see Project Timeline -Table 13). It also meant a much lower than anticipated level of interaction between meetings, and often an absence of response to my

attempts to open up dialogue, which engendered some anxiety on my part. It was in this context, influenced by my ongoing dialectical and reflexive critique as reflected in previous chapters, that I came to adjust my expectations and orientation to ‘successful delivery’ of a strategy and support framework and instead came to focus on my address-ability and response-ability (Oliver 2001), and consequently on understanding both my own and the others’ emerging responses (especially non-response), on how I could learn from this. However, it is important to say that in adopting a position of response rather than a position of direction, which the normative leadership models valorise, I was also challenged by participants’ expectations for direction (see Table 14), which always had the potential to unseat my sense of self as responsive and, therefore, the educational values I was trying to embody. This reflects the tension Townley et al. (2003, p.1053) observe in organisational life “*between communicatively achieved understanding with its burden to engage in discussion, and coordination by other means such as hierarchical administration*”, between the achievement of reasoned justification through deliberative democracy and the institutionalisation of instrumental rationality.

Table 14: DeLF Interview Extract 1 (February 2012)

Me: I suppose I was concerned at the outset not to be too didactic about things, or, you know, that it was very much - I felt it should be very much a democratic and collaborative project, that everyone gets to kind of address what their own concerns and issues are and that there isn't
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anyone one telling them what the end product should be or, you know, forcing them into a particular path or box. Do you think that that's a fair assessment of how I handled things?

'N': Yeah, I think - and that could have been to your detriment actually in that if you've no defined path to be taking or somewhat defined or somewhat restricted then you're going to go and run with anything and everything, which I think probably was what happened, what might have happened and you can see a lot of the courses - there seems to be, they seem to be all over the place. There's no - there's no sort of "are we going to go do this branch first" and we'll do this branch next. So, people ran with - they ran with anything and everything and again - no clearly defined - what's the end goal here? So, yeah I think it could have been to your detriment actually.

Me: Okay.

'N': Or the detriment of what you were trying to achieve.

Applying the criterion of strategic rationality, the project to develop a strategy and support framework was not successful because this goal was not achieved, a goal to which I began with an anxious attachment. However, I found that as I became more reflexive about my own subject-positioning through reflection on previous cycles, more aware of my blind spots, I became more motivated towards understanding others (hooks 1994 cited by Oliver 2001) and their freedom to respond - to bring their own beginnings (Arendt 1958) - and less

anxious with ‘successfully communicating’ antecedent thought about dialogic collaborative forms of e-learning, less concerned with my self-identity as a ‘strategist’. Through this movement it became possible to be more open to witnessing others’ struggles to make social meaning, and to seeing the ‘truth’ of e-learning as an educational leadership issue emerge through encounter; to understanding what I had been pursuing as non-communication (Pinchevski 2005). Then, rather than seeing failure it became possible to see ‘achievement’, for example, in the establishment of two ‘e-learning labs’ for use by trainers and the development of the technical support or ‘learning technologist’ roles, but particularly in the movement in understanding through dialogue, such as is revealed in this second interview extract (Table 15), between seeing a strategy for e-learning as something ‘academic’ or ‘high-level’ and understanding it in terms of evolving roles and relationships. ‘E’ is one of the technologists whom I supported to define this role and to respond to the ‘Technology/Technical Support’ and ‘Professional Development’ quadrants of the matrix (see Appendix T).

Table 15: DeLF Interview Extract 2 (February 2012)

<p>‘E’: Okay, I think I was a little bit confused at the beginning about what it was that we were to do. I think it became much clearer towards the end and certainly now we’re still - from Training Branch’s side - we’re still working on producing output based on what we had discussed. In the beginning I wasn’t sure if it was meant to be quite a high level strategic</p>

document we were producing, but I think we're trying to do much more practical work in terms of producing what we think e-learning in Revenue should be about and producing guidelines for other trainers to kind of go about producing e-learning content.

Me: Okay, so talk to me a little bit about that, about the idea, I suppose at the beginning that you thought it was one thing and then it became clearer that it was something else. What was the kind of critical point there for you?

'E': Yeah, so we had, well we had our - the four quadrant diagram about the, say, technical, business, management frame - it was a framework we were kind of talking about.

Me: Yeah, like the administration, management and then the technical side and the professional -

'E': - professional development side. And so, the, I guess the - even the whole notion of a framework was that we were producing - I kind of understood it from a - maybe from an academic point of view, producing something quite - formal document, but I think myself, yourself and 'N' had a conversation. It was probably before Christmas. We kind of set down that maybe we needed to be more hands-on rather than it being something kind of tech- or academic - an academic document. Me and 'N' needed to produce more guideline based stuff so that the trainers in Training Branch can actually understand what - what our role was from the - the learning technologist side and what

their role was from producing e-learning material. But not on the very high - I felt on a very high academic level, which was what I understood this framework document initially to be.

It was also possible to see movement in understanding through dialogue (see Appendix U), as is revealed in this third interview extract (Table 16), between constructing e-learning as dichotomous with classroom training and exploring it as an enhancement:

Table 16: DeLF Interview Extract 3 (February 2012)

‘M’: As I say, for me, until the survey was done I suppose and until I put up that bit of an introduction that you responded to I didn’t really understand the distinction between using technology as a delivery mechanism as opposed to an enhancement of, you know, classroom. And that was a huge thing to - a huge leap that I did find.

Me: Right.

‘M’: And, at least, I think that’s where the project came together for me better in the last little while because now I feel I actually understand what it is we’re trying to do.

Me: So that feedback you found helpful, did you?

‘M’: I did actually. I have to say when I got it initially I was a bit deflated.

Me: Right.

‘M’: Because I seemed like I was so off the mark but having said that when I

went back and read it over and I was saying okay now I can see that I had a completely different understanding of it and yes, my idea was that we're just using technology and put the content in in a different way but obviously that's a very narrow view of it.

Me: How do you think your thinking has shifted?

'M': Well, I think my thinking has shifted in that that now we'll use it to enhance how we do things as opposed to replacing or just as a complete alternative. I think I had it in my mind that yeah put things up on Moodle or whatever - that's online – classroom is separate - and how do we, you know, marry the two because, yes, people give out about they don't want less of this. So, yeah, I think I have a better understanding of that, that, yeah, it's not a replacement; it's how do we enhance and develop using all that we have?

...

'M': I'm just reading while I'm looking at the screen because I want to read one of the sentences that kind of came home to me: "*the use of information and communications technology to support learning relationships and processes*". That was the sentence for me that you put in there that sort of gave me the better understanding that it's not about the delivery mechanism.

Significantly for me, it became possible to see achievement in being able to witness, through interview, participants' self-understandings of the challenges

that the project had presented for them, which were primarily expressed in terms of exploring the meaning for their own roles and their relationships with other role-holders, such as trainers, trainees, local managers etc. (see Table 17), and then, to see achievement in the not insignificant insight that this dialogue brought for me: that understanding e-learning as a disruption to established thinking and practice means understanding that roles and relationships have to be re-thought and re-negotiated *intra-* and *inter-personally*, and that this takes time, space and social support. Finally, it became possible to see achievement in the contribution that the three projects – EOLAS, ARieL and DeLF – made to developing the time, space and support for this exploration.

Table 17: Project Challenges - Roles and Relationships (DeLF Interviews)

Role	Theme	Example
Trainers	Understanding the challenge e-learning presents for the trainer and working out the supports required	<i>“... on a face-to-face - in a classroom it’s very easy to ensure that the individual is learning, picking it up, you can engage with them. It’s very difficult in, in the sort of the abstract, you know, when you’re dealing, when you don’t see the individual and you’re just hoping they’re going to engage ... I underestimated the change it would be for trainers.”</i>
Senior Management	Need for senior management commitment	<i>“... there’s no clear sponsor of this thing ... It’s taking a long time to clearly define who’s doing what and how it’s being done...”</i>

Learning Technologists	Challenge of defining own role and managing role expectations viz. trainers' requirement for support	<i>"... it's considered [that] we're the technologists and we're probably the, the people with that background and therefore we should do all of the technology element, whereas, what we're trying to do is hand over some of that to people and give them user tools ... the tools to go about developing e-learning content by themselves, with support from the technology side but without us being fully responsible for everything."</i>
Trainees	Challenge of getting trainees to 'engage' online	<i>"I would be the person constantly on the forum saying to people 'right, you're half way through your first week, how are you finding it? Do you have any problems? Do you have any issues?' and it's very hard to get people to engage back"</i>
Local Management	Challenge of getting local managers to support e-learning	<i>"Local managers will agree that X needs a certain training programme. They will agree to send X to somewhere for two days, or three days, or a week in class. It's not in class – it's online and they get three weeks to do it. Marvellous. But they don't agree the training schedule - the training programme -even though we encourage them, we write to them."</i>
Information Communications	Challenge of formalising	<i>"... the integration with ICT&L. So while we have some sort of an</i>

Technology and Logistics (ICT&L) Division	arrangements with ICT&L for infrastructure and support	<i>ad hoc agreement at the minute – you know, formalising that - trying to formalise that is a better phrase.”</i>
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7.3. Deconstructing Strategy

In reflecting on the DeLF programme in light of my exposure to critical management studies, I saw the desirability of ‘de-naturalising’ (Fournier and Grey 2000) strategy as I had leadership, of questioning my understanding and the conditions of its formation, to query why the development of a strategy for e-learning had presented as a ‘logical’ solution to the problems presented by the EOLAS and ARieL projects, and why I might have experienced it as contradictory during the DeLF project.

On my reading, I was beginning to see that strategy, like leadership, could be explored as discourse in the light of Foucault’s ideas about disciplinary power and the constitution of the subject. This, in turn, required that I address my conceptualisation of power, which Foucault (1980) shows us to be inadequate for comprehending its exercise in the contemporary world. His central argument is that we are still given to thinking about power in sovereign-juridical terms as ‘something’ that is held by one person (or group) over another (or others), structured in language by oppositions such as personal autonomy versus political power, and that in modernity we need to see that one

is not the antithesis of the other, that people are not simply subjects of power, which in fact operates at every level of society, but actors in its exercise. Thus modern power should be seen as diffuse, emergent within networks of actors, productive as well as repressive and understood more precisely as ‘power relations’, constituted through knowledge, and in terms of ‘power-effects’. For Foucault (1982) power is the structuring of the possible field of action for others. This crystallises in his concept of ‘governmentality’, a neologism of government – understood in a much broader sense than usual as the administration of populations and encompassing, at every level, those authorities that seek to govern economic activity, social life and individual conduct - and rationality, which “*recognizes that before something can be governed or managed, it must first be known*” (Townley 1994, p.6). Foucault (1982, p.783) describes this power-knowledge nexus as a “*matrix of individualisation*” which aims for control at a distance by installing self-discipline.

This mode of government, that we term ‘welfarism’, is constituted by forms of political rationality embodying certain principles and ideas based upon a particular conception of the nature of society and its inhabitants. This is linked to an array of programmes, technologies and devices ...
(Rose and Miller 1992, p.191)

Following Rose and Miller’s example, I could see the possibility that I might begin to comprehend my professional subjectivity more fully by analysing the “*emergence and reproduction of strategy*” (Knights and Morgan 1991, p.251) with the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994 as an instance of

governmentality: that is, by investigating it in terms of the ‘problematics’ of government of the public service, and the political rationalities and governmental technologies of ‘public service modernisation’ as a ‘programme of government’ aimed at modifying the understandings and actions of civil servants. To comprehend this is, first of all, to understand government as an inevitably a problematising activity that poses the obligations of authorities in terms of the problems that they seek to address, in other words “*elaborating a view of the world in which problems are defined that the discourse can ‘solve’*” (Knights and Morgan 1991, p.253). In this light we may reframe the history of public service ‘reform’ as a history of problematisations, “*bound to constant identification of difficulties and problems of government*” (Rose and Miller 1992, p.181) with “*programmes of government ... elaborated around difficulties and failures*” (ibid., p.181) and “*designs put forward [by a range of experts] ... that seek to configure specific locales and relations in ways thought desirable ways*” (ibid.).

Political rationalities are described by Rose and Miller (1992, p.176) as:

... the changing discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualised, the moral justifications for particular ways of exercising power by diverse authorities, notions of the appropriate forms, objects and limits of politics, and conceptions of the proper distribution of such tasks ...

The tentative proposition I develop here is that the SMI can be seen as reflecting a changing discursive field within which the Co-ordinating Group of Secretary Generals sought to re-conceptualise their exercise of power and offer

new justifications, forms, objects and limits by reframing the problem of government in terms of a need to ‘modernise’ the public service and its solution in terms of strategic management – the emergence of strategy as discourse; and that this re-organisation of their political rationalities (Rose and Miller 1992) was engendered by a crisis of legitimacy viz. their claims to be “*indispensable to the implementation, formulation, and evaluation of policy in their areas of authority*” (Wallis and McLoughlin 2010, p.442) following the institutionalisation of a corporatist approach to policy making through a series of social partnership agreements from the 1980s onwards (ibid.). Moreover, this coincided with the international dissemination of New Public Management (NPM) discourse, which provided an epistemological basis for the new political rationalities, through transnational networks such as the OECD Public Management Committee (PUMA) (Bislev and Salskov-Iversen 2001), national institutions such as the Institute of Public Administration and the Committee for Public Management Research in Ireland, and programmes in business schools, including the M.Sc. in Strategic Management (Public Sector) run by the University of Dublin, Trinity College for Assistant Secretaries.

The new rationalities, which drew extensively on the dissertation of the first M.Sc. class in 1993/1994 (see Byrne et al. 1994), were articulated in Delivering Better Government (DBG) (Department of An Taoiseach 1996) as a ‘programme for government’. This offered ‘reasoned justification’ for the

development and acceptance of a matrix of governmental technologies, which

Rose and Miller (1992, p.175) describe as:

... the complex of mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions.

In SMI/DBG, an assemblage of ‘experts’ provided the means to connect governmental ambition with individual action and enact strategic management as material practices through the design and implementation of what Townley (2001) describes as a strategic performance management system. This, in effect, saw the introduction of three-yearly statements of strategy, annual business plans, performance measurement, annual reports, and individual performance appraisal. Such systems are “*beloved of NPM*”, says Townley (2002, p.562), modelling organisations “*into a well-conceived layer of measures and targets cascading throughout the organization, linking individual, unit and organizational objectives*” (ibid.).

While scepticism has been expressed in some quarters about the substance of change at an institutional level of analysis (see for example, Hardiman 2010), it should be clearer, at a micro-political level of analysis, that these changes were “*not cosmetic, but pedagogic*” (Oakes et al. 1998, p.284), exercising control by redirecting work and changing organisational identities, in particular how people understand their working through the apparently ‘neutral’, ‘normal’ and ‘necessary’ re-construction of civil service departments as businesses, their functions as services, the public as customers, and even employees as internal

customers of other employees and functions, and by re-presenting organisational reality in terms of mission, vision, goals, strategies, outputs and outcomes. SMI/DBG, therefore, was pedagogic in the sense of preparing employees like me for change by invoking a changing discourse of strategy, business planning and performance management, and in changing the stakes so that cultural capital was to be gained by appearing strategic and using the new vocabulary. The business planning process itself has created “*points of examination at which members of a field are encouraged to examine their existing activities and identities*” and at which “*people name and categorize themselves*” (Oakes et al. 1998, p.277), with symbolic power operating through the production and imposition of meaning, constructing “*the seeable and the sayable by specifying what will be documented and what will be ignored*” (ibid., p.273).

The Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) discussed in Chapter 2, provides several such moments of self-examination each year and has been a significant tool in ensuring that governmental ambition is felt at the depths of the organisation by ‘visibilising’ the individual as a unit of efficiency (Townley 1996). As the revised PMDS guidelines produced as part of the new ‘Public Service Reform Plan’ articulate:

It is critical that the goals of the individual are clearly linked to the business plan/ strategic goals of the organisation. Otherwise, while the performance of an individual may be good, the Jobholder will not be working towards achieving the organisation’s goals.
(Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011b, p.5)

It has also been central to reconstructing accountability as a performance contract (Townley 1996), redefining social relations between employee and ‘line manager’ as a contract “*strictly defined*” (duGay 1996a, p.155) and producing the subjective conditions under which such contractual notions can work. It does this both discursively -

... the individual is being paid a salary and therefore has a responsibility to contribute efficiently and effectively to their organisation’s objectives. The individual who is underperforming impacts negatively on all staff. Colleagues may resent having to pick up the slack ...

(Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011b, p.3)

- and materially, by forcing a distinction between ‘performers’ and ‘underperformers’, whose ‘underperformance’ is to be managed and who are to be rehabilitated through training and development or access to the Employee Assistance Service, or disciplined “*where underperformance does not improve*” (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2011c, p.9). The possible sanctions for underperformance are set out in the Disciplinary Code, and include deferment of increments, debarment from promotion competitions, transfer, placement on a lower rate of pay, reduction in grade or rank, suspension without pay and dismissal. In this manner an employee’s pay “*is made more dependent upon whether s/he has met or exceeded certain performance objectives*” (duGay 1996a, p.157), which ensures that PMDS functions as a form of “*responsibilization ... held to be both economically desirable and personally ‘empowering’*” (duGay 1996a, p.157). This is also achieved through promotion and the possibility of obtaining higher ranks

(Townley 1996), in which process strategy is implicated at two levels. Firstly, new 'strategic HRM' practices arising from SMI/DBG have, over time, led to a cessation of promotions on seniority, an increase in open (external) recruitment, and new recruitment and selection methodologies, in particular the development of a grade-based competency framework, which forms the basis of the application and interview process and, like PMDS, employs the examination and the confession (Townley 1994). Secondly, this competency framework, which prescribes the desirable behaviours at each civil service grade below Assistant Secretary, includes 'Strategic Thinking' as a competency for both the Assistant Principal (see Figure 12) and Principal Officer grades, which reinforces the idea of strategy as a cognitive process (Vaara and Kakkuri-Knuuttila 1999) and the preserve of senior management (Carter et al. 2008). Thus accounting for oneself through the application form and interview for promotion from Higher Executive Officer (HEO) to Assistant Principal, for example, entails significant identity work in relation to the strategy signifier (see Table 18). Such competencies, argues Townley (1999) are not neutral, but prompt a particular relationship to the self - providing a *"means by which individuals come to understand and act upon themselves in relation to ... the desirable and the undesirable"* (duGay 1996b, p.23). *"The competency framework is"*, she says, *"the inducement to self-overcoming ... [and] adopting those behaviours which have been identified as denoting competence"* (Townley 1999, p.292).

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL (STANDARD)

Cluster Areas	Sub Competency	Competency & Summary Description
Thinking	Strategic Thinking	Understands the relevance of wider departmental, Civil Service and external issues and recognises the implications in the context of their role.
	Contextual Awareness	Is aware of world events and trends and links these to implications for the Irish Civil Service and their own specific area.
	Analysis/ Problem Solving	Identifies relevant information sources, objectively analysing and evaluating complex information to identify the key issues. Presents solutions to problems rather than complaining about the problem.
	Decision Making & Judgment	Recognises when decisions need to be made quickly and will make decisions without guidance when necessary.
People	Interpersonal Effectiveness	Influencing Skills; Can present persuasive arguments and maintain poise under questioning. Is clear about objectives, plans how to influence others to achieve desired outcomes.
	Communication	Communicates effectively with a wide variety of people using a variety of methods ensuring that message is clearly understood.
Results	Planning & Managing Resources	Effectively plans projects, maximising available resources and setting realistic timeframes to ensure quality outputs/services. Measures and monitors progress to ensure delivery of results. Anticipates potential problems and puts contingency plans in place.
	Managing & Developing People	Shows staff how their work fits into the broader context and keeps them informed of relevant issues. Sets high standards for the team and encourages team members to meet these standards.
	Commitment to Quality Results	Is committed to achieving high standards even in pressurised or difficult conditions. Constantly develops own skills in order to improve standards of performance. Sets high standards for others and strives to ensure that these standards are met.
Personal	Flexibility & Change Orientation	Implements change taking a solution-focused and creative approach to dealing with problems. Identifies barriers to change and works to overcome them.
	Initiative	Is capable of proactively identifying and implementing appropriate improvements/changes in own area of responsibility.

Figure 12: Competency framework for the Assistant Principal Grade

Table 18: Extract from familiarisation material and interview preparation questionnaire for Stage 2 of an Assistant Principal competition

“The following are outline descriptions of the skills and qualities that have been identified as being important for effective performance of the AP role ... To be successful in the AP selection process you need to demonstrate that you possess these skills and qualities ... Using the space below for each of the areas, please briefly describe in each case a specific experience or achievement, which you feel demonstrates your ability to meet the challenges of the AP role ... (4) Key experience or achievement relating to your contribution to the development of a new strategy or direction for your business area, division, or department”

Earlier in my career - as I made the transition from Clerical Officer to Executive Officer and then to Higher Executive Officer - I would have felt the positive and productive aspects of this process (Knights 1990). In giving an account of my actions, thoughts and experiences through the application form and the interview, I would have secured a “*sharpened sense of self*” (Townley 1996, p.578), albeit an identity tied to “*practices confirmed by others as desirable*” (ibid.), especially where this was validated by the promotions that I received, which provided a desired status reward, an “*acknowledgement, recognition and confirmation of the self*” (ibid.). But such identities, constituted through power/knowledge practices, are vulnerable (ibid.) and in failing to secure promotion from HEO to Assistant Principal Officer, despite several attempts over the past decade, I have been returned to the “*uncertainty*”

and insecurity in the requirements of meeting successful performance... [and] preoccupation with judgements and evaluations of others” (ibid., p.578).

These are the points at which the values of others provide norms for my own “ambitions, judgements and conduct”, a network that enables government at a distance (Rose and Miller 1992, p.177).

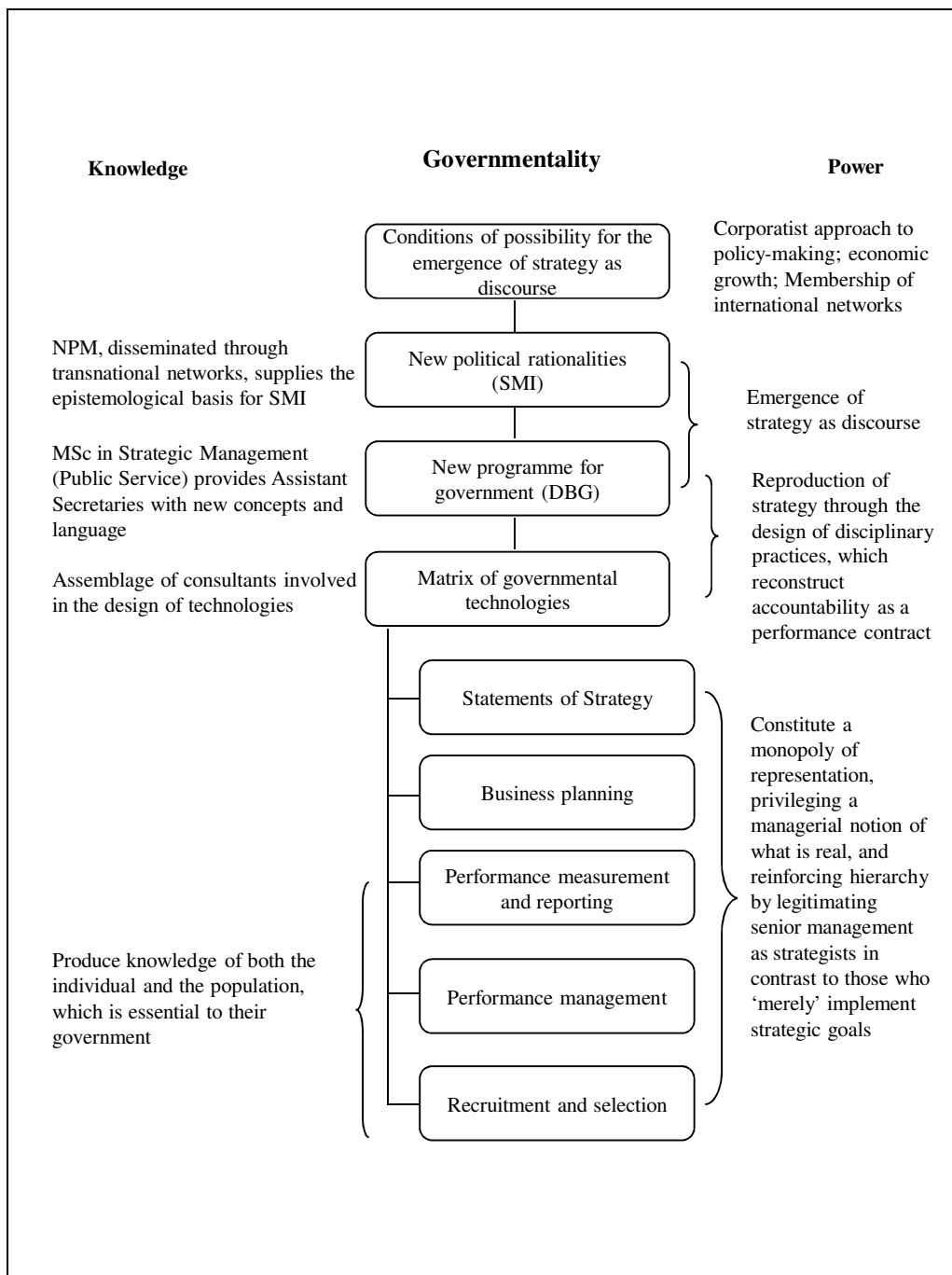


Figure 13: SMI as an instance of governmentality

7.4. From Strategic to Communicative Reason and Action

Analyses of governmentality, such as that above, underline the central function of ‘rationalisation’ in institutional change— providing reasoned justification for action - but, following Foucault (1982, p.780), there is a need to “*analyze specific rationalities*”, which is, first of all, to perceive that there are multiple modes of rationality, reflecting very different actor orientations, and, therefore, the possibilities for thinking and acting otherwise. Habermas (1984), for example, distinguishes between instrumental and strategic rationality on the one hand, and communicative rationality on the other, which distinction can have significance for re-framing e-learning development as social action, as well as conceptualising the educational challenge of communicating a dialogic collaborative understanding of e-learning within a context dominated by instrumental and strategic reason.

Instrumental and strategic rationality are subject-centred modes of reason, related to a view of knowledge “*exclusively as knowledge of something in the objective world*” (Habermas 1984, p.314). These model a subject-object relationship to the world (Thomassen 2010) and inform action aimed at achieving success, which is judged by how nearly objectives are achieved and how efficient the means used are (Lyytinen 1992). The interests, values and norms of others affected by interventions are at best secondary (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al. 2002). In the former case, reasoning and thinking are non-social and action is towards transforming, manipulating and controlling objects

- including others as ‘immutable objects’ - through the application of technical rules, knowledge and tools (Ngwenyama and Lyytinen 1997). In the latter case, reasoning and thinking are social, figuring others as opponents who can engage in intelligent counter-action while the success-orientation is towards transforming the other’s (individuals and groups) behaviour (Lyytinen 1992). Thus reasoning involves knowing the opponent’s goals or position, taking into account co-operative and conflicting interests, anticipating likely counter-actions and assessing what it is feasible to achieve (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al. 2002, Lyytinen 1992, Ngwenyama and Lyytinen 1997). In both forms, social and material resources are constitutive of action “*in that they are involved in the generation of power and dominion*” (Ngwenyama and Lyytinen 1997, p.78), which is consistent with Bourdieu’s (1986) idea of capitals.

In contrast, communicative reason is intersubjective, located within a subject-subject relationship to the world (Thomassen 2010) and related to a view of knowledge as communicatively mediated (Habermas 1984). “*One treats the other not merely as a means to an end, but as an end in itself*” (Thomassen 2010, p.23) and “*the success orientation is replaced by a desire to understand a communicating partner*” (Lyytinen 1992, p.166), to identify and resolve hidden disagreements and co-ordinate action plans (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al. 2002, p.220). Communicative action is primarily enacted via language and “*presupposes a common language, media and a shared understanding of the organizational context*” (Ngwenyama and Lyytinen 1997, p.77) through which

situations can be intersubjectively interpreted (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al. 2002, p.217), free from distortion or domination. In practice, however, the conditions for communicative reason and action may be restricted by asymmetrical power relations, competing interests, “*different levels of communications competence and unequal access to knowledge and resources*” (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al. 2002, p.220), leading to distorted communication. Here, the appearance of communicatively rational action can mask covert strategic action, as in the case of SMI/DBG, which enacted a distinctly strategic view of communication. This discursively emphasised ‘partnership’, ‘co-operation’, ‘communication’ and ‘consultation’ in order “*to stabilize participants’ social construction*” of the changes taking place (Townley et al. 2003, p.1067) and to influence their acceptance, but was “*operationalized through mechanisms that predominantly reflect dimensions of instrumental rationalization*” (ibid., p.1067), revealing the immanent dialectic in institutional change between reasoned justification or communicative action and the institutionalisation of instrumental rationality (ibid.).

The competency framework discussed above (and in Chapter Two) is one such mechanism that reflects the privileging of instrumental rationalisation, and which contributes to the ‘colonisation’ of our understanding of communication, with significant implications for training practice. If we examine the meaning of communication ascribed within both the PMDS and Public Appointments Service competency frameworks, for example (see Tables 19 and 20), we see

what Deetz and McClellan (2009) describe as a strategic, linear and subject-centred model of interaction that views communication “*as a means to convey meanings to others*” (ibid., p.434), “*a tool for influence, coordination and control*” (ibid., p.436). This implies that meaning originates with the speaker or writer prior to interaction, masking its political construction, and that responsibility lies with her, who is ‘competent’ if she can accomplish these things but in need of ‘communication skills’ training if she cannot. This, in effect, constructs communication as technology and technique.

Table 19: Description for ‘Communication’ competency within ‘Personal Effectiveness Cluster’ of PMDS framework

Competency	Description The job requires me to?
<p>Communication <i>The ability to communicate with others in a manner that conveys the key message(s) and is appropriate to the audience</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be willing and able to communicate. ➤ Present factual information effectively, both orally and in written form. ➤ Have good writing skills. ➤ Be effective in oral presentation. ➤ Be a persuasive communicator.

Table 20: Description of the ‘Communication’ competency for each grade within the ‘People’ cluster of the Public Appointments Service framework

Grade	Competency Summary Description
Principal Officer	Makes an impact through fluent and articulate communication skills.
Assistant Principal	Communicates effectively with a wide variety of people using a variety of methods ensuring that message is clearly understood.
Higher Executive Officer	Communicates effectively with a wide variety of individuals using a variety of methods ensuring

	that the message is clearly understood.
Administrative Officer	Presents information clearly and concisely both in written and oral format.
Executive Officer	Adopts a persuasive approach when communicating. Builds rapport by listening and responding to the needs of others. Presents written material in a clear, concise, comprehensive and convincing manner, to inform and influence the reader.
Staff Officer	-
Clerical Officer	Clerical Officers must communicate both orally and in writing in a clear and concise manner. He/ she will clarify information when required and communicate in a confident manner with individuals at all levels.

While my action research work with training colleagues was motivated by a desire to share a dialogic collaborative understanding of e-learning, developed through participation in the M.Sc. programme, communicating this understanding constituted an ongoing problem, and to read my endeavours against the normative model presented by the competency frameworks, as well as other cultural artefacts, was repeatedly to perceive my own failure as a manager and understand why I had not ‘made the grade’ for promotion. And yet in the face of these seeming failures to ‘convey’ or ‘persuade’, there remained an understanding that in the context of the M.Sc. programme the dialogic collaborative meaning had been produced intersubjectively, and that each individual had, free from systematically distorted communication, exercised a capacity for original thinking that mediated any educational

influence (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). This ongoing tension, between my embodied understanding and an organisational ‘ideal’ for training, engendered an emotional remainder, which I have only latterly been able to address conceptually, in part through the ideas about subject formation that I have discussed, but also by making use of Deetz and Simpson’s (2004) distinction between viewing communication as reproduction – which the competency frameworks clearly do – or as production, which I now do.

Deetz and Simpson argue for a dialogic theory of communication, consistent with a view of communication as production. That is, instead of seeing the psychological individual as the locus of meaning and communication as the means of transfer (reproduction), which focus tends to self-expressionism (self interests) and sets the scene for strategic control, we should see the locus of meaning in the interaction itself, with communication producing new experiences for self and others, in which individual expressions of experience are mere raw material. This accords with a shift from seeing the self as fixed and knowable, to understanding the individual as constituted through discourse. On this view, Deetz and Simpson (2004, p.143) see the point of communication in self-destruction rather than self-preservation:

“to overcome one’s fixed subjectivity, one’s conceptions, one’s strategies, to be opened to the indeterminacy of people and the external environment to form an open redetermination.”

This they believe is the basis for ‘voice’ - *“the capacity to freely develop and express one’s own interests”* (ibid., p.142) - as awakening to ‘the otherness of

the other' within such dialogic forums poses "*questions to any fixed conception or meaning*" (ibid., p.143). That is, we may begin to see ourselves and others as "*outcomes of communicative practices situated in specific socio-historical circumstances*" (ibid., p.144) and many of our meanings as 'inherited' uncritically from dominant groups or interests. Such a dialogic conception of communication is, I see, foundational to developing a more educational training practice and, in particular, to approaching e-learning as a relational practice with a pedagogical focus on creating dialogic, worldly spaces in which we can encounter otherness and difference, and bring something new, something unforeseen (Biesta 2006). This is the conception of communication that I carry into the development of my website to accompany this thesis. This is my response to what I have encountered as 'other' within organisational life.

7.5. Conclusion

It is only with sustained reflection on the significant emotional content of the experiences discussed in these last three chapters, and the pursuit of a psycho-social instinct in interpretation, that I have come to appreciate how the biographical interacts with the structural (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). And it is through this critical endeavour that I have come to understand how 'mundane' technologies, like competency frameworks, can exercise disciplinary power through processes of objectification and subjectification (Townley 1994) and I see my own 'identification with' or 'investment in'

managerial discourses (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) as a potent example of its power-effects. For me this has central significance in understanding *post hoc* the considerable educational challenges involved in trying to share a dialogic collaborative conception of e-learning in the face of governmental ambition for training and the strategic view of communication held in the common sense, and to have renewed faith in the significance of my acts for my own professional development, and the hope that these carry for democratic renewal within work organisations. In this sense, I begin to understand the production of this thesis as an ‘intimate revolt’ in Kristeva’s (2002) terms, a reclaiming of psychic space through questioning the past, law, authority, and identity, and by rejecting the ‘normalising order’.

Following Oliver (2002, 2004), who extends Kristeva, I see the development of this thesis as the creation of a social space within which I can now articulate drives and affects as positive, lovable. I experience inclusion through their representation, through making language and meaning my own, which is the basis of my subjectivity and agency. I do this in order to speak to you, so that what has been experienced as traumatic can be assimilated into the social order. And I express the hope that others may be able to find in this living theory account an aspect of the social support that Oliver sees as fundamental to psychic identity – ‘the loving third’: that it can provide a positive counterbalance to the organisation that abjects the affective and communicative (non-strategic), a new point of identification. I see that others’ living theories

have provided such support for me, and that the critical management literature – that which provides a counterbalance to managerial discourse - has ultimately made available a new language, grammar and vocabulary, making it possible to name what had been unnameable and to say what had been unsayable.

Chapter Eight – Conclusion: *How do I evaluate the evidence-based account of my educational influence?*

The core aim of the Professional Doctorate is to make significant contributions to knowledge of professional practice through research. In that context the Professional Doctorate aims to foster professional development through research as well as meeting the requirements of rigour and originality expected of a doctorate. (DCU 2011)

8.1. Introduction

I begin this chapter by briefly restating my research aims before clarifying my claim to knowledge, which is that I can explain my professional development as a civil servant during doctoral studies. I also clarify the conceptual understandings developed about the nature of e-learning as an educational leadership issue through three cycles of action research in which I tried to support training colleagues in the Revenue Commissioners to explore the educational potential of ICT for training practice. This involved developing an understanding of the challenge e-learning presented as a disruption to established thinking and practice, as well as developing epistemological curiosity about leadership as a knowledge object. Next, I discuss the educational values that were clarified during self-study. These constitute explanatory principles for the actions undertaken, which can be seen as constitutive of the professional development process as enacted. Through the research process these values have been transformed into critical standards of judgement that can be used to test the validity of my living theory of leadership

development for e-learning. Finally, I reflect on the originality of my work and on the potential significance of the contribution to knowledge and practice in the field of training and development, and for the development of a systematised knowledge base of practice.

8.2. Aims of the Study

This self-study sought to build on previous action research described in Chapter One, aiming to continue my investigation into the nature of my professional development as I commenced doctoral studies. Now, as then, I have been concerned with understanding how my experience of higher education influences the development of my practice as a civil servant and vice versa, and how this in turn shapes my conceptual understanding as I try to support training personnel to develop e-learning practices. This addresses an intellectual interest in exploring the knowledge-practice nexus, which in this study focused on the domain of educational leadership (as the subject of the Ed.D. programme), in particular on the nature of e-learning as an issue for educational leadership. It also addresses a normative interest in re-framing accountability, which is increasingly circumscribed by schemes of performance measurement and monitoring. Thus a key concern has been with accounting for how I have used the educational opportunity I have been afforded through the Refund of Fees Scheme to contribute to organisational development, an account that would otherwise be invisible in ‘corporate performance reports’ and ‘output statements’ as being radically outside the means-ends calculus of

strategy statements and performance indicators. A further significant aim of research has been to address the experience of myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead 1989), simultaneously valuing the potential of ICT to make training more educational, and experiencing the negation of this value in my practice. Through my research I hoped to resolve this contradiction and bring my educational values to work. This is what I mean by improving my practice.

8.3. A Living Theory of Leadership Development for e-Learning

Living educational theories seek to explain educational influence and to develop epistemologies of practice that can contribute to the development of professional knowledge bases. They are living in the sense that they are lived, embodied in live practice, and in the sense that they are dynamic, always in process in the interplay between knowledge and practice. The narrative form of this thesis presents my living theory of leadership development for e-learning as an account of professional development in the descriptions, explanations and analyses of actions undertaken as I tried to improve my professional understanding and practice so that I could support training colleagues to explore the educational potential of ICT. This includes the idea of influence on the education of the social formation, which I make sense of in relation to the way that, in my work, I engaged with training personnel as a group of people with a common focus whose practice is organised in terms of relationships and discourses that are premised on regulatory values as ‘rules’ (Whitehead and McNiff 2006), and with trying to encourage dialogue, collaboration and critical

reflection on the values, assumptions and epistemologies informing that practice (Farren and Whitehead 2005). This account is supplemented by my website <http://webofenquiry.org/moodle> which helps to communicate the emergence of my values and understandings in practice within e-learning forms, and extends ideas about alternative forms of knowledge representation (Eisner 1993, 1997; Whitehead 2005).

I explain my educational influence in improving training practice in terms of the following key themes, which emerged during the study and include the development of conceptual understanding in relation to my original research concerns and questions:

The nature of professional development

By undertaking this action research self-study I have exercised educational influence on the development my professional practice, supported the professional development of my colleagues in the Revenue Commissioner's Training Branch through three action research cycles, and, through these processes, developed conceptual understanding about the nature of professional development in terms of developing subjectivity within a professional field. In this manner I have moved from understanding professional development as an individual process of acquiring knowledge and skills to be applied to practice, to understanding the extra-individual dimensions of professional development, which arises within cultural-discursive, social, and material-economic fields

that overlap in the professional context (Kemmis 2010). Through research I have clarified some of the socio-historical influences on trainer professional development in the civil service context – my own and my colleagues’ – in which agency is structured but structures are constructed and re-constructed through agency and interpenetrate individual and group dispositions, and cultural practices (Hodkinson et al. 2008).

The relationship between leadership research, knowledge and the development of practice

By locating my study at the intersection between my professional practice and my participation in the Ed.D. programme during which I studied extant leadership knowledge claims and undertook my own workplace research, I have developed conceptual understanding about the relationship between leadership research, knowledge and the development of practice as a triangular, critical space. In this process I have learned to insert myself positively amongst competing interpretive frameworks (Barnett 2000a), to engage dialectically with propositional leadership knowledge in practice at the disjunction between different frames for researching and understanding, from which has emerged an epistemology of professional development. By communicating this methodological approach to self-study of professional development with my training colleagues, and by encouraging them to treat their experiments with ICT in training practice within such an enquiry frame, I have begun to introduce action research living theory into the civil service context. I hope that

this educational influence can be extended through publication of this thesis and sharing my website.

Training as an educational practice

Through self-study I have been able to clarify my values for the development of a more educational training practice, which are linked to my experiential understanding about the potential of ICT for improving access to training and development and for increasing opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection (see Section 8.4). This results from my intellectual and practical engagement with Farren's (2005) 'pedagogy of the unique' and Biesta's (2006) philosophy of democratic education, from dialectical engagement with the socio-historical features of my professional context and through the exercise of reflexive critique with regard to my own thinking and practice.

e-Learning as a relational practice

In undertaking the EOLAS project I came to see how e-learning can be reified, which process Berger and Luckmann (1966 p.106) describe as "*the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something else than human products*". By reflecting on the nature of my relationship and communications with participants, and on Bruce's (1996) ideas about ICT and social practice being mutually constitutive, I developed the pedagogic idea that e-learning could be communicated as relational practice in which trainers can

exercise agency in how they use ICT to mediate learning relationships. This idea underpinned the development of the ARieL programme. In reflecting on that cycle I further developed the idea during the DeLF project as I examined the ways in which agency is structured in the professional context, which contributes to explaining e-learning as a leadership issue.

e-Learning as a disruption to training practice

By adopting an action research methodology, by collaborating with training colleagues in the development of e-learning practice, and by paying attention to the nature of the evolving relationship between us, I was able to develop an insight into how this was experienced as a challenge to established thinking and practice. This understanding, which I developed through the EOLAS and ARieL projects, I was subsequently able to share with management and technical support staff to encourage the development of a support framework for e-learning in the context of the DeLF project, and to communicate it in this thesis and my website.

e-Learning as an educational leadership issue

Through a commitment to developing epistemological curiosity with regard to the nature of leadership as knowledge object, I have moved from a substantialist to a relational ontology of leadership, and clarified my constructionist epistemology. By way of evidence of this shift and the development of my capacity for critical thinking, I invite you to have a look at

Appendix J, which presents the original research proposal that I submitted to the School of Education Studies in 2008 when applying to participate in the Ed.D. programme. In this I write naively about the idea that my practice-based research would contribute to “*developing my capacity to provide leadership for e-learning in my organisation*”. Next, look at Appendix D and the ‘Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness’ case study that I undertook in response to curriculum and assessment criteria for the module ES602 ‘Leadership in Improving Learning Organisations’, and in which I engage critically with the leadership literature. Building on this, through the DeLF project, I developed the idea of e-learning as an educational leadership issue out of a dialogue between my experiences and the literature in examining the conceptual, axiological and political problems which e-learning as disruption to practice presents.

Communicating e-learning meaning and understanding

Through a commitment to sharing my learning from the M.Sc. in Education and Training Management (e-Learning) programme at DCU with training colleagues, I have grappled with the practice problem of communicating a dialogic collaborative view of e-learning, which is axiologically at odds with the programmatic values authorising training practice, and with translating ideas from the academic context for the public service workplace. Through an ongoing dialogue between this problematic experience over three action research cycles and the literature, I developed understanding about the

conceptual metaphors underpinning thinking and practice, which I communicate in this thesis as contributing to understanding e-learning as an educational leadership issue. I also carry this into the representation of my knowledge through my e-learning website for a potentially wider audience, influenced by Eisner's (1993) ideas about different forms of representation making different kinds of experiences possible, and leading to different kinds of understanding.

8.4. Living Standards of Accountability

In an important sense, this thesis has been concerned with explaining how I hold myself accountable for what I do. Butler (2005) says that we are interpellated to account for ourselves in forms that are not of our own making, and so it is with the bureaucratic forms of account giving that Power (1997) describes so effectively in 'The Audit Society', and which see social relations as increasingly dominated by instrumental reason.

Accountability has become a significant theme in contemporary leadership literature, and is a recurrent signifier in public service reform discourse at this time. Biesta (2004, p.233), for example, talks about "*the rise of a culture of accountability*", which has entailed a discursive shift over recent decades with the meaning of accountability extended "*well beyond its core sense of being called to account for one's actions*" (Mulgan 2000, p.555). This is intimately linked to changing public administration ideologies (Sinclair 1995), which rely

on microeconomic theory and managerialism (Christensen and Laegrid 2002) and re-constitute democratic or political accountability as a form of ‘performance contracting’. This is distinctly ‘low-trust’ (Strathern 2000), de-politicising, and enacted as disciplinary practice (Foucault 1977) through the imposition of predominantly quantitative ‘performance indicators’ and external scrutiny by means of *inter alia* inspection, audit and evaluation (Power 1997). In the context of Irish public service reform, accountability is increasingly constructed as ‘performance-based accountability’ (Embleton 1997), equated with transacting greater “*individual accountability for achieving performance targets*” (Department of An Taoiseach 2008a, p.4). This is accountability as managerial technology influenced by the field of accountancy (Charlton 2002).

I make sense of this discursive shift in terms of Foucault’s (1980) ideas about the movement of power through discourse, and in particular with reference to Steven Poole’s (2006) ideas about political language in his book ‘Unspeak’. This draws attention to the way in which certain words and phrases ‘smuggle in’ unspoken political arguments, having a rhetorical effect in a way that alternative words or phrases do not, making them very difficult to counter. I also make sense of this in relation to Lévi-Strauss’ (1950 cited by Mehlman 1972) ideas about ‘floating signifiers’ as meaning units that have no distinct meaning in the sense of a differential value and so can take on any meaning.

Like 'reform', it is very difficult to argue against 'accountability', against the idea that those in public service should be accountable for their actions and indeed, it is not this general, abstract meaning I wish to argue against at all. Rather, it is the obscured technical meaning (Charlton 2002) I wish to address, to argue for greater critical attention to such language and for greater precision from those who would employ it: To whom is the account rendered and to what purpose? What form does it take? What is the nature of the power relation that the account giving engenders? What is the cost to human instincts (Butler 2005)? What is its impact on democratic process and political engagement, and on how we relate to each other as individuals, groups or organisations (Biesta 2004)?

In Chapter Two I reflected on how reform discourse and programmes have influenced the cultivation of a managerial ethos and logic within the Irish public service with centralised, top-down targets and measures that serve to circumscribe one's 'legitimate interests' to finding more efficient means to given ends. These have the effect of foreclosing the possibilities that those directly involved in delivering services might bring about improvement from within – to innovate 'bottom-up' so to speak - or to participate meaningfully in the setting of standards of accountability for their own work. For the training function, for example, the 'key performance indicator' is the number of training days delivered each year, for which account must be given in 'corporate performance reports'. Such a criterion says nothing about what is

educationally valuable and, in fact, valorises the quantitative over the qualitative. Moreover, because this indicator is individualised through the PMDS process (see Chapter Two), each Training Officer must account for how many training days s/he delivers, which account forms part of their appraisal and 'performance rating' with implications for pay and promotion. In this manner, training practice is structured to remain focused on technological aims, away from critical reflection on programmatic values and from investigating alternatives modes of practice. Proponents of performance measures are wont to argue that '*what gets measured gets done*' but do not explore, or simply obscure, the underlying fact that '*what gets measured*' is that which is easily amenable to quantification, and the implication which follows, that what is not easily amenable to measurement does not get done because this is not what is recognised, valued or rewarded. In my 2007 research I reflected that it was a lack of professional development opportunities that discouraged Training Officers from exploring the educational potential of ICT. Now, I see that the situation is substantially more complex and that the managerial standards of accountability imposed also limit the capacity to re-conceptualise training and development.

In undertaking this enquiry I have been claiming the right to participate in creating my own self-set standards of accountability for my work (Whitehead 2002) and to make these living standards, which reflect my ontological values, that is, the values that give meaning and purpose to my life and work. Through

my research I have clarified the meaning of these embodied values and offer them below as explanatory principles for my action as I have tried to live more in their direction. In claiming to know the nature of my educational influence through this improved learning for improved practice, these ontological values are also transformed into epistemological standards for the research, which can be used to test the validity of my living theory and the quality of my supporting evidence. These are values that carry hope for democratic renewal within work organisations.

I value the potential of ICT to increase access to training and development.

By this I mean that new forms of ICT can help us to address geographic, temporal and financial barriers to participation, including improving accessibility for people with disabilities. For example, employees of the Revenue Commissioners are dispersed across the Republic of Ireland in over 100 office locations. Participation in a training programme often requires the individual travel to a training centre outside of office hours and perhaps to stay away from home for one or more overnights. As this places a burden on those, usually women, with caring responsibilities it can reinforce gender inequality by constituting a barrier to access. Moreover, the issue of access became particularly significant during the lifetime of the research as cuts to travel and subsistence budgets meant that in some cases employees could not attend courses, or were discouraged from doing so. It has also meant that formal

opportunities for more longer-term personal and career development were diminished, as requests were required to prove ‘immediately relevant to business needs’. In my action research work with training colleagues, in particular through my efforts on the EOLAS project, I tried to show how this potential of ICT to improve access by overcoming such barriers might be realised through the use of videoconferencing and Moodle.

I believe that learning is fundamentally dialogic.

The conceptual metaphors of ‘learning as acquisition’ and ‘teaching as transmission’ are inadequate for training practice. Like McNiff (2000), I believe that knowledge is generated through sequences of dialogue between what a person knows and what is being taught, between theory and practice, between oneself and others, including the normative contexts in which one lives and works. I hope it is evident that in my own learning this has included an ongoing and reflexive dialogue with a wide range of thinkers and theories across a number of disciplines and fields, and with the social and historical conditions that ground my professional development. Like Biesta (2006), I see education as having to do with freedom, that is, with the freedom of each individual to become, to bring something new, something entirely unforeseen, a possibility that depends on the creation of dialogic spaces in which ‘otherness’ – including other ways of seeing – can come into presence *politically*. Also, like Barnett (2000a) I see that conditions of ‘supercomplexity’ require new pedagogical approaches and relationships that

help individuals to embrace multiple conflicting frames of understanding and to insert themselves positively amongst the counter-claims. This is challenging in hierarchical organisations and contexts where one's 'legitimate interests' are circumscribed and 'empowerment' may mean only that one is 'free' to find more efficient means to produce given outcomes. Through my work with training colleagues, in the development of my website and in this thesis I have tried to avoid technicist or managerial presentations of e-learning, to avoid its presentation as a unproblematic body of knowledge or so-called 'best practice' that trainers should apply uncritically. Instead, over three action research cycles, I tried to co-create new dialogic spaces where each participant could take responsibility for their own learning and actively construct new knowledge through action and critical reflection, in relationship with me and each other. This was challenging, as participants' expectations were that I would approach the issue as a technological one. Nevertheless, this dialogue was central to my own learning as I developed an understanding of the ways in which e-learning is encountered as a disruption to established thinking and practice.

I value the possibilities that ICT presents for making training more educational.

By this I mean that it can increase the opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection on what we are doing in organisational life and why we are doing it, processes that I understand as fundamental to all significant

learning. My experience shows me that the Internet and Internet-based technologies dramatically increase the range of people, experiences and views that we can come into dialogue with, however, I recognise that my value is not one that coincides with the inherent properties of any particular technology I might use but requires that I behave more dialogically, collaboratively and critically reflectively in my training relationships. I question the programmatic intention that training should create particular subjectivities and I see a more educational response to training as supporting the individual to ‘become’ within organisational life, to respond to plurality and difference and to bring something new (Biesta 2006). Training courses can be brief and intense with little opportunity for participants to shape the curriculum. I believe that developing organisational capability hinges not on learning what is prescribed but on questioning the very assumptions underpinning practices (Argyris and Schön 1974). In facilitating the EOLAS, ARieL and DeLF projects I tried to co-create dialogic spaces in which I and my colleagues could collaborate and critically reflect on the assumptions underpinning training practice, which was especially challenging after my re-assignment from Training Branch in November 2009. In particular, after Cycle One I focused on making my own training practice more educational through the ARieL professional development programme, and further unpacking my own assumptions during Cycle Three and the writing of this thesis.

I value the professionalism of training personnel, their commitment to the client of training, which I consciously tried to reflect in distinguishing ARieL as a professional development programme rather than a training course. I also value their originality of mind and capacity for critical engagement, their capacity to innovate from the ‘bottom-up’ and to set their own standards for e-learning practice in terms of their educational values, although this capacity can be distorted by, for example, managerial discourse and the exercise of control. I believe that top-down quantitative targets are inimical to innovation and present a threat to authentic and educationally effective practice. Within the action research projects undertaken I tried to communicate the thinking and educational values underpinning my actions in the hope that it would encourage others to think about the assumptions and values motivating theirs. I did not impose targets for engagement but invited participants to set their own. In the ARieL programme, for example, I tried to encourage participants to define their action research enquiries as the basis for their learning, with reference to their own educational concerns and values.

8.5. Originality

Originality is a key criterion for doctoral research, which can take many different forms (Phillips and Pugh 2005). I understand my living educational theory to make an original claim and contribution to professional knowledge in the following ways. Firstly, it addresses a lacuna in the literature which tends to treat e-learning as an issue of technical innovation or one for top-down

strategy towards ‘embedding e-learning’ within individual institutions, neglecting how the development of e-learning practice is actually experienced by individual trainers - mentally, emotionally, physically and practically. In addressing itself to this gap, my work re-conceptualises leadership development for e-learning as an epistemology of professional development in which the clarification of educational values through reflexive and dialectical critique are central to explaining educational influence and the development of training practice; and develops understanding of e-learning as an *educational* leadership issue having conceptual, axiological and political dimensions. Also, in interpreting the challenge that e-learning presents as a disruption to established thinking and practice, my work proposes the idea that, arising from programmatic ideals and existing conceptual metaphors in the training field, as well as from misconceptions about the independence of technology and technological development from social practice, e-learning is at risk of being reified as electronic delivery of content. In response, it re-conceptualises e-learning as a relational practice in which subjectivity and agency are central issues in the development of a more educational training practice, supported by ICT. Finally, I understand that my work exercises originality in terms of the way that I have brought together ideas from a diverse set of disciplines and fields, including education, ICT, psychoanalysis, social theory and philosophy, and in the way that I have taken Farren’s (2005) ‘pedagogy of the unique’ and Biesta’s (2006) philosophy of democratic education from the academy into the civil service training context. To the best of my knowledge this critical self-

reflective self-study of professional development as a civil servant in the context of participation in a professional doctorate programme is a first of its kind.

8.6. How do I explain the significance of my research?

I understand the significance of my action research self-study “*in relation to its capacity to generate and test theory to improve learning to improve practice*” (McNiff and Whitehead 2006, p.233) as follows:

Significance for professional development

The ‘accomplishment’ of professional development and the development of an epistemology of professional development through action research self-study carries significance for my own professional development as an intentional, enquiry-led process and for the professional development of the training colleagues with whom I collaborated in the development of their own enquiries. It also has potential significance for the professional development of others in terms of its contribution to a more sophisticated understanding of professional development as an embodied, relational and deeply situated process, and to understanding how higher education interpenetrates the professional context and subjective dispositions. This can have meaning for those undertaking professional development, for those researching it, and for those with responsibility for supporting it, either directly or indirectly.

Significance for the education of the social formation

The research, which critically reflects on the values, assumptions, and epistemologies underpinning training practice and the development of e-learning, has potential significance for the education of the training function and its transformation by transforming its discourse and relationships.

Similarly, critical reflection on the managerialist conceptions of leadership and ‘performance-based accountability’ underlying ‘public service reform’ has potential significance for the education of the public servants whom it interpellates, while showing how accountability can be reconceptualised through action research self-study towards more democratic forms.

Significance for ‘leadership’

The research reflects epistemological engagement with the concept of leadership as an object of knowledge and the development of conceptual understanding about the nature of e-learning as an educational leadership issue in terms of its conceptual, axiological and political dimensions. This has potential significance for the development of relational ontologies and epistemologies of leadership, and for more democratic processes in organisational development, including the development of e-learning.

Significance for knowledge production and representation

The research carries significance for the development of theories of professional development as explanations of educational influence, and for

understanding the political nature of such practitioner research. It also develops ideas about how e-learning meaning can be communicated within e-learning forms, which has potential significance for the wider dissemination of such research knowledge beyond the academy and into the workplace.

Significance for the development of a knowledge base of training and development practice

My research shows how personal knowledge of training practice and the development of e-learning can be systematised through action research self-study so that it can be shared with other practitioners. The development of such a knowledge base can have significance for addressing the gaps in understanding within the predominantly functional knowledges that dominate the field.

8.7. How do I modify my concerns, ideas and practice in light of my evaluation?

The account of professional development and the development of educational knowledge that I have given reflect a set of experiences mediated by depression, which I have insufficiently explored to date. In revealing this at all I am encouraged by Crotty's (2011) recent living educational theory account in the *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, which unknowingly responds to Lynch's (2010b) criticism that the affective domain is neglected in education, and explains the importance of emotion in teaching and learning and its

influence on her emerging higher education pedagogy. Without using the phrase directly, I think she gets very close to explaining the educational relationship as a sort of ‘holding world’ (Humphreys and Ruddle 2010) in which it is possible to express and, hopefully with support, to transcend difficult experiences and emotions so that one can flourish educationally. I make a connection between this idea and Butler’s (2005), drawing on psychoanalysis, that we are formed in primary relationships of dependence which exert an influence on us throughout our lives that is not fully available to consciousness. I also make a connection with Lynch’s (2010b) deconstruction of the ‘rational autonomous actor’ as object of education and how it denies our constitutive interdependency, vulnerability and neediness.

I understand the significance of these ideas in relation to my own emotionally-charged experiences of higher education through which I have struggled with intermittent but heavy doubts about my intellectual capacity to enter into an equal dialogue with significant thinkers and difficult concepts or language, to bring something new, something unforeseen (Arendt 1958; Biesta 2006), something that might be legitimated by the academy and valued in the public service workplace. It is a present concern that I could at so many junctures have been entirely overwhelmed by these doubts, in which case I might not have been able to continue my education, to systematise my personal knowledge and to make public this account. This experience sensitises me to the possibility that this constitutes an affective reality for others, and I come to

see that while developing pedagogies of the unique (Farren 2005) and dialogic, worldly spaces in which encounter with otherness is a real possibility (Biesta 2006), we must pay particular attention to the quality of the educational spaces and relationships we are co-creating. These should feel ‘safe’ enough that we can be ourselves (Crotty 2011), accept and express our constitutive vulnerability and dependency (Butler 2005; Lynch 2010b), the limits of our self-knowledge (Butler 2005), and learn to provide one another with the love, care and solidarity that are central to human flourishing (Lynch et al. 2007). If we can do this then we may all learn to enjoy how we are intelligent (Crotty 2011).

8.8. Conclusion

I am showing through this account the live processes through which I have generated and tested the validity of my own living theory of leadership development for e-learning, and how these contributed to my professional development. I am showing how I engaged in sustained reflexive and dialectical critique, and a critical dialogue with the thinking of others, transforming my conceptual understanding and my practice. I am showing the risks and challenges involved in bringing educational ideas from the university into the workplace context, and how individualistic theories of leadership are inadequate for understanding the distributed nature of the organisational change process (Engestrom 2000; Gronn 2000; Spillane et al. 2004). Above all, I am showing how I developed my own epistemology of professional

development, which I believe, makes a potentially significant and original contribution to the development of a knowledge base of training practice, in particular for the conceptualisation of e-learning as a relational practice and an educational leadership issue. This could not have happened without the collaboration of training colleagues in the use and production of leadership knowledge for e-learning (Gunter 2001).

If the potential of e-learning lies between conflicting values, then I believe that an important task of educational leadership is to create dialogical spaces in which training personnel can approach e-learning as a site of struggle (Bourdieu 1990) and identify the normative influences on training practice, spaces in which they are helped to clarify and articulate their educational values for use of ICT, and to insert themselves positively amongst competing interpretive frames (Barnett 2000a). Through action research I have been able to clarify the educational values that give meaning to my life and work. These serve as explanatory principles for the actions that I took to improve professional knowledge and practice. I invite you to use them to test the validity of my claim to know my professional development. I hope that you will see as justifiable my claim to have generated a living theory of leadership development through my ontological commitment to a more *educational* training practice and to the possibilities that ICT presents for increasing opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection on what we do in organisational life – improving learning for improving practice.

... we can say that someone has learned something not when she is able to copy and reproduce what already existed, but when she responds to what is unfamiliar, what is different, what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs. Here learning becomes a creation or an invention, a process of bringing something new into the world: one's own unique response. (Biesta 2006, p.68)

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Appendix A – Note on the Professional Doctorate in Education (Leadership) Programme at DCU

The Professional Doctorate in Education (Leadership) is a four-year, part-time programme offered by the School of Education Studies in DCU since 2006. I was part of the second cohort, beginning October 2008. The programme comprised two phases: the ‘taught phase’ of six modules - three in the area of research and three in the theme area, educational leadership - delivered in a series of two-day workshops over four semesters; and the ‘research phase’ – a further two years - in which I worked with the guidance of a supervisor to complete this doctoral thesis.

See: http://www4.dcu.ie/education_studies/pdpe.shtml

Table 1: Structure of PDPE Programme

	Module
2008/09	FB602 Doing Research
	ES603 Leadership in Education and Training
	ES605 Practitioner Research in Organisational Contexts
2009/10	ES601 Emerging Research Theories and Methods in Education and Training
	ES602 Leadership in Improving Learning Organisations
	ES604 Research-Based Educational Leadership
2010/11	Research project
2011/12	Research project

Appendix B – Research-Based Educational Leadership Case

Study

Note: This assignment was completed in fulfilment of the assessment requirements for Module ES604 Research-Based Educational Leadership in Year Two of the Professional Doctorate programme. I include it here as a part of my evidence base for the claim to be able to explain my professional development. It shows how, through engagement with the curriculum and the substantive and methodological literature, and through field research I developed understanding of the conceptual and political environment in which ‘accountability mechanisms’ have become central to managing organisations

Assignment:

The Module Assignment is a 3,000 word paper which will encompass the following three areas:

(1) A conceptual analysis of the rise of ‘the age of evaluation; (2) an analysis of the processes in the field of quality assurance and evaluation / self evaluation in each organisation; (3) an evaluation of the working in the quality assurance / evaluation system in each of our organisation involving some field research, ideally in the form of focus groups.

In Evaluation We Trust: Training and Development in the Irish Civil Service

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1. Introduction

In response to the findings of a value for money (VFM) examination by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in 2000 (Comptroller and Auditor General 2000), several initiatives were instigated by the Department of Finance with the stated intention to provide greater policy direction for training and development across Irish government departments/offices and greater co-ordination of activities. One of these initiatives has involved the promulgation of a system of evaluation of training based on Kirkpatrick's (1994) 'Four-Level Model of Training Evaluation' and Phillips' (1997) 'Return on Investment in Training' (ROI) methodology. In this paper I set out to examine the development within the context of a conceptual analysis of the emergence of the 'evaluative state' (Neave 1998) and its enthusiasm for "*performance-based accountability*" (Embleton 1997, p1). In the Irish context this locates my case study within the wider context of reforms introduced during the 1990s under the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) for the public service, as well as more recent reviews. Using document analysis and focus group data I examine the 'implementation gap' between policy and practice to come to an analysis of the working of the system. I conclude, after Power (1997, 2007), that in this

case the distinction between evaluation and audit has been blurred, and that the evaluation demand produced through the C&AG report has been more about installing ‘auditability’ by visibilising training in a standard material form – the evaluation report – as a comparable trace of internal control. I will argue that the fact that evaluation is to be done in accordance with a prescribed model and targets displaces preoccupation with first-order training performance and standards, or even what is discovered about these through evaluation.

2. The Rise of the Age of Evaluation

Whether we employ the phrase ‘evaluative state’ (Neave op. cit.) or ‘audit society’ (Power 1997), we are at once reflecting a strand of social scientific research that has as its objective an examination of the apparent increase in regulation, inspection and external monitoring within the public sector over the last three decades and its impact on social, political and economic life. This observed rise in the use of benchmarking, evaluation, audit and quality assurance as tools of state governance, which has been increasingly focused on questions of ‘performance’ in public services (Clarke 2003), is linked by many to the spread of ‘New Public Management’ (NPM), particularly in *anglophone* countries.

NPM is a *post facto* label or short hand used to describe both a set of normative ideas about public administration with roots in economic rationalism and managerialism, and a wave of worldwide public sector reform programmes

influenced by those ideas since the 1980s. The ground for this, it has been argued, was provided for by macroeconomic crises of the 1970s, a growing neo-liberalism, and the enthusiasm of supranational organisations such as the OECD, EU, IMF and World Bank. Its central theme was inserting the ‘competitive ethic of the market-place’ into public service, which was considered inherently inefficient (Christensen and Laegreid 2002), and forcing “*institutional and thus system development*” (Neave 1998, p7). Hood (1991), who is attributed with coining the phrase, identifies its core doctrinal components as follows:

1. A disaggregation of units in the public sector, with decentralised budgets and ‘arms-length’ interaction;
2. ‘Hands-on professional management’, with managers ‘free to manage’ (delegated authority), and a stress on private sector styles of management practice;
3. Explicit standards and measures of performance in the form of goals and targets, preferably expressed in quantitative terms, and greater emphasis on output controls, with resource allocation linked to measured performance;
4. A shift to greater competition through term contracts and public tendering procedures;
5. A stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use by cutting direct costs and raising labour discipline.

Proponents of NPM-influenced reforms argued that they were necessary to produce accountability, transparency and value for money, which as abstract principles, argues Neave (op. cit.), were unassailable. However, they proved controversial in terms of their operational, legislative and financial consequences (ibid.), with critics arguing that they threatened professional autonomy, increased bureaucracy, led to 'gaming', and in fact constituted an attempt to convert political questions into resource management ones (Power 1997).

The increase in monitoring, which Neave and Power describe, arises from a tension at the heart of NPM, between what Kettl (1997, p449) describes as 'letting managers manage' and 'making managers manage'. As authority is delegated new systems of oversight become mandated, and evaluation emerges as a key instrument in maintaining bureaucratic control. This reflects a fundamental shift in the way the state monitors and manages, argues Bleiklie (1998, p307), from *ex ante* regulation focused on rule production and adherence, to *ex post facto* control centred on goal formation and performance evaluation with incentives and sanctions invoked to promote increased efficiency. VFM audit is at the heart of these changes (Power 1997, p26). NPM, however, is not a monolith and considerable cultural variation has been observed in the extent to which its principles have taken root in different countries (Hood 1995; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000), requiring attention to the way in which different politico-administrative systems are organised

(Christensen et al. 2007). While efficiency considerations came into focus in Ireland in the wake of reforms elsewhere, the variant of NPM that emerged here with the SMI in 1994 was distinctive, being undertaken by senior civil servants themselves, without consistent political direction, efficiency targets or budget sanctions (Hardiman and MacCarthaigh 2008). And although reforms aimed at institutionalising programme review and evaluation as a central element of good governance (Boyle 2005), the form of evaluation which emerged was consensual, collaborative and negotiated, influenced by the corporatist and partnership-driven approach to economic policy and industrial relations dominated over the last two decades (McNamara et al. 2009).

3. Methodology

A case study methodology was used to explore the micro realities of the ‘evaluative state’, taking the implementation of a system of evaluation of training across civil service departments/offices and how this has been experienced in the Revenue Commissioners as its case. This employed both document analysis and focus group work to permit an exploration of the ‘implementation gap’ between the system as formally described in policy documents and its working as described by participants. This empirical work was informed by my experience of working as a trainer in Revenue during the period 2004-2009 and carrying out evaluations.

Documents examined included meeting minutes, evaluation reports, training materials, policy documents, and strategy statements.

A single focus group was undertaken, representing a cross section of training personnel in the Revenue Commissioners, including the Director of Training, two training managers and six trainers, all of whom are involved to differing levels of degree in undertaking evaluations. This had the advantage of permitting the development of an interactional, inter-subjective view, focused on respondents' experiences and perceptions of the system.

4. Training and Development 1996-2011: Emerging Evaluation Demand

In 1996, the second report of the group of co-ordinating Secretaries-General, 'Delivering Better Government' (Government of Ireland 1996a) recommended that in order to support the programme of reforms set out in the SMI, departments/offices increase their spending on training and development from a then average of 0.75% of payroll to 3%. Agreed with the social partners as part of Partnership 2000 (Government of Ireland 1996b), the target was increased to 4% in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Government of Ireland 2000) and sustained in subsequent agreements.

Given this four-fold increase in expenditure, training and development would soon come under the radar of the C&AG, newly empowered under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993 to undertake VFM

audits. Its 2000 report on training and development in the civil service, undertaken with assistance from external management consultants found, *inter alia*, that:

... the civil service system for measuring training and development performance is focused on cost control and the achievement of the SMI target of 4% of payroll. The system does not facilitate the evaluation of training performance in terms of whether it is achieving the desired outcome.

(Comptroller and Auditor General 2000, p42)

Significantly, the report compared the evaluation mechanisms then in place in departments/offices to Kirkpatrick's 'Four-level Model of Training Evaluation' (see Table 1), which it noted "*is in widespread use in the private sector*" (ibid., p40), observing that "*most civil service training is subject to level one only*" (ibid.), that is, evaluating participants immediate reactions to a training event. This appropriation of Kirkpatrick's model was completed without any apparent critique or review of alternative models. This is significant because the VFM report was to provide the catalyst for a number of initiatives by the Civil Service Training and Development Centre (CSTDC) in the Department of Finance, including the publication of a 'Framework for Civil Service Training and Development 2004-2008' (Department of Finance 2004) and the establishment of a cross-departmental Training and Development Committee (TDC) composed of nominated representatives "*to advise on the development and ongoing management of Training and Development across the civil service*" (ibid., p32).

The Framework emphasised the need to apply a structured approach to evaluation to assist with closer integration of future training interventions with business objectives; the development of common standards for training and development; prioritisation of training; improving and refining training and development design and delivery; assessing value for money. The TDC were charged with advising on the “*development of an evaluation method that is appropriate to the objectives of individual training and development programmes*” (ibid. p31), supported by CSTDC research into evaluation ‘best practice’ (ibid. p41).

The committee also came to endorse Kirkpatrick, supplying departments/offices with guidance materials in 2004, and augmented this in 2008 to include Phillips (op. cit.) ROI methodology. The system is formally described in the ‘Return on Investment Workbook’ (Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2009) produced by a working group of the TDC as guidance for departments/offices (see Table 1), which defines the purpose of evaluation as follows:

The purpose of evaluating training and development interventions is to ensure that resources are invested wisely, that training and development is delivered efficiently where and when it is needed and to confirm that the training and development is having the desired impact on individual and organisation behaviour.
(Civil Service Training and Development Centre 2009, p3)

In other words, evaluation should demonstrate that expenditure on training is economic, efficient and effective (the three Es), echoing the language of VFM audit (Power 1997, p44).

Since 2009, targets for evaluation have been agreed by the Training and Development Committee as follows:

30 % of Courses are to be evaluated to Level 3, and Training Units are to strive to complete 10% of the 30% of level 3 courses to Level 4 and a minimum of 1 Course is to be evaluated to Level 5 in 2009.
(Departmental Training Officers Network 2009)

In developing capacity to meet this evaluation demand, the CSTDC tendered for provision of ROI training, which was delivered to 84 participants from across 30 Government Departments/Offices and Agencies (Harris 2010).

Table 1: Kirkpatrick/Phillips Model of Training Evaluation (CSTDC 2009)

Level	Information	Data	Percentage of courses to be evaluated
Level 1 – Reaction, Satisfaction, Planned Action	Measures reaction, which is what participants think or feel about the training	Ask the participant to rate to what extent training objectives were addressed	100%
Level 2 - Learning	Assesses learning, which is what happens when attitudes are changed, knowledge is increased, or skills are improved as a result of training	Use tests to establish that learning has been achieved, e.g. multiple choice, assignments, projects, simulations, role plays, quizzes etc.	60%
Level 3 – Application/ Implementation	Is concerned with behavioural change that is the extent to which	Ask staff member and manager to estimate improvement in	30%

	learning transfers back into the workplace and impacts on job performance	observable competence as a result of training	
Level 4 – Business Impact	Considers the results that are the organisational performance that can be directly attributed to the training provided	Ask the manager to identify the impact training has had on the attainment of business goals and estimate the contribution of training solely to improvement	10-20%
Level 5 – Return on Investment	Measures the return on investment (ROI), identifying business results of training and then converting them into monetary values and isolating the effects of the training from other factors that could have contributed to the results	Establish programme costs and net training cost benefit to manager	3-5%

This is *ex post facto* evaluation with a largely summative focus. That is, it is primarily concerned with making a judgement about the impact of a training programme and what its measurable effects were, or in other words, proving rather than improving. Thus evaluation may be said to serve an accountability purpose - demonstrating how far a programme has achieved its objectives, how well it has used its resources and what has been its impact. It reflects a positivist philosophy, having “*instrumental concerns with measurable*

objectives” (McNamara and O’Hara 2004, p467). Data is primarily quantitative, collected mainly through questionnaires. In this context it is a system of internal evaluation, undertaken by training personnel, for which the only formal training has been the ROI course organised by the Department of Finance.

5. Evaluation by Numbers? Discussion and Analysis

5.1. Exploring Trainers’ Experiences and Perceptions

A striking theme in this research was the extent to which the evaluation model had been naturalized and accepted as common sense by respondents (Power 2004), as well as the degree to which the discourse of performance measurement had been internalized, for example:

#6 “I particularly think they’re valuable in terms of moving away from the whole measuring training days to measuring what sort of impact we’re having but again ideally I think that would be measured in terms of outcomes rather than even outputs”.

The appeal of Kirkpatrick/Phillips for training personnel is obvious. It is a pragmatic model that helps them to think about evaluation in a systematic way (Alliger & Janak 1989; Tamkin et al. 2002; Bates 2004). It simplifies the process by suggesting when and how evaluation is done and what questions should be asked of whom. Also, at level four and five it provides a means for trainers to couch what they do in terms of its impact on business, thereby proving its (and their) organisational value. However, its simplicity also belies

its weaknesses and Kirkpatrick, in particular, has been criticised on three key counts, critiques that to some extent belied respondents' largely positive account:

Firstly, the model implies a hierarchy of value in the levels of evaluation, with business impact measures being seen as the most valuable and reaction the least (ibid.). This contrasts with a strong focus by respondents on the value of formative feedback, which allows them to make ongoing adjustments to courses, and on the value of assessment in improving learning outcomes:

#2 "We're a lot more dynamic to react rather than waiting on an analysis like that ... you're always innovating and changing and reacting to the feedback of groups".

#3 "... the continuous assessments tends to focus the mind and we hope, and I think I've seen from some of them, that it does be reflected or it is reflected, I should say, in the end results."

A second critique is that the model assumes a causal chain of impact such that a positive reaction to a course will lead to greater learning, which will enhance workplace behaviour and in turn improve organisational results (ibid.).

Underpinning this is a more fundamental assumption that training is undertaken to directly improve particular organisational results, which respondents perceived is not always the case, for example:

#6 ... trying to make the link between a behaviour, a training and an outcome. I think it's even more difficult when you're talking about something you don't want to see, for example, the whole thing of ethical areas and really you're talking about what you don't want the person to do as much as what you do want them to do... the risk of not training is

also not something very well addressed in Kirkpatrick. For example, a health and safety course - you may be required to deliver it under law is the first thing, so the risk of not delivering it leaves us open ...”

The third major critique is that the model fails to take account of any intervening variables that might affect learning or ‘learning transfer’ to the workplace (Holton 1996), so that, for example, ‘on-the-job’ learning is marginalized:

#7 “... is the improvement a direct result of our training courses or is it a direct result of something else or is there a number of factors involved? Because the training we do – a lot of it is classroom-based. It’s a combination of classroom and on-the-job training, so on-the-job training has to come into it as well.”

In any case, it is evident that a more pragmatic approach is taken by respondents to implementation than is prescribed by the CSTDC, for a third notable theme in the research was the extent to which respondents could satisfy the need for feedback through other organisational channels and through more strategic, programmatic review:

#1 “...we have so many networks that we all attend that are so clued in to training and that tell us whether or not there actually is an impact on the ground from what trainees are actually doing ...”

#2” Every two or three years we go back and revisit a programme ...[this] is the appropriate interval to systematically go through it ...when you do that sort of consultation it should be good for a two or three year period at least before having to do it again.”

On this basis and on the basis that *there has always been a level of evaluation undertaken* it was felt that the promotion of the model by the CSTDC had only

had a small impact on practice - to the extent that there was a new obligation to undertake ROI evaluation:

#1 "... it has a small impact ... It's had an impact in so far as we have an obligation to at least get to a Level Five - a return on investment – on one training programme a year. So it has had that impact. And attempting to that – attempting to do it is one thing but actually trying to get a result is a very different thing."

This obligation, which involves trying to assess the monetary value for the training compared to its costs is problematic not least because performance measurement is not embedded in the civil service (OECD 2008). In order to try and establish ROI trainers have had to rely on one quantum available to them – participants' and managers' own estimate of the time saved as a result of training. In theory, this 'tangible benefit', as illustrated in the ROI workbook (see Table 2), can be converted to a monetary value by costing the average hourly rate of pay and extrapolating the benefit for a full year). Asking the respondent to estimate the % of the saving that can be directly attributed to training is indicated as a means to 'isolate the effect of training', servicing a "fake precision" (Power 2004, p770). In practice, however, while several ROI evaluations have been attempted in Revenue none has yet been successfully completed, as even this quantum has been difficult to establish with trainees and managers unable to say how much time had been saved as a direct result of training.

#1 "This particular one, I suppose, I find as a manager very, very frustrating and its very, very time consuming ... we've had a number of people trained on how to do this. Everyone of them have attempted to do an ROI, one of them is still trying to happen ... it's worthwhile but trying to get there is very, very difficult."

Table 2: Calculating the monetary benefit for one course participant (CSTDC)

	Pre-training impact on productivity	Cost factor	Pre-training cost	Post-course impact on productivity	Post-training cost	% of saving directly attributed to training	Saving x % attribution
Time spent by manager correcting errors	7 hours	Hourly rate of €29 x 46 weeks	€9338	5 hours	€6670	70%	€1867.60

5.2. Applying Power’s Theory of Auditability

Power (1997) argues that VFM audit is intended both to evaluate and shape auditee performance. The VFM audit of training and development, undertaken by the C&AG in 2000, was effective in shaping auditee performance, encouraging departments/offices to make themselves more auditable. By implementing the Kirkpatrick model departments/offices could offer evaluations at each level as ‘traces of control activity’, which in turn made it possible for the C&AG to benchmark these by the time of a 2007 follow-up study (Comptroller and Auditor General 2007). This was, in effect, second-order verification of evaluation.

The claim for VFM, says Power (1997), is that it renders performance visible in three dimensions - economy, efficiency and effectiveness - while in practice prioritising economy and efficiency over effectiveness, which is more local,

ambiguous and less amenable to quantification. Moreover, he argues, when organisations lack productivity measures to link inputs to outputs the audit of effectiveness is in fact a process of defining and operationalising measures so that effectiveness is not verified but constructed around the audit process itself (ibid.). This was the case with the original VFM report which did not examine training effectiveness at all but the systems, practices and procedures used to evaluate effectiveness.

While on the face of it the Kirkpatrick model was selected by the Training and Development Committee, its citation in the original VFM report as a standard evaluation technique in widespread use framed the discourse such that departments would have to define themselves in relation to that system (Power 2004). However, by the 2007 follow-up “*preparedness for audit*” (Power 2007, p2) was such that the C&AG could note:

Explicit targets and performance indicators are being developed for evaluation of formal training ...
(Comptroller and Auditor General 2007, p199)

Subsequent public sector reviews (OECD 2008; Department of An Taoiseach 2008) have provided further strong incentives to departments/offices “*to represent, defend, and publicly prove the quality of their performance*” (Power 2007, p2) with arguments for increased performance measurement. Against the backdrop of these ROI must have appealed as a technical instrument that could ‘translate’ training performance into a standardizable and measurable quantum – money. Its inclusion within the system since 2008, however, goes beyond the

original VFM report and constitutes an example of “*accountingization*” (Power and Laughlin 1992, p133), that is the increasing influence of accounting logic in framing accountability.

All measurement, argues Power (2004), is produced through cycles of innovation, crisis and reform, although measurement systems that appear defective and fail nonetheless “*reproduce and invent an institutional demand for numbers*” (ibid. p769). Attempts at monetarizing training through ROI have not been entirely successful and few evaluation reports have yet been submitted to the CSTDC. If this is a crisis point, it is not yet clear how reform will play out but it is clear that ROI is not easily abandoned:

... the theory in relation to Return on Expectation¹ leads us all to believe that it is probably a more suitable method for evaluation in relation to the Civil Service, but we are still tied to the Return on Investment commitment for the foreseeable future. (Departmental Training Officers Network 2010)

6. Conclusion

Three arguments are made for this case study.

Firstly, it contributes to understanding the emergence of evaluation as a tool of public sector governance in Ireland and to the development of evaluation capacity (see Boyle 2005). It illustrates the impact of SMI reforms, in

¹ Recent practice advisories by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, a leading professional body for human resource and training personnel in the UK and Ireland, argue that very few organisations find ROI an appropriate strategic measure of the value of learning. They advocate a shift in evaluation effort to measuring Return on Expectation, that is, identifying measures that address the value expectations of stakeholders for training and the extent to which training meets these expectations (see for example, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development 2010a, 2010b).

particular the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993, on internal evaluation demand.

Secondly, it contributes to understanding the situated nature of these NPM-influenced reforms in the Irish Civil Service, which have largely been bottom-up (Hardiman and MacCarthaigh 2008) and tempered by locally prevailing corporatist and partnership approaches to policy-making and industrial relations (McNamara et al. 2009). The selection of a system of self-evaluation by representatives of departments'/offices' training functions provides a further illustration of the consensual nature of evaluation practice adapted (ibid.), which carries no sanctions.

Finally, it illustrates Power's (2007) contention that what is at stake in new regimes of public accountability is 'control of control' and a requirement that organisations make themselves auditable. Through this lens we may see that a key consequence of the C&AGs 2000 VFM report and subsequent follow-up has been the creation of a second-order verification activity, which is more concerned with seeing that evaluation is done in a standardised way than with first-order training performance. Targets for ROI evaluation rather than standards of training have become the subject of inspection by the CSTDC. The prescription of the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model of evaluation has contributed to "*creating the material conditions of possibility for audit*" (ibid., p2), with evaluation reports providing "*traces of control activities*" (ibid.,

p16). Trust in the fact that evaluation is done displaces preoccupation with training *per se*.

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Appendix C – Key Developments in the Irish Public Service

1992-2012

Year	Event
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (May) Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993 - <i>Extended the remit of the C&AG to include ‘value for money’ audits</i>
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (February) Programme for Competitiveness and Work - <i>Third national ‘social partnership’ agreement, covering the period 1994-1996</i> – (February) Launch of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI)
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (May) SMI: Publication of ‘Delivering Better Government: Second Report to Government of the Co-ordinating Group of Secretaries: A Programme of Change for the Irish Civil Service’ – <i>working groups established in six areas: human resource management, financial management, information technology, quality customer service, openness and transparency, regulatory reform</i>
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (January) Partnership 2000 - <i>Fourth national ‘social partnership agreement’, covering the period 1997-2000.</i> – (January) SMI: PMDS - Hay Management Consultants commissioned to assist with the design of a performance management process for the civil service. – (April) Freedom of Information Act, 1997. – (May) SMI: Public Service Management Act, 1997 - <i>requires each department/office to publish their statement of strategy in accordance with the guidelines approved by government</i> – (July) SMI: Announcement of Government decisions on the modernisation of the public service - <i>Including a Programme of Expenditure Reviews as part of a three year programme, and establishment of Implementation Group of Secretaries General</i> – (October) Amalgamation of Paper Keeper and Clerical Assistant grades into grade of Clerical Officer – SMI: Quality Customer Service Initiative - first publication by departments of individual Customer Service Action Plans.
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (February) SMI: Establishment of All Party Oireachtas

	<p>Committee on the SMI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SMI: Government Approval given for Multi-Annual Budgets and enhanced Administrative Budgets.
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (May) SMI: Publication by departments of first Statements of Strategy under the terms of the Public Service Management Act 1997. – SMI: Design of new Civil Service policies and systems on HRM and Performance Management. – SMI: Government approval of Financial Management system.
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (February) Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000-2003) - <i>Fifth national 'social partnership agreement', covering the period 2000-2003</i> – (March) SMI: Research report on Gender Imbalance in Irish Civil Service Grades at Higher Executive Officer Level and above – <i>undertaken as part of SMI to identify reasons for under representation of women</i> – (May) SMI: Introduction of Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) in the civil service. – (September) Report of the Steering Group on the Review of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners – <i>undertaken on foot of report by the Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) Sub-Committee on Certain Revenue Matters in its Parliamentary Inquiry into D.I.R.T.</i> – (December) Value for Money Review of Training and Development in the Irish Civil Service published by the Comptroller and Auditor General
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (April) OECD report: Regulatory Reform in Ireland. Agreement on an Action Programme and National Action Strategy on Better Regulation. – (July) Standards in Public Office Act, 2001
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (January) SMI: Changes to PMDS - <i>Introduction of Upward Feedback on phased basis over 3 years.</i> – (January) Formal Review of Partnership in the Civil Service (J.J. O'Dwyer and Associates). – (March) SMI: Evaluation of the Progress of the Strategic Management Initiative / Delivering Better Government Modernisation Programme (PA Consulting) – (April) SMI: Evaluation of Customer Action Plans (Butler).

2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (February) Sustaining Progress - <i>Sixth national 'social partnership agreement' covering the period 2003-2005; Establishment of Performance Verification Groups to monitor and report on progress in implementing the modernisation agenda.</i> - (April) Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act, 2003. - (April) Revenue's Human Resources Policy published - (November) Revenue's Training & Development Strategy published - (December) Announcement by government in the December 2003 budget to relocate 10,000 Dublin-based civil and public servants to 53 locations around Ireland, including the relocation of 8 Government Departments in their entirety. - (December) Completion of the restructuring of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (January) SMI: Publication of the Government White Paper, 'Regulating Better: Action Plan to advance regulatory reform' - (March) Framework for Civil Service Training and Development 2004-2008 published - (June) SMI: PMDS Evaluation (Mercer) - <i>recommends integration of PMDS with wider HR system</i> - (June) Piloting of Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) commences - (September) Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour published - (October) Public Services Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act, 2004 - <i>allows Civil Service Departments/Offices to recruit staff directly</i>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (May) Integrated PMDS model - <i>integration with increments, promotions, higher scales.</i> - (July) Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2005. - (October) Introduction of RIA.
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (June) Towards 2016 - <i>Seventh national 'social partnership agreement' covering the period (2006-2015)</i> - (July) Civil Service Disciplinary Code revised - (December) Budget 2006 / Performance Indicators - <i>Includes commitment on development of annual output statements by Departments/Offices</i>

2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (March) First Departmental ‘Output Statements’ published – (April) Government announces ‘Organisational Review Programme’ - <i>to review the capacities of individual Government Departments and major Offices</i> – (June) Consolidation of arrangements on Post-Entry Education – Refund of Fees, Study Leave and Examination Leave
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (April) ‘Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service’ OECD Review published – (November) Report of the Task Force on Transforming the Public Service (TPS) published - <i>Action plan drawing on recommendations of the OECD Review</i> – (November) Government Statement on TPS published – (November) First Report of the Organisational Review Programme (Pilot Phase) published – (November) Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes established - <i>Colloquially known as ‘An Bord Snip Nua’ (Irish for ‘the cuts board’); established to recommend cuts in public spending</i>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (February) Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 – (March) Announcement of moratorium on recruitment and promotions in the public service – (July) Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes published (McCarthy Report) - <i>including recommendations for 17,300 public service job cuts</i> – (December) Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No 2) Act, 2009
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (June) Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 – (September) Second Report of the Organisational Review Programme - <i>Includes a review of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners</i> – (November) National Recovery Plan published – <i>Includes commitment on an Employment Control Framework for the Civil Service and further staff reductions in the period 2011-2014</i> – (December) Memorandum of Understanding between the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund on a ‘Programme of Financial Support for Ireland’ – (December) ‘Strengthening the Capacity of the Department of

	Finance: Report of the Independent Review Panel' published
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (February) New coalition government is formed February 2011, which establishes the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) - <i>assumes responsibility for all issues relating to civil service remuneration and employment, including responsibility for PMDS</i> – (June) First Progress Report of the Implementation Body of the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 – (June) Report to the Department of Finance arising from the review of Public Service Management Savings Initiatives – (September) Learning and Development Framework for the Civil Service 2011-2014 published by the Civil Service Training and Development Centre. – (September) Review of PMDS in C&AG audit of the Accounts of the Public Services 2010 – (November) Public Service Reform Plan published (DPER) – (December) Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-14 published (DPER)
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (January) Changes to PMDS (DPER) – (January) Third ORP Report and Progress Report on Implementation (DPER) – (February) Government Agreement on Strategic Approach to Shared Services Delivery – (February) Review of Decentralisation Programme (DPER) – (March) Civil Service Training and Development Centre is closed - <i>Replaced by 'Civil Service Training Policy Unit' in DPER</i> – (May) Announcement of plans for Civil Service Wide Human Resources Shared Service Centre (DPER) – (July) Reform of sick leave arrangements announced (DPER) – (July) Further changes to PMDS announced (DPER) – (September) Review of Public Service Allowances published (DPER) – (September) Progress report on the implementation of Public Service Reform Plan published (DPER)

Appendix D – Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness

Case Study

Note: This assignment was completed in fulfilment of the assessment requirements for Module ES602 Leadership in Improving Learning Organisations in Year Two of the Professional Doctorate programme. I include it here as part of my evidence-base because I believe that it demonstrates how, through engagement with the curriculum, literature and field research, I have engaged epistemologically with the idea of leadership as research and knowledge object.

Assignment:

Using the learning from the modules, workshops, presentations and discussions write a 5,000 word essay in case study format on Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness in an organisation. The essay in case study format should include a short overview of case study methodology, a substantial summary of the literature. Use a minimum of ten references in the body of the case study part of the assignment. Areas of leadership to be covered are (a) Description of organisation including vision and mission and goals; (b) description of a leader – What qualities exist that are most important to role; (c) Leadership impact on organisational effectiveness – list 4-6 standout examples; (d) How performance is measured; (e) What could be done better by the leader and how would it make the organisation even more effective!

Exploring ‘Leadership’ and ‘Organisational Effectiveness’ in the Irish Public Service: The Case of the Revenue Commissioners

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1. Introduction

This assignment responds to the proposition that leadership is critical to organisational effectiveness and that this may be apprehended by the researcher taking an individual leader as the object of her enquiry. Instead of accepting the proposition, it treats the two variables and the relationship between them as inherently problematic and worthy of greater conceptual elaboration. In response, a case study approach is used to explore these complex constructs in an Irish public service setting. It takes the case of the Revenue Commissioners – the organisation in which I work - to reflect on how effectiveness may be conceptualised in this public service setting, on the different actors influencing effectiveness criteria, and on the way in which the meaning of leadership and organisational effectiveness may be in process. This approach also permits reflection on two contemporary narratives with relevance: distributed leadership (Gronn 2000; Spillane et al. 2004); and public sector ‘accountability’. The study is timely in the light of recent cuts in public expenditure in Ireland, industrial relations difficulties in the public service, and

a third narrative, in political and media accounts at least, of the need for systemic ‘reform’, ‘transformation’ and ‘modernisation’ of the sector. It is also timely in light of the OECD (2008) and Task Force on the Public Service (Department of An Taoiseach 2008a) prescriptions of leadership and leadership development as the solution to a whole range of public service challenges. The paper begins by reflecting on the conceptual challenges in researching leadership and organisational effectiveness, before outlining the case study methodology adopted for this research. At a macro level this includes a brief analysis of the public service ‘modernisation project’ in Ireland over the past 16 years, and its implications for the case study organisation. At a micro level it includes an analysis of a specific project within Revenue, which aims to impact organisational effectiveness – the ‘Case-working Improvement Initiative’. Experimentally, this is attempted through the frame of activity theory which aims to help researchers transcend the micro-macro and mental-material dichotomies (Engestrom 2000) and re-integrate context into leadership studies (Gronn 2000). Tentative conclusions are drawn and recommendations for further study are made.

2. Conceptual Challenges in Researching Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness

It is now widely asserted, in business texts and in public policy documents, that leadership is critical to organisational effectiveness. This is easy to assert but much more difficult to empirically test and yet that is the hypothesis to which

this case study assignment is asked to respond. The challenges for the researcher are manifold but begin with a crudely dichotomous choice between objectivist and subjectivist perspectives on the research phenomena (Coghlan and Brannick 2005). Do we assume that leadership and organisational effectiveness are consistently real 'things', comprised of processes and structures that are independent of human thinking about them, or do we assume that they are socially-constructed products with cultural and historical variation? Do we assume that these phenomena can be accessed objectively, or do we assume that they can only be understood through individual's points of views? These are highly significant questions because they influence what we choose as our 'unit of analysis', which methods we use to operationalise our research question(s), and ultimately what we can discover through the endeavour, and yet this sort of discussion is noticeably missing from most research accounts in the field. In this section, therefore, I propose to discuss the problematic nature of both leadership and organisational effectiveness as objects of enquiry, for it is clear from the research literature that there is little consensus on what these phenomena are, and considerable methodological diversity. I also briefly consider the potential of activity theory as a solution to the research problems identified.

Leadership

What do we study when we study leadership? What is our unit of analysis? Grint (2005), for his part, distinguishes at least four ways that it has been

approached: leadership as person; leadership as results; leadership as position; and leadership as process. Nonetheless, individualistic conceptions of leadership dominate the literature, implying that it is what an individual ‘leader’ is or does that constitutes leadership. This conflates leadership with headship (Gronn 2000). It reflects what Meindl (1995) terms ‘the romance of leadership’, an attributional bias that privileges leaders in explanations of organisational effectiveness, and hinges on a leader-follower dualism, the validity of which Gronn (2007) calls into question. This he argues makes two erroneous assumptions: that the relationship is a simple one-to-one relationship; and that influence is uni-directional, that is, the leader leads and the follower follows. This is clearly not the case as influence can be exercised by different organisational members at different times – not only by the leader, who is frequently led. It also neglects to say what is qualitatively different between what each does. One of the problems then with taking leader as the object of enquiry is that leadership can ‘disappear’ (Alvesson and Svenningsson 2003), because the tasks of leadership can transcend role-space occupancy (Gronn 2000) and “*leaders may or may not engage in leading or leadership [while] those who are not prescribed leaders may de facto be doing so*” (Ribbins and Gunter 2002, p.380).

Leader as object of enquiry also neglects the socially constructed nature of leadership, its shifting meaning (Storey 2004; Chapman and O’Toole 2010), and the role of leadership discourse as a technology in maintaining

asymmetrical power relations, such that Ribbins (1999) observes that an increasing focus on leadership in the UK has been a key means by which Government has pushed through reform agendas in education. It is, observes Serpieri et al. (2009), defined as “*one of the most relevant levers of change*” (p.211) within the neoliberal discourse of New Public Management (NPM). More recently a new narrative of distributed leadership has emerged to challenge the idea of leadership as an individual property. This reflects an alternative conceptualisation of leadership that is only now receiving due attention (Gronn 2000): that leadership is an emergent property that only exists in the interactions between networks of people. On this view leadership is fundamentally relational (Collinson 2005; Glatter 2004).

Both Gronn (2000) and Spillane et al. (2004) have highlighted the potential of activity theory to address these challenges in leadership research. Activity theory, which provides a template for understanding how activity is achieved through human behaviour and engagement with the material world, argues Gronn (2000), offers the potential to make visible that which is hidden (Engestrom 1999) in individualised stories of leadership, and to show how leadership activity is distributed “*in the interactive web of actors, artifacts, and the situation*” (Spillane et al. 2004, p.9). It rectifies a persistently reported fault in leadership research, that is, that leadership is taken out of the cultural and historical context on which it is dependent. This is explored in more detail later.

Organisational effectiveness

Organisational effectiveness, like leadership, occupies contested territory. The problem for research, it is argued, is that effectiveness is a construct, having no objective reality, and that effectiveness criteria always reflect value judgements (Quinn and Rohrberg 1983; Cameron 1986; Walton and Dawson 2001). For public service organisations these judgements are political and contingent, made by multiple constituencies, for example, consumers, taxpayers, staff and politicians (Boyne 2003, p368), each with competing values (Quinn and Rohrberg 1983). Moreover, effectiveness criteria are neither stable nor static, but conceptualizations of effectiveness change over time (Cameron 1986). This is clear from the analysis of Hood (2007) amongst others who has observed how the construction of public service effectiveness have been influenced by the ideas of New Public Management (NPM) from the 1980s onwards, of which the use of quantitative performance indicators to render organisations auditable and comparable has been a central theme.

Thus, we see, there can be no universal model of effectiveness (Boyne 2003; Cameron and Whetton 1983) and the problems for the researcher are ones of “*definition, circumscription, and criteria identification*” (Cameron 1986, p.539). In addressing these problems the researcher requires an understanding of the organisation’s “*functional and environmental uniqueness*” (Steers 1975, p.554), of the different domains of organisation activity that comprise this

multidimensional construct (Cameron 1986, p.543), and of the paradoxes and trade-offs inherent in organisational life (Lewin and Minnion 1986). This latter task is significant because, as Cameron (1986) argues, effective organisations “*perform in contradictory ways to satisfy contradictory expectations*” (p.550), making effectiveness criteria inherently contradictory. Quinn and Rohrberg (1983) describe these paradoxes along three value dimensions that underlie conceptualizations of effectiveness:

“The first value dimension is related to organisational focus, from an internal, micro emphasis on the well-being and development of people in the organisation to an external, macro emphasis on the well-being and development of the organisation itself. The second value dimension is related to organisational structure, from an emphasis on stability to an emphasis on flexibility. The third value dimension is related to organisational means and ends, from an emphasis on important processes (e.g., planning and goal setting) to an emphasis on final outcomes (e.g., productivity)”
(Quinn and Rohrberg 1983, p369).

Thus we may understand leadership, which is just one of many factors that have been extolled as predictors of effectiveness (Cameron 1986; Lewin and Minnion 1986) in paradoxical terms, effectiveness depending both on:

“Continuity of leadership – which permits stability, long-term planning, and institutional memory – along with the infusion of new leaders - which permits increased innovation, adaptability, and currency.”
(Cameron 1986, p545)

Linking Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that attempts to frame the relationship between leadership and organisational effectiveness will prove challenging. If leadership has an impact on organisational effectiveness it is an indirect,

mediated one (Leithwood and Levin 2005), and the role of organisational culture in “*generating, improving or maintaining effectiveness*” also requires examination (Lewin and Minnion 1986, p.526). This research task then requires a sophisticated theoretical model (Leithwood and Levin 2005), which activity theory appears to provide, addressing the several challenges that have been outlined. It promises to permit an integrated analysis of leadership as culturally-embedded, goal-directed and interactional practice, inseparable from the object of activity that is pursued by leadership, which is transformed into organisational outcomes through mediation *inter alia* by rules, including systems of performance measurement, evaluation and audit.

3. Methodology

Given the conceptual challenges involved in studying ‘leadership’ and ‘organisational effectiveness’, which I have just outlined, case study methodology is particularly apposite, allowing a naturalistic and contextual exploration of these constructs.

Case study, as the name implies, involves studying a single case in its “*particularity and complexity*” in order “*to understand its activity within important considerations*” (Stake 1995, p.xi). In this sense case is understood as a “*bounded system*” or “*an instance in action*” (MacDonald and Walker 1975, p.2). The bounded system in this research account is the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, and the instance in action is the ‘Caseworking

Improvement Initiative’, both of which are described below. The case study serves to document and interpret the complexity of the case within the socio-political setting (Simons 2009) of the Irish public service.

This case study has both explanatory and exploratory dimensions (Yin 2003): The explanatory dimension is concerned with reflecting on the reform process in the Irish public service over the past 16 years, and on what is meant by ‘leadership’ and ‘organisational effectiveness’ in this context at this time. I justify this on the basis of my reading of Storey (2004) and others which reveals how problematic the term leadership is: being highly contested, contextual, and ‘in process’.

The exploratory dimension is concerned with subjecting the asserted link between leadership and organisational effectiveness to empirical examination, the objective being to explore how leadership may be apprehended within a specific organisational project, how this activity may contribute to effectiveness, and how this effectiveness may be ‘measured’. In adopting this approach I am informed by Gronn’s (2000) observation that it is work activity that bridges the gap between agency and structure, and that exploring this provides micro-level details of leadership practice as well as identifying meso and macro-level influences (Gronn 2003), because the “*micro is the point where policy-required roles and subjectively defined professional identities meet*” (Gronn 2003, p.3). It is through work activity that abstract concepts such

as ‘leadership’ and ‘organisational effectiveness’ come into being (after Schwartzman 1989).

As a research approach, case study does not have any distinctive methods of data collection or analysis (Bassegy 2007) but is flexible, permitting whatever methods are appropriate for understanding the case (Simons 2009). Here, triangulation was attempted through multiple sources:

Document analysis, in particular, supported triangulation and permitted a longitudinal analysis (Cohen et al. 2007), showing how the case study organisation and the individuals concerned are embedded within specific, political and economic structures (Thompson and McHugh 2002) and how the situation described has evolved over time (Cohen et al. 2007). In this way it helps to address a significant critique of case study, countering “*both the tendency to see organisations as free-floating and autonomous, and the concentration on the micro-level of analysis, or single enterprise*” (Thompson and McHugh 2002, p.120).

Non-participant observation of an inaugural Case-working Improvement Steering Group meeting in March 2010 permitted naturalistic study of ‘leadership-in-action’, meetings being important sites of study because they dominate the everyday work of leaders as locations for group discussion, deliberation, negotiation and deciding (Van Vree 2002). This was followed by

a semi-structured interview in May 2010 with the Assistant Secretary of [one of the operational divisions] as Chair of the Case-working Improvement Steering Group. This was used to explore his subjective perspective on the change initiative, its contribution to organisational effectiveness, and the leadership strategies underpinning it. An essentially inductive approach was taken to data collection and initial analysis, with activity theory applied *post hoc* as an analytic framework.

4. The Case Study Organisation

In this section I provide a brief overview of Revenue, embedded within its wider public service context, and highlight some of the different ways in which ‘leadership’ and ‘organisational effectiveness’ are currently constructed and assessed. This is inherently linked to a trajectory of public service modernisation, beginning with the launch of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994, which has been predominantly about increasing accountability, and ‘second phase’ modernisation, which coincides with the OECD (2008) review of the public service and its emergent focus on leadership as a lever for advancing reform.

The Office of the Revenue Commissioners (Revenue) was established by Government Order in 1923. The Order provided for a Board of Commissioners, which comprises a Chairman and two Commissioners all of whom carry the rank of Secretary General. The Chairman of the Board is also

the Accounting Officer for Revenue, reporting to the Committee of Public Accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas (PAC) (Department of Finance 2002). Scrutiny by the PAC is based on audits and examinations carried out by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), on behalf of the Dáil (ibid., see for example C&AG 2009, pp.88-122).

The Board are supported by a Management Advisory Committee² (MAC), also comprising each Assistant Secretary as Head of Division. Revenue comprises 15 Divisions, including four Regional Divisions, Large Cases Division, Investigations and Prosecutions Division, four Revenue Legislation Service Divisions, Planning Division, Corporate Services Division, Revenue Solicitor's Office, Information, Communications Technology and Logistics Division, and Collector General's Division. This current structure is the result of a major reorganisation in 2003 undertaken on foot of the DIRT Inquiry by the PAC (2000), and the subsequent Report of the Steering Group on the Review of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, ordered by the Minister of Finance (Department of Finance 2000).

Leadership as competency is embedded with the Performance Management and Development System launched in 2000 (Department of An Taoiseach

² The MAC is the top management team in Government Departments/Offices. Their formation was a key recommendation of the Report of the Public Services Organisation Review Group (so-called Devlin Report) in 1969, although it is apparent that this was not enacted for some time. Illustratively, the interview subject relays the following anecdote: *“It’s a story often told but worth re-telling. I think it was 1994. This was the first meeting of the Revenue MAC. It was either 1993 or 1994, and the first order of business was that the Chairman had to introduce the Assistant Secretaries to each other [laughs].”*

2000) – a development within SMI aimed at linking individual performance to strategic objectives. The behavioural indicators for performance appraisal, which appear incipient, are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Behavioural Indicators for Leadership Competency in PMDS Framework (Butler and Fleming 2002, p79)

<p>Manage a group or a team</p> <p>Develop a vision for the future</p> <p>Keep people informed about developments</p> <p>Guide the performance of others</p> <p>Make choices and decisions which take the organisation forward in a changing environment</p>

Revenue is the largest and most decentralised of any of the Government Departments/Offices with in excess of 100 Revenue offices countrywide, and with a staff complement of over 6,000 approx. Its mission statement reflects its core business:

“To serve the community by fairly and efficiently collecting taxes and duties and implementing Customs controls”.
(Revenue Commissioners 2008, p.5)

In this sense, Revenue is not unlike most private sector organisations where the focus is on generating profit, however, unlike these organisations Revenue’s mandate derives from obligations imposed by statute and by Government and as a result of Ireland's membership of the European Union. It is the extent of

regulation, argues Boyne (2003) that is a distinctive feature of public sector management.

Revenue's goals and strategies in meeting its mission are set out in a three-yearly strategy statement, which every Government Department/ Office is required to prepare under the terms of the Public Management Act (1997) – a key enabler of the SMI. The current Statement of Strategy for the period 2008-2013 describes four core goals (see Table 2). Nine programmes of activity or strategies are outlined across these four goals, with outputs and performance indicators defined for each programme.

Table 2: Revenue's Goals (Revenue Commissioners 2008, p.5)

<p>Goal 1: Ensure everyone complies with their Tax and Customs responsibilities.</p> <p>Goal 2: Provide quality and innovative service that supports all our customers.</p> <p>Goal 3: Contribute to economic and social development by participating effectively both Nationally and Internationally.</p> <p>Goal 4: Develop our people, processes and technology to make sure we are a capable, responsive, results oriented organisation.</p>
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The Chairman and Board of the Revenue Commissioners must also, under the terms of the Public Management Act (1997), provide the Minister of Finance

with an annual progress report on the implementation of the strategy statement (see for example, Revenue 2010). This, taken together with the Annual Output Statement (see for example, Department of Finance 2010), which each Minister is required to submit with his/her budget estimates since 2007, reveal the bases on which organisational effectiveness is effectively assessed at this time. Key measurements in the annual report include: exchequer returns, timely compliance rates, collection and enforcement activity and yield, audit and assurance checks (no. and yield), special investigations (no. of cases and yield), number of prosecutions and convictions, and customs seizures. The output statement details expenditure (resource inputs) across the nine work programmes and reports on output achieved as compared with targets. The generation of this type of performance reporting has been the focus of another SMI project – The Management Information Framework or MIF³, for short (See Department of Finance 2004).

Separately, Revenue awaits a report of its appraisal under the Government's Organisational Review Programme⁴, commenced in 2008. This is aimed at assessing Department/Offices' 'capacity' and 'capability' to meet future challenges and reveals additional effectiveness criteria:

“Strategy – how effective is the organisation at developing strategy?
Managing delivery – how good is it at delivering services to its

³ The Management Information Framework (MIF) incorporates: corporate performance reporting; operational performance measurement; programme costing; and financial reporting. It was implemented across Departments/Offices on foot of Government decision of 14 July 1999.

⁴ The second round of ORP reviews covering four government organisations, including Revenue, are due to be published in a composite report at end-June/early July 2010.

customers? Evaluation – does the organisation evaluate what it does and, if so, do the findings feed back into new policies?”
(Department of An Taoiseach 2008b, p.1)

Within the template used for the review programme, strategy has been broken down into three elements of which ‘giving leadership’ is one, revealing an ontological bias - leadership is provided by leader to follower. The constituent elements of this are as described in Table 3 (Department of An Taoiseach 2008b, p.78).

Table 3: Constituents of Giving Leadership

<p>Conveys a clear sense of strategic direction to staff and to other stakeholders. Displays a strong commitment to strategic objectives.</p> <p>Maintains and promotes high standards of behaviour (including ethical standards).</p> <p>Management, at all levels, behave in such a way as to reinforce high standards throughout the Department.</p> <p>Recognises and encourages high standards of behaviour. Takes appropriate action in cases where behaviour does not meet acceptable standards.</p> <p>Projects department’s voice in key fora, promotes consensus around key challenges in its policy domain and attracts support for policy responses.</p>

5. The Case-working Improvement Initiative

While Revenue, briefly described above, provides the bounded system for this case, the instance in action is its ongoing 'Case-working Improvement Initiative', which in facilitating the examination of work activity at a micro level also permits reflection on the meso and macro influences on organisational practices and on how structure and agency are in continuous interplay (Gronn 2000). Thus we will see that the designated leader is in no sense a solo agent and is enabled and constrained in many different ways. Case-working in this instance refers to Revenue's compliance programme, that is, the interventions taken by case-workers to maximise tax compliance, such as undertaking an audit. The introduction of a new IT risk-based system for targeting compliance activity – REAP (Risk Evaluation and Profiling) - aims to enhance organisational effectiveness by targeting resources at those cases at highest risk of non-compliance however, there is a feeling that structures and practices now need to change in order to take advantage of the technology. The Case-working Improvement Initiative (CII), recently launched, is aimed at influencing these changes and may be understood as an activity system or context of actions, which is collective, historically evolving and exists within a network of relations to the other activity systems (Engestrom 2000) that constitute Revenue as organisation. It rejects the individual as an adequate unit of analysis, focusing instead on how human activity is culturally-historically and technically mediated, and provides a template for understanding how

leadership may contribute to organisational effectiveness “*thorough analysis of the pragmatics of accomplishing organizational work*” (Gronn 2000, p.327).

This frame has a number of advantages. Firstly, it draws attention to developments that have taken place in Revenue and the wider public service over recent times, locating leadership practice within the context of its historical development and mediated by rules as well as cultural artefacts. It is this history that has provided the opportunities and resources for the current initiative (Blackler 1993). The development of REAP, for example, has its origins in a second recommendation of the Report of the Steering Group on the Review of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners (Department of Finance 2000) that Revenue should: “*computerise the method of selecting cases for audit and base it on computerised risk-assessment procedures*” (p.12).

Reorganisation completed in 2003, in 2004 a risk analysis programme commenced, made possible in the meantime by the integration of Revenue’s disparate IT systems as part of the CONTAX project and the creation of a data warehouse. The modernisation processes discussed in the previous section, the Government’s programme of decentralisation announced in 2003 and more recent challenges arising out of the countries fiscal difficulties (Hardiman 2010) have also contributed to producing the context for this initiative.

Secondly, it draws attention to how CII overlaps with other programmes of activity and communities of practice in Revenue (Blackler and McDonald 2000), and how Revenue embraces competing goals. Finally, it draws attention

to potential sources of tension or contradiction that may re-shape the initiative over its course (Engestrom 2000).

The key features of the analytical frame are thus: the unit of analysis is motive-laden, goal-directed activity, which always forms part of a collective labour process. This involves the interaction of “*six inseparable and mutually constitutive elements*” (Hooker 2009, p.332): subjects, tools, object and outcome, rules, community, and division of labour; these constituents are not fixed but are moulded and re-formulated through activity; the relationships between these elements are mediated, never direct; elements may be analysed in terms of their relationships and the contradictions or tensions they introduce, which provide the driving force for change (see Figure 1).

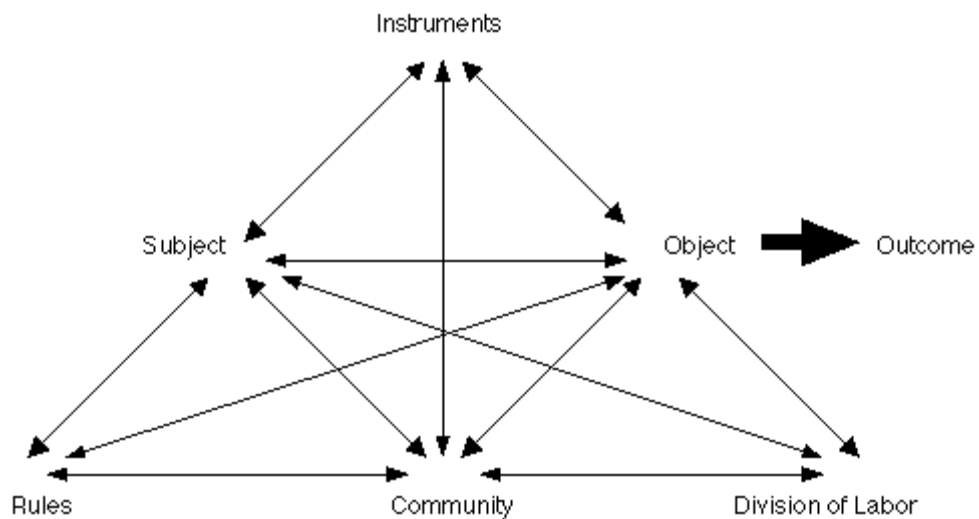


Figure 1: Mediational structure of an activity system

Subject

The Assistant Secretary may be taken as the starting point for our analysis, making him the Subject (S) - the individual (or sub-group) whose agency is chosen as the point of view (Engestrom 1996). This role is a product of reorganisation in 2003, which created new operational divisions or regions. He is also a member of the MAC Sub-Group on Capability Development formed in 2008, which is charged with defining and prioritising the areas in which Revenue needs to develop ‘capability’ and reporting back to the MAC. It is in this latter guise that he is acting, and has formed a steering group, to which we will shortly return. In the meantime, however, we can reflect briefly on his subjective perspective on leadership, which he says is about ‘sponsoring people’ and about working with culture – such that he presents the initiative as being “counter-cultural” and about “challenging the orthodoxy”. We can also reflect on his perspective on the impact of modernisation processes on his work and role, such that he sees the Assistant Secretary role as being much more executive than when he began his Civil service career in 1978, attributing this to the “jerkiness” of change initiatives, and to a concentration of management training and information at senior levels :

“... because we haven’t, in fact, found the means of growing those skills incrementally as we would if the Civil Service had evolved naturally and gradually, along with the proper incentives. Instead of that we jumped so it’s up to those people who did have some briefing to almost retro-fit the thinking onto the more junior brains and it makes it, as I say, very hands-on.”

Object

As used in activity theory the object of activity is the thing, or project, that people are working to transform, the carrier of motives. These are “*constructed by actors as they make sense, name, stabilize, represent and enact foci for their actions and activities*” (Engestrom and Blackler 2005, p.310). In this initiative (S) is trying to influence the other Regions’ approach to case-working, disseminating a new methodology developed within his own Region, following a pilot Data Mining Project undertaken in conjunction with Planning Division. This is centred on a team-based approach to case-working, which he describes as presenting a “*cultural storm*”. As a member of the MAC Sub-Group and having responsibility for Revenue’s Training Branch he has decided to approach this as a capability and training issue. This is the Object (O) – “the 'raw material' or 'problem space' at which the activity is directed (Engestrom 1996).

“The distribution of skills is patchy. Part of the task lies in identifying the package of skills required by the case-worker, which has not been articulated. There is also a need for team structures and for fluid assignment of tasks amongst the team. This is now operating in the South West but it is counter-cultural.”

((S) speaking at inaugural Steering Group meeting)

This ‘problem space’ or capability challenge arises not just for case-working, and not just from the introduction of REAP but has historic antecedent in the 2003 organisational restructuring, in decentralisation, and more recently in a retirement ‘time-bomb’ created by recruitment embargoes in the 1970s and 1980s (O’Riordan 2006), as well as a new recruitment moratorium and an

Incentivised Scheme Early Retirement (ISER) announced in 2009, both aimed at reducing public sector numbers.

Community

The relationship between subject and object always occurs within a community of practice (C), which in this case is the CII Steering Group, a group of ten, comprising Principal Officers – primarily District Managers from the other Regions, as well as representatives from Planning Division and the Director of Training. This is the group (S) has assembled having firstly made a round of Regional presentations:

“I visited each of the Regions and Large Cases Division and I asked them to nominate a person. Now, I knew that by default most Regions would nominate their Principal Officer in charge of the Regional Office, which several of them did but I also knew that the most vociferous participant at the Regional meeting was likely to be the person nominated”.

These are distinct from any other organisational grouping, sharing the same general object – development of case-working capability. The community can also be considered to comprise members of (S)’s own Regional team, who he says have been involved in disseminating the overall approach through presentations and informal networking.

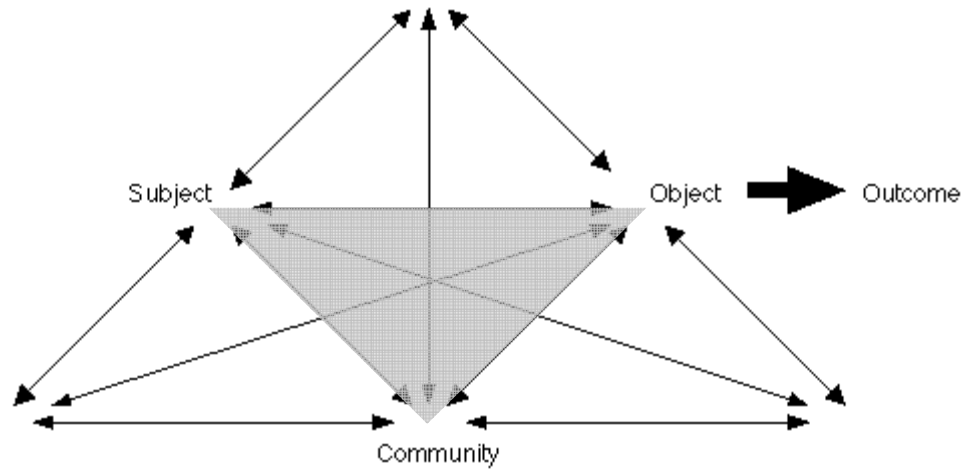


Figure 2

Blackler (1993) notes that contrasting conceptions of an activity will exist within any system as different members perceive their work in different ways and that this introduces a tension, which has the potential to alter the object over time. Certainly, within the context of the inaugural Steering Group meeting the ‘object of activity’ is contested and alternatively constructed by different members as they suggest the problems lie with REAP itself, with recruitment and with current training, for example:

C6# “We are not recruiting. Describing it in a different way doesn’t help. We have to get into accountancy and tax law. We can nearly take this stuff as read. How will we establish how much accountancy and law is required?”

...

C2# “I don’t see any difficulty with the system [ICM 4.0] and roll-out. The problems are with REAP. We are now three years on and saying people don’t know how to use Case Select”.

...

#C3 “We need to move outside Revenue and look at what the top accountancy firms are doing, matching requirements to university degrees”.

(Extracts from inaugural Steering Group meeting)

We also learn at the meeting how this community of practice overlaps with other activity systems and communities: BMEX, Revenue Case Management Board (RCM), the REAP Liaison Advisory Group (RLAG), a Compliance Network, Training Branch, as well as Planning Division, which “*has responsibility for writing case-working policy*” (S).

Instruments

Tools and concepts, including technology, symbols and linguistic systems, also mediate the interactions between the individual and their context, both affording and constraining action (see Figure 3).

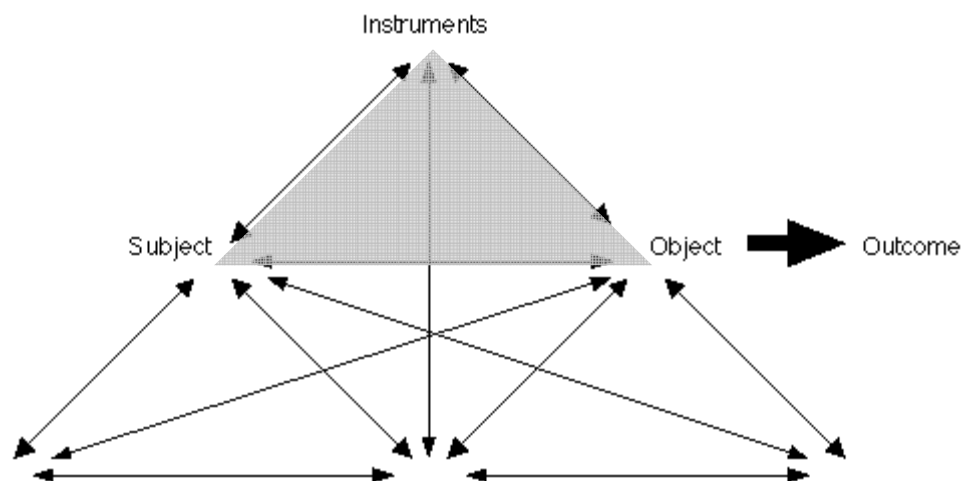


Figure 3

It is perhaps too early to say what instruments might constrain action, but a key instrument which is affording CII is a new case workflow management system (ICM 4.0), for which the need became apparent during the pilot project. This software will track the decision-making process involved in case-work and is being sold as a tracking mechanism, however, (S) sees it rather more instrumentally, in terms of influencing practices:

“I’ve concluded that we need team-based case-working and we need to break-down all the process into a more rational and stepped method of case-working but that will represent an enormous culture change in the organisation. So, that’s why I’m doing it this way, which is put out an eminently sensible piece of software. We encourage people to explore its use and to find the most efficient way of using it and we are - well I am fairly confident in fact that they will then come around to realising that the change of culture is necessary. So what I’m saying at this stage is take the software, use it, if it shows that your present way of working is the best well that’s fine. I’ll go with that. But, if as I expect, that it shows that the new way is better then ...”

Such tools are created and transformed during activity and carry culture, that is, historical remains from their development (Bannon and Kaptelinin 2001).

Originally proposed to record a type of query developed in SW Region, its functionality has been expanded by another overlapping community, the Business Management Executive (BMEX). Initially called Solomon and then TIS, it is now being integrated within an existing system – ICM or Integrated Case Management. It is the implementation of ICM 4.0 that provides a focus for CII, in particular the roll-out of a national training programme, which is discussed at the inaugural Steering Group Meeting.

“This (ICM 4.0) has emerged a bit too soon to develop a common methodology ... from a training and capability perspective it is clear that

skills deficiencies will be apparent and will have to be addressed. This will be one of the largest training initiatives we will have undertaken”
(S) speaking at inaugural Steering Group meeting)

Another instrument, which may well help to advance the initiative, is a formal report on the pilot data mining project:

“What has also happened in the background, I mentioned it at that meeting in fact, is that the data mining project, which is the only piece of evidence that one form of case-working is better than another. The data mining project report has been completed and that now has been circulated last week and is up for discussion at the Business Management Executive in the afternoon. That, as I say - I mentioned it at the CII meeting because it is the grounding for the training programme. It is there that we can identify remarkable differences between Districts in dealing with similar cases in similar circumstances and that points to a difference in skill and a difference in confidence. I want to discuss that in the next few weeks at another meeting of the CII and put the report before them and brief them in terms of their going back home and trying to identify these skill deficiencies in their own Regions.”

Language (to the extent that it is culturally shared) also constitutes an instrument, and in this case the project title has strategic intent with (S) indicating it does not have the status of ‘project’ as “*this would bring its own difficulties*”. Instead ‘Case-working Improvement Initiative’ is chosen as relatively neutral and benign, after all “*who could complain about improvement?*” (S). The initiative is potentially contentious as not everybody agrees with Revenue’s new risk-driven approach and concerns are expressed at the Steering Group meeting about perceived ‘prescriptiveness’.

Division of Labour

Simultaneously, Division of Labour (DoL) mediates the relationship between the community and action of its members, referring to both the horizontal distribution of tasks between the members of the community and to the vertical division of power, status and authority, which determines the decision-making and influencing powers of the different actors (Engestrom 1996).

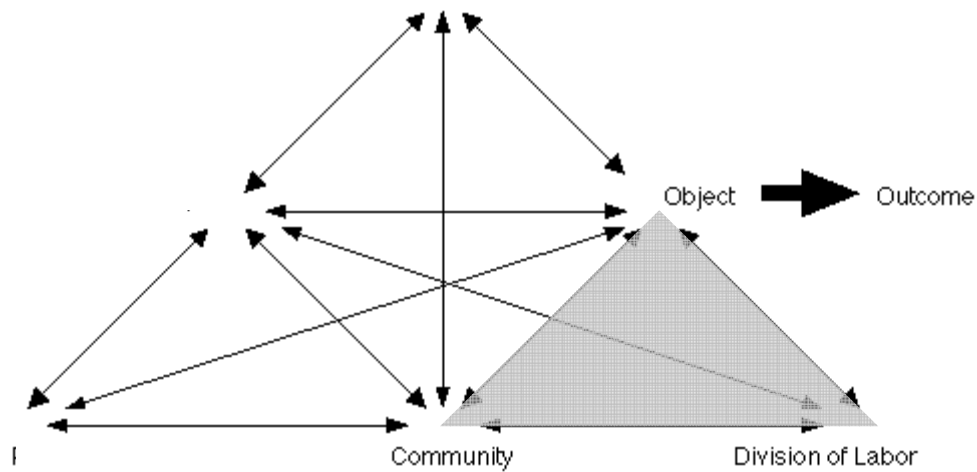


Figure 4

Prolonged study over the life-cycle of the project would be required to fully understand the distributed nature of the leadership tasks here, however, some division is already apparent. (S) indicates in discussion that Planning Division have responsibility for writing case-working policy, also that a Principal Officer in his Region is chairing the group pursuing the ICM 4.0 development. Another of his Principal Officers, the Director of Training, is charged with implementing training for ICM 4.0 and whatever other training and

development is mandated by the Steering Group. At the Steering Group meeting itself, members are asked to look at their own Regions' capability development requirements and to report back:

“It needs each operational division to identify obstacles or inhibitors to best practice. If these are identified we can target significant resources.”
((S) speaking at inaugural steering group meeting)

(S) himself undertakes to produce a paper setting to frame further discussion and actions:

“We will need to meet again and look at three issues: delivery methods; competencies and work structures. We probably need a paper to look at ... I will try to get a paper around. I need to express what we were discussing this morning.”
((S) speaking at inaugural Steering Group meeting)

Rules

Rules(R) also mediate the relationship between the individual and the community, and refer to the explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain actions and interactions within the activity system, such as the use of time and the measurement of outcomes (Engestrom 1996).

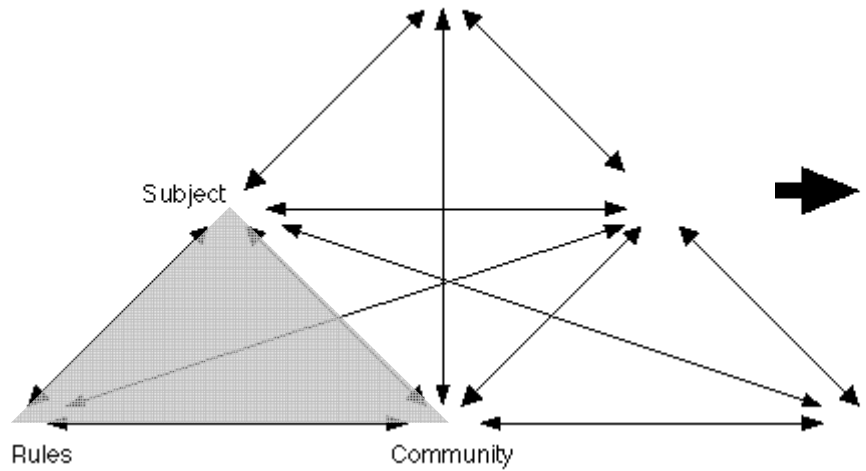


Figure 5

Thus we can see performance measurement in context of MIF, annual reports and output statements, as well as scrutiny by C&AG and PAC as providing rules. Formal delegation to each Assistant Secretary as Head of Region/Division in accordance with the Public Service Management Act (1997) also constitutes a rule of engagement so that (S) cannot impose a case-working approach on other Regions. Finally, though not exhaustively, Civil Service recruitment policy and practices are also ‘visibilized’ as rules so that case-working capability must be largely built-in rather than bought-in, which is hotly debated at the meeting.

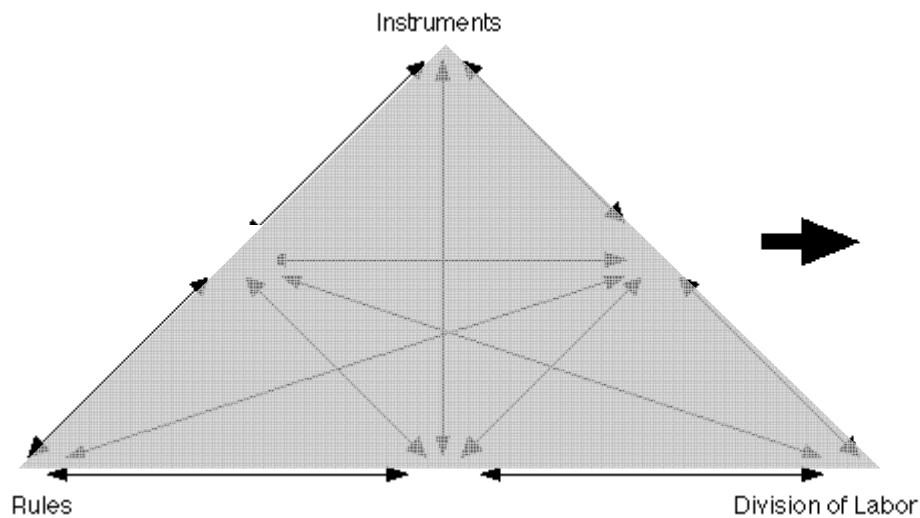


Figure 6

Outcomes

Finally, the object of activity, having been moulded through mediation by the various constituents described above, will be transformed into outcomes (Engestrom 1996), and it is here we may make the connection between leadership practice and organisational effectiveness. Thus the object 'capability for case-working' is intended to impact on some of the performance measurements highlighted earlier, such as exchequer returns, timely compliance rates, and audit and assurance checks (no. and yield). In fact, we will have to wait to fully appraise the outcomes of the CII - (S) expects the initiative to run for three years - however, for now it may be useful to conceive of them (intended and unintended) in terms of the competing values expressed in Revenue's statement of strategy: maximising yield through effective compliance activity; minimising resource input in the sense of achieving

efficiencies through risk-based targeting; and ensuring fairness in its treatment of taxpayers. These are outcomes which are measured and indeed scrutinised by C&AG and PAC, and through customer surveys – contributing to perceptions of organisational effectiveness.

6. Conclusions

In responding to the proposition that leadership is critical to organisational effectiveness I have neither accepted nor rejected the claim but tried instead to elaborate the conceptual challenges underpinning empirical investigation.

There is no apparent consensus within the research community on what these are or how they can be operationalised, and a key conceptual challenge for any researcher remains delineating a unit of analysis.

I have attempted in my case study to overcome the objectivist-subjectivist divide that permeates research on leadership and organisational effectiveness, such that these are either treated as concrete ‘things’ or as products of human cognition. Moreover, I have attempted to address a persistent critique of leadership research that it conflates leadership with individual agency and de-contextualises it – presenting a romantic and rational view of leadership and organisations.

I took as my starting point Gronn’s (2000) insight that activity bridges the gap between agency and structure in studies of leadership practice, reflecting that

activity would also provide the bridge between leadership and organisational effectiveness. This led me to focus on a specific project in Revenue, which is aimed at contributing to improved organisational effectiveness, and on a senior manager who is heading the initiative. While the CII in its early stages, engagement with activity theory served a tentative analysis of leadership practice as deeply relational, goal-directed activity mediated *inter alia* by rules such as criteria or measures of organisational effectiveness, which could be developed through prolonged fieldwork. Nonetheless, the exercise underlines the value of activity as a unit of analysis for research of this kind and the potential of activity theory to provide the sort of sophisticated theoretical model Leithwood and Levin (2005) calls for in order to show the mediated impact of leadership on organisational effectiveness.

Yvonne Emmett

June 2010

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Appendix E – Ethics statement (ARieL)

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

The study in which you are being requested to participate has the working title of ‘A Living Theory of Leadership Development for e-Learning’. It is being undertaken by Yvonne Emmett, an Ed.D student in the School of Education Studies in Dublin City University (DCU).

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

This is a self-study of my educational and professional development as I undertake action research with the aim to improve my work. The context for action is the Action Research in e-Learning (ARieL) programme in which you have been participating. This has been aimed at supporting trainer professional development and encouraging use of e-learning within training and development practice. My research primarily involves reflection on my work on that programme in relationship with you.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain

Language Statement

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Are you aware that your interview(s) will be audiotaped? Yes/No

Are you aware that the validation meeting will be videotaped? Yes/No

Do you consent to your data from the ARieL programme being used?
Yes/No

Do you consent to audio clips of you being used in the research account?
Yes/No

Do you consent to video clips of you being used in the research account?
Yes/No

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from it at any point. There will be no penalty to you for withdrawing before all stages have been completed.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

You will not be named in the research account. Instead, false names will be used. Data collected will only be accessed by me, and will be stored in a secure filing cabinet in my office in the Revenue Commissioners. It will be used only for this research and destroyed at its conclusion, which is expected to be within three years of collection.

VI. Any other relevant information

While you will not be named in the research, you should be aware that it may still be possible for others to identify you from the research account.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Plain Language Statement

I. Introduction to the Research Study

The study in which you are being requested to participate has the working title of 'A Living Theory of Leadership Development for e-Learning'. It is being undertaken by Yvonne Emmett, an Ed.D student in the School of Education Studies in Dublin City University (DCU).

II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require

Involvement will entail at least one face-to-face interview with me in February 2011. It is also possible that I may need to request a follow-up interview, which could take the form of a group interview. Interviews should last no longer than 1 hour. Your consent for the audiorecording of interviews is also sought in order to facilitate data gathering and subsequent analysis, however, you retain the right to decline the request.

You will also be invited to participate in a validation meeting at which I will report on my research and will invite you to comment on and critique it before it is finalised. I propose to videotape this meeting.

Finally, permission is also sought for use of your course data from the Action Research in e-Learning (ARieL) programme, including e-mail communications, Moodle data, videos and coursework.

III. Potential risks to you from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)

There are no known risks associated with involvement in this study.

IV. Benefits to you from involvement in the Research Study

It is hoped that the research will contribute to improved training practice. I will also make a copy of the research available to you, if you wish.

V. Data Confidentiality

You will not be named in the research. Instead false names will be used. Data collected will only be accessible by me and will be held in a secure filing cabinet in my office in the Revenue Commissioners.

VI. Data Destruction

All research data will be destroyed at the conclusion of this research, which is expected to be within three years of collection.

VII. Voluntary Participation

Participation in the research process is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from it any time without penalty or repercussion.

VIII. Additional Information

While you will not be named in the research, you should be aware that it may still be possible for others to identify you from the research account.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000

Appendix F – Ethics Statement (DeLF)

Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

The study in which you are being requested to participate has the working title of ‘A Living Theory of Leadership Development for e-Learning’. It is being undertaken by Yvonne Emmett, an Ed.D student in the School of Education Studies in Dublin City University (DCU).

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

This is a self-study of my educational and professional development as I undertake action research with the aim to improve my knowledge and professional practice. The context for action in Cycle Three is the Developing an e-Learning Framework (DeLF) project in which you have been participating. This has been aimed at helping you to develop a support framework for e-learning in Revenue, including identifying and developing the supports that training personnel require in order to explore the potential of ICT for their training practice. My research in this cycle primarily involves reflection on my work on that project in relationship with you.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Are you aware that your interview(s) will be audiotaped? Yes/No

Are you aware that the validation meeting will be videotaped? Yes/No

Do you consent to your data from the DeLF programme being used?
Yes/No

Do you consent to audio clips of you being used in the research account?
Yes/No

Do you consent to video clips of you being used in the research account?
Yes/No

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from it at any point. There will be no penalty to you for withdrawing before all stages have been completed.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

You will not be named in the research account. Instead, false names will be used. Data collected will only be accessed by me, and will be stored in a secure filing cabinet in my office in the Revenue Commissioners. It will be used only for this research and destroyed at its conclusion, which is expected to be within two years of collection.

VI. Any other relevant information

While you will not be named in the research, you should be aware that it may still be possible for others to identify you from the research account.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Plain Language Statement

I. Introduction to the Research Study

The study in which you are being requested to participate has the working title of 'A Living Theory of Leadership Development for e-Learning'. It is being undertaken by Yvonne Emmett, an Ed.D student in the School of Education Studies in Dublin City University (DCU).

II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require

Involvement will entail at least one face-to-face interview with me in February 2012. It is also possible that I may need to request a follow-up interview, which could take the form of a group interview. Interviews should last no longer than 1 hour. Your consent for the audiorecording of interviews is also sought in order to facilitate data gathering and subsequent analysis, however, you retain the right to decline the request.

You will also be invited to participate in a validation meeting at which I will report on my research and will invite you to comment on and critique it before it is finalised. I propose to videotape this meeting.

Finally, permission is also sought for use of your data from the Developing an e-Learning Framework (DeLF) project, including working documents, meeting minutes, e-mail communications and Moodle data.

III. Potential risks to you from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life)

There are no known risks associated with involvement in this study.

IV. Benefits to you from involvement in the Research Study

It is hoped that the research will contribute to improved training practice. I will also make a copy of the research available to you, if you wish.

V. Data Confidentiality

You will not be named in the research. Data collected will only be accessible by me and will be held in a secure filing cabinet in my office in the Revenue Commissioners.

VI. Data Destruction

All research data will be destroyed at the conclusion of this research, which is expected to be within two years of collection.

VII. Voluntary Participation

Participation in the research process is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from it any time without penalty or repercussion.

VIII. Additional Information

While you will not be named in the research, you should be aware that it may still be possible for others to identify you from the research account.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President

Appendix G – Letter from the Director of Training



Office of the Revenue Commissioners
Training Branch
3rd Floor
D'Olier House
D'Olier Street
Dublin 2, Ireland

Oifig na gCoimisinéirí Ioncaim
Brainse Oiliúna
Urlár 3
Teach D'Olier
Sráid D'Olier
Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire



3rd November, 2010.

To whom it may concern

This is to confirm that

Yvonne Emmett

has my full permission to undertake her action research in Revenue Training Branch as part of her doctoral studies in education leadership at Dublin City University.

Director of Training
Revenue Training Branch

Appendix H – Pilot Study Analysis of EOLAS Project

This is an extract from the Pilot Study completed in fulfilment of the assessment requirements for module FB602 Doing Research in December 2009. The extract provides a first analysis of the EOLAS project. I include here is a part of my evidence base because I think it helps to illustrate the significant movement in my thinking between this and the subsequent, more critically and self-reflexive analysis presented in Chapter Five.

4. Implementation and Evaluation

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I document how I moved my enquiry forward through a 13-month action research cycle during which I collaborated with three Training Officers, supporting them to engage with e-learning in their practice. This came within the context of an organisational ‘proof of concept’ project for distance learning in which I also acted as de facto project manager. I conceived of the project as an experiential learning opportunity for myself and those involved as well as well as a concrete step in the direction of educationally sustainable use of e-learning. I show the development of my learning and my influence in the learning of others in the context of this project. I try to explain what I did, why I did it and with what effect. This contributes to my claim to know my improved practice.

4.2. Phase 1 - Reflecting: 'I experience a concern when some of my educational values are negated in my practice'

November 2008

In Chapter One I reflected on how strongly I value the potential of ICT to improve access to training and development and to overcome some of the limitations of classroom training: to make it more educative in the sense of increasing opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and reflection, and allowing the 'trainee' to intervene in the curriculum (see Appendix 4).

Improving access is an organisational concern, as the Director of Training explains:

Extract from interview with 'A':

...because a lot of training has always been done in a classroom delivered manner it meant that people had to travel, and travelling, considering our demographic is becoming more and more of – I don't like to say a hardship – but a burden on a lot of us because we're at a certain age where we have other commitments ... and the idea of travelling and organising all of that in the background can sometimes put people off the idea of developing themselves.

I also reflected in Chapter One on how I experienced the continued negation of my values in practice, as previous action research in 2007 aimed at introducing training personnel to collaborative online learning and addressing trainer professional development needs did not lead to the innovation being sustained.

My concern at the start of this enquiry was with developing leadership for e-learning, by which I mean that I felt that I needed to develop leadership skills

to influence increased use of e-learning. This is evident in the initial project proposal in which I wrote:

My aim for the pilot is to provide leadership for the complete project; to assess the quality of that leadership through the lens of the literature and the critical feedback of others ...

Here I was reflecting uncritically on the common sense concept of leadership as something that individuals do. I was also placing naïve faith in my own agency and that of my trainer colleagues. I had not at this point considered the way in which standards of accountability in the form of performance indicators, and other institutional factors were powerful inhibitors to change.

4.3. Phase 2 - Planning: 'I imagine a way of overcoming my problem'

November 2008 to February 2009

Towards the end of 2008 I organised two half-day 'Introduction to Moodle' sessions for my trainer colleagues, during which I invited them to work with me. Subsequent to this, three Training Officers expressed an interest in exploring how they could use videoconferencing and Moodle to deliver two training programmes - VAT Module 1 and Business Writing. One of these initially had difficulties in persuading her manager that she should become involved. This highlighted for me one of the ways in which trainer's ability to innovate can be limited

My work at this time also focused on persuading our Information Communications Technology and Logistics (ICT&L) Division to install

Moodle in-house so that our work could subsequently be sustained and developing a project plan. Overall, sustainability was a key emerging concern:

Extract from Research Journal 14 January 2009

I am all the time concerned that this will be another once-off project that will not lead to sustained change. To mitigate this risk I feel that I need to be engaging more training personnel.

One idea I had at this time was the idea to run a competition for all Training Branch staff to suggest a name for the project. As a result, the project came to be known as EOLAS, the Irish word for information / knowledge and an acronym of Electronic Online Learning Accessible Services. This had the important effect of ensuring that all training staff knew about the project.

4.4. Phase 3 - Acting: 'I act in the direction of the imagined solution'

February to September 2009

During this period I worked with my colleagues as they developed and delivered their training programmes using videoconferencing and Moodle, providing whatever support and advice they felt they needed. Influenced by McNiff's (2003 p9) admonition that "as self-professed democratic actors, we have responsibility to practise what we preach" and my experiences with VAT Module 1 (described below), I also decided to run an Advanced Excel course myself using Moodle. I felt it would enhance the evidence-base for collaborative online learning, show what I meant by collaborative online

learning, and it would act as an additional case study to be shared with colleagues.

I tried to work in an educationally relational way throughout, by which I mean that I worked actively to share my learning but in a way that supported project participants to take responsibility for their own learning and the development of their practice. I did not set targets for them but encouraged them to set their own. I wanted 'D', 'C' and 'B' to become independent of me so that they would feel their work was authentic and so that it could be sustained if I left. In 'D's case (Business Writing) this worked well. She immersed herself in the project and just drew on my advice and support as she felt she needed it. It proved especially challenging, however, in respect of my work on VAT Module 1 as 'C' and 'B' continued with a full classroom delivery schedule, which limited the amount of time they had to get involved. Even scheduling time with them for meetings was difficult. I was also concerned that they weren't problematising distance learning. 'B' had re-developed a set of course notes and felt that these could be put online, and the 'good student' would download these and study them without much difficulty. This was conflicting with my own views about learning, which I experienced as a significant tension. I wanted to influence thinking about e-learning, but realised that such influence is always mediated by the other's originality of mind so that one choose whether or not to be influenced (McNiff 2000).

I encouraged them to run a test event so that they would get feedback from others on the approach they were taking.

Extract from E-mail to 'B' and 'C', 19 January 2009

I am also proposing that you have a trial run on the topic 1 content with either Training Branch personnel or others you can identify ... This would provide an opportunity for feedback on the material and the way it is presented etc., and would give you practice at engaging with participants using the communications tools in Moodle, e.g. discussion forums. Successful engagement with these can make the crucial difference between students feeling supported and motivated, and students dropping out! Unfortunately, it is not just about putting the material up there and leaving them to it ... I would also advocate having a trial run with Polycom as part of the process. Again, it is not just about the technology but very much about the way that it is used.

I paid special attention to collecting and collating the feedback from the test event, which proved quite critical and provided many constructive suggestions.

I hoped that this would influence them to change their approach, to make it more interactive, and that they would become more actively engaged in the process. I tried to encourage them to take an action research approach to the project, to treat each week as a mini-cycle after which they could reflect on what went well and what they could change for the following week. I also tried to encourage them to focus less on the content of training than on communication - developing a guidance note on supporting distance learners through discussion forums. As it became apparent that course participants were not engaging as they had expected and some had appeared to drop-out, I encouraged them to make direct telephone contact to get one-to-one feedback. It did not appear at the time that the interventions were influencing thinking or

learning but as 'C' subsequently explains, lack of time was a major limiting factor:

Extract from validation meeting (see Appendix 3)

'C': Early on I thought that, even from the time with the library people

ME: From the test event?

'C': The test. I thought this isn't going to be the way I had previously thought about it ...

ME: But time was limited and you really didn't have the time with your training schedule to change things?

'C': No I didn't. I didn't spend as much time at it as I would have liked to get a feel for it.

I have already explained how sustainability was a key concern, and that I felt involving more trainers would contribute to this. In June, as VAT Module 1 finished, my focus shifted to those trainers not directly involved in the project, and how I could extend the learning opportunity presented by EOLAS to them. I hoped to influence them to begin experimenting with Moodle and considering how they could use it. This led me to create two new Moodle courses for trainers and a Moodle Sandbox for all training Branch staff to experiment with. I also asked the Librarian to purchase in several related books to support self-development, which I advertised to staff through the Moodle courses. These actions did not have the immediate impact I wished for as few staff accessed them. I also tried to stimulate discussion through the course discussion fora, again with little obvious success. Again, the pressure of training schedules may have contributed to this:

Extract from Interview with ‘C’

ME: What about those resources that I put up on Moodle? Have you found those helpful?

‘C’: They are yes but do you know what the problem with that is – reading them and the time to read it ... it’s ten pages – I don’t know if I have time to read that. I have a class to do next week. I have to prepare ...

In August I organised for the three trainers to share their experiences with other training colleagues, and for the Director of Training to explain how this would impact on future work. My intention here was two-fold: to encourage participants to reflect on their learning; and to encourage them to share their learning with others – extending influence. The event was exceptionally well-attended and commenced an engaging debate about the future of training and development.

From September onwards I turned my focus towards evaluation, which I had emphasised in the project plan. ‘D’ and I had already completed evaluations of our courses but evaluation of VAT Module 1 was delayed because participants were expected to sit an exam in September. This in turned delayed an overall evaluation of EOLAS. As ‘B’ had retired, I tried to involve ‘C’ in the process but again his commitments to delivering classroom training limited his input. This presented another tension for me in terms of my values: I was uncomfortable undertaking the evaluation as an outsider, speaking for the trainers involved, but I also felt it important that one was completed and that it was disseminated. In the end we agreed I should issue the report with the

proviso that he had not had an opportunity to review it. I believe that evaluation of any new initiatives is vital. We cannot only rely on our own interpretations of events to understand how others have experienced them. If our practice is to be just and rational we must engage with other perspectives. I also believe that evaluation is an important learning tool in terms of committing us to critical reflection on action. The outputs of evaluation are written accounts of the work, which now exist as an organisational artefacts, agreed records of the project and its outcomes.

4.5. Phase 4 - Evaluating: 'I evaluate the outcome of my action'

November to December 2009

I evaluate the outcome of my action at two levels: the extent to which I have realised my values in practice; and the extent to which I have influenced thinking about e-learning. Central to this evaluation are the perspectives of those who participated in the project with me. These are contained with the one-to-one interviews one I recorded September 2009; and the validation meeting I held in December 2009. Together these accounts testify to the impact the project, as an experiential learning opportunity, had on their thinking about e-learning and their practice. They illustrate how participants came to see things from the trainee's perspective and to reflect on the sorts of improvements they would like to make, for example:

Extracts from validation meeting

- ‘A’: Going forward I don’t think I would ever put out course content like all of VAT 1 together. It would be ten small individual courses ...
One of things on the VAT that has made me decide I would never offer it that way again – there was 13 weeks. It was a massive commitment for people to give, especially in this job – people move, there’s lots of pressures on them ...
- ‘C’: The Polycom [videoconferencing] is flat. For me it’s flat delivering it ... I don’t know if they’re responding or hearing it ... there was no – the feedback or the interaction wasn’t great but I learned from it. I think myself I would probably approach it slightly differently, perhaps more a question and answer session only or have something for them to do, that they have to bring something to it ... that would be better than just listening.

For both ‘D’ and ‘C’ it has influenced change in their practices:

- ‘D’: I think there’s huge potential for dialogue in future work ... One of the projects I’m working on is working on say single topic sites where rather than me put everything up and people just read it I’m looking for people all around the organisation to put up their stuff which will be available on an open access basis and I think even things like that which is kind of an off-shoot of this project because it’s not something that would have occurred to me otherwise ...”
- ‘C’: It gives you the idea of starting to think about even the quizzes in Moodle. I thought about that ... I’ve brought that now into the classroom which I hadn’t really been doing before. Now I’ve continuous assessments which are those original questions because I thought the idea was right.

For ‘A’, as Director of Training, the experience illustrated the challenges for trainers and increased her awareness of the sorts of supports they need.

‘A’: ... the e-tutor ones, and you’ve all touched on it yourselves – it’s a massive learning curve for you to move from the classroom tutor-led to the e-tutor. I mean one thing both of you [‘D’ and ‘C’] said was you don’t have control. In the classroom you have total control over the pace. You’ve lost all of that when you go online because the people take it at their own pace. So it’s learning to cope with that and the different stages.

From an organisational point of view the project is influencing new policies and practices. This is evident in the decision by Revenues Internal Services Project Board that Moodle should be formally implemented, and in the development of a new Clerical Officer Development programme:

‘A’: I think from the early stage a couple of months ago the decision not to role this programme out as a two-day programme and to develop it differently as a blended approach – this had had a massive influence on that.

4.6. Phase 5 - Reflecting: ‘I modify my problems, ideas and actions in light of the evaluation’

December 2009

At the end of my 2007 research I concluded that the principal issue preventing engagement with e-learning was lack of trainer professional development. I still think it is an important factor, which must be addressed, but I now recognise that the situation is more complicated than that.

Through this action research cycle I have come to recognise that the standards and targets imposed on trainers in the form of performance indicators subtly

discourage innovation. The key performance indicator for trainers is the number of training days they deliver. This communicates a particular value and priority. The time committed to classroom delivery schedules can leave little time for questioning what we are doing, why we are doing it, or indeed investigating if there are better ways of doing it.

I have also learned through the research that the technology presents less of a challenge for trainers than the challenge to use it in educationally effective ways. I think this is partly a question of values, and the potential conflict between business values, such as cutting costs, and the educational values trainers carry for their work. I value the potential of e-learning to increase opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and reflection but now realise that this potential can only be realised if these are the sorts of values underpinning its use. However, in many respects e-learning continues to be thought of as a 'thing' instead of a practice. This is no doubt influenced by the models available.

As I complete the account of this research my professional role is changing and so too is the context in which I work. I am moving from the role of Training Officer, which I have occupied for more than five and a half years to an internal audit function, in which I will initially be re-positioned as trainee. My concern now is about how I can continue to support leadership development for e-learning while working outside of the training function, at the same time as

supporting trainers to become more self-directing. An action research approach has enabled me to clarify the educational values that underpin my work with e-learning, to understand the normative influences on my practice, and to bring about improvement in my thinking and action. I wish now to explore how I can support the development of a community of practice for e-learning, so that trainers are enabled to conduct their own action research enquiries into their practices and identify their educational values as standards for engagement. By supporting their learning at a distance, using ICT, I hope to show how e-learning can be reconceptualised from technology-mediated delivery of training content to an educational and communicative practice.

In Chapter One I explained how I began my enquiry about leadership development for e-learning by treating the question of what this might look like as radically open, one that could only be answered through collaborative dialogic action. In reflecting on this cycle of action I realise that it is a question that has to be answered again and again in collaborative dialogic action (after Biesta 2006).

4.7. Summary

In this chapter I have documented the development of my learning and practice as I tried to support three colleagues to engage with e-learning in their training practice. Through this collaborative process and reflection on action I have come to a better understanding of e-learning as a ‘leadership challenge’, and of

the normative influences on Training Officers' practices, including my own. I reflected on what I did, why I did it and with what effect. This improved thinking can help improve future action. The process has also helped me to clarify my educational values as explanatory principles for my actions, which I detail in the next chapter.

Appendix I – Action Planner for EOLAS Project

I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in practice.

In 2007 I ran a short online course for trainers using DCU's online learning environment, Moodle, as a means to integrate my M.Sc. e-learning studies with my training practice; and to share my learning about e-learning with other trainers. While successfully evaluated by participants this initiative was not sustained. Now enrolled on the Doctorate in Education (Leadership) programme I wish to take action anew to connect my studies with practice and share my learning about e-learning, this time approaching it as an educational leadership issue. I value the potential of e-learning to increase access to training and development, and to make it more educational in the sense of increasing opportunities for communication and collaboration but e-learning to date has mainly taken the form of off-the-shelf computer-based training for Microsoft Office applications.

I imagine a solution.

Persuade our IT Division to install Moodle in Revenue and support it on a trial basis. Develop a project that will provide an experiential learning opportunity for myself and my trainer colleagues that will give them experience of delivering their own programmes using Moodle and Revenue's new videoconferencing suite (Polycom), and that will give me experience of trying to support trainers to engage with e-learning in their practice.

I act in the direction of the solution.

I will deliver a workshop to trainers that explores the potential of Moodle for training and development and gives them experience of using its features. I will invite trainers to consider their capacity to use it to deliver one of their programmes as part of a proof of concept project for distance learning. I will work directly with volunteers to help them adapt and deliver their programmes using Moodle and Polycom. I will also help them to evaluate their programmes and reflect on their learning.

I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.

Work with trainers on evaluating their courses with their trainees. Interview trainers at the end of the project.

I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.

Communicate findings in a formal project report. Organise a formal presentation for Training Branch at which project participants can share their experiences. Explore how we can build on these experiences

Appendix J - Original Research Proposal

Leadership for E-Learning: E-Learning for Leadership

Yvonne Emmett, Revenue Commissioners
yemmet@revenue.ie

“Nothing really happens unless you have leadership. You can have as many champions as you like, you can have as much online information as you like, you can have brilliant pieces of learning technology ... but it begins and ends with leadership.”

(Laurillard quoted in Centre for Excellence in Leadership 2005, p.2)

Introduction

Conventional wisdom has been that successful e-learning implementation requires champions. My own experience of implementing e-learning over the last four years in the Revenue Commissioners, however, leads me to agree with Laurillard: organisations need more than champions for e-learning if they are to realise its transformative potential – they need leadership. That e-learning has not had the predicted disruptive effect on training and development may ultimately be attributable to a deficit of leadership. What form that leadership should take and how it is developed must be of pressing concern, as it has implications for how the training and development function evolves to meet changing organisational needs. This paper sets out my proposal to address this concern through the form of practitioner-led action research.

Background

Training and development functions in Public Service organisations, such as the Revenue Commissioners, are coming under increasing pressure to ‘deliver better outputs’ without being empowered to bring about the necessary practice improvements from within. Thus, while there is a growing awareness of the multi-faceted nature of learning in organisations and of the value of informal and work-based methods, little concrete support has evolved for them. It is contradictory, for example, that the formal, tutor-led ‘Train-the-Trainer’ programme remains the way in which training personnel are themselves trained. E-learning, which can facilitate collaboration in authentic work settings, is not a part of the formation. This may also be said of the formation of line managers and those in leadership positions who also serve a training and development purpose. As a result, e-learning remains poorly understood and relies solely on the experience of computer-based training (CBT) to inform a view that ‘e-learning doesn’t work’ or isn’t worth the effort. However, computer-based training is underpinned by a behaviourist view of learning that has largely fallen out of favour. A ‘blended learning’ approach - the combination of e-learning and traditional methods - is increasingly preferred but this may be seen as a strategy to adapt to lack of learner interest in CBT, rather than evidence of a critical re-appraisal of e-learning and the new possibilities it offers for integrating working and learning (Jansen et al. 2004; Collis 2006).

Leadership for e-learning in this context should therefore be about assisting others to uncover the potential of newer, more enlightened forms of e-learning to meet organisational learning needs, '*while investing in them the capacity to change, improve and transform their practices*' (Smyth 1989, p.179). This should include sharing the evidence-based outputs of practitioner research.

Outline of Proposed Research

I am motivated to enrol on the Professional Doctorate in Education Leadership programme because I am interested in developing my capacity to provide leadership for e-learning in my organisation. I am also interested in how that leadership capacity is developed, the degree to which e-learning itself supports development, and how leadership capacity is exercised to bring about improvement in workplace practice.

Using a living theory approach to action research I propose to study the development of my leadership capacity as I apply my learning from the doctoral programme to bring about improvement in my workplace practice. In addition to potentially generating a theory of leadership development for e-learning, I anticipate that this practice-based research could contribute to the:

- Re-orientation of the training and development function in the Revenue Commissioners through the strategic application of e-learning to improve training outcomes; and

- Development of a leadership programme for the Revenue Commissioners that incorporates e-learning.

Action research is practitioner-led research that unites both research and action in a cyclical process of researching a problem context, planning and implementing change to bring about improvement, and evaluating the impact of action. Research design is emergent: reflection on one cycle of action leads to a revised plan for the next, and so on. It is also collaborative – those on whom practice impacts are viewed as co-researchers in the process. The ‘objects’ of action research are the researcher’s own practices, understanding of these practices, and the practice context with the aim to improve these (Carr and Kemmis 1986). The living theory approach to action research, developed by Whitehead (1989; Whitehead and McNiff 2006), attempts to reconstruct educational theory by allowing the practitioner-researcher to account for her own educational development, her influence in the learning of others, and her influence on the education of social formations.

The choice of methodology is apposite:

1. While leadership development programmes may be criticised for teaching leadership theory rather than leadership competence (Allio 2005), action research unites theory and practice, which are recognised as interdependent phases in the change process.

2. Self-knowledge, which is an important facet of leadership, and comes through reflection and feedback from others, is a cornerstone of action research.
3. The collaborative nature of action research coincides with a developing view of leadership as '*occurring within actions and activity, stretching across different agents, all of whom can exert influence on a situation*' (Ross et al. 2005, p.131). It also facilitates learning from the experience of peers, a further key in leadership development.

With respect to establishing the theoretical base for my study and refining my research questions I am interested in exploring six key strands in the literature:

1. Maturity models for e-learning.
2. Leadership for the training and development function, with particular focus on the strategic application and evaluation of e-learning.
3. Approaches to leadership development.
4. The potential of e-learning to transform leadership development by facilitating collaborative, work-based learning.
5. The impact of collaborative online learning in leadership formation on networking by leaders.
6. The impact of e-learning in leadership formation on technology innovation by leaders.

Rationale

The recent review of the Irish Public Service by the OECD (2008) draws several conclusions, which I believe serve to highlight the value and timeliness of this research:

1. The role of leadership in the development of a more integrated Public Service, and for e-Government in particular, is heavily underlined. This is a view of leadership that has an integrated view of Public Service and reinforces Public Service values.
2. '*Learning to work in networks*' (p.267) is identified as a key to the development of a more integrated Public Service, which will also depend on '*the creation of new kinds of lifelong learning opportunities that require the participation of other departments*' (p.237).
3. The impact of decentralisation is seen to pose critical challenges for the Civil Service as staff are widely dispersed and many are new to Government departments. These include high staff turnover, loss of expertise and knowledge, and ensuring appropriate training so that service quality and effectiveness is not interrupted. It is a further challenge to ensure that staff who require training can readily avail of it as most training is delivered centrally.
4. An argument is made for a policy facilitating increased mobility for staff. This will also depend on new training approaches and increased training capacity to cater for increased numbers and changing needs.

These factors contribute to the case for embedding collaborative online learning within the formative process so that ‘networked working’ would be the natural fallout of ‘networked learning’, and so that technology innovation becomes a fundamental part of leadership development. Furthermore, there is a strong evidence-base worldwide for the potential of collaborative online learning technologies to connect geographically distributed learners (Salmon 2000) and to be an enabling factor in lifelong learning, delivering flexibility in terms of both access and content (Killion 2000). Finally, the development of leadership capacity for e-learning from within will more naturally lead to a reinforcement of Public Service values and an integrated view of Public Service through the application of e-learning than will a reliance on external expertise.

Experience

I have worked for the last four years in the development, delivery and evaluation of computer applications training and e-learning in the Revenue Commissioners. Furthermore, this proposal builds directly on the foundation of research that I completed in 2007 as part of the Masters in Education and Training Management (e-Learning) at DCU. My dissertation, entitled ‘How am I applying my learning from a Masters programme in e-learning to improve my practice as a Training Officer in a Government Department?’ (Emmett 2007), presented an action research living theory study of my professional development as a Training Officer as I created and facilitated collaborative

online learning modules to support training colleagues to address their own professional development needs. These modules were also designed to deliver organisational experience of collaborative online learning as the Revenue Commissioners considered introducing a distance learning programme. The challenge for me since then has to been to use the experience of this successful pilot project to influence senior management support for e-learning. It is this experience that reinforces for me the need to develop leadership capacity.

Access

It will be necessary to negotiate access and obtain permission from the Director of Training and Head of Human Resources Division in order to carry out this research project. Also, as research design is emergent it will be necessary to agree the scope of each action-research cycle as it is defined, and to negotiate access to technology and other resources required. It will also be necessary to obtain permission from those whom I hope to involve in my research. These will be identified during research design.

Benefits

The proposed research would contribute to the development of leadership capacity for training and development, in particular for e-learning, in the Revenue Commissioners; to the development of e-learning infrastructure; to the strategic application of e-learning to meet changing organisational and wider Public Service needs; and to the development of a leadership programme

that incorporates e-learning in order to foster 'networked working' and technology innovation. The development of research and evaluative capacity as a by-product should also be viewed as a critical benefit at a time when the OECD (2008) advise that the Public Service in Ireland needs to use the results of research and analysis for evidence-based decision making. The development of expertise from within will reduce reliance on external consultants and lead to a reinforcement of Public Service values. The use of action research in preference to traditional research approaches will lead to earlier gains for the organisation as the focus is on practice improvement rather than the generation of theory. Finally, the research will build on the foundation of research already undertaken in the context of the M.Sc. in Education and Training Management (e-learning) and contribute to an understanding of how personal learning can be integrated into workplace practice. This should be of particular interest to Public Service organisations, including the Revenue Commissioners, who support employees to attend educational courses as part of their professional development on the basis that organisational knowledge will be enhanced, and practice improved.

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Appendix K - Video Clips

Clip 01 – From Introduction to Moodle Workshop (see Chapter Five)

Clip 02 – From EOLAS Participants' Presentations (see Chapter Five)

Clip 03 – From EOLAS Validation Meeting (see Chapter Five)

Clip 04 – From ARieL Workshop 2 (see Chapter Six)

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Appendix L - EOLAS Project Plan

Note: I see my development of this project plan as informed by a strategic rationality, which I subsequently came to deconstruct during Cycle Three (Chapter Seven).

EOLAS Project Plan

February 2009

Overview of Project

1. Background

EOLAS is a distance learning ‘proof of concept’ project to explore how information and communications technologies (ICTs) can be used to enhance organisational capability through the delivery of flexible, efficient and effective training and development.

The project will run from January to September 2009 and will be led by Revenue Training Branch, supported by ICT&L Division and the Civil Service Training and Development Centre.

The project will involve the adaptation of two training courses for delivery by distance learning - one theory-based course, and one practical – and will follow

their implementation and evaluation. The courses are VAT Module 1 and Business Writing.

The technical framework will be provided by the open source online learning environment, Moodle to deliver programme content, and supplemented by use of PolyCom to facilitate videoconferenced seminars, as well as the RevConnect tool for small group tutorials.

The exercise builds on a project completed in 2007, which used Moodle to deliver a trainer professional development module to a group of Training Officers in different Regions/Divisions.

2. Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the project is to deliver a ‘proof of concept’ for distance learning.

The key objectives of the project are:

1. To support the professional development of trainers and the preparation of trainees for distance and blended learning.
2. To embed distance and blended learning within the organisation.
3. To effectively evaluate and learn from the innovation.

3. Overall Approach

3.1. Strategy and Methodology

A core project team within Training Branch will comprise the Director of Training, project manager and the trainers involved in the migration of selected course for distance delivery. The project may draw on other Training Branch resources on a task-by-task basis, for example, audio-visual support for the delivery of videoconference sessions. The project will also draw on technical resources from ICT&L and CSTDC, and may seek to draw on Regional/Division resources for the purposes of student support and project evaluation.

The project is divided into four phases:

1. Phase 1: Design and Planning (January to February 2009)
2. Phase 2: Implementation (March to May 2009)
3. Phase 3: Evaluation (June to September 2009)
4. Phase 4: Dissemination (September to October 2009)

[See Detailed Project Planning]

3.2. Issues to be Addressed

1. Recruitment of participants
2. Installation of Moodle
3. Training for trainers

4. Migration of programme content

3.3. Scope and Boundaries

The implementation phase of the project will run between March and May 2009, and will see the delivery of the two courses in the mode described above.

Formative evaluation will be ongoing through implementation. Summative evaluation will take place between June and September.

3.4. Critical Success Factors

The following factors are critical to meeting the goals of the project:

- Compliance with project plan.
- Project is effectively resourced.
- Communication and co-ordination between project partners ensure a good working relationship.
- Technology is in place for mid-February 2009 and is robust throughout the project.
- Trainers receive adequate training and support.
- Course materials are successfully migrated by trainers.
- A sufficient number of students are recruited and retained for the duration of the project.
- Effective buy-in from local management, which translates as support for students.

- Student orientation is effective, and sufficient technical and subject support is available to students throughout the project.
- Effective evaluation criteria are established and all stakeholders are actively engaged in the evaluative process

4. Project Outputs

The project will deliver the following outputs:

- Project plan and other project documentation
- Moodle course and training materials for Training Officers
- Trainee induction and e-learning support materials
- Two training courses adapted for distance delivery
- Criteria for evaluation and evaluation instruments
- Case studies of the two courses delivered: to provide exemplars for other Training Officers and potentially generate good practice guidelines for the adaptation of courses for distance and blended delivery and the effective use of ICT
- Dissemination of knowledge and experience through events, to include a workshop/seminar for Training Officers
- Final report to include an evaluation of the project and a set of recommendations for action.

5. Project Outcomes

The main outcome for EOLAS will be ‘proof of concept’ for distance learning.

The knowledge and experience gained through project should inform future exploitation of ICTs to enable more flexible, remote and distributed access to training and development in Revenue. It will also enhance understanding of the organisational and technical challenges to wider implementation.

The project will generate information about the types of adaptations required to programmes for successful distance delivery, and will develop an understanding of how best to use the available technology to support capability development. It will also identify training requirements for training personnel operating in the new environment, while contributing substantially to the professional development of those directly involved in the project through planned knowledge transfer. Through dissemination of project outputs, training personnel not directly involved in the project will also be sensitised to the arguments for developing distance learning and the change factors involved. They may be encouraged to use ICTs in delivery of their own programmes.

For non-training personnel the project should contribute to promoting a culture of continuous, self-directed and work-based learning so that this issue takes on a higher priority throughout the organisation. For trainees participating in the

project enhanced digital and information literacy skills are a potential outcome. These participants may also become ‘champions’ for distance learning

Overall, the implementation and evaluation will allow conclusions to be drawn about the value of distance learning in addressing training and development needs, the new opportunities it presents, its feasibility at this time, and the critical success factors.

The project outcomes could impact on the collaborative provision of training and development between Training Branch and Regions/Divisions, could facilitate more work-based learning, and will, hopefully, inform wider strategy and policy discussions on organisational capability. It may also provide a basis for future co-operation with ICT&L and CSTDC.

6. Stakeholder Analysis

Internal

Stakeholder	Interest / stake	Importance
Training Branch	Successful project outcomes	High
ICT&L Division	ICT used effectively	Medium
Trainees	Flexible access to training and development	Medium
Managers	Minimising costs and	High

	disruption to business Effective staff training and development	
Regional/Divisional Training Personnel	Consulted and involved in change process	High
MAS Sub-group on Capability	Evaluation and recommendations	High

External

Stakeholder	Interest / stake	Importance
Civil Service Training and Development Centre	Effective use of Moodle installation	Low

7. Risk Analysis

Risk	Probability (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Score (PxS)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
Staffing Loss of project team members				Ensure project documentation is kept to date Ensure knowledge transfer within team Create opportunities to involve non-team members
Organisational Key milestones are missed				Use project plan to control
Participation Insufficient participants recruited Participants fail to engage with new delivery mechanism Trainees drop-out				Involving local training personnel in promotion. Potential benefits are made salient. Deliver effective orientation session(s) and materials. Ensure effective and ongoing technical and subject support throughout

Technical Hardware and software issues				Multiple platforms are used: Moodle, Polycom and RevConnect. Two Moodle hosts are used: ICT&L and CSTDC
Management Support Lack of buy-in by local management				Ensure ongoing communication with all stakeholders

8. Technical Development

The project will use the following technologies:

Technology	Description	Function
Moodle 1.9.3	Online learning environment	To deliver course materials and facilitate online discussion and support
Polycom	Videoconferencing	To deliver orientation presentation and seminars
RevConnect	Application sharing	To deliver Moodle training as part of orientation

Project Resources

9. Project Partners

Partner	Role	Contact
ICT&L Division	Technical infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moodle host (Site A)• Polycom and RevConnect	[Name] [Name]
Civil Service Training and Development Centre	Moodle host (Site B)	[Name]

10. Project Management

The project will be managed by Training Branch.

10.1. Project Team

Role	Name	Activities
Project Director	'A'	Project sponsor, high-level communication
Project Manager	Yvonne Emmett	Project planning and control, Moodle training and support, development of student orientation materials, evaluation
Trainer	'B'	Migration of VAT Module 1 course materials to Moodle, delivery of course,

		evaluation
Trainer	'C'	Migration of VAT Module 1 course materials to Moodle, delivery of course, evaluation
Trainer	'D'	Migration of Business Writing course materials to Moodle, delivery of course, evaluation
Trainer	[Name]	Moodle demonstration using Polycom/ RevConnect and Moodle support

10.2. Training

Participating trainers will require training in the use of Moodle, which will be provided by the project manager. Training in the use of RevConnect will also be required and support will be sought from ICT&L (Telephony Unit) in this regard.

Detailed Project Planning

13. Workpackages

<i>WP#</i>	<i>Name (Short)</i>	<i>Brief Description</i>	<i>Outputs/ Deliverables</i>	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>
1.	<i>Design and Planning</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Project plan</i> • <i>Migration of training materials to Moodle</i> • <i>Tutor training</i> • <i>Recruitment of trainees</i> 	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Mar</i>
2.	<i>Implementation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Preparation of trainees</i> • <i>Delivery of distance courses using Moodle, Polycom and RevConnect</i> • <i>Summative evaluation</i> 	<i>Mar</i>	<i>May</i>
3.	<i>Evaluation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Formative evaluation:</i> • <i>Collecting stakeholder feedback</i> • <i>Comparison of VAT1 exam results for distance and non-distance students</i> 	<i>June</i>	<i>Sep</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assessment of cost savings</i> • <i>Recommendations</i> 		
4.	<i>Dissemination</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reporting on project</i> • <i>Learning transfer</i> 	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>

14. Evaluation Plan

Timing	Factor to Evaluate	Questions to Address	Method(s)	Measure of Success
March to May 2009	Participant engagement		Monitoring activity within Moodle and participation in seminars	
May 2009	Participant reaction and satisfaction (level 1)	Learning Objectives Satisfaction with delivery mechanism	Online questionnaire	
Sept. 2009	Learning (level 2)		Exam	Results for distance learner compare favourably with results for non-distance learners

15. Dissemination Plan

Timing	Dissemination Activity	Audience	Purpose	Key Message
Sept. 2009	Evaluation report and recommendations	MAC Sub-group on Capability Training Managers Steering Group on Training	Determine future direction	Project development, successes and challenges Change management factors for wider implementation
Sept. 2009	Workshop	Training personnel	Promote blended learning Disseminate knowledge	Enhancing delivery of training and development through effective use of ICT

Appendix M - EOLAS Evaluation

Report on EOLAS Project

Training Branch, November 2009

1. Introduction

This document reports on the EOLAS project undertaken by Training Branch between March and September 2009 and supported by ICT&L. EOLAS is an acronym of Electronic Online Learning Accessible Services. The project was conceived as an experiential learning opportunity for training personnel in the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to support capability development, and as a ‘proof of concept’ for distance and blended learning, in particular the use of the open source online learning environment, Moodle. The project saw the adaptation and delivery of three training programmes by distance learning for the first time, using a combination of Moodle and the Polycom videoconferencing suite.

The report begins by providing an overview of the three courses and describes the technology used to facilitate their delivery. It clarifies both the outputs and outcomes from the project, and summarises the findings of evaluations of the three courses. It also summarises the challenges raised in the context of the project, which carry implications for future work in terms of building on the

innovation. Finally, the report presents some overall conclusions and recommendations.

2. Project Approach and Scope

EOLAS was undertaken within an action research framework. This is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a community of practice to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. It is closely linked to Kolb's idea of experiential learning (Figure 1), however, the focus here is on improving practice at the same time as improving learning: both learning and the application of learning are integrated – circumventing the 'learning transfer problem'. It is a cyclical process, comprising four key phases (see Figure 2):

1. reflecting on current practice problems;
2. identifying opportunities and planning action;
3. monitoring action; and then
4. evaluating action.

Evaluating the impact of one cycle of action can lead to a revised plan for a subsequent cycle.

EOLAS may be conceptualised as a first action-reflection cycle (Cycle 1); and the project evaluation (comprising this report and individual course

evaluations) can contribute to a revised plan of action for subsequent work (see Conclusions).

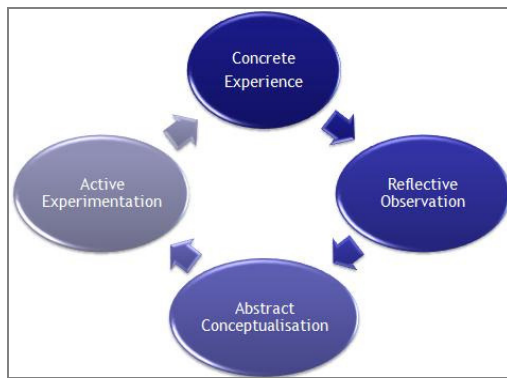


Fig. 1: Kolb's Learning Cycle

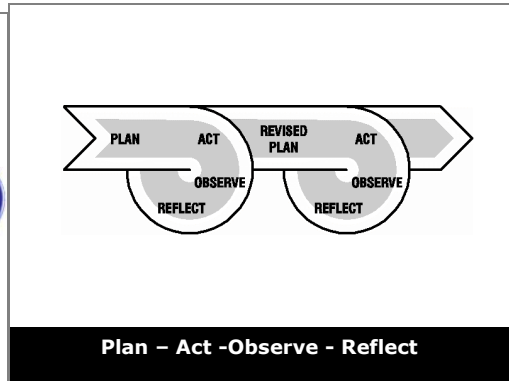


Fig. 2: Action Research Cycle

Three training courses were adapted for distance delivery. These are introduced below. Detailed evaluations of each of these courses have been presented separately.

VAT Module 1

VAT Module 1 is a five-day classroom-based, tutor-led module. It forms part of the Diploma in Advanced Taxation, which newly-appointed auditors are required to undertake. It is primarily lecture-based. Participants are required to sit a written exam at the conclusion of training. In EOLAS this course was delivered over thirteen weeks from 2 March to 31 May 2009. The existing course manual was segmented and released on a weekly-basis through Moodle, supported by online quizzes created for EOLAS and four Polycom broadcasts.

Business Writing Skills

Business Writing Skills is a one-day classroom-based, tutor-led course. It comprises presentations, practical exercises and a DVD. For EOLAS the course was scheduled to take place over three weeks from 20 April to 8 May 2009. Existing course notes were uploaded to Moodle. New activities were designed in the form of online discussions, online quizzes and writing assignments. Polycom was used to provide an initial orientation session for participants.

Advanced Excel

Advanced Excel is a one-day classroom-based, tutor-facilitated programme aimed at enhancing productivity in Excel through increased use of advanced functionality. The course is structured around a workbook of practical exercises, accompanied by exercise files. For EOLAS the course was scheduled to take place flexibly over six weeks from 11 May to 26 June 2009. The existing workbook was segmented and uploaded to Moodle with the relevant exercises files. New online quizzes were created and more challenging exercises posed in the context of the discussion forum. Polycom was not used in this instance.

3. Technical Framework

Moodle

Moodle is an open source, online learning environment that facilitates distance/blended learning through a sophisticated suite of tools that allow trainers to create programme materials and activities that trainees can access from their own workplace, and includes collaborative communication tools such as discussion fora, chat rooms, wikis and instant messaging.

Polycom

Polycom is Revenue's new videoconferencing suite, which now allows training personnel in one location to present training to employees across a range of geographic locations at the same way, with two-way video and audio transmission between the trainer and trainee.

4. Project Outputs

The project has delivered the following outputs:

- Moodle installation
- Introduction to Moodle workshop for training personnel
- Three courses adapted for distance delivery
- Trainee induction and e-learning support materials (module handbooks)
- Evaluation instruments (questionnaires)
- Two Moodle courses for Training Officers, comprising a range of self-managed learning resources: Moodle Features; and Blended Learning (inc. multimedia tools)

- Guidance note on supporting distance learners through online discussion
- Case studies for dissemination in the form of individual course evaluation reports
- Project dissemination through presentations by Training Officers involved in EOLAS
- Project evaluation comprising this report and individual course evaluations

5. Project Outcomes

EOLAS has been a significant experiential learning opportunity for those involved, and has ‘proved’ the use of Moodle in training and development.

Insights developed through the project can inform future exploitation of ICT to enable more flexible access to training and development in Revenue. In particular, it has enhanced understanding of the organisational challenges to wider implementation (see Issues), which include the development needs of training personnel.

All Training Officers in Training Branch have received Moodle orientation training and through the dissemination of project outputs have been sensitised to the arguments for blended learning.

Trainees and their managers have also been introduced to distance delivery.

Evaluation findings demonstrate openness to this form of learning.

6. Key Findings

- Evaluations of the three courses were undertaken as part of the project and their findings presented separately. Key highlights are presented here to aid comparison and conclusion:

- Completion rates were higher for the two shorter, practical courses: 78% for Business Writing Skills; 77% for Advanced Excel; 63% for VAT Module 1.

- There were no significant differences in exam results for those taking VAT Module 1 through distance learning and those receiving face-to-face training.

- Acceptance rates for this form of learning also reflect this pattern: 93% of Business Writing Skills participants responding to an online evaluation questionnaire indicated that they were happy or open to participating in distance learning again; this figure was 83% for Advanced Excel; and 67% for VAT Module 1. It should be noted, however, that the online questionnaires reflect the views of those completing the courses.

- Some additional feedback was sought from VAT Module 1, distinguished from the other two courses by its more theoretical orientation and longer duration: 83% of respondents indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to access this module locally; 50% indicated that they appreciated being able to study at their own pace; 58% indicated that studying while at work helped them to make connections between the module content and their role; 50% agreed that studying while at work helped them to draw on their colleagues' experience; 50% indicated that they had become more independent learners as a result of the experience.

- Feedback in respect of all three courses highlights the significant challenges participants faced in managing study time in the light of ongoing work demands, and the need for access to study spaces. Management support is critical in ensuring participants are guaranteed the necessary study time within the working day. Lack of time was cited as a major factor for drop-out. Some participants indicated that they missed the discipline/structure of the classroom situation. Many participants said that they missed the face-to-face interaction of the classroom situation. This seemed to be especially the case where participants were studying in isolation.

- Feedback in respect of the three courses also indicates that participants found the technology easy to use and that this itself did not present a barrier to participation.

7. Issues and Challenges

Several issues were raised by the project, which present ongoing challenges in the context of building on the innovation:

- Project participants were manually enrolled in Moodle, which required setting up user profiles and entering data, i.e. username, password, e-mail, location etc. For organisation-scale implementation this could become problematic. As this data is already available to other Revenue applications, some mechanism for using this data would lead to more sustainable practices.
- During EOLAS the Moodle administrator role was performed by the project manager with minimum demand for support from ICT&L. For wider-scale implementation the role will need to be divided between Training Branch (Moodle Training Administrator) and ICT&L (Moodle Technical Administrator): with ICT&L assuming responsibility for server-side administration, definition of policies, course back-up and archiving, new module installations and upgrades etc; and Training Branch assuming responsibility for course creation, participant

enrolment, Moodle support for trainees and trainers, and liaison with ICT&L.

- While Moodle and Polycom supported flexible learning, this flexibility challenged current administrative practices in terms of how training is recorded in HRMS for statistical purposes. For example, if, as in the case of VAT Module 1, participants accessed those topics of interest/relevance but did not complete all activities, is this recorded as delivered, and what unit of time is assigned to training for that individual? This challenge already exists for current computer-based training courses.

- Flexible engagement by participants also challenged trainers who experienced a shift in control from them to the trainee, and who because they did not have immediate visual contact with participants found it difficult to monitor individuals' progress. This challenges them to find other ways to get ongoing feedback, e.g. through online discussion, learning activities/projects/assignments, direct contact etc.

- Trainers also found the use of Polycom difficult. While it offers the potential to broadcast to multiple locations at once, in practice this has lent to a lecture-based approach, which minimised the scope for interactivity. Trainers found it difficult to build rapport with

participants because they did not know who was present in each location and could not address them by name. Multiple connections and poor camera placement in locations meant that the trainer could not even see all participants on screen. Participants also found it challenging to interrupt and to ask questions, and lack of record and play-back facility reduced flexibility. Technical limitations in terms of picture and sound quality contributed to these difficulties, however, new organisational approaches may mitigate some of them, for example:

- Connecting to fewer locations at any one time, holding more sessions or regionalising sessions so that fewer connections are made. Regionalising sessions would reduce learner isolation and re-integrate a level of face-to-face interaction, which some participants indicated they missed.
- Having a local person, perhaps a Training Officer present in each location to act as a facilitator or spokesperson for that group during a session.
- Reconsidering the pedagogic approach to these sessions. In VAT Module 1, for example, VAT seminars took the form of summary lectures, which did not require much engagement from participants.

In higher education seminars are intended to build on lectures and are much less formal and more discursive, bringing together smaller groups where all present are expected to actively participate.

Assigned readings are discussed (participants are expected to be prepared), and examples of practical problems are worked through.

- Having at least one face-to-face session at the start of long duration courses.

- Polycom was not suitable for demonstrating Moodle as picture distortion and delay made it difficult for participants to see on screen text etc. The new AT&T (RevConnect) tool may prove more suitable. Alternatively, face-to-face hands-on training within an overall orientation session may be appropriate. These sessions could still be regionalised if local training personnel were introduced to Moodle.

- Programme materials presented challenges for trainees where these primarily took the form of notes/ manuals. These were difficult to study in the timeframe and trainees were not always clear what it was important for them to know. They also did little to foster interaction. It is interesting to note that trainers do not rely on these substantially in the classroom but use media such as PowerPoint, video etc., as well as discussion and activity to mediate the content. Distance and blended

delivery requires similar attention in terms of course design, however, because the trainer is not present to explain, much more attention is required to the presentation of materials, which must be unambiguous, accessible and engaging. This also carries implications for trainer development.

- It proved more difficult to sustain engagement over longer duration courses. Shorter more focused courses will probably improve engagement and ultimately enhance flexibility and personal relevance.

- During the project the upload limit in Moodle was 2MB, meaning that programme materials uploaded were less than 2MB in file size. If trainers are to fully explore the efficacy of multimedia for engaging learning, then this will need to be increased in order to incorporate podcasts, video clips, screencasts, flash animations, SCORM⁵ courseware. This may also impact other policies/ practices.

- Time presented a challenge for all: trainees in terms of trying to integrate study with work; trainers in trying to adapt their courses and then give adequate support at the same time as managing classroom

⁵ Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) is a collection of standards and specifications for web-based e-learning, such as the computer-based training (CBT) courses used in Revenue for Microsoft Office Training

training schedules. In particular fostering interaction through online discussion and activity requires time.

8. Conclusions

Overall, the EOLAS project contributed significantly to trainer development and organisational learning about distance / blended learning, at the same time as having delivered three courses by distance learning for the first time.

Moodle and Polycom can help to improve access to training and development and make it more flexible and responsive to individual and organisational needs. In particular, it increases opportunities for dialogue, collaborative activity and reflection - cornerstones of all significant learning. This potential, however, may only be realised if these are the values underpinning use. If a broadcast approach is taken to use then it is unlikely that individuals will experience it as responsive, nor will it increase dialogue, collaboration or reflection. These technologies offer new opportunities for learning outside of the classroom but course design and delivery must build these in the form of discussion, activity and multimedia, with implications for trainer development. Overall, the key question focusing future use ought to be *'what are the current limitations of classroom training in terms of learning that use of these tools may help to address?'* The action research approach adopted for this project continues to offer the possibility of addressing trainer development needs at the same time as improving practices through progressive problem-solving:

allowing trainers individually and collaboratively to address themselves to this question.

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Appendix N - Analytic Memo – ‘e-Learning Meaning’ (EOLAS)

Analysis of EOLAS interview data suggests that thinking about training and e-learning is structured by a ‘product delivery’ metaphor (Wilson 1985), which resonates with Reddy’s (1979) work on the conduit metaphor of communication, as well as with Sfard’s (1998) work on the acquisition metaphor of learning. Here the image conveyed is of instruction as a package of knowledge, of the trainer as courier, and of the trainee as the intended recipient of the knowledge, which s/he should understand, remember and apply.

Training is “*delivered*” and “*classroom training*” or “*tutor-led training*” constitutes the main “*delivery mechanism*”. This is constructed dichotomous to e-learning, for which multiple terms are used interchangeably, including “*remote learning*”, “*distance learning*” and “*online learning*”. e-Learning implies “*delivering something online*” or “*being able to deliver ... remotely to a desktop*”. Trainers are seen to have to make the “*shift from the stand up deliverer to the sort of back end kind of technical kind of remote deliverer*”. The business imperative is “*using our technology to assist us deliver training in a more efficient and effective manner*” and “*to deliver a better learning product*”.

“Blended learning” is used to describe a hybrid delivery approach, with the managerial aim to have a *“much more blended approach than we currently have”*.

e-learning is constructed as suitable for *“concrete elements ... where you know you can get things across very clearly”*. This is content that in the classroom often involves *“endless slides”* and *“people just doze off”*. Here, e-learning is seen to have the advantage that *“people take much more responsibility for their own learning”* and are, therefore, *“more likely to remember it”*. It is seen to be more challenging for *“detailed, difficult sort training materials, you know, technical matters on tax or customs or whatever that are difficult sometimes for people to grasp and the trainer can kind of because he or she is standing there can get it across very easily.”*

The challenge for the *“online trainer”* or *“e-tutor”* lies primarily in *“making sure that materials are good enough quality to stand alone”* and in *“trying to move people along the subject matter”* using a *“drip feed kind of approach”*.

e-learning is seen to inhibit discussion or interaction because *“people are reluctant to ask questions”* and whereas in the classroom the trainer might ask questions to get people involved or use exercises to gauge whether something has been understood *“it’s difficult to do that on Moodle”*. This suggests that discussion is constructed as a feedback mechanism.

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Appendix O - Action Planner for ARieL Project

I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in practice.

I value the potential of e-learning to increase opportunities for dialogue, collaboration and critical reflection but this value was not fully realised during the EOLAS project. Reflecting on my learning I realise that I need to clarify that while this is my value for use of ICT, it is not a property or given, and its realisation requires that I use it in these ways. I believe that I should create opportunities to share this new understanding with my former trainer colleagues, to involve them in articulating their own values for use of ICT and in defining their own action research projects. There is a growing body of research and resources being developed in higher education contexts that I could share with participants through Moodle. Interaction through Moodle could also help them to develop better insight into how trainees may experience e-learning. Colleagues with whom I have worked on previous projects could also share their experiences.

I imagine a solution.

Develop a professional development project for trainers that re-presents e-learning as relational practice, that is, involves trainers in making values-based choices about how to exploit the potential that ICT presents, choices which are always in relationship to learners. Ask participants to define their own action

research projects, which will allow them to take responsibility for their own learning.

I act in the direction of the solution.

Invite trainers to participate with me in the programme. Develop a curriculum centred around participants' action research projects. Emphasise the communicative potential of ICT, focusing on the tools in Moodle that support communication, collaboration and reflection, and encourage their use by participants to support these processes. Encourage participants to clarify their values for use of ICT and to critically reflect on the implications for their relationships with trainees. Introduce them to e-learning literature and encourage them to use the Internet as a tool for research and professional development. Involve participants from previous projects in sharing their experiences and learning.

I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.

Monitor interaction within Moodle and during workshops, also gather formative feedback. Interview participants at the end of the programme.

I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.

Continue to try and create opportunities to collaborate with trainers on e-learning projects, integrating insights and experiences from this cycle

Appendix P - ARieL Programme Outline and Timetable

Action Research in eLearning (ARieL) Programme

Overview

Information and communications technologies (ICT) have an increasingly important role to play in how the Revenue Commissioners operates. It is also important, therefore, that training personnel take account of developments in ICT as they seek to contribute to building organisational capability. This programme will help Training Officers to make informed and critically reflective decisions about how to use the opportunities presented by ICT and will address issues of design, development, integration and evaluation.

Aim

The aim of this programme is to support Training Officers to investigate how they can use the opportunities presented by ICT to enhance their training and development practice. Learning will be experiential – participants will develop the skills and knowledge for effective use and evaluation of e-learning through the development of individual action research projects.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will learn how to:

- Use the opportunities presented by ICT to enhance training and development practice
- Develop blended learning programmes, incorporating collaborative activities and multimedia resources
- Design, implement and evaluate an e-learning action research project

Approach

Participants will be expected to identify an e-learning project on which they will work over the duration of the programme. Participants' individual research projects will frame the direction their learning takes and will shape how the programme responds to their needs in terms of topics of interest. Collaborative work will contribute significantly to achieving learning outcomes, supported by extensive use of Moodle to extend the opportunities for learning beyond the workshops and to develop e-tutoring skills.

Action research is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a community of practice to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. It is closely linked to Kolb's idea of experiential learning (Fig. 1), however, the focus here is on improving practice at the same time as improving learning: both learning and the application of learning are integrated – circumventing the 'learning transfer problem'. It is a cyclical process, comprising four key phases (see Fig. 2):

1. reflecting on current practice problems;

2. identifying opportunities and planning action;
3. monitoring action; and then
4. evaluating action.

Evaluating the impact of one cycle of action can lead to a revised plan for a subsequent cycle.

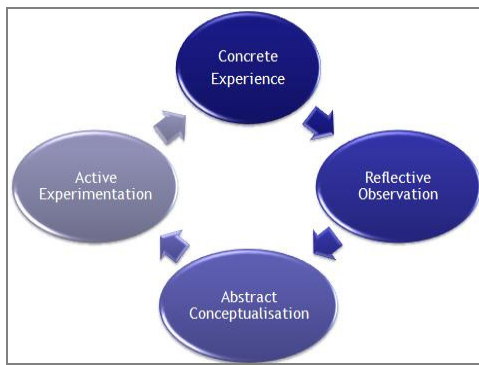


Fig. 1: Kolb's Learning Cycle

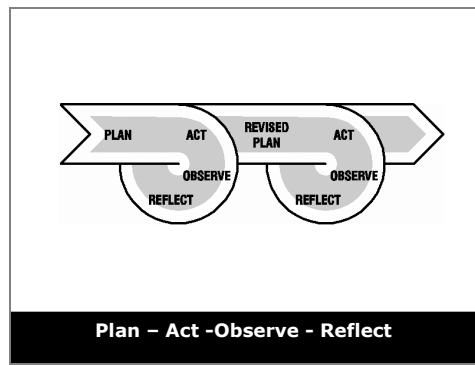


Fig. 2: Action Research Cycle

(Additional reading: *Action Research for Professional Development: Concise Advice for New Action Researchers* <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/booklet1.html>)

Indicative Content

The programme will present opportunities for participants to identify and address their own learning needs within the following broad framework:

- Design for blended learning programmes
- Action research as a systematic framework for improving practice and developing knowledge

- Selection and development of multimedia learning resources (e.g. Web design, screencasting, podcasting, video etc.)
- Design and development of collaborative e-learning activities (e.g. discussion, enquiry-based learning etc.)
- Role of the e-tutor

Schedule

Participation in the programme will involve attendance at six full-day workshops during 2010. Participants will be required to formally present their work in October 2010 to other Training Officers and to subsequently submit a written account of their action research as a case study, which can also be disseminated.

- **Workshop 1 – Introduction to Blended Learning and Action Research
(March 2010)**

- **Workshop 2 – Collaborative Online Learning I / Multimedia
Development I (April 2010)**

- **Workshop 3 – Collaborative Online Learning II / Multimedia
Development II (May 2010)**

- **Workshop 4 – Collaborative Online Learning III / Multimedia
Development III (June 2010)**

- **Workshop 5 – Collaborative Online Learning IV / Multimedia
Development IV (September 2010)**

- **Workshop 6 – Evaluating Blended Learning (October 2010)**

- **Presentations – October 2010**

ARieL Programme Timetable

Date	Workshop	Sessions	Topics
26 March 2010 <i>9:30AM-5:00PM</i>	Workshop 1	Introduction to Blended Learning and Action Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action planning • Learning theories • Curriculum design • Storyboarding
23 April 2010 <i>9:30AM-5:00PM</i>	Workshop 2	Collaborative Online Learning I (AM) Multimedia Development I (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle communication tools – Chat, Discussion, Choice • E-tivities, e-moderating & the role of the e-tutor • Introduction to multimedia tools: PowerPoint; podcasting; screencasting; Web design, video
21 May 2010 <i>9:30AM-5:00PM</i>	Workshop 3	Collaborative Online Learning II (AM) Multimedia Development II (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle collaboration tools – Groups, Wiki, Glossary • Project work
25 June 2010 <i>9:30AM-5:00PM</i>	Workshop 4	Collaborative Online Learning III (AM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moodle assessment tools – Journal, Quizzes, Games, Assignments, Questionnaire

		Multimedia Development III (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project work
24 September 2010 <i>9:30AM-5:00PM</i>	Workshop 5	Collaborative Online Learning IV (AM) Multimedia Development IV (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars and videoconferencing • Project work
22 October 2010 <i>9:30AM-5:00PM</i>	Workshop 6	Evaluating Blended Learning	Presentations and feedback

Appendix Q – ARieL Teaching Approach

In developing the ARieL programme my overall aim was to influence thinking about e-learning, that is, to challenge the idea that it necessarily means electronic delivery of content, and to encourage trainers to explore the possibilities for dialogic collaborative forms. This I see as the difference between approaching e-learning as a technical practice, focused on ‘getting content online’, and approaching it as a relational one, focused on how to support the social construction of knowledge. In addressing this aim and value, my teaching approach in introducing participants to Moodle during ARieL was to focus primarily on the tools that it provides to support communication and collaboration and to model how these might be used, and only towards the very end of the programme to give a demonstration of how content may be uploaded. This contributed to some of the anxiety expressed in Chapter Six about the completion of projects (see, for example Table 9).

I include here, as part of my evidence-base, some examples of the structured group activities developed to engage participants in guided, experiential enquiry about the meaning of e-learning for their practice, and to model such a teaching approach. These were also intended to inform the development of individual e-learning projects over the duration of the programme, which were further supported through group discussion.

Workshop One

What are your values and concerns?

Participants were asked to reflect on what they valued about training and development and what their concerns about e-learning were, which were recorded on a flipchart (see Figure 1). This was preliminary to an introduction to action research and the action planner and the suggestion that participant projects could be treated as action research enquiries in which values for use of ICT were clarified.

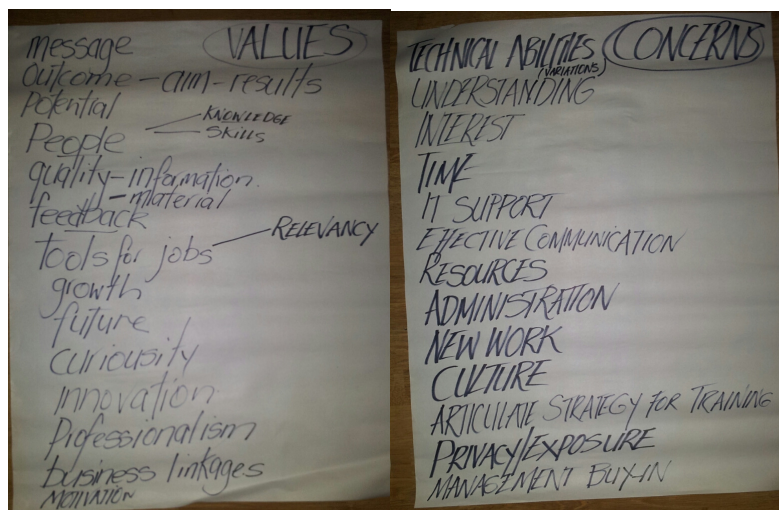


Figure 1: Participants' Values and Concerns

What does Blended Learning mean to you?

Participants were introduced to the Wiki (collaborative) writing tool in Moodle and asked to reflect on their understanding of the term 'blended learning' and then to add their own definition to the Wiki, where these could be shared by the group (see Figure 2). This was informed by a similar exercise on the M.Sc.

programme, where we were encouraged to explore the Wiki tool by adding our definition of interactivity to a class list.

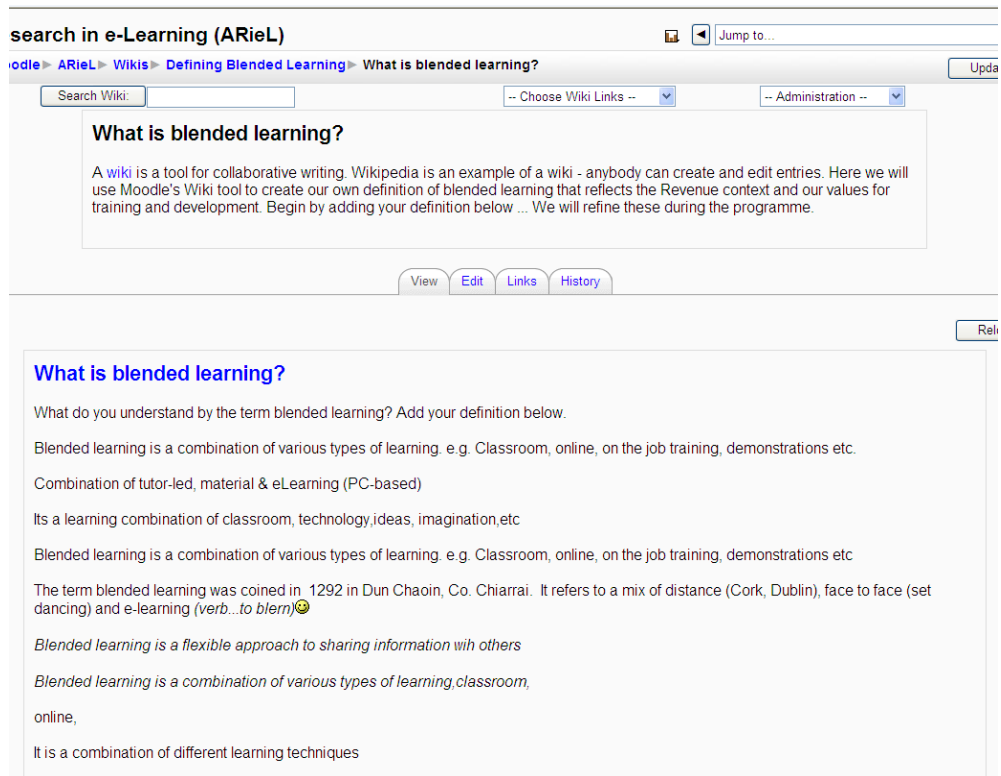


Figure 2: 'What is blended learning?' wiki

Evaluating e-Learning

Participants were encouraged to begin reflecting on what they might find valuable in an e-learning experience by asking them to explore three extant e-learning artefacts and to discuss their evaluative criteria, which were also recorded on flipcharts (see Figure 3). You can view a copy of the exercise outline here <http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/mod/page/view.php?id=51>

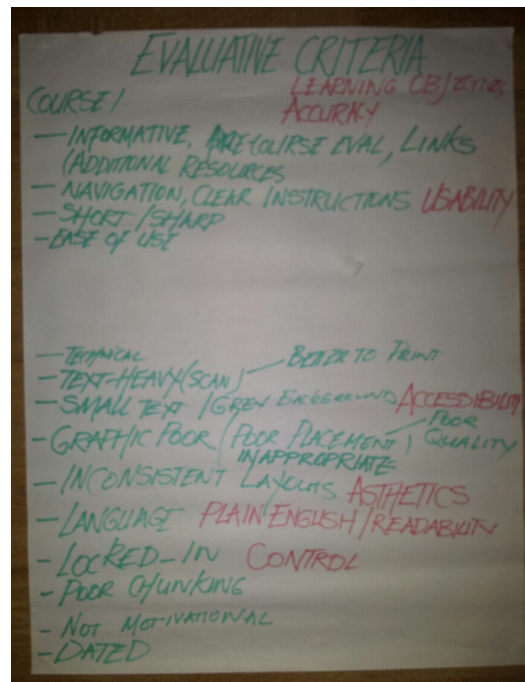


Figure 3: Evaluating e-Learning – Articulating Evaluative Criteria

Learning Models Webquest

This adapted a formative exercise from the M.Sc. programme, which is discussed in Farren (2008). Here, using the Moodle ‘Web Page’ feature I implemented Dodge’s (1995) WebQuest model to introduce participants to the idea of competing learning theories, at the same time as modelling the use of Moodle to support guided inquiry. In the exercise participants were asked (within groups) to research a particular learning model using the World Wide Web, to discuss their findings and responses to reflective questions with the whole group, and to collaboratively create a definition for a course glossary using the Glossary feature in Moodle. This was new for most of the participants as knowledge of pedagogy is not developed through the ‘Train-the-Trainer formation, which assumes that trainers are subject experts and need

only to learn presentation and group management skills. Here, the intention was to draw participants' attention to the multiple competing conceptions of 'what learning is' and stimulate reflection on how underlying conceptions might have practical consequences for 'what e-learning can be'.

You can view a copy of the Webquest here

<http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/mod/page/view.php?id=50>

Workshop 2

Computer-Mediated Communication

This gave participants additional experience at using the Glossary tool and introduced them to some e-learning terminology. Within groups, they were asked to research the meaning of the terms computer-mediated communication, synchronous communication and asynchronous communication using the World Wide Web, and to develop a glossary definition that could be shared by the group as part of a developing course glossary, along with relevant examples and a useful Web reference. (See Clip 04, Appendix K).

Exploring Asynchronous Communication

Following on the previous exercise, this introduced participants to the Forum tool and gave them experience of participating in an asynchronous threaded discussion. The discussion topic encouraged reflection on participants' own online behaviours and the role of the e-tutor or e-moderator in encouraging interaction through use of a typology (see Figure 4). It modelled the use of the


Forum to support discussion-based activities, as well as the role of the e-moderator in ‘weaving’ or summing up participant contributions. You can view a copy of the exercise outline here

<http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/mod/forum/view.php?id=58>

What kind of e-learning animal are you?
by Yvonne Emmett - Friday, 23 April 2010, 07:10 AM

Which of the 'e-learning types' below do you think you most resemble and why?

What would encourage you to be more active and inter-active in Moodle?



'At play in the Moodle Zoo'

Type	Behaviours	E-moderator response
The Wolf	Visits once a week, lots of activity then disappears again until next week, over the week after !	Nudge Wolf by e mail to encourage to visit again and see responses that s/he has sparked off
The Elephant	Steady- visits most days for a short time	Congratulate. Ask Elephant to encourage and support others – especially Mouse & Squirrel.
The Squirrel	Always catching up - completes - two weeks in once session then disappears again for some time.	Nudge Squirrel by e mail to suggest life is easier with more regular access. Check on other commitments. Provide regular summaries and archiving to enable Squirrel to catch up easily and contribute

Figure 4: Exploring Asynchronous Discussion Using Moodle and the role of the e-tutor

Exploring Synchronous Communication

This introduced participants to the Chat tool as facilitating a type of synchronous communication and gave them experience of participating in a chat session, moderated by one of the participants.

Designing E-Tivities

This gave participants additional experience at using the Forum tool and introduced them to the concept of e-tivities - online discussion-based activities (Salmon 2002). Within groups, they were challenged to develop a short e-tivity that they could implement for one of their programmes using the Forum.

Workshop 3

'Theory into Practice' Case Study

This gave participants additional experience at using the Wiki and Forum tools to support the social construction of knowledge and extended discussion of evaluative criteria. Within groups, participants were again asked to evaluate two extant e-learning artefacts, this time using some of the theoretical ideas encountered in previous workshops, and to collaborate on an evaluation report using the Wiki tool. Participants were then asked to post individually to the discussion forum in response to the other groups' reports. You can view a copy of the exercise outline here

<http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/mod/page/view.php?id=68>

Workshop 6

'Bringing it all back home' Case Study

This group exercise invited participants, within teams, to develop an outline proposal for an e-learning module on customer service and to investigate the

idea of ‘scenario-based learning’. You can view a copy of the exercise outline here <http://webofenquiry.org/moodle/mod/page/view.php?id=26>

References

Dodge, B. (1995) Some Thoughts About WebQuests [Online] Available from: http://webquest.sdsu.edu/about_webquests.html [Accessed 26 October 2005]

Farren, M. 2008. e-Learning and action research as transformative practice. *Innovate: Journal of Online Education*, 5(1) [Online] Available from: <http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=543> [Accessed 9 October 2008].

Salmon, G. 2002. *E-tivities: The Key to Active Learning Online*. London: Kogan Page.

Appendix R – Action Planner for DeLF Project

I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in practice.

Cycles One and Two focused on supporting bottom-up innovation by trainers through active experimentation with ICT for e-learning. It is clear that this must now be met with top-down support if development is to move beyond pockets of experimentation. This is backed up by my own research experience, in particular by the feedback from cycle two participants who undertook their own action research-based e-learning projects.

This will be my final cycle of action research as I aim to submit my doctoral thesis for examination in June 2012. Before withdrawing from the field I am concerned to share my learning from the previous two cycles as fully as I can to ensure that the work commenced can be sustained. I have learned from the previous cycles that there are some structural issues that need to be addressed and feel that I can support designated personnel to address these through action research.

I imagine a solution.

Facilitate an action research group to help designated personnel to investigate elements of an e-learning strategy/framework for top-down support and to investigate their own professional development needs in the process.

I act in the direction of the solution.

Invite designated support personnel to participate with me in an action research group. Treat the development of an e-learning strategy/framework as a collaborative group project that can support both change and learning. By investigating the key elements of a strategy/framework, through consultation and supported by secondary research, I could also help them to identify and address their individual constitutive research concerns, such as:

- How can I develop management support for e-learning?
- How can I develop administrative support for e-learning?
- How can I develop technical support for e-learning?
- How can I develop training support for e-learning?

Meet with participants once a month between July and November 2011. Set up a Moodle workspace to facilitate collaborative work and share examples of e-learning strategies/frameworks from other contexts, as well as relevant secondary research. I hope through the use of Moodle, and potentially videoconferencing, that participants can develop authentic experience in using the tools that they will eventually be providing support for.

Develop a multimedia website using Moodle 2.0, which has been recently released and incorporates many new features and enhancements. Through this process I will develop knowledge about the modified platform enabling me to better support the group. It will also help me to share the ideas I have been

developing through the research in a multimedia form to support further e-learning.

I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.

Monitor interaction within Moodle and during meetings, and progress on the development of the support framework and strategy document. Interview participants at the end of the project. Ask participants to validate the research account.

I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.

Incorporate the knowledge developed through this cycle into the multimedia representations on my website. Present the research findings at a Branch e-Learning Day in December 2011.

Appendix S – DeLF Consultation Survey

In Chapter Seven I claim that dialogue during the DeLF project helped to influence thinking about the nature of e-learning. I include here as part of my evidence-base a report on an online survey of Training Branch staff that I presented as a draft ‘Consultation’ section for the proposed e-Learning Strategy and Support Framework.

Extract from DeLF Discussion Forum

e-Learning Consultation Survey by Yvonne Emmett - Tuesday, 29

November 2011, 03:31 PM

Hi there,

Have completed analysis of results from staff consultation survey on development of e-learning strategy and framework, which make for interesting reading ...Data is categorised here according to major theme and ranked in order of the frequency raised; actual responses are included in second worksheet. [File url]

Have also had a go at drafting Section 2 (Consultation) of the framework document on the basis of analysis. [File url]

Looking forward to hearing your views.

Regards,

Yvonne

Survey Report

2. Consultation

This section summarises the results of an online survey of Training Branch staff undertaken during November 2011. This aimed to identify staff concerns about increased use of ICT in training and development, and to invite input into the development of the support framework and strategy for e-learning.

The survey was created using the Questionnaire module in Moodle and was placed on the Moodle homepage so that log-in was not required and staff could respond anonymously.

22 out of a total of 48 Training Branch staff members completed the questionnaire, giving an overall response rate of 46%.

Content analysis was undertaken to analyse free-text responses and to identify key themes, as highlighted below.

Q1. What is your main role in Training Branch?

Respondents were asked to indicate their main role in Training Branch, choosing from the categories: (1) Administration; (2) Management; and (3) Training. Response rates for these categories are summarised in Table 1 below.

	No. of Staff	No. of responses	Response Rate
Management	5	3	60%
Administration	18	8	44%
Training	25	11	44%

Q2. What does the term 'e-learning' mean to you?

The aim of this question was to understand how staff conceive of e-learning, to appreciate the distance between current understanding and a holistic or maximal definition that distinguishes e-learning as the use of any ICT to support learning processes and relationships in whatever figuration. The majority of the responses present minimal definitions, that is, they conceive of e-learning in narrow terms such that it is viewed as distinct from classroom delivery, rather than as part of it or complementary to it, for example:

- 7 out of 22 (32%) respondents perceived e-learning to mean self-managed learning
- Just 3 out of 22 (14%) respondents specifically addressed the possibility of interaction with a tutor within their definition
- 5 out 22 (23%) respondents perceived e-learning to specifically mean online (web-based) delivery
- An additional 7 out of 22 (32%) identified e-learning as PC/desk-based
- Just 5 out of 22 (23%) respondents gave a maximal definition, that

could include a wide range of technologies and uses

Q3. What are your concerns about the implications of increased use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in training and development for your role?

The concerns expressed by respondents about increased use of ICT in training and development are linked to perceptions of what e-learning is (Q2) and can be summarised along several major themes (classified by framework quadrant), as follows:

Quadrant 1 – Management

- Quality of e-learning
- Inclusion of trainers in decision-making processes around technology, with shared understanding of the strategic plan, and collaborative problem-solving
- E-learning is not always appropriate; assessment should be on a course-by-course basis
- E-learning places greater demands on both the trainee and trainer
- Managing workload as a trainer
- The library will become less visible due to reduced visitors to D'Olier House
- E-learning leads to a loss of interaction and could be isolating
- Loss of immediate feedback to trainer and need to ensure proper

evaluation

- Trainees are not interested in e-learning, preferring classroom training
- Staff will be lost
- E-learning diminishes the trainer role and the training delivered
- Management support for the development of e-learning, including allocation of time

Quadrant 3 - Technology and Technical Support

- Current technical restrictions on use/integration of multimedia artefacts
- Availability of technical support and back-up at all times

Quadrant 4 - Professional Development

- Having the skills and knowledge required to use the technology and develop e-learning
- Ensuring e-developers are familiar with ICT tools so quality is not compromised
- Having access to training, including technical training for specific packages e.g Camtasia, and access to support materials, e.g. Moodle handbook for trainers
- Getting guidance on how to get content right and achieve learning objectives via online delivery

Q4. What issues would you like to see addressed by a support framework and strategy for e-learning?

The issues respondents would like to see addressed by the framework are summarised by theme, and classified by quadrant, as follows:

Quadrant 1 - Management

- **Strategy**
 - Big picture view of how/where e-learning fits
- **Communication**
 - Promoting e-learning and getting buy-in/acceptance; removing the ‘fear factor’ for trainees and trainees; ensuring management are supportive so that trainee’s get time
- **Quality Assurance and Evaluation**
 - Quality assurance to ensure that training is of an equal standard to classroom-based courses; and evaluation to measure success
 - Introduction of standards for e-content to ensure uniformity, including templates and style guide that incorporate best practice in interface design;
 - Take account of different learning styles and needs
 - Ensuring accessibility
 - Evaluation
- **Project Management**

- Definition of roles and responsibilities
- Establishment of a working group to suggest and assess e-learning opportunities in consultation with end-users
- Support from Training Branch managers to ensure time is allocated for development, including time to focus on training needs

Quadrant 3 - Technology and Technical Support

- The level of technical support that will be provided, in particular for the development of multimedia content; and succession planning for technical support
- Full ICT&L support for Moodle, including multimedia products
- Arrangements for keeping up-to-date with emerging technologies

Quadrant 4 - Professional Development

- Training for e-learning development, including one-to-one training, workshops, demos, mentoring and 'step-by-step' guides
- Establishment of a support network for trainers to share ideas and experiences

E-mail

From: 'A'

Sent: 06 December 2011 15:52

To: Emmet, Yvonne

Subject: FW: RevInnue article

Yvonne

Below is a draft version of an article or perhaps centre pull out for RevInniu. We had hoped it would make the Christmas issue but it is likely now to be an early edition next year. I am forwarding to you as it might be a possible addition to your thesis - an appendix perhaps - look how far we have come theme sore of !!

Regarding the Moodle online survey the 46% response rate is somewhat disappointing, considering 'E' sent a number of reminders. There are however a number of interesting comments, particularly around e tutor development, e tutor support with technology, quality of the e learning product and the possible isolation of the e learner and loss of interaction with tutor. Some of these issues need serious consideration and give food for thought, and although on initial reading seem rather negative, they must be addressed.

The responses to Q4 are very enlightening and interesting. I have to admit that I am heartened that standards, uniformity, quality assurance, support network for trainers and evaluation all got air space as these are issues that I would love to debate and agree processes.

Perhaps we can include these as headings on the framework document - on second thoughts perhaps all your "quadrants" needs to be highlighted on this document.

We might all try and sit down again before Christmas and discuss progress etc.

Many thanks again for provoking the though process.

‘A’

Appendix T – Correspondence with IT Trainer (DeLF)

In Chapter Seven I claim that dialogue during the DeLF project has influenced the development of the technical support or ‘learning technologist’ roles and the movement in thinking between seeing an e-learning strategy as something abstract - ‘high-level’ or ‘academic’- and seeing it in terms of evolving roles and relationships and the support that is required. I include here, as part of my evidence-base, correspondence with one of the DeLF project participants in relation to the development of the learning technologist role and their response to the ‘Technology/ Technical Support’ and Professional Development’ sections of the proposed e-Learning Strategy and Support Framework.

From: ‘E’
Sent: 04 November 2011 09:48
To: Emmet, Yvonne
Cc: ‘N’
Subject: document

Hi Yvonne

Just to let you know myself & ‘N’ are working on a document for the DeLF project which can be found at [file url]

Its a very rough draft & we have lots of work to do & things to expand but feel free to contribute

I'm going to send out the DeLF questionnaire to training branch today or Monday also, if that's OK with you?

Thanks

'E'

From: Emmet, Yvonne

Sent: 07 December 2011 12:11

To: 'E'; 'N'

Subject: FW: document

'E'/'N',

Following survey and your own concerns, expressed at recent meeting about quality and standards, I am wondering whether you might consider including within your scope as learning technology team, contribution to quality assurance through following actions/activities?

Develop usability and accessibility checklists for training personnel

Develop templates for Moodle courses (with placeholders)¹ and for standalone e-learning artefacts (PowerPoint/Flash-based)²

Co-ordinate usability and accessibility testing³

1. See for example http://cid.vcc.ca/p1-dl/instructions/moodle/moodle_block/readme.html and <http://moodle.middlesexcc.edu/course/view.php?id=19>

2. See for a range of high quality templates <http://www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/?s=templates&x=13&y=11>

3. <http://www.stcsig.org/usability/resources/toolkit/toolkit.html>

Regards,

Yvonne

From: Emmet, Yvonne
Sent: 07 November 2011 17:48
To: 'E'
Cc: 'N'
Subject: FW: document

'E'/'N',

Have had a good read of document and put together some initial thoughts in the attached - do let me know your thinking and we will try to set up meeting ...

Regards,

Yvonne

[Attachment]

'E' / 'N',

Seems like you are being asked to provide answers where you probably still have lots of questions ...

Just a few observations in relation to RevShare document, which probably also raises more questions at this time than answers but maybe they can help ...

I have in mind the principal target for this document as the Training Branch staff member saying to him/herself - 'what has e-learning got to do with me?', and possibly answering that it has nothing to do with them unless they have

been pulled into one of the smaller projects aimed at developing a suite of mini-tutorials. I would hazard the guess – based on experience - that for a number of staff it will be the case that they are happy to stick with classroom delivery and not think about e-learning – ‘it’ being someone else’s problem. I think a key conceptual problem is that ‘e-learning’ is being interpreted as getting content online (as evidenced by some of the questionnaire responses), which, especially if it is displacing face-to-face training or the trainer, will be perceived as less effective, less desirable – in effect, a compromise.

I think a key challenge for this project is to help staff re-conceptualise e-learning, to frame it in more holistic terms, so that instead of management asking top-down ‘what can we put online’, each trainer begins to ask the question ‘what are the ICT tools available to me and how might these help me to improve what I am doing?’ This might include delivering content online, but I would argue that the greater value may be found in looking at the communicative aspects of Moodle, videoconferencing and the possibility for webinars as well as considering how some of the multimedia development tools acquired could be used to enhance face-to-face sessions.

In so far as it is possible, I think the document needs to clarify for that reader:

Who is responsible for what?

What is in place now?

What is yet to be put in place? [and roughly] By whom? When?

Moodle (Technical) Administration

What are the aspects of administration that are provided by the different administrators? When should someone go to [Admin Section] rather than yourselves?

Could a course request template be developed, requiring the creator to specify the various parameters?

ICT&L

You identify several areas where engagement with ICT&L is required. I think these will probably need to be put together in a document for ICT&L in order to progress the issues. It may be a case that it requires a project initiation document but I do think a basic requirements specification is required to get the ball rolling - highlighting requirements for: live and test sites; site customisation; maintenance, back-up and recovery; logins; support for video and audio; tools for webinars; and arrangements for Moodle upgrades and installation of third party modules.

Toolbox

The document at the moment is a bit Moodle-centric, and I am wondering about the possibilities for videoconferencing, for webinars and for the development of multimedia artefacts for use in class (outside of Moodle). It might be valuable to say something about the lab you have set up - how people can access it etc. and what support they can expect? Who will support which tools? Is there training that you need in order to be able to provide support for these tools?

It might also be valuable to briefly outline what the various tools can be used for in training terms

I am wondering whether any thought been given to video production – whether tools have to be acquired for this - or is this something where Training Branch will be reliant on ICT&L for advice and direction, in which case it should go in specification doc?

What about RevShare?

Training

In the short term it may be desirable to centralise skill development, especially in relation to those tools that have a higher learning curve, however, there is a danger of this being developer-centric with minimal innovation by trainers,

leading to development blocks and succession problems. I think some level of familiarisation training is desirable to encourage trainers to think about the possibilities beyond 'online delivery', and to enhance their own development opportunities.

SCORM Content

It's also possible to produce SCORM content from Captivate, including from imported PowerPoint files. I believe it is also possible to do so with Camtasia so it may not be necessary to acquire another tool. See also [file URL]

Business Plans and Resources

My worry for you is that you are getting very little time to consider any of these issues because of your training schedules. I am wondering whether there are any distinct work-packages that you can identify, which can/should be scheduled in next year's business plans so that required resources are secured?

I think one reasonable approach to all of this is to work backwards from what you think your roles as learning technologists is/should/could be – to develop your job spec. Then think about - What do you need in order to perform these roles? What activities are outside your scope, and require someone else to address?

From: Emmet, Yvonne
Sent: 22 November 2011 17:19
To: 'E' and 'N'
Subject: FW: document

'E'/'N',

From my notes - think this constitutes next steps

- Summarise findings of consultation survey (Yvonne)
- Find out to how advance Moodle support development requirements via ICT&L project governance structure - what is required, what format etc.
- Identify training courses required to meet technology support roles and identify budget requirement to 'A'
- Identify 'work packages' for inclusion on 2012 Business Plan and as actions in framework document
- Finalise 'Technology and Technical Support' and 'Professional Development' quadrants of Framework document and circulate as a discussion document, inc:
 - Specify role of Learning Technology Team (Appendix A)
 - Draft Moodle Policy and Protocol Document (Appendix B)

Regards,

Yvonne

Appendix U – Correspondence with Training Manager (DeLF)

In Chapter Seven I claim that dialogue during the DeLF project helped to influence thinking about the nature of e-learning – a movement from seeing e-learning as dichotomous with classroom training. I include here, as part of my evidence-base, correspondence through Moodle with one of the DeLF project participants in relation to the development of an Introduction for the proposed e-Learning Strategy and Support Framework. The extract begins with ‘M’ posting a draft to the Wiki in Moodle and inviting feedback through the discussion forum, to which I respond.

Extracts from DeLF Discussion Forum

Introduction

by ‘M’ - Tuesday, 17 January 2012, 12:07 PM

I've put something into the introduction wiki that i'd appreciate your thoughts/red pens on.

Re: Introduction

by Yvonne Emmett - Monday, 23 January 2012, 02:01 PM

Hi ‘M’ et al.,

Just wanted to raise a couple of reflection/discussion points in relation to draft introduction for framework document. (I have posted more detailed comments in blue text in the wiki.)

These ideas follow from my action research programme over the past three years, in particular the conviction (based on my experiences) that development of e-learning in Revenue constitutes a conceptual and axiological (values) problem, much more than it constitutes a technical problem, which ironically seems to be the way people prefer to approach it and is probably the easier dimension to address.

The conceptual problem, I believe, is that 'e-learning' is primarily being equated with an effort to get content online (as evidenced in the recent survey responses), which, especially if it is displacing the relationship between the trainer and trainee, and between trainees themselves, may be perceived and experienced as less effective, less desirable – in effect, a compromise. This is not accidental but, it seems to me, reflects an underlying overly simplistic conceptual model that views learning in terms of the transmission or delivery of knowledge content from the expert to the novice. Naturally, if we hold this view we see content as central and so when we consider electronic media we are thinking how we can translate this content to the new medium. But there is typically a lot more going on in the classroom than presenting content – certainly dialogue, collaborative problem-setting (and solving) activity and critical reflection are all central to learning. So why would we leave these out?

I think the major challenge is to help staff re-conceptualise e-learning, to frame it in more holistic terms, so that instead of asking top-down 'what can we put online', each trainer (individually and collectively) are supported to ask the question 'what are my concerns about my current mode of training, what are the ICT tools available to me, and how is it that these might these help me to improve what I am doing for the benefit of the learner?' This might ultimately include delivering content online, where that constituted an improvement for the learner, but I would argue that the greater value may be found in looking at the communicative aspects of Moodle, videoconferencing and the possibility for webinars as well as considering how some of the multimedia development

tools already acquired could be used to enhance face-to-face sessions. I suppose what I am saying is that ICT presents an opportunity to fundamentally look at what we are doing, how we are doing it etc.

One of the major points that I tried to develop in the ARieL programme is that e-learning should be approached as a pedagogical rather than a technical problem. I raised the idea of ‘affordances’ – that is the quality of an object, or environment, that allows an individual to do something. (For example, the use of Moodle promotes the activity of writing in the Business Writing programme as it affords written communication through forums etc.) I asked participants to consider: what they thought the affordances of current classroom training arrangements were, and what the affordances of new technologies might be; how the affordances of one mode could address the weaknesses of another if perhaps used in conjunction; and how these might be or might not be valuable in educational terms.

This leads me on to the second problem – the axiological or ‘values problem’ – which lies, I believe, in the conflict between the values different groups or ‘stakeholders’ might hold for e-learning, e.g. between reducing costs on the one hand and effectively supporting learners on the other, and in addressing value conflicts. My contention is that RTB’s emphasis should be on effectively supporting learners and learning, and on valuing the possibilities ICT presents for improving that support.

Resources:

Why Focus on Pedagogy? <http://www.elearning.ac.uk/features/whyped>

Presentation: How do people learn?

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/Sesssion1.ppt

Handout: Three approaches to understanding how people learn

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/Three%20approaches.doc

Hope this makes sense.

Talk soon,

Yvonne

Extract from DeLF Wiki

Introduction

This section will address the vision, aims and strategic objectives for e-learning.

There are many definitions of e-learning but the one below is one which seems to capture it in a nutshell.

E-learning is a unifying term to describe the fields of online learning, web-based training, and technology-delivered instruction .

[YE 23/01/2011 - Many definitions of e-learning focus on the 'delivery mechanism(s)', such as this one above. I would suggest that definitions of e-learning should follow from definitions of learning – we wouldn't restrict definitions of learning, for example, to the mode of classroom presentation by a trainer. Whatever learning is, it is a relational (social) and communicative process so that when ICT enters the picture it is a question of how these new communications media mediate learning relationships. I would suggest a more holistic and humanistic definition along the lines of: "the use of information and communications technology to support learning relationships and processes". This places technology in the servant role and obviates the need to

distinguish between 'e' and 'b'-learning. You could go on to say something like: "In exploring the possibilities that ICT presents for enhancing training and development practice, the question must always be 'how can this help us to improve what we are doing?' This definition permits a much wider reflection on how ICT can be used to enhance training practice in response to new challenges and what e-learning processes and relationships might look like."

The content of e-learning courses can be delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM and refers to both out-of-classroom and in-classroom educational experiences. It can be self-paced or tutor led or a combination of both for blended learning.

YE 23/01/2011 – I think this emphasis on content reinforces the transmission model of training. Perhaps the document could focus on the opportunities that all of these new communications media present for increasing access to training and development and for making training and development more effective by addressing current problems/barriers?

The quality of electronic-based training, as with all training, is in its content and its delivery . E-learning can suffer from many of the same pitfalls as classroom training, such as boring slides, monotonous speech, and little opportunity for interaction. However, with advances in technology and a range of software available, very effective learning environments can be created that will engage and educate the student.

[YE 23/01/2011 – As above – it's all in the relationship!]

As an organisation Revenue benefits from enhancing our e-learning capabilities by meeting our growing learning needs in a more cost effective manner while the individuals needs are met by providing more options for training and more timely and focused training.

[YE 23/01/2011 – I appreciate that cost containment is being heavily emphasised as a managerial value within various strategy documents but I think RTB should be focusing on the values of ICT for learners and learning and the possibilities for improving on current arrangements]

This policy ties into the CSTDC's development framework for Learning and Development for the Civil Service, to look at alternative and supplementary approaches to learning delivery. The framework document emphasises "value for money", the necessity of sharing of resources and the critical relationship between learning and business requirements. (attach link?)

YE 23/01/2011 – As above?

Our e-learning development also contributes to the OECD requirements that all staff should have access to training irrespective of location.

YE 23/01/2011 – would suggest that this an inherent value, something that RTB has always tried to do rather than something which is now being imposed. The issue is what new opportunities ICT presents for realising this?

Extract from Annual Corporate Plan 2011:

'Our staffing numbers are expected to reduce under the National Recovery Plan 2011 - 2014. Apart from declining numbers, we also expect to lose further highly skilled and experienced people to retirement; this is in addition to the significant numbers that have already left under the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement. Replacing those lost skills through capability building and open recruitment, and adjusting our structures and redeploying staff to take account of the new staffing realities will be a major challenge'.

This theme continues into the 2012 Plan and part of RTB's role in capability building is to explore and utilise different methods of training delivery. E-learning development will play a large part in achieving this through increased on line and blended learning.

Currently RTB has initiatives in four of the main models of e-learning:

e-Learning enhanced: some trainers are using youtube and other internet access to enhance their classroom presentations

Blended modules: ???

Online modules: ???

Standalone learning resources: there are a number of these short subject specific courses available which don't require any course request or tutor input.
definitions of e-learning and blended learning?

Linkages to Revenue SoS and CSTDC Learning and Development Framework

Four main models for e-learning are identified:

e-Learning enhanced refers to conventional taught modules or programmes with supplementary e-learning components

Blended modules or programmes include some face-to-face delivery but a proportion of the teaching is online

Online modules or programmes where most of the content is delivered online with minimal or no mandatory attendance requirements

Standalone learning resources which do not require any course or programme request or trainer support

A fifth emerging model concerns the use of e-portfolios to support competency development, e.g. Mahara.