Success factors in consultancy projects: making 'maps that work'

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The author, a consultant who has worked on projects in the education, training and professional regulation arena for more than three decades, reflects on factors that make for successful interventions and sustainable project outcomes. Seven key factors are identified: (1) intellectual credibility, both in a substantive and methodological sense; (2) a consistent and explicit ethical perspective; (3) developing a comprehensive rich picture of the practice context; (4) using a 'realisation' or 'co-creation' approach to ensure that the client community has ownership of the project; (5) the development of effective systems architecture; (6) being able to act as a constitutional arbiter to maintain consistency and constancy of purpose; and (7) treating the project as a research process, both internally to build in ongoing review and evolution and externally to provide critique and position it in relation to parallel developments in the field. The importance of methodological fluency is also emphasised to develop approaches that are contextually appropriate, while cautioning against the use of over-formalised methods and processes.

Keywords: Consultancy; projects; practice as research; practice methodology; success factors.

Introduction

I work as a consultant and researcher in work-related education and training systems, including with the frameworks and regulatory systems used by professional membership and registration bodies. I have worked with professional bodies, universities, government agencies, specialist and sector groups, project partnerships and (to a lesser extent) public, private and voluntary-sector employers on projects that range from short expert inputs or reports through to long-term projects to set up or review and revise major systems and

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frameworks. I am also an early graduate of Middlesex University's practitioner doctorate (DProf), which I completed in 2002 based on the initial stages of a long-term consultancy relationship ('B' in table 1 below).

A request in 2022 to lead a seminar on intellectual leadership for professional doctorate candidates, along with the 30-year anniversary of my time in private practice and reflections on how I want to organise my work pre-retirement, acted as prompts to think about what has worked well and what less well in my work. Since 1993 I have worked with roughly a hundred clients or project partners on nearly 300 discrete pieces of work, ranging from short reviews and commentaries to research and development projects spanning several years. It is the larger projects – those that cover at least one full cycle of activity and allow an opportunity to review their effects – that are the most valuable as subjects for evaluation and reflection. I took seven projects as the main objects of reflection, dating from 1998 to 2022, between two and nine years in length, and including EU-funded development projects and work for clients (table 1). From these I identified key themes that aided their success and then returned to each project to pick out greater detail relating to each theme; five themes appeared in all of the projects, one (practice as research) in six, and one (constitutional arbiter) in five. Finally I reflected on each theme in relation to my overall body of work, including two less successful pieces of work, to identify any additional points of note. The results illustrate what has worked for me; I am offering them for consideration and further exploration rather than as a prescription for anyone else.

Table 1. Project-base.

Project	Timescale	Client type	Main focus
A	1998-2002 (3 years)	Government agency	Framework for online learning
B	1998-2007 (9), revisited 2018-20	Professional body (initially consortium)	Establish and further develop self-regulation framework, promote development of the profession
C	2011-2013 (2)	EU partnership project	Develop and trial international qualification
D	2013-2016 (3.5)	Professional umbrella body	Establish self-regulation framework
E	2015-2017 (2)	EU partnership project	Develop principles for a professional competence model
F	2017-22 (4.5)	Professional regulatory body	Review education and qualifications system
G	2018-21 (3)	EU partnership project	Research and development for digital learning

The main themes emerging from my review are *intellectual credibility*; making clear my *ethical stance and perspective*; building a *rich picture*; gaining *ownership* from stakeholders; developing effective *systems architecture*; acting as a *constitutional arbiter*; and framing *practice as research*. These are outlined in the sections below.

Intellectual credibility

In my experience the value of intellectual credibility in a project typically has two facets, and appears firstly as one of the factors for being approached and securing the work in the first place, and secondly as a source of authority for taking the work forward. The first facet is authority in the broad substantive area concerned. This can differ depending on the type of client and project. In some projects there is a close correspondence between my expertise

and that of the client or project partner, for instance when working with a university on work-based learning, in which case my role can be closer to that of a team member than an external adviser, and my intellectual authority is that of an academic peer bringing in an additional perspective.   In others I have expertise that is substantially different from that of the client, for instance when working with a practitioner community on matters of professionalisation and self-regulation.   In both contexts I am able to draw on, and demonstrate a record of contributing to, current thinking and research. Part of this contributes to credibility to be able to take on a project – being able to point to a large collection of refereed papers and research and development reports, some of which are likely to be relevant to the project being contemplated, is often useful – but it also provides a base from which to develop thinking within the project as well as to provide material to convince more sceptical stakeholders.

The second facet is process and methodological expertise. The extent to which clients have project management and research-and-development expertise can be highly variable, but in any case I am usually able to add process insights to a project whether it is principally about carrying out research or developing, communicating and securing the adoption of a new system. My natural standpoint is essentially phenomenological (Lester 1999, Schutz 1999) and systems-oriented, but I have a range of experience in practical research and development that gives me insights into how to construct studies and projects so that they work at a practical level as well as being conceptually consistent. I sometimes have the good fortune to work with a methodologically adept client or group of partners, but I have often found myself either needing to lead on the development of plans and methods or attempting to move clients away from adopting inappropriate or narrow approaches that stem from a lack of methodological fluency.

Ethics and perspective

The importance of ethics and perspective has increased over the years I have been active, nominally owing to concerns with matters such as fairness, transparency, diversity and wider impact, but primarily from a desire that projects should result in something worthwhile; this could be summarised as a concern with fitness of purpose as much as fitness for purpose. At

a practical level this translates into the obvious requirement for me to work in a way that is ethical and transparent, but it also creates an obligation to be clear about ethical boundaries and how my perspective will influence the work. A general principle that I have adopted is not to become involved in projects that will, or are likely to, result in avoidable harm or unfairness, such as using technology to economise while undermining quality, or developing an assessment system that has poor validity and accessibility or is insufficiently robust. Secondly, I attempt to make my perspective on matters relating to potential projects clear at the outset, both to avoid mismatches and to provide a baseline that can be referred back to later in the project, both in developing systems and practices and in the 'constitutional arbiter' role discussed later.

Two examples illustrate this. One is from a project proposal for a professional body that wanted to expand its qualifying process internationally. Part of my presentation concerned principles of good assessment such as validity, robustness, accessibility and so forth. One member of the commissioning panel said something to the effect that this is all very well, but they need a system that is efficient and above all cost-effective; these are niceties that could come later. I explained that they would be undermining their reputation and exposing their members' clients to incompetent practice if they didn't adopt good practice from the outset. They were not persuaded, and needless to say I didn't secure (and under the circumstances would not have accepted) the work. The second more positive example comes from a partnership project concerned with digitally-facilitated learning, where I was invited to take part as a work-based learning expert. In the initial discussions I made clear that while I support the use of new technology, the project needed to focus on learning first and technology-based solutions second; learners could not be diverted by exciting but poorly aligned technology that moves the focus away from the value of the learning. This principle was adopted throughout the project alongside enthusiasm for the technology, and interventions to ensure learning sequences were well-designed and supported were welcomed.

The issue of perspective can be a more difficult one to manage within projects, as unlike ethical considerations the boundaries are less clear and differences in perspective between

different actors in a project can, if managed well, be a source of creativity and innovation. There is a tradition of the consultant as an objective outsider, and while I do not dismiss this completely it is important to clarify that 'objective' in this sense simply means bringing in a set of perspectives that are (in most cases) not contaminated by the organisation(s) or particular case involved, and employing methods that wherever possible are open to scrutiny and make assumptions explicit. I aim to make important perspectives apparent in proposals and early-stage discussions, with where relevant pointers to published work and previous projects that illustrate how I might view and approach analogous situations in both an ethical and a methodological, and to some extent epistemological, sense.

The rich picture

Building a 'rich picture' is one of the initial steps in Peter Checkland's soft systems methodology. Checkland describes the need for a balance between being "sponge-like, soaking up as much as possible of what the situation presents… holding back from imposing a favoured pattern on the first impressions" and "hav(ing) in mind a range of prompts which will ensure that a wide range of aspects are looked at" (Checkland & Poulter 2006, p24). I concur with that, while adding that in my experience the development of the rich picture is generally more messy, iterative and multi-layered than Checkland's accounts suggest. It is also more phenomenological in principle, particularly in aiming to "identify phenomena through how they are perceived by (the) actors in a situation" (Lester 1999, p1) and avoiding creating firm interpretations until there is enough information to justify them. It draws on the metaphor of map-making and the pragmatic need to develop 'maps that work' (after Korzybski 1958) from multiple perspectives, recognising that the situation being addressed typically involves a 'wicked problem' (Rittel & Webber 1973) or 'mess' (Ackoff 1974).

In most instances the detailed work of a project will start with a broad brief or objective and a presenting problem as stated from the client's perspective, with an accompanying narrative setting out the associated reasoning, some of the history, what it is hoped will be achieved, the main actors (and sometimes counter-actors) involved, and some of the perceived facilitators, obstacles and wider dynamics. At the outset I will normally ask further questions

to orient myself in the situation, probe reasoning and gently question any assumptions that I think may be suspect. I will also ask for suggested reading materials, data sources and other people to speak to, as well as searching more widely from published and internet sources, and if sensitivities permit talking to other potential informants.   In theory the rich picture can be built up from a single initial research phase, but in practice this is often not feasible or even desirable; feasible because the client or funder may want to see some proposals early on in the project, and desirable because part of the picture concerns assessing reactions to proposed changes, which might not be possible to do sensibly until those who will be affected by them can see the detail taking shape. A rich picture underpinning a systemic change will need to include current problems, practices, aims and visions, as well as tensions, politics and dissenting perspectives, and not all of these will become fully apparent from initial research.

In practice I find that the rich picture or working map develops over time alongside other aspects of the project, and the key is to make sure that proposals and implementation details do not run ahead of what is known about the situation. This will typically mean sketching out some proposals early on in the process, perhaps providing examples of how the detail could be developed where the client is unsure how something might work, but leaving enough room to modify them or propose a different solution as the picture develops. Firming up proposals and then consulting on and testing them generally open up new sources and perspectives, and these can substantially add to the richness and depth of the information available about the situation.   In several cases the developed rich picture has provided the client or partnership with significantly enhanced knowledge about their operating arena that can be used to inform other developments and modifications.

Systems architecture

The idea of 'systems architecture' has its origins in engineering and later information technology, as a discipline for modelling complex systems and facilitating their design and modification (e.g. Crawley *et al* 2004). While I work with systems of principles, procedures and practices rather than physical components and processes, I find systems architecture as a perspective or analogy draws attention to the interrelated nature of systems as well as

supporting working effectively with the complexity involved. Educational or regulatory systems have different components that interrelate in different ways, they involve procedures and processes that translate into practices that both affect and produce the outputs of the system, and they have emergent properties some of which are reasonably predictable and others less so. In my experience setting up or modifying things such as qualifying processes, regulatory systems and even continuing development frameworks requires a systems-oriented approach, informed by a well-constructed rich picture, if the results are to work effectively and be robust and sustainable. The aim is again to develop a pragmatic 'map that works', i.e. a set of constructs, components and interrelations that may not be theoretically perfect but provide a way forward that is effective, equitable and durable.

In my development as a practitioner I have been influenced by work going back to Rittel & Webber (1973), Ackoff (1974) and Argyris & Schön (1978), through Schön (1983), Senge (1990) and Goldratt (Cox & Schleier 2010) to Checkland (Checkland 1981, Checkland & Poulter 2006). Early in my career I attempted to apply Goldratt's Theory of Constraints and Checkland's soft systems methodology in a fairly formal way, but I quickly found that most projects need flexibility to examine system components, processes and interactions as relevant to context. The closest I have to a formal approach it is something like:

- What are the issues, and who own and are affected by them?
- What needs to happen here, at an overall level?
- What are the main components, and what happens (or needs to happen) in each of them?
- Who needs to own, operate and take part in them – and who can undermine them?
- How are they interconnected?
- How does (or should) the system work as a whole?

I add to that as a guiding process a simple action research cycle involving investigation, definition, design, implementation and review. The cycle need not simply move forward and repeat; different cycles can take place at different speeds (for instance for components and for the framework as a whole), and not all parts of the cycle need be revisited at different

stages. An essential property of a 'live' system is that while it has constancy of purpose and consistency of practices, it is open to evolution. Part of the role of this action research cycle is to ensure that evolution takes place as necessary and in a consistent and evidence-informed way. There is therefore a need within at least the more complex types of project to build in a systems perspective and culture of ongoing review within the client organisation.

As a final point, a systems perspective links the context and purpose of an undertaking (the 'big picture') with the detail. An important aspect here is distinguishing critical from trivial detail. In a physical system critical detail could be a tiny mechanism or a piece of code without which the system would work poorly or not at all, while trivial detail could be the colour of a part or design factors that don't affect how it functions. In the kinds of systems that I work with, critical details typically describe process activities or criteria and can hinge on consistent, unambiguous and easily understandable terminology. Getting this right and communicating it effectively can make the difference between successful, easy implementation and a system failing or struggling because of lack of clarity about how things need to work. This also means getting the balance right between maintaining consistency and allowing scope for interpretation and evolution, something that can require careful and subtle use of language.

Realisation and ownership

Realisation (Schiff 1970) or co-production (Reeves & Knell 2006) involves the external expert or facilitator working jointly with a client to produce an outcome – such as a system, framework or process – rather than delivering an expert solution that requires handover. While some of my smaller projects are commissions to produce for instance a report, review or set of recommendations, on systems projects I have found a realisation approach is vital to ensuring acceptance and sustainability. In most instances this is unproblematic at a surface level, as the client will have a reason for developing the project and will want to own the results, psychologically as well as legally. There are however a number of obstacles that I have encountered, variably in different projects, that can affect sustainability.

In a few projects I have come across a lack of attention to gaining wider ownership – or at least buy-in – across the organisation or community. This can be a particular problem if the project promoters (for instance the committee or executives of a professional body) start with an attitude of wanting to impose change on a wider community (such as their members). Often this will be revealed in early discussions and illuminated through developing the rich picture, and there is scope in the development process to modify the system so that it is more acceptable, to incorporate extended consultation and communication, or to agree that the outcomes will not be accepted by everyone and will result in some of the relevant group becoming hostile or going elsewhere. The value of a rich picture developed from multiple perspectives becomes apparent here, as it allows dissenting views and sources of negative power to be identified, and an assessment to be made of how changes need to be negotiated and managed in order to succeed.

Another limiting issue that is sometimes present is that projects can be driven by enthusiasts whose ability to sustain momentum in their wider organisation or operating environment may be limited. This raises a question of how the project is to be framed; for instance as a short-life project or trial, as a catalyst or incubator, as a peripheral activity or spin-off, or as something subversive that has the potential to create wider-scale change later. Ensuring that the parties involved agree on this early on can be critical to making it a worthwhile activity rather than a brave effort that fails as soon as the driving force behind it is removed. As an external expert and facilitator I have very occasionally been able to aid wider adoption of something that started as a peripheral activity, but more often my role has been to inject realism and help identify appropriate achievable goals – for instance focusing on creating an example of innovation or good practice rather than instant system-wide change. In the early part of my career I have been as guilty as any of over-optimism about translating innovation into large-scale change, but I think I have learned from the failures of projects to achieve overambitious goals.

A different type of dynamic is present in partnership projects, where several different organisations come together to share ideas and develop a new framework or approach; European Union supported strategic partnership projects, of which I have been involved in

several, are of this type. Here there are multiple objectives: the overt ones expressed in the partnership agreement or funding application, and the private ones of the individual partners. An important factor is bringing to the surface the more private objectives and agreeing that they are a legitimate part of the project, while gaining enough buy-in for the project objectives to produce some viable results. Again some realism is in order, as while many of these projects produce interesting reports and resources few act as catalysts for wider change; the more sustainable impacts are often within the individual project partners or organisations that they work closely with.

The constitutional arbiter

A role that I have sometimes needed to take in relation to systems projects is that of constitutional arbiter, guiding the client to work within the system that they have set up until it is fully embedded and appropriate ways of working have become part of the organisation's practices. The aim of this role is essentially to maintain constancy of purpose and consistency of practices while also allowing for adjustment and modification. In some instances it can be like an editorial role, maintaining internal consistency across documents, guidance and communications, while in others it takes on a quasi-legal status involving making formal interpretations and judgements, including where necessary challenging the client's perspectives. One client described this role as more akin to a mufti in Islamic law than anything in the English legal system. It is probably best illustrated by way of two examples, one operational and one constitutional.

An example at an operational level concerned a professional body's continuing professional development (CPD) regulations. Within the regulatory framework that we had agreed, CPD was defined as activity of any kind that led to learning relevant to the person's practice, career or role in the professional community. In the trialling stage of the framework there was some reversion to attaching more significance to CPD inputs than to the actual learning that had taken place, and criticism of CPD accounts that did not include courses or conferences. My response was to pause the process briefly, call in a sample of cases and make exemplary

interpretations, developing them as precedents to reinforce the guidance material on how the regulations should be implemented.

A constitutional example involved the relationship between a joint council representing multiple organisations and an 'arm's-length' (i.e. operationally independent) standards board. The council had a history of inter-organisational politics that had undermined its effectiveness, and I had worked with its executive committee and a government sponsor to set up the standards board so that it could operate independently of the influence of the individual organisations. However, shortly after its establishment the board attempted to go beyond the level of independence provided for in its constitution, provoking the council to rein it in. The council's proposal was effectively to rewrite the constitution giving itself more power over the standards board, which would have undermined the latter's ability to make independent operational decisions. In response I provided a written interpretation that explained how the constitution had been devised to deal with this type of eventuality, and the course of action that should now follow; the council accepted my recommendations and the situation was resolved.

Practice as research

The idea of 'practice as research' was coined by Goldiamond and colleagues in the 1960s to reflect the fact that day-to-day practice (in their case in psychology) could, if approached in an appropriate manner, simultaneously be research (Goldiamond *et al* 1965). With systems development projects it is difficult to envisage how practice cannot be research, as each project is essentially unique while drawing on and offering learning points for other similar work. In most projects a large quantity of data and information of various kinds is gathered and the project necessarily has elements that are reflexive, cyclic and evaluative. However, learning from this kind of practice can be enhanced significantly if the project is approached throughout as a research-informed and knowledge-generating activity.

In most projects there are two aspects to this, one internal and concerned with evaluation and review, and the other external and about positioning the development and having

something to say to the wider world. Most developments I have been involved in envisage some form of evaluation activity, but it is often an add-on and can be more about surface opinion and validation than genuine evaluation. It is more valuable, and often easier, to build information-capture into the system, both to adjust developments as they progress and to review them later. This suggests an ongoing action research-type process with multiple sources of feedback rather than periodic review points, though what is practicable varies from one development to another. The external aspect involves both looking out to see what others are doing (though generally from a more critical perspective than one of simple benchmarking), and gathering evidence from which to develop an account that is located in a wider practice context and says something valuable to others in parallel fields. It is not necessary for the development to be innovative or even particularly successful, as sometimes learning from partial failures and missed opportunities can be as useful as that from ground-breaking successes.

A third point about practice as research is that it is not normally attempting either to produce formal social sciences research, or create the kind of quantitative or evaluative reporting that is the norm for many public-sector and large-scale consultancy reports. Practical research is often a type of bricolage that uses whatever opportunities are available and blends the findings together in a way that is internally consistent, authentic and valid for the case in point; again it aims to produce a 'map that works' rather than a fundamental truth or a practice prescription. The value of this kind of reporting is principally in moving practice forward; it can have wider and longer-lasting value, but its intention is not primarily to add to a body of academic knowledge. Having said this I have found that academic papers that discuss practice projects can have value for clients in being able to see their developments from a wider perspective, enabling them to recognise the significance and credibility of what they are doing. They can also provide me with an opportunity to add a more measured critique and longer-term perspective than may be possible directly in a consultancy role.

A final reflection: methodological fluency

A major consideration for being able to work with the factors described in the preceding sections is what can be termed methodological fluency. This means having a good theoretical and working understanding of different methodological approaches and techniques, and being able to select and construct methods that are appropriate to the project in hand. Where necessary it also means drawing on other sources of expertise; for instance while I am comfortable with manipulating and interpreting numerical data I am not a statistician, and have brought in, or persuaded the client to bring in, additional resources when statistical analyses have been needed. Overall this approach is again essentially a form of bricolage, making best use of the resources and opportunities that are appropriate in the context, and it is the opposite of taking standard methodologies and applying them according to procedural rules regardless of context.

Related to this is an observation about textbook descriptions of research and development methodologies, whether for instance Checkland's original exposition of soft systems methodology, Glaser and Strauss's work on grounded theory, Kincheloe's description of bricolage, or formalised processes for applying Goldratt's Theory of Constraints. From the perspective of drawing on these methodologies in diverse and messy practice situations, descriptions are typically overformalised and too rigid to apply optimally in context. This doesn't mean that the descriptions are not valid – more formal expositions have value in large-scale, well-structured projects as well as to some extent in establishing academic credibility – but that attempting to follow them in every situation is not a recipe for good practice. A more appropriate and effective approach is to start from a transdisciplinary or situational perspective and build a methodology around the needs of the practice situation, drawing on the theory that is relevant and developing methods and interventions that fit the context.

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The impact of COVID-19 on the working environment of organisations

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The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared on 30th January 2020 that the outbreak of COVID-19 was an international public health emergency (WHO, 2020). Governments all over the world introduced lockdowns of all non-essential services. In the African continent COVID-19 lockdown began in April 2020 (Department of Health, 2020), while in Europe lockdown began in March 2020 (Tusl *et al.,* 2021). Worldwide, the impact of lockdown contributed to mental ill-health with social isolation and conflicting messages from governments being the leading contributory factors (Elmer *et al.,* 2020). As a result, the working environment of organisations faced rapid and drastic changes. For example, employees that commuted to the office were suddenly required to work-from-home, many employees were furloughed and essential services, such as healthcare and supermarkets,

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were faced with a rapid increase for their services (Koh and Goh, 2020). The evidence has indicated that COVID-19 contributed to a deterioration of working conditions and employees began to report more problems of mental health, which included anxiety, stress, depression and musculoskeletal health problems because their workstation at home was not set-up ergonomically (Ramani *et al.,* 2021; Turolla *et al.,* 2020). According to Kramer and Kramer (2020) the biggest fear amongst the working population as result of the pandemic was losing their job and thus their income.

This article will review the impact of COVID-19 on the working environment of organisations by critically analysing the following factors:

(a) Employee engagement and recruitment;

(b) Talent management; and

(c) Organisational culture and employees.

(a) Employee engagement and recruitment

Organisations were required to purchase and develop more robust communications systems to deal with their teams working remotely, they had to find ways to show more instant appreciation, ensure that the implementation of procedures and policies were applied more flexibility, and a new virtual team had to be created with all employees to undertake online team activities (Nair, 2020). One of the main engagement dimensions that organisations had to take into consideration was the engagement of employees with their families and how their employees needed to keep their children entertained and home-schooled while they worked from home during the lockdown (Sarkar, 2020). According to Goswami (2020) organisations that kept their employees engaged during lockdown reported that their

employees were more motivated and positive because their fears were allayed. Some of the ways organisations ensured their employees remained engaged included weekly discussion sessions, team meet-ups on video conferencing systems for special occasions and lunch, virtual competitions and challenges, online training and courses, book club discussions and virtual exercise classes (Goswami, 2020). According to Dutta (2020) organisations that were quick to create engagement digitally during the first period of lockdown saw the incessant growth of their employees professionally while empowering them digitally for the future. In addition, Singh (2020) reported that when an organisation provides significant opportunities for growth, employees are more motivated and show increased commitment for their organisation. Goyal *et al.* (2020) highlighted numerous issues that employees had to face during the tough period of the pandemic and how organisations needed to address these issues. This paper suggested that organisations must respond to the increasing stress and anxiety levels of their employees and should create an open dialogue with clear channels of communication so that employees feel comfortable to step forward with problems they may be grappling with (Goyal *et al.* 2020). According to Anand (2020) organisations needed to show greater acknowledgement, recognition and acknowledgement when employees were isolating at home during the period of lockdown. Examples of this include allowing employees to interact and play with their children, undertake chores in the household, and take time to prepare meals (Anand, 2020). Nair (2020) highlighted that during the pandemic organisations needed to change their communication structures to more constant video messaging from the leaders so that a sense of belonging was maintained even if their employees were working remotely. With regards to this concept of feeling a sense of belonging to the organisation while working, Bhardwaj (2020) discussed various activities that organisations have undertaken during the pandemic to ensure that employees

maintained that sense of belonging to the organisation while working remotely, such as taking a home selfie or posting pictures of a pet, virtual 'know your leaders' and general knowledge quizzes and virtual hidden talent competitions. Metts (2020) advocated for organisations to commit to plans of communication to keep morale high and employees connected and engaged with each other. Communication was identified as an important feature that had to be adapted because of COVID-19. Fallon (2020) advocated for leaders to set an example by making regular and frequent contact with employees so that they remained engaged and to ensure that these interactions were not just work focussed but also friendly and social by asking the employees about how they were getting on with their work and life. Numerous organisations have developed creative and innovated practices to ensure employee engagement as they begin to experience the impact of COVID-19. For example, Amway revised their medical aid provision to take care of the costs of treatment for COVID-19; Coca Cola Beverages developed an online programme that allowed for the engagement of employees, their colleagues and their families; and McDonald's developed electronic learning training modules for use on phone learning platform applications so that employees could undergo training while in lockdown (Hasan, 2020).

Employee recruitment practices were also affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Virtual interviews became the new normal (Mwita, 2020). This provided an opportunity for organisations because interviews could be more easily scheduled than face-to-face interviews, which saved both time and money for both the organisation and applicant (Mwita, 2020). The work location was no longer a deciding factor to find the perfect hire because organisations could adopt flexible working arrangements and therefore have access to a much wider pool of applicants (Mujtaba, 2022). Some of the challenges faced by less

established organisations was that the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic made applicants wary of applying to them because they were deemed to be high-risk, and they preferred to look for employment in more stable organisations (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020). As organisations began to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and began to recruit again, they had to offer more relevant benefits such as flexible working, generous salary and enhanced sickness pay, occupational health and wellbeing packages because they could no longer rely on recruiting employees with the perks of a nice office with a good view or an onsite gym or recreation room (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020).

(b) Talent management

The world economy has reduced substantially because of COVID-19. In many organisations worldwide there have been layoffs and freezes in the hiring process. According to McBride and Cannon (2020) organisations that were historically viewed as offering safe and secure employment, such as marketing companies, experienced layoffs during COVID-19. Wauters (2020) reported that in Europe and the United Kingdom, there were approximately 38% recruitment freezes. Those employees that were fortunate not to lose their jobs faced reductions or freezes in pay and many had their bonuses cancelled (Ferry, 2020). The pandemic changed the way in which work was done. McKinsey (2020) reported that by May 2020, virtual working became the norm with about 76% of organisations requiring their employees to work remotely. During this period the physical resources and equipment that employees were used to having access to when in the office were no longer available (Fana *et al.,* 2020). Furthermore, with remote working, interpersonal communications were less spontaneous, there was a lack of support and feedback from leaders, and a change to the boundaries of professional and personal life, which made worse the levels of burnout and

stress experienced by employees (Brenan, 2020). Layoffs and freezes in hiring were challenges that organisation were already experiencing pre-COVID-19, however, these were made worse by COVID-19.

The principles and theory of performance management can be used by organisations amid a difficult time such as COVID-19. The principles and theory of performance management can assist organisations with the challenges due to talent management brought on by the pandemic. The definition of performance management is "a continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing the performance of individuals and workgroups and aligning performance with the strategic goals of the organisation" (Aguinis, 2019, p. 8). Thus, the management of performance can assist employees to remain committed, motivated and competent, while helping organisations to be clear on their goals, understand the performance of their employees, and to assist them with making decisions that are fairer (Aguinis, 2019). If no system exists to manage employee performance then the organisation will not be able to make equitable and fair decisions with regards to promotions, pay increases, bonuses and layoffs (Kakkar *et al.,* 2020). COVID-19 has revealed that numerous organisations have not kept pace with the latest systems to manage performance but have developed systems that only appraise the performance of their employees (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021a). Kakkar *et al.* (2020) reported that investment in performance management systems is often limited because the multiple value and purpose of the system is largely overlooked. The value and purpose of the performance management systems goes beyond the typical administrative functions such as personnel decisions, salary and promotions, it also provides critical functions that help organisations reach their goals. According to Farndale *et al.* (2019) these include being able to reinforce and communicate

strategic priorities, aid the development of employee development, maintain and plan a quality workforce, and collate information that can aid in making decisions. Therefore, if performance management systems are implemented it can not only support organisations inform the challenges that talent management posed during the COVID-19 pandemic it can also assist organisations to be more productive when the pandemic is over.

Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2021b) proposed the following recommendations to assist organisations to management their talent which has been impacted by COVID-19:

i.   Understand that monitoring employee behaviours and results are not going to be easy to observe and measure and to accept the fact that there is going to be different ways of doing the same job.

ii.   Consider non-traditional ways of measuring performance such as an adaptive performance measure so that employees who adapt to the everchanging crisis are rewarded and which is critical to ensure that the organisation survives the pandemic.

iii. Have 'stay' interviews with top performers so that their talent is retained. This will assist the organisation to maintain a competitive advantage during the pandemic because these top performers make a significantly more impactful contribution.

iv.   Introduce a performance management system that provides a continual feedback and communication loop between employers and employees. This helps to ensure that employees become less defensive when poor performance feedback is provided.

(c) Organisational culture and employees

This section is grouped into themes following a critical synthesis of the literature.

(a) Moving away from the past ways of working

In pre-COVID-19 times organisations were in the process of embracing technology within the workplace, however with the crisis of COVID-19 these plans were expedited to deal with the circumstances of lockdown. The role of automation was one such change that created opportunities for organisations to rethink their business strategies and to determine what future job roles will look like (Deloitte, 2020). According to Forbes (2020) these new job roles should take into consideration the needs of the workplace, and the amount of productivity and performance that is required, and to use this information to ascertain the type and level of automation that is needed. Most organisations at present are looking at moving from a physical contact business to a remote approach with some physical contact. This approach is not necessarily supported by all employees as some would like to work physically in the organisation, some would prefer to work fully remote, and others prefer a hybrid approach (Chetty, 2021). In this regard, Miller (2020) does caution organisations to resist any temptation to go back to previous ways of working that are no longer suitable for the current work climate and to avoid making mistakes of the past. To embrace the digital world of work and to build new processes it is important for the organisation to adequately invest and prepare the workforce for the incoming changes. According to the Harvard Business Review (2020) employees need to have proper training sessions with the implementation of any new digital system and that new work processes should be designed in such a way that differences in remote work and in-person work are minimised. This new way of working will also require organisations to evaluate how they motivate and reward

their employees and how they measure their productivity and support their career growth (Harvard Business Review, 2020).

(b) Redesigning the workplace

To prepare for the post-COVID workplace, organisations must reassess the work that needs to be done and the location at which it can be performed. It is therefore inevitable that a redesign of the workplace is a priority. Pre-COVID workplaces have only considered basic redesigns, such as rooms for meetings, confidential cubicles and spaces and communal areas, with almost no consideration to the needs of the employee (Gill, 2019). However, in a world of COVID-19 organisations need to consider different types of workplace designs to incorporate both onsite and remote working (Rico and Cabrer-Borras, 2020). For example, if an organisation is working on a very collaborate project, then space in the office should be provided for meetings, while on the other hand, if the work can be performed remotely then the organisation would not require significant office space. In the latter situation, Rozman and Strukeli (2020) proposed that with remote working the organisation can focus on supporting their employees with setting up an office in their home or even have local offices set-up near to the location of their employees. According to the World Economic Forum (2020) the criteria for redesigning the workplace need to be based on safety, with the focus on social distancing with onsite working and safety and occupational health regulations. As the COVID-19 rates of infection begin to ease, only part of the workforce will physically return to the office, and the consequence of this is that office rent and costs related to maintaining the office will also decrease as organisations reduce the amount of space needed to manage their business. Mikusova and Horvathova (2019) reported that organisations that go fully remote will see significant cost reductions in all their office costs.

Therefore, the redesigning of the workplace, catalysed by COVID-19, brings benefits not only to employees but also to the organisation by reducing real estate costs.

(c) The use of technology

Organisations must take the relevant precautions to ensure that they do not spend beyond their budget during COVID-19 but ensure that costs for technology to maintain digitalisation and associated costs for cybersecurity are protected (Ting *et al.,* 2020). Post-pandemic, many organisations will retain the use of technological working which many employees report allows them the flexibility to work remotely which help to facilitate their feelings of health and wellbeing (Chetty, 2022). Prior to COVID-19 many organisations had restrictive practices and controls over the use of technology, however, post COVID-19 this created an opportunity to re-evaluate the technological processes and protocols and performance management systems. The use of technology in the workplace provides an opportunity for organisations and their employees to be agile in their interactions. For instance, technology allows employees to work from home and those with musculoskeletal mobility issues, childcare responsibilities and/or having to take care of elderly parents do not have to contemplate leaving their jobs (Bouziri *et al.,* 2020), and the re-evaluation of the technological processes and protocols and performance management systems will allow organisations to reset how productivity is measured when employees work in the office and when they are working remotely (Garfin, 2020). Therefore, regarding the use of technology, regardless of the usage level of the organisation, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to engage with it. With the introduction of new technology in the workplace initial problems and challenges are also happen. Ting *et al.* (2020) reported these as having connectivity issues or employees having limited access or an overload of the network. Both

the organisation and their employees must boost or upgrade their existing telecommunication infrastructure to boost the connectivity of the interfaces of the users which can support remote working (Ting *et al.,* 2020). Furthermore, the use of technology and its impact on remote working has supported many organisations survive the COVID-19 pandemic. For employees, it had ensured that connection, productivity and collaboration with the workplace were maintained which contributed to feelings of job security and health and wellbeing (Garfin, 2020).

(d) Having a digital strategy

COVID-19 has required organisations to rethink their digital strategy. In European countries the process of digitisation has already began while in Southern Africa, the homeland of the author, many organisations are yet to begin. The implementation of technology due to the pandemic has been successful in several countries despite the short time frame in which remote working had to be introduced and employees had to be trained in digital networking platforms. According to Whitelaw *et al.* (2020) organisations that had a significant amount of digital working pre-COVID-19 were in a much better position during the pandemic than organisations that were non-digitalised. Thus, the technology gaps and inefficient infrastructures within organisations were surfaced because of COVID-19. Fortunately, this created a catalyst for organisations to realise the need for a digital strategy, not just for COVID-19, but for situations that may arise in the future that are unforeseen. Whitelaw *et al.* (2020) proposed the following digital strategies for organisations to consider: (a) documents in paper could be digitised; (b) 5G broadband; (c) use of artificial intelligence; (d) virtual reality; and (e) quantum computing. However, Gabryelczyk (2020) noted that when changing or introducing a new strategy, it is important to consider organisational culture so

that there is an acceptance and collaboration amongst employees with the new strategy.

For the digital strategy to be successful it will require senior leaders to analyse the digital

needs of the organisation in relation to their business market needs and balance these with

the infrastructure and training requirements of their employees. Furthermore, the

development of a digital strategy post COVID-19 will serve as a benchmark when

organisations must respond to future business challenges. According to Gabryelczyk (2020)

from a change management viewpoint any initiative of transformation, which in this case is

the development of a digital strategy roadmap, is more likely to be successful if

organisational culture together with the viewpoints of management and employees are

considered so that ultimately the initiative of transformation will be accepted more willingly

by all stakeholders, and it can be adapted more successfully in the workplace.

(e) A 'new' workplace and hybrid working

Initially organisations were reluctant to allow their staff to work remotely, however because

of COVID-19 employees worldwide had to work and stay at home. Before COVID-19,

organisations were of the mindset that employees could be more productive when working

on-site and many organisations competed for office spaces in prime areas usually in the city

centres (Wang *et al.,* 2021). The rationale was that it would attract the top talent through

welcoming and collaborative office designs (Wang *et al.,* 2021). As governments all over the

world begin to reduce COVID-19 restrictions and people must now start living with the virus,

organisations had to also start thinking about what models of work would work best for

their business and their employees. Jobs traditionally thought of as never being able to be

done from home, such as customer care and insurance brokering, were able to demonstrate

that operations could be carried out effectively remotely (Bonacini *et al.,* 2020). According

to Wang *et al.* (2021) organisations must have a clear understanding of the concept of remote working. Bonacini *et al.* (2020) reported that organisations that forced employees back to the office as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted resulted in large numbers of resignations. Bhardwaj (2020) proposed that a hybrid working model whereby employees could work partially from home and partially onsite appeared to be the most preferred model. This model is preferred because it blends the benefits of being onsite such as physical contact and interactions amongst employees combined with the flexibility of working from home (Bhardwaj, 2020). Different organisations have been impacted differently because of COVID-19 and the process of creating a 'new' workplace is an ongoing process. Brenan (2020) proposed that it is important for organisations, as they try out different ways of working, to ensure that employees feel productive, engaged and a sense of happiness during the journey of change. This is important because Brenan (2020) pointed out that during the process of experimenting with new models of working, other ways of working start to be discovered many of which have not even been conceptualised or reported previously.

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Autoethnographic inquiry of professional identity within the occupational safety and health profession: A reflection on undertaking a professional doctorate

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This article explores key aspects of my professional doctorate (DProf) that focused on the construction of my professional identity as an occupational safety and health professional, using autoethnographic inquiry.

It promotes the use of the portfolio as part of the assessment for professional doctorates, and other further and higher education qualifications. The article investigates how, using autoethnography, this can be used as part of the research process.

It concludes with my reflections on how undertaking a DProf has been beneficial regarding the redefining of, and the construction of, my own professional identity.

Keywords: Professional identity; autoethnography; occupational safety and health; professional doctorate; portfolio

Definition: Professional identity is the ongoing critical reflection of the sum of the professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within their community of practice.

Introduction

In 2021, I completed my professional doctorate (DProf) (Backhouse, 2021b, 2021d, 2021e). In this paper I will explore the meaning of professional identity within the occupational safety and health (OSH) profession, using the lens of autoethnography based upon my

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findings in my DProf and includes my reflections of completing a DProf. I will also reflect on my doctoral journey – asking the question, was it worth it?

This paper critically reflects upon the benefits of an insider researcher undertaking Higher Education (Mills and Stewart, in Chhabra, 2020, pp. 437–441), and in doing so I will describe how developing a portfolio can be used as reflective practice.

Rationale for undertaking a professional doctorate

In 2002 I entered the occupational safety and health (OSH) profession as a second career, leaving behind my first role as an accounts manager of an engineering company. I soon undertook a wide range of professional and academic qualifications.

The motivation for undertaking my professional doctorate was four-fold: 1) personal achievement being my primary focus – like other doctoral candidates this also incorporated the desire to be called doctor, and hopefully resulting in further career progression [to become an independent scholar] (Fulton et al., 2013, p. 5); 2) to contribute to my community of practice, i.e., to undertake a critical review of the role of Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in supporting its members' professional development and improving their membership benefits; 3) like Caldwell (2022), I wanted to continue my education after gaining two post-graduate degrees (Backhouse, 2015a), and 4) gain credibility within my profession.

The professional doctorate, at Sunderland University, draws together professional practice with relevant academic theory, and applies this to the solution of a real workplace problem. In 2021 I submitted my 55,000-word thesis and 30,000-word portfolio and successfully defended my thesis: A Critical Review of the Role of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health in Supporting their Members' Professional Development (Backhouse, 2021b), through an oral examination (*viva voce)*.
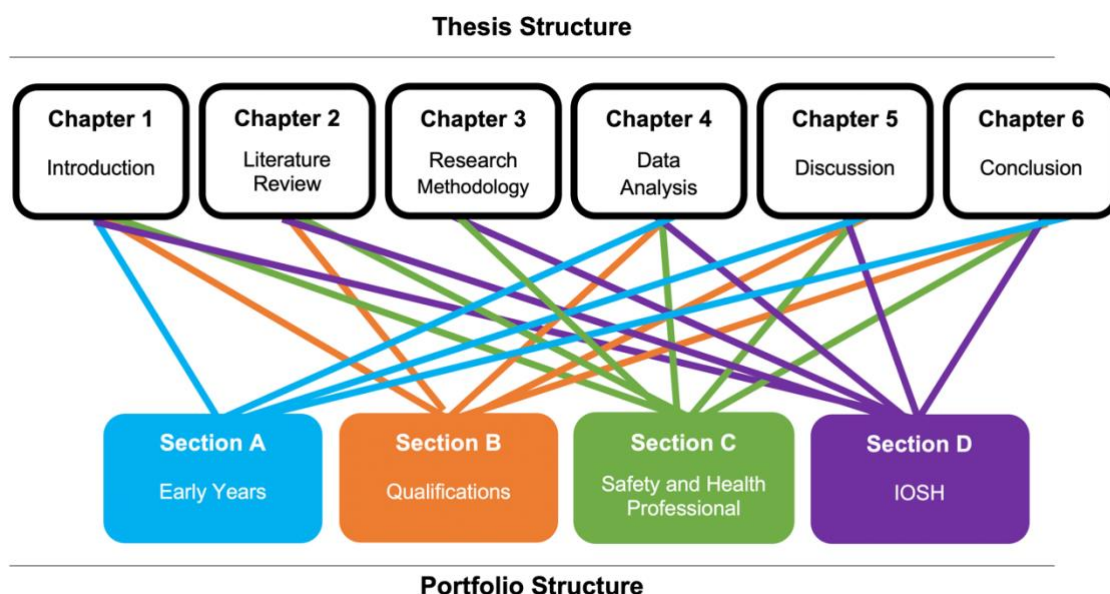
Figure 1: Structural linkages between Thesis and Portfolio

IOSH

IOSH is the largest professional body, and only chartered membership body for OSH professionals, with circa 49,000 members worldwide. The professional body was formed in 1945 as the Institution of Industrial Safety Officers (IISO), gaining charitable status in 1962. IISO was renamed to Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in 1981 and was awarded a Royal Charter in 2002 (see https://iosh.com for further details). I am a typical member – male over 40; based in the UK. I joined the profession following a previous career in accountancy. I am currently working, predominantly, in the private sector. I have been a member of IOSH for over 15 years. I am an atypical member – I am a self-employed consultant/trainer/author, Chartered Fellow, and have been volunteering with a local branch for over 10-years.

Professional identity

During my professional doctorate I discovered that, even though the OSH professionals' role has evolved over the last 40 years, there has been limited research into their professional

identity (Bell, 2018; Provan, 2018).   Therefore, the literature review, within my thesis, critically explored the theoretical understanding of professional identity in the context of the safety and health profession (Backhouse, 2021a), and my portfolio provided a personal narrative which I used in the construction of my own professional identity.

The term professional identity has been used, within this paper, to encompass the wide range of titles within the broader academic literature; for example, 'occupation identity' (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011), 'career identity' (Meijers, 1998, in Neary, 2014), 'work identity' (Illeris, 2014a, in Partington, 2017) and 'professional identity' (Provan et al., 2018) are all used interchangeably (Hughes, 2013; S. J. Schwartz et al., 2011).

The most common definition of professional identity has been attributed to Schein (1978) and Ibarra (1999) as 'one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences'.   This definition is found in a wide range of academic literature (cf Sanders, 2011; Shaw, 2016; Provan et al., 2018). During the taught stage of the professional doctorate, I was reminded not to take anything I read at face value, and I was to refer to the source documents where possible. Therefore, I purchased Schein's book, *Career dynamics: matching individual and organisational needs*, to discover the quote was not there. Schein (1978) makes no direct reference to professional identity, rather he refers to three self-concepts he labelled as career anchors. He posits that these are continually evolving through actual work experience. They are an interaction between the individual and the work environment, i.e., talents and abilities (based on actual successes in a variety of work settings); motives and needs (based on opportunities for self-tests and self-diagnosis in real situations and on feedback from others); and attitudes and values (based on actual encounters between the self and the norms and values of the employing organisation and work setting) (Schein, 1978, pp. 125–126).

> *Career anchors reflect the underlying needs and motives which the person*
> *brings into adulthood, but they also reflect the person's values and, most*
> *important, discovered talents. By definition, there cannot be an anchor until*

there has been work experience, even though motives and values may already be present from earlier experience … The career anchor is a learned part of the self-image, which combines self-perceived motives, values, and talents. What one learns is not only a function of what one brings to the work situation but also reflects the opportunities provided and the feedback obtained. Consequently, the anchor is determined to some degree by actual experiences, not only by the talents and motives latent in the person (Schein, 1978, p. 171)
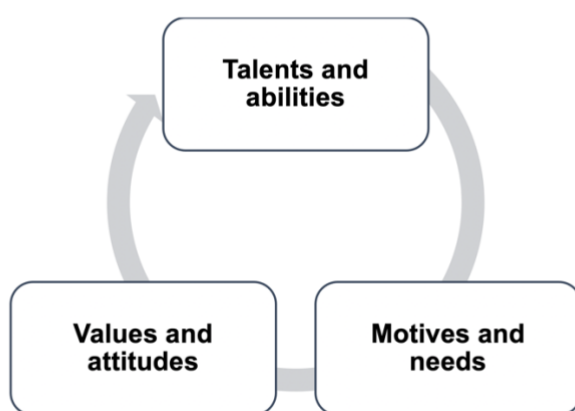

Figure 2: Self-concept career anchors of professional identity (based on Schein, 1978).

During my professional doctorate I constructed the following definition of professional identity, which honoured the original concept by Schein (1978), and provides a more accessible definition within the body of knowledge and for professionals

An ongoing critical reflection of the sum of the professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within their community of practice (Backhouse, 2021b).

Research Approach

As the researcher I was aware how my research would be influenced by my approach (Watson, 2014, p. 50), which was based on my ontological assumptions which gave rise to my epistemological assumptions which, in turn, had methodological implications for the choice of particular data collection techniques adopted (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Like

Gregersen (2019), the terms ontology and epistemology were first introduced to my lexicon during the first year of the professional doctorate programme (Hayes et al., 2019).

Within the context of OSH research, different paradigms are held. While it is not always the case that these research approaches are stated (see Ahmad et al., 2017; Crawford et al., 2017; İnan et al., 2017), there are examples when a positivist [realist] approach is adopted; for example, measurement of workplace parameters such as accident rates or levels of exposure to hazardous agents; or a subjectivist [relativist] approach is adopted; for example, addressing ethical dilemmas or evaluating issues arising in practice (Lundy, 2013, pp. 58–59).

Since the safety and health profession crosses many disciplines, this is consistent with the view that medical sciences have tended to adopt a positivist or post-positivist paradigm and in contrast, social sciences often adopt a social constructivist paradigm (Haigh et al., 2019). During my studies I discovered that a critical realist approach was used within safety and health research (Bell, 2018) and has become a more accepted social science (Lipscomb, 2011; Price & Martin, 2018). I identified with a critical realism world view (Wright, 2014) as a research approach (seeing the benefits from both a realist and relativist perspective).

Research Methodology

While surveys have been used successfully in safety and health research (Bohalteanu, 2016), there has been limited use of autoethnographic inquiry except being used to appraise vignettes within a doctoral thesis (Bell, 2018). It was hoped that my thesis would engage and encourage other OSH professionals and researchers to build upon this research method within their respected fields. Autoethnography has been defined as

[A]n approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis et al., 2011).

Walton (2020) posits that traditions of social investigation developed by pioneering anthropologists such as Franz Boas (1858–1942) and Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942) incorporate autoethnography (Walton, 2020, cited in Smith, 2020, p. 6). There are also examples of qualitative sociological research that include autoethnographic elements dating back to the 1920s (Anderson, 2006, p. 376). The term autoethnography was, however, first referenced by anthropologist Heider (1975). Goldschmidt argued that anthropologists should engage with autoethnography by suggesting that "all ethnography, is self-ethnography" (1977, p. 294). An early example of autoethnography being applied to the writings of anthropologists conducting and writing ethnographies of their people was made by Hayano (1979, pp. 99–103). It was not until the 1990s that autoethnography became a method of choice for using personal experience and reflexivity [rigorous self-reflection] to examine cultural experiences (Adams et al., 2017).

There are different autoethnographic approaches: indigenous/native ethnographies; narrative ethnographies; reflexive, dyadic interviews; reflexive ethnographies; layered accounts; interactive interviews; community autoethnographies; co-constructed narratives; and personal narratives (Ellis et al., 2011). The use of autoethnographic research and reflexive accounts as a methodology is a legitimate doctoral methodology (Armstrong, 2015; Bartlett, 2015; Gregersen, 2019) and has been viewed as an authentic methodology within social science research (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2013; Ellis et al., 2011). There are advantages and challenges with using autoethnography, which are summarised by Costello et al. (2016).

Table 1: advantages and challenges with the use of using autoethnography (adapted from Costello et al., 2016).

Advantages	Challenges
(1) offers new perspective; (2) greater depth of insight, and (3) creates accessibility.	(1) analytical rigour; (2) difficult to evaluate, and (3) introduces ethical changes.

This authentic methodology is demonstrated in the academic literature and provides opportunities to reflect on one's professional identity through seeing it from someone else's perspective; for example, within teaching (Yazan, 2019); academia (Grant, 2019); OSH (Zolnikov, 2018); and business (Clarke et al., 2019). Within professional doctorate programmes that require a portfolio this provides an opportunity that is currently underutilised.

The use of a portfolio is becoming increasingly common as a means of assessment for professional doctorates (Fulton et al., 2013, p. 96). For a professional doctorate, the portfolio assessment is a valid approach to demonstrating advanced scholarship, particularly in the development of an autoethnographic evaluation (Holgate & Sambell, 2020, p. 57). Autoethnography within the professional doctorate context is argued to be an excellent way of linking theory to the practical situation (Hayes & Fulton, 2014).

Nevertheless, there is not a one-size-fits-all instruction manual on how to 'do' autoethnography (Gregersen, 2019, p. 80). These different approaches broadly fall into two types of autoethnography within qualitative research, that of 1) evocative autoethnography and 2) analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006).

The focus of the evocative autoethnographers' aim is to seek narrative fidelity; it creates an emotional resonance with the reader, drawing upon postmodern sensibilities. Evocative autoethnography requires considerable narrative and expressive skills—exemplified in well-

crafted prose, poetry, and performances. It takes the reader into the depths of personal feeling, leading us to be emotionally moved and sympathetically understanding (Anderson, 2006). Carolyn Ellis sets out the criteria of the steps she takes when evaluating evocative ethnographies, which she aligns to narrative autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). While not an exclusive list it appears that the key aspects she views as being essential to evocative pieces must include the following five features 1) engaging - requiring the reader to stop frequently to think about details of their experience, their memories or feelings; 2) educational - with regards to social life, social process, the experience of others, the author's own experience, the readers own life; 3) entertaining - with a developed plot, having a sense of verisimilitude [i.e., the appearance of being true or real]; 4) exposing - of the author's portrayal of themselves; and 5) [being] ethically sound - getting relevant permissions if others are identifiable within the narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In contrast, Anderson (2006) posits that the focus of the analytic autoethnographers' account is grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it. They will draw upon traditional realist epistemological assumptions. He argues analytic autoethnography requires following five features 1) complete member researcher status; 2) analytic reflexivity; 3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self; 4) dialogue with informants beyond the self; and 5) commitment to theoretical analysis. These are described in the table below. The purpose of analytic autoethnography is not merely to document a personal experience, but to provide

an 'insider's perspective', or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader – as in evocative autoethnography. Instead, the defining characteristic of analytic social science is to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves (Anderson, 2006, pp. 386–387).

Table 2: Identifying as an analytic autoethnographer (adapted from Anderson, 2006)

Features	Description
(1) Complete member researcher status	(1) I have been actively involved with the safety profession for over 20 years.
(2) Analytic reflexivity	(2) The data presented is situated within my professional experience and sense-making.
(3) Narrative visibility of the researcher's self	(3) My visibility within IOSH has included representing the local IOSH branch for over ten years, speaking at local events and interviewing prospective chartered members.
(4) Dialogue with informants beyond the self	(4) I have been able to present on academic presentations/ posters (Backhouse, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2018c). Data presented provides a self-narrative of analytic autoethnography to analyse safety professionals' professional identity formation.
(5) Commitment to theoretical analysis	(5) My self-narrative validity was founded by the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using the self-concept career anchors of professional identity (based on Schein, 1978).

The reflexive nature of autoethnography provides an opportunity for the autoethnographer to critically reflect upon their various identities (S. H. Schwartz, 2012), which can be undertaken in various forms, for example, poetry can be used through the lens of autoethnography to make reflections and analyses of the situations in the authors constructed reality (Blinne, 2010, cited in Robinson, 2017, p. 2).

Dewey, who was among the first to write about reflective practice, (1933, in Cohen et al., 2018) posits that reflection in its most basic sense can be seen as learning from experiences (p. 60).   Schön (1983), fifty years later, introduced concepts such as reflection-on-action, i.e., occurring after the event - thinking about what happened, what was seen and whether there was anything that would change next time that could have changed the outcome - and reflection-in-action, i.e., concerned with reflecting on practice while it is happening (Paterson & Chapman, 2013). Schön (1983) suggested that when a practitioner reflects-in and -on his practice, the possible objects of his reflection are varied [including] tacit norms, patterns of behaviour, and on the feeling for a situation which has led them to adopt a particular course of action, that when completed is constructed within a larger institutional context (1983, p. 62). These reflections will shape the practitioner's professional identity. In comparison, the adoption of critical reflective practice differs between sectors/professions and the seniority of the person involved (Mapletoft, 2019, p. 46). The process of reflexivity is standard within many professions as part of their continual professional development (Paterson & Chapman, 2013); for example, as an IOSH member I will write up autobiographical accounts (vignettes) of activities/critical incidents (using a Plan – Do – Reflect – Review model) (IOSH, 2020). This approach is broadly based on the Demin Cycle (Schmidt, 2019). Schön (1983) argues that a researchers' role is distinct from, and usually considered superior to, the practitioner's role (1983, p. 26). Therefore, I [as the researcher] should engage in rigorous self-reflection; typically referred to as "reflexivity" (Adams et al., 2017). It enables growth in capacity to understand the significance of the knowledge, feelings, and values (Attia & Edge, 2017). This process provides them with a set of transferable skills and transcribing the professional developmental journey within a portfolio (Watson, 2014, p. 62).

A professional doctorate programme frequently sees the researcher as an insider (Mapletoft, 2019). It is increasingly common for researchers to carry out a study directly concerned with the setting in which they work (Robson, 2002, p. 382), as is the case with this Professional Doctorate undertaken from an insider researcher perspective.   As a member of IOSH, I follow their Code of Conduct (IOSH, 2013), which directs me as a

professional and researcher. As an established trust is the foundation upon which an insider researcher constructs their research (Attia & Edge, 2017).

Historically, insider research was undertaken in ethnographic studies in anthropology and sociology (Hellawell, 2006, in Fleming, 2018). Building upon this tradition, an autoethnographic analytic inquiry requires that the insider researcher approach has a complete member researcher status (Anderson, 2006). Using insider knowledge of cultural experience, it is possible to provide aspects of cultural life that other researchers may not know; however, this does not imply that an autoethnographer can articulate more truthful or more accurate knowledge than outsiders (Adams et al., 2017).

While the definition attributed to Schein (1978) and Ibarra (1999) as 'one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences', is erroneous I, therefore, analysed my own professional identity using three prescribed themes of self-concept career anchors (based on Schein, 1978):

1. Competency (talents and abilities)

2. Motives (motives and needs)

3. Values (values and attitudes)

This formed the construction of the following definition of professional identity.

An ongoing critical reflection of the sum of the professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within their community of practice (Backhouse, 2021b).

Autoethnography (as a method)

Autoethnography used my personal experiences to expand the understanding of social phenomena (Chang, 2013, p. 108) of being a member and volunteer of IOSH. I examined my professional identity journey as a safety and health professional member and volunteer of IOSH through the lens of an autoethnographic inquiry.

The purposes of autoethnography, at least from the social science perspective, is in-part telling personal narratives, but to expand the understanding of social realities through the lens of personal experiences (Chang, 2013). There is a variety of ways to gather data; for example, recalling [bringing out memories about critical events, people, places, behaviours, talks, thoughts, collecting artefacts and documents, interviewing others, analysing self, observing self] and reflecting on issues about the research topic (ibid). Therefore, the compiling of my portfolio provided an opportunity during the professional doctorate to assemble my autoethnographic data.

Like Lee (2019), I had not kept a journal as autoethnographers commonly do. Instead, my narrative's starting point was to assemble an abundance of external data *(Lee, 2019, p. 4)*. As with other autoethnographic researchers my starting point was my Curriculum Vitae [Résumé] (Bell, 2018; Costello et al., 2016; Humphreys, 2005). These contributions and reflections on my contributions, have been self-constructed out of memories; for example, I have critically reflected on crucial events of my involvement with IOSH reflecting on how this has shaped my professional identity formation and development (Campbell, 2018). Through my reflective practice, I have become the subject of my own research (Caldwell, 2019), it has guided me to a critical reflection of my professional values, motives, and competencies; it has been an ongoing critical reflection of the sum of my professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within my community of practice. Using the vignettes within my portfolio it was possible to reflect on these real-life situations to provide opportunities to evaluate how my career has developed to date (Schein, 1978).

My journey to help me understand who I am, what I do, and why, in the context of my work, i.e., my professional identity, was part of the formation of my 55,000-word thesis and 30,000-word portfolio for my Professional Doctorate. Through my doctoral research, my autoethnographic inquiry helped me to construct my identity (Campbell, 2018) and guided me to a critical reflection of my professional values, motives, and competencies.   Within my this section of my Portfolio I examined my professional identity journey as a member of IOSH (over the last 15 years) through the lens of an autoethnography. This section documents a range of vignettes, using an analytical autoethnographic lens. I continued to embrace a reflexive first-person narrative approach (Humphreys, 2005, p. 844), i.e., through narrative autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In doing so I argue for the validity with higher education of using vignettes as it has already been demonstrated within

Professional doctorates, for example(e.g., Bell, 2018 (within safety and health); Gregersen, 2019 (within law)).

The headings and main sections of my portfolio were as follows:

SECTION A   Early Years

The first section provided background information describing how, after leaving school with two GCSE passes, I was then diagnosed with dyslexia. It chronicled my early professional career, and how I became an OSH professional.

SECTION B   Qualifications

In the second section I evaluated the main qualifications I had gained, which demonstrated my commitment to enhancing my skills, knowledge and training to enable me to continue to make a valuable contribution to the safety and health profession.

SECTION C   Safety and Health Professional

In the third section I reflected on the key contributions I have made as a self-employed safety and health professional. It documented four areas of my work

C.1   Safety and Health Consultant

C.2   Fire Risk Assessor

C.3   Qualified Teacher

C.4   Writer

SECTION D   Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

The fourth section reflected upon the key contributions I have made as a member and volunteer of IOSH [whilst coming to terms with my diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis], i.e., my community of practice. The chapter documented eleven vignettes.

D.1   Joining IOSH as a technical member TechIOSH (2005)

D.2   Gaining graduate membership GradIOSH (2008)

D.3   Joining the Tees branch committee (2010 – [2022])

D.4   Gaining chartered membership CMIOSH (2013)

D.5   Organising events and workshops

D.6   Delivering presentations and workshops

D.7   Mentoring branch members, and other safety and health professionals

D.8   Interviewing members for chartered membership (Peer Review Interviewer)

D.9   Nominating two members for presidential awards

D.10   Gaining fellowship CFIOSH (2018)

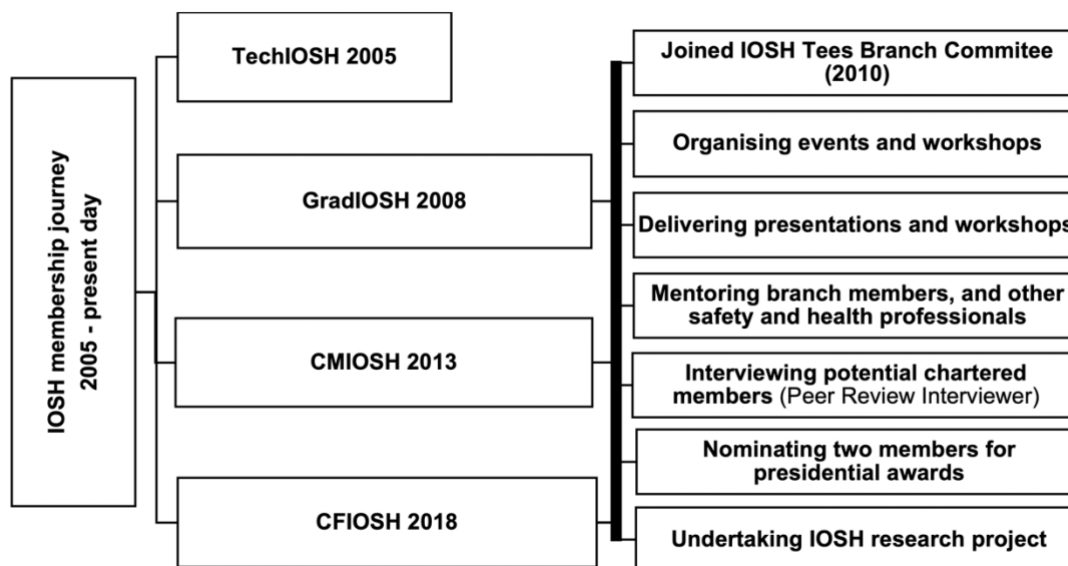D.11   Undertaking [my] profession doctorate.

Figure 3: IOSH membership journey (used in Portfolio)

I am a typical member – male over 40; based in the UK. I joined the profession following a previous career in accountancy. I am currently working, predominantly, in the private sector. I have been a member of IOSH for over 15 years. I am an atypical member – I am a self-employed consultant/trainer/author, Chartered Fellow member, and have been volunteering with a local branch for over 10-years. I would also choose to remain a member even if my job did not require it, even post-retirement.

Reflecting upon my own professional identity, through Schein's (1978) self-concept career anchors of talents/abilities (aka competency), motives/attitudes and values/needs, I am aware that IOSH has helped develop my competencies, i.e. while being a member of IOSH through gaining knowledge by attending branch events. However, the significant growth has come through the experience gained being a member of the executive, organising events, delivering presentations, mentoring, nominating members, and undertaking this research project (see **Figure 3:** IOSH membership journey). As for my values and motives, IOSH helps me achieve my social focus and personal focus.

The following are short extracts from each section of my portfolio.

In section A, I described leaving the engineering company, after I had successfully completed my National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate, in 2000.

> *The time spent at the engineering company was not pleasant; there had been times when I wanted to leave earlier than I actual did, but, on reflection, I realise it provided me with significant experience that has become invaluable to my current role as a self-employed safety and health professional. Prior to leaving the engineering company I was able to utilise my new skills to develop and implement a safety and health policy. It was days after completing this that there was a visit made by a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Inspector to the engineering company. On [examining] of the safety and health policy and our procedures he was satisfied with our workplace. This provided me with an amazing sense of achievement.*

In section B, I reflected further on my NEBOSH General Certificate.

> *In 2000, when I passed the NEBOSH General Certificate, I realised I had the capability to undertake further training.   While I may not be able to [fully] overcome my dyslexia, I realise[d] that it would not stop me gaining [my academic potential].*
>
> *...*
>
> *[It] was the first step that ultimately lead to a Masters of Research in Occupational Health, Safety and Environmental Management, helping in the acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge.*

In section C, I evaluated how part of my motivation was the support I was given in my early studies, and how this became a key aspect of my values and motives – to help people achieve their potential.

For many years my focus of consultancy work has been to have more engagement in the classrooms, i.e., providing relevant examples, etc. I am able to refer anonymously to situations my clients, and I, have encountered. I have also engaged in other consultant work; as an expert witness (Backhouse, 2020i).

> *The writing of the Expert Witness Report was possibly the most challenging work I have undertaken to date. In January 2020 I wrote my first Expert Witness Report concerning a claim for noise-induced hearing loss from Claimant's alleged exposure to noise for over 30 years in his employment with the Defendants being a commercial tyre fitter. I was required to apply my understanding of the case to various publications, including ... 'Guidelines on the diagnosis of noise-induced hearing loss for medicolegal purposes' (Coles et al., 2000). and being able to [apply my understanding to] calculate and apply the Noise Immission Level:*

$$NIL_i = (L_{EP,d})_i + 10 \log_{10} T_i \qquad (1)$$

While I did find this interesting and challenging,

> *I realised the main reason [I take on such work] was to become a better [OSH trainer]. I am a dual professional in the sense of working in the professional field so that I can teach (Davies, 2007).*

The training I received, and support, was outstanding, however at the time I was struggling with my health (MS) and took far too long to complete the Report. I hope to have another opportunity in the future to undertake such work again.

In section C4 I provided a short summary and reflection of the publications I had authored to date.   These included one journal article on manual handling (Backhouse, 2014c), 3 books published by Taylor and Francis (Backhouse, 2013b, 2018a; Backhouse & Ferrett, 2017), in addition to contributions and book sections (Backhouse, 2014a, 2014b; RMS, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017). I also discussed my role as Editor-in-Chief, then Co-editor-in-Chief, between October 2019 – July 2020, for Risk Assessment & Compliance (RAC), with regards to the 26 articles I authored, (Backhouse, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019h, 2020c, 2020e, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h, 2020k, 2020l, 2020m, 2020n, 2020o, 2020p, 2020q, 2020r, 2020s, 2020t, 2020u, 2020v, 2020w, 2020z, 2020aa, 2020ab; Backhouse & Crossland-Clarke, 2020), along with other magazine and web articles I authored (Backhouse, 2008, 2013a, 2013c, 2014e, 2014f, 2015b, 2015f, 2015g, 2016a, 2016c, 2016f, 2017a, 2020b, 2020d, 2020x, 2020ac; Backhouse & Hayward, 2015)

*As I read back the above contributions and reflect upon **who I am,** (self-employed safety and health professional) and the **work I do** as a writer, (having three books published by Routledge; contributed to six others and having written over 30 articles) I critically reflect on **why I do** this. At one point, it was the desire to become an author – perhaps naively I thought this was an achievement being dyslexic. A few years ago, I turned down the chance to write my fourth textbook. It is clear that these three books have made a contribution (see the Amazon reviews above), but this is, I believe, only at a superficial/basic level; it is not as though these textbooks appeal to a broad audience. Their scope is limited, as are the contributions to other books. Over the last three years, as I have read countless papers and textbooks, I have come to realise that their contribution is narrow and shallow. Likewise, the 30+ articles, including the peer-reviewed one, I consider to be hardly worthy of note within this portfolio individually; hence grouping all my writing together to demonstrate that the above learning outcomes evaluate their worth. I realise that I thought far more positively about my work than I ort, and this has, more probably than not, prevented me from reaching my potential. On reflection, I realise that my publications have made*

> *a positive contribution to the safety and health profession. However, I have*
> *not produced scholarly work that has added to the body of knowledge, or*
> *within my community of practice, i.e., IOSH, thus far.*

While it is suggested that the highest contributions are generated from writing textbooks or technical monographs, which add to the body of knowledge within the community of practice, (Stinchcome (1990): Reason and Rationality in Cook and Levi (eds), 1990, p. 300), I look back at my contributions and acknowledge they are limited; i.e., alone they do not provide adequate scope, and depth, for a portfolio used in a professional doctoral programme as they have limited impact within HE.

I summed up my vignettes, in part C, with the following recalled memory

> *In concluding this section, I am reminded of a piece of writing I submitted for*
> *my church's newsletter back in January this year (Backhouse, 2020a), which*
> *ended with: 'It is an honour to help hundreds of people on their journey to*
> *reach their professional potential and to be able to help safeguard peoples'*
> *health, safety and welfare; which is, arguably, an outworking of the principle*
> *of loving my neighbour (Matthew 19.19).' My aim, in my safety and health*
> *consultancy role (as with other safety and health professionals), is outward*
> *focused, and has been to prevent harm, improve workplace safety and*
> *improve culture, and aid in the development of others.*

Since my DProf, I have continued my desire to write, authoring the following (Backhouse, 2020b, 2021e, 2021c, 2022a, 2022c; University of Hull & Backhouse, 2022; University of Sunderland & Backhouse, 2021), non-scholarly work.

Sections A – C facilitated my understanding of my values, motives, competencies. Although I had considered the impact, I had made within, and beyond the OSH profession through my earlier publications it was in section D that I focused on my contributions made within my community of practice, i.e., IOSH. This section reflected on the key contributions I have made as a member and volunteer of IOSH [D1 – D11]. Gaining Chartership (CMIOSH), was not a goal I had personally set myself, but I realised, during an interview, how this was to be crucial for my future as an OSH professional.

> *I had gained TechIOSH in 2005 and GradIOSH in 2008, only as the result of gaining NEBOSH Diploma, which enabled me to become an examiner for NEBOSH - the only time I could remember ever being asked for the membership grade I held. Well, it was, until I attended an interview, Friday 13th April 2012, to become involved in course development and training work for a new client. The subsequent work enabled me to travel to Angola, and the USA, ... I felt I had answered the questions to the best of my ability, and I had given a mini-presentation that was clear and engaging. It was all going so well. As the interview was drawing to a close, the interviewer said: "Jonathan, I don't understand something from your CV." He paused and looked at me. I gave no reaction (I think). "With all this experience, I don't understand - why are you not a chartered member?" Now it was my turn to pause, caught in the headlights of his question - in my mind I was asking myself 'Why not?' 'Why should I be?' I was confused. Call it selective amnesia, but I cannot remember my answer - a babble of excuses. "Jonathan, you should be chartered. You are more than capable of becoming a chartered member." A second pause, time to focus. "Yes, you are right, thank you. I will work towards gaining my chartership, thank you." And I did! From April 2012 to August 2013, 16 months, something that I could have completed in a quarter of the time. I enrolled in the Initial Professional Development (IPD) scheme. ...I had to complete a Skills Development Portfolio (SDP) requiring selection of seven performance criteria, from five elements. It took far too long as during the IPD and SDP I suffered from bouts of ill-health, caused by my Multiple Sclerosis, ... Eventually, I was successful, and my SDP was passed.*

> *I provided enough detailed CPD activities, and it was now time for the Peer Review Interview (PRI); at which I was successful. In August 2013, over 5-years since gaining graduate membership, I was awarded chartered status.*

My Chartership has provided me with opportunities to reach my potential as an OSH professional, beyond anything I could have imagined. It has become crucial in my ongoing critical reflection of the sum of my values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within my community of practice.

Most of Part D, rightly, focused on my contributions at both a local level, i.e., Tees Branch, and national level – becoming a peer review interviewer, nominating members of presentational awards, etc.

Table 3: Events orgainsed at IOSH Tees Branch, referenced in Portfolio

Date	Event
26 January 2021	Setting up as a Health and Safety Consultant – Zoom Meeting.
15 June 2020	Covid-19 open forum – Zoom Meeting.
10 September 2019	Career Development – Workshop Teesside University.
14 May 2019	CPD – Workshop, Teesside University.
18 December 2018	Civil Court – Mock Trial, Teesside University.
5 June 2018	Asbestos Awareness – Seminar, Teesside University.
27 March 2018	Ageing Workforce Risk Assessment – Seminar, Teesside University.

Date	Event
23 January 2018	CPD – Workshop, Teesside University.
4 April 2017	Construction Management – Seminar, Teesside University.
13 September 2016	Auditing Management Systems – Seminar, Teesside University.
15 March 2016	Criminal Court – Mock Trial, Teesside University.
15 December 2015	Fire Safety – Seminar, Teesside University.
15 September 2015	Professional Development – Seminar, Teesside University.
23 June 2015	Environmental Management – Seminar, Teesside University.
4 November 2014	Visit to Hartlepool Nuclear Power Station, Teesside University.
10 June 2014	Accident Prevention – Seminar, Teesside University.
10 September 2013	Noise and Vibration – Seminar, Teesside University.
19 December 2011	Lighten the Load – Seminar, Teesside University.

I also provided detail of the key presentations I made at local branches (Backhouse, 2011, 2014d, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2015h, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e, 2016g, 2018b, 2018d, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2020j).

> *While it is true that I, and others, who attended these meetings/seminars will have gained knowledge about the topics presented, I also developed my soft skills (e.g. social, management, subjective, cognitive, and strategic skills) (Tino & Grion, in Nägele, Christof & Stalder, Barbara E., 2018, pp. 339–247) from*

> *organising [and presenting at] these numerous events. It is only through*
>
> *being a member of the IOSH Tees Branch that I have been able to organise*
>
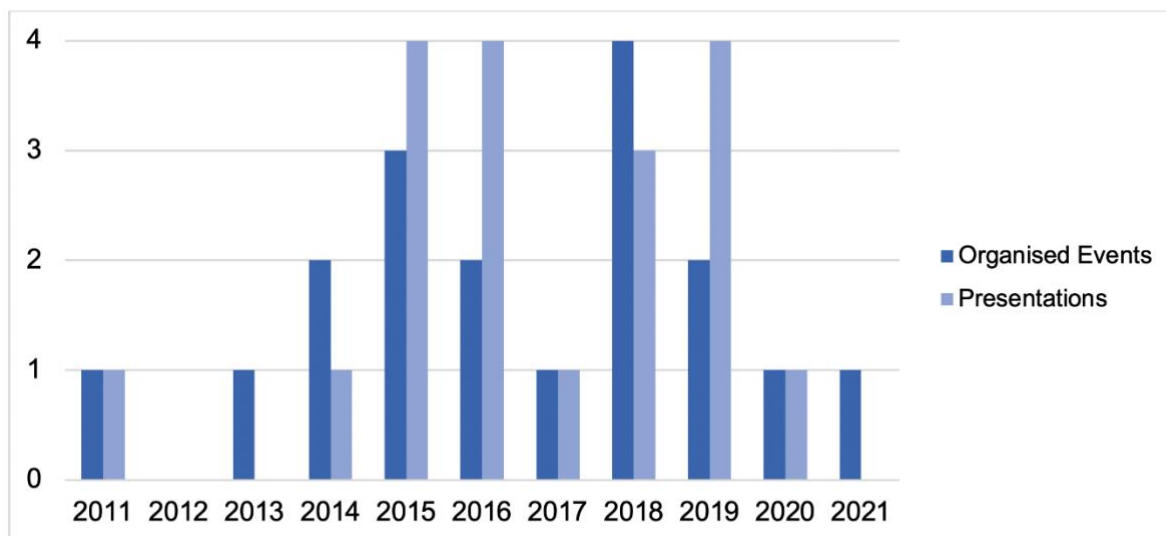> *such events and gain a wealth of experience.*

Figure 4: Organised events and presentations

After analysing my vignettes for section D, I summarised by thoughts as follows.

> *I [became] aware that IOSH has helped develop my competencies, i.e., while*
>
> *being a member of IOSH through gaining knowledge by attending branch*
>
> *events. However, the significant growth in my career has come through the*
>
> *experience gained being a member of the executive, organising events,*
>
> *delivering presentations, mentoring, nominating members, and undertaking*
>
> *[my] profession doctorate.*

Limitations

My professional doctorate addressed both the academic and pragmatic, rather than focusing on addressing a real-world project (Fulton et al., 2013; Lundy, 2013; Mapletoft, 2019; Riggs, 2014; Watson, 2014). Although this paper focuses on the redefining of, and the construction of, my own professional, it has not reflected upon the primary data source

used within my professional doctorate. The research utilised a mixed method approach, which comprised of a survey given to IOSH members (n = 159) and an autoethnographic inquiry (which has been summarised in this paper).   My professional doctorate's research aim was to address a real-world project by undertaking a critical review of the role of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in supporting its members' professional development and improving their membership benefits. It answered the research question '*What does it mean to be a member of IOSH, and how can IOSH support their members' professional development?'*. The three objectives constructed to address the research question were as follows: 1) Explore the theoretical understanding of professional identity. 2) Evaluate membership benefits provided by IOSH. 3) Examine professional identity in the context of IOSH Membership. These have been explored, evaluated, and examined within the thesis. The findings and recommendations have been forwarded to IOSH. However, the survey given to IOSH members falls outside the scope of this paper.

The biggest regrets were asking the wrong questions during the early stages of the taught part of my professional doctorate. First, "Should I start keeping a diary?" – I was told there was no need. Granted at the time I had not heard of autoethnography. Following on from the taught modules my literature review included the doctoral thesis *The lived experience of a university law clinic supervisor: an autoethnographic inquiry* by Gregersen (2019). Her thesis was instrumental in my appreciation of autoethnographic method and provided an instant regret of not composing a diary at the start. Second, "Since I am already published do I need to have some journal articles published between now and completing my DProf?" – again I was told there was no need. I agree this was not a requirement, however, the benefit to myself and, hopefully, other doctoral candidates is evident (Caldwell, 2019a; Campbell, 2018).

Discussion

Understanding more about who I am, what I do, and why has helped me to gain a deeper appreciation of the profession to which I belong. It has enabled me to realise both my potential and limitations and focus my efforts on making further contributions to the OSH profession. I have learned through my experiences, and the contributions I have made to the profession, that the areas of work I want to focus my time and effort on are those which align with my values, motives, competencies. I had initially thought that gaining a doctorate would be the ultimate goal; now I realise it is only the beginning of a new chapter.

The development of a Portfolio, using an autoethnographic lens has provided an opportunity to evaluate my values, motives, competencies within the current scope of my role as an OSH professional, and to identify the way forward. My next chapter. The primary motivation for undertaking my professional doctorate was the desire to be called doctor, and, hopefully, resulting in further career progression (Fulton et al., 2013, p. 5).   The secondary motivation was to enter a new chapter of my multi-disciplined role, i.e., within HE.

I am proud to be part of a profession that, while OSH is one of the newer professions (Belcher, 2016), it provides a significant contribution to all of humanity, and therefore would warrant a place alongside the core disciplines. Alluding to the earliest professions – law, medicines and theology – Freidson (2001) emphasises the significant contribution which they make.

> There are a few disciplines whose tasks bear on issues of widespread interest and deep concern on the part of the general population. They might be called **core disciplines**, bodies of knowledge and skill which address perennial problems that are of great importance to most of humanity (Freidson, 2001, p. 161 emphasis in quote).

Yet I am conscious that my professional status is continually evolving – I called myself, in my portfolio a dual professional (Davies, 2007) – but I am a multi-disciplinary professional, spanning both the OSH profession, teaching, and now entering higher education.   As an OSH professional I need to be aware, and keep updated with technological, economic, legislative, social and cultural changes (Brun & Loiselle, 2002, p. 510); for example, the health issues associated with nanotechnology (Canu et al., 2018; Schulte et al., 2014) and more recently COVID-19. There needs to be a state of continual professional development (see Brun and Loiselle, 2002; Schulte *et al.*, 2014; Bamber *et al.*, 2017); after all the OSH profession has evolved significantly over the past 30 years (Provan et al., 2018) and there is no signs that this will change. Caldwell writes that 'my identity has evolved during my time working in higher education' (2022, p. 1). I can corroborate her assertion - as I look over now my career I realise my values, motives, and competencies are evolving and interacting with other aspects of my identity. In the same way my work is impacted by and impacts other aspects of my life; for example, I have been prevented from working for clients due to both my Multiple Sclerosis and my dyslexia (Backhouse, 2020y); however, my dyslexia and Multiple Sclerosis are part of who I am and have not stopped me achieving my goals (Backhouse, 2015a; Backhouse & University of Hull, 2022; Backhouse & University of Sunderland, 2021).

Conclusion

In my professional doctorate, and this paper, I have attempted to define professional identity as

> *an ongoing critical reflection of the sum of my professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within my community of practice (Backhouse, 2021b).*

I have used the lens of autoethnography – providing personal and professional insight into the construction of my own professional identity.   I was able to critically explore the contributions I have made to IOSH and the wider OSH profession as I constructed my

portfolio. This highlighted opportunities for professional growth and further contributions to my community of practice.

My professional doctorate journey has led to the self-realisation of who I am, what I do, and why and has helped me gain a deeper appreciation of the profession to which I belong. It has enabled me to realise both my potential and limitations and focus my efforts on making further contributions to the OSH profession. I have learned through my experiences and the contributions I have made to the profession that the areas of work I want to focus my time and effort on are those which align with my values, motives, competencies (Backhouse, 2022b).

This article, which transpired from reading Caldwell's reflections on her professional doctorate (2019b, 2022), has provided me an opportunity, almost one year on from gaining my professional doctorate, to reflect on my own journey. I, therefore, conclude with her sentiment that undertaking a professional doctorate is worth it and I too would encourage others to do the same (Caldwell, 2022, p. 8).

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Can professionalizing dispensers reduce intra-professional tensions and raise pharmacy team performance?

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Pharmacy practice change is facilitated by delegation, teamwork, leadership and reorganization of personnel structure and roles. The international pharmaceutical federation (FIP) recommends that society should have access to appropriately trained pharmaceutical personnel. Three cadres form the pharmacy workforce: pharmacists, technicians and pharmacy assistants or dispensers. Globally, the training, regulation, scope, and status of technicians and dispensers vary. Role tensions exist between pharmacists and technicians which impact both workplace behaviour and performance. Literature on role expansion for pharmacy technicians excludes (reference to) the contribution of the pharmacy assistant or dispenser. Unlike the technician, the dispenser largely lacks professional recognition. But overlaps between the roles of the technician and dispenser can occur leading to further tensions in the pharmacy workplace. 'Unhealthy'' intra-professional conflicts obstruct the pharmacist practice envisioned by the WHO 7-star pharmacist. A solution that brings together the 3 cadres in joint or shared action is desirable. Social theory suggests that inter-cadre conflicts could be both necessary and inevitable. Being political nature, the tensions can be moderated by a ''political settlement''. The present paper is a reconstruction of and reflection of the author's journey in building a harmonious pharmacy workforce. Professionalizing the dispenser cadre restructures the hierarchy of the pharmacy workforce leading to harmony which in turn improves organizational performance. Lessons learned from this case can be applied to resolve workplace tensions in other settings.

Key words: pharmacy practice, workplace change, pharmacy technicians, dispensers, intra-professional harmony, pharmacy workforce

Introduction

The present paper is about a practice (real world) problem whose emergence in the workplace triggers the formulation of a unique solution. This article is a reconstruction of and reflection on one pharmacist's journey in building a harmonious workforce at a

pharmacy practice site. The purpose of this case study is to describe and explain the phenomenon. The focus is on intra-professional tensions in the pharmacy workforce and the author's experience with these tensions. This work provides insights for resolving these tensions. Staged in the context of contemporary pharmacy practice, this work uses social theory to make sense of the journey travelled, and to account for the outcomes and lessons learned. The author reconstructs a story of events in which the author is a stakeholder, actor, participant, or target. Written in the third person, the paper reviews decisions, and actions as well as consequences.

Concepts

Three cadres work in the pharmacy workplace: pharmacists, a mid-level cadre, and auxiliaries or assistants. For purposes of this paper the title of ''dispenser'' is used to refer to pharmacy assistants or other pharmacy auxiliary staff while the term ''technician'' refers to holders of the diploma ''licensed by the regulator to practice as pharmaceutical technologists''. 'Professionalization'' is the process by which a craft is transformed into a learned occupation or craft with the status of a profession. To date the term has been applied largely to pharmacists. It is good practice to ensure team members are neither underqualified nor overqualified for the tasks assigned to them. This maxim captures the concepts of productivity and efficiency. The two concepts are concerned with optimization of resource use to maximise outputs. Performance is a broader term and comprises both productivity and efficiency.

''Task-shifting'' is a strategy of public health practice wherein health professionals delegate professional activities and responsibilities to lower-level cadres within their hierarchy. This measure is taken, usually in low- and medium-income countries (LMICs), to remedy shortages of the substantive professional.

Pharmacy practice

Pharmaceutical personnel
The international pharmaceutical federation (FIP) recommends that, as Good Pharmacy Practice (GPP) in developing countries, all people should progressively have:-
(1) access to community health worker(CHW) with pharmaceutical training (2)access to a person with pharmaceutical knowledge beyond that of CHW (3) access to qualified

pharmacy technician (5) access to a pharmacy technician working under the direct supervision of a pharmacist (6)direct access to qualified pharmacist(Stone, 1997).

Pharmacist

The 7 -star pharmacist model of pharmacy practice proposed by the world health organization (WHO) envisions the pharmacist as a care provider, leader, decision maker, manager, life-long learner (and researcher), educator, and communicator. Assuring pharmacist productivity consists in (1) identifying critical activities that require pharmacist input and involvement, and (2) supporting the pharmacist to perform the said critical activities. The pharmacist needs support to realise this mandate. The Basel Statements are made up of 19 over-arching and governance statements and provides guidelines on 7 themes or areas of hospital pharmacy practice:-procurement, influences on prescribing ,preparation and delivery of medicines, administration, monitoring of medicine use, Human Resources ,Training & Development (HRTD).Whilst professional satisfaction is a recognized motivator of pharmacy practice change, change is facilitated by delegation, teamwork, leadership and reorganization of personnel structure and roles(Roberts et al., 2005).To attain the level productivity envisaged by both the WHO 7-Star pharmacist and the Basel Statements, a well-trained support staff is the required support. A pharmacist with a well-trained support team can focus on planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. The law requires the pharmacist to supervise several drug related activities. In all practice settings, pharmacists have a controlling role in assuring the quality of both products and services (Van De Pol et al., 2019).This quality includes all efforts to efficiently deliver products and services that meet customer requirements, and assure patient safety while ensuring compliance with service and industry requirements and benchmarks.

Pharmacy support staff

Pharmacy practice change is facilitated by delegation, teamwork, leadership and reorganization of personnel structure and roles. Delegating non-critical activities to trained technicians spares pharmacist time for critical roles(Myers, 2011). Literature on role expansion for pharmacy technicians excludes the contribution of the pharmacy assistant or

dispenser. It is the position of this paper that there are certain professional tasks that are best undertaken by pharmacists as opposed to technicians or dispensers; there are certain pharmacy tasks that pharmacists should delegate (Bradley et al., 2013).But there are pharmacy tasks that can be shared in the spirit of team-work and joint action. Attempts have been made to determine risk levels for professional pharmacist activities delegated to technicians (Johnston et al., 2010; Ness et al., 1994) .Conflicts have been known to occur between pharmacists and other pharmacy staff (P. A. M. Gregory & Austin, 2017).Overlaps between the roles of the technician and dispenser can occur leading to further tensions in the pharmacy workplace. Gregory & Austin found that role misunderstanding and threats to self-identity were at the root of the conflict. The authors concluded that conflict had the potential to undermine patient safety and was a critical issue that calls for comprehensive interventions. In spite of concerted efforts to increase the scope of the technician, there is evidence that regulated technicians operate ''below their license''(Jetha et al., 2020). Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have differing views on the capacity and competence of technicians. The training, regulation, scope, and status of pharmacy support staff varies from one country to another (Koehler & Brown, 2017). Gregory and Austin (2020) examined the professional identity of the licensed pharmacy technician. Their work reveals that technician identity is dependent on and impacted by the attitudes of pharmacists towards technicians (P. Gregory & Austin, 2020).Thus technicians and other support staff should ideally work under the supervision of pharmacists as suggested by FIP.

Regulation of pharmacy support staff

The General Pharmaceutical Council of UK (2023) regulates the training and scope of practice of pharmacy technicians. The Council recognizes the role of pharmacy support staff who must work under the supervision of pharmacists and technicians in accordance with prescribed standards of pharmacy practice. The South African Pharmacy Council (2023) regulates 10 categories of Registered Persons including pharmacy owners and two levels of pharmacist's assistants (Boschmans et al., 2015).The purpose of the recognition is to regulate their scope of practice-pharmacy support staff are obligated to work under pharmacist supervision (Republic of South Africa, 2011). It is the position of the author that this guarantees complete control of the pharmacy sector-every person with a stake in pharmacy is enjoined to maintain prescribed standards or risk loss of status.

In sub-Saharan Africa task shifting in healthcare has been successful (Fulton et al., 2011).The national Guidelines for the conduct of clinical trials in Kenya, permit a pharmacist to delegate certain activities to a dependent non-pharmacist.

History of pharmacy support workforce in Kenya

By law, the terms ''technologist'' and ''officer'' are reserved for diploma holders while the term ''technician '' is the usual title for certificate holders. For purposes of this paper the term ''technician'' will refer to holders of the diploma ''licensed by the regulator to practice as pharmaceutical technologists''. Initially, trained to serve in public hospitals, these mid-level professionals now work in all sectors. They go through a 3 or 4-year diploma training that includes supervised internship in industrial, hospital, and community pharmacy.

The Kenyan pharmacy technician (formerly recognized as enrolled pharmaceutical technologist) has been in existence since 1927.The cadre has evolved through the years-previous titles include compounders, dispensers, and pharmacy assistants. Local training of technicians preceded that of pharmacists who were initially mostly expatriates or foreign trained(Republic of Kenya ministry of medical services and ministry of public health and sanitation, 2012).

Kenya has some of the best trained pharmacy technicians in the world. Their curriculum covers a proportion of the biomedical, pharmaceutical, social, economic, and clinical sciences covered by trainee pharmacists. The professional diploma may lead to progression to an 18-month higher national diploma or admission to 4/5-year undergraduate pharmacy degrees. Upon enrolment (not registration) technicians may be licensed to work in any pharmacy practice setting but may only assume lead responsibility for services in community pharmacy. In practice, technicians may work as superintendents of hospital-owned pharmacies which are essentially hospital-based community pharmacies (Republic of Kenya parliament of Kenya, 2002). In 2012 ratio of technicians to pharmacists was about 1:1(Republic of Kenya ministry of medical services and ministry of public health and sanitation, 2012).In 2013,70% of all registered pharmacists worked in hospitals and the public health system, making the technician the *de-facto community pharmacist* . This means that many technicians work without the direction, supervision of a pharmacist.

There is no formal recognition of pharmacy assistants or pharmacy assistant training programmes. In the late 1990s, some Government, and private colleges created a short-lived 1-year certificate programme for pharmacy assistants and dispensers. Much older hospital dispenser programmes run by faith-based hospital organizations have also fizzled out. This cadre of trained pharmacy support personnel did not gain formal recognition and the term ''pharmacy technician'' does not exist in Kenya. For purposes of this article the title of ''dispenser'' is used to refer to pharmacy assistants or other pharmacy auxiliary staff.

Pharmacist-technician tensions in Kenya

Intra-professional tensions between pharmacists and technicians is an old global problem (Sanford et al., 1984). From literature, causes of this animosity include, lack of role clarity, hegemony of the pharmacist, jealousy ,pharmacist self-centredness(Molzon, 1990) ,phobia , anxiety over perceived inadequate competence of the technologist(Whitney Jr, 1992) ; pharmacists' fear of loss of control, fear of failing to conform to global practice standards, lack of respect and courtesy; and perceived lack of career opportunities for both the pharmacist and the technologist. Since the early 1990s Kenyan pharmacists and technicians have had interprofessional feuds. Aggressions and counter-aggressions between pharmacists and technicians have sustained this struggle for the last 3 decades. It seems the situation has been escalating. In July 1991, Kenya had only 1137 pharmacists on its gazetted register (Republic of Kenya, 1991). At some point ,around 1990, the struggle culminated in the transient birth of a curious cadre known as ''diploma pharmacists.'' This resulted in a court case. The feud escalated with the technicians forming the Kenya Pharmaceutical Association-in Kenya, pharmacists are members of the Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya. These feuds are far from over: using their numbers, technicians have used the political process to advance their interests. The technicians have been socialized to believe that they are ''pharmacists by another name'' (Mutethia, 2021) .Pharmacists are also socialized to be suspicious of technologists .Researchers on pharmacy-based public health initiatives have made little effort to consider or investigate distinctions between the two cadres (Gonsalves et al., 2019). About 3 years ago, technicians lobbied parliament to (make amendments to the Pharmacy and Poisons' Act) to increase the ratio of technologist to pharmacist membership to about 1:1.Thanks to the same political process draft legislation have proposed creating greater roles for technicians in industry, wholesale distributorship and

hospital (Omboki, 2018). In the 2014 draft, Parliament (with the support of the regulator) proposed the term ''pharmacy practitioner'' as a common terminology for both pharmacists and technicians. Pharmacists were indignant at this suggestion, and made it clear to Parliament that the appellation was unacceptable. On the hand, the technicians were resentful of the suggestion to phase out the diploma-trained ''pharmaceutical technologist'' in favour of a certificate-trained ''pharmacy technician''.

In Kenya, pharmacists dominate the industry, hospital, and health system pharmacy. The wars between pharmacists and technicians are incited by and managed by parties external to pharmacy. External forces have been acting in concert to *reset* practice standards. These forces include the pharmaceutical industry, pharmacy businesses, employers, the Government, politicians, and other health professionals. The court case cited above was occasioned by the decision of the chairman of the PPB to ''license technicians to practise as pharmacists''. The chairman was the Director of Medical Services (read physician) and his action was triggered by a presidential decree to make the technicians available to the private sector. A 1994 policy recommendation to replace the 3 year technologist programme with a lower cadre -a 2 year diploma-to be known as a pharmacy technician was resisted(Republic of Kenya ministry of medical services and ministry of public health and sanitation, 2012). The technicians seem to outdo the pharmacists in lobbying parliamentarians. PSK has already voiced its opposition to the proposal. It is the author's perspective that these forces have been using the pharmacy technician to distract the pharmacist from pursuing the bigger agenda of pharmaceutical care. They have been trying to substitute pharmacists with technicians and other professionals (Kinuthia et al., 2022). The external forces are now clamouring for an ''all inclusive'' FDA to replace the pharmacy and Poisons' Board which has hitherto been a pharmacy-only affair.'' All amendments to the law are initiated or processed by politicians through the departmental House Committee for Health which is invariably chaired by a physician legislator.

The feud between the pharmacists and technicians is an impediment to good pharmacy practice. To realise their potential, pharmacists should collaborate with both technicians and dispensers. More creative use of pharmacy technicians could free pharmacists to undertake more cognitive tasks(Kalman et al., 1992). A 2022 study showed that job resources (job control, time spent in various work activities, and social support) were

associated with a reduction in burnout and an increase in professional fulfilment of American community pharmacists (Fadare et al., 2022). It has been suggested that pharmacists should collaborate in all settings and that pharmacist roles should be complementary to the roles of other professionals (Mwawaka, 2023).

ABC

ABC is a pharmacy practice site within a hospital and clinical research environment. The functions of the pharmacy at ABC include clinical research, pharmaceutical supply and logistics, product custody and distribution, medicine use counselling, pharmaceutical care, pharmaceutical advisory services, pharmacy compounding, project planning and management, quality assurance, compliance, and external liaison. The author joined ABC in August 2009.In early 2010, the author and management upgraded two long-serving pharmacy assistants to dispensing clerks. The author would eventually work *behind the scenes* to have all the assistants assume the new title. The pharmacy function has been one of the least resourced in the clinical services department. There was a general under-appreciation of pharmacy's contribution to research. For instance, at a sister clinical site, the site pharmacist -who was the only pharmacy professional-had to delegate his work to physicians, physician associates and nurses whenever he had to be away. Clearly there was risk that, if unchecked, this could render the pharmaceutical function redundant. Thus, pharmacy as a profession was struggling for space among other disciplines in ABC. There was an urgent need to preserve this pharmacy position and grow ''the pharmacy space'' in the organization.

Resource scarcity: There has always been a scarcity of both pharmacists and technicians at ABC. Prior to 2006, pharmacy services at ABC were traditionally run by the dispensers. The necessity for a pharmacist was created by sponsors. As at end 2011, the staff establishment for the site was 1 pharmacist ,1 technologist and 3 pharmacy assistants. With time the site acquired 2 more dispensers through intra-departmental ''horizontal promotions''. At this point in time, the technologist was the principal assistant to the pharmacist whose role, to the extent of the delegation, mirrored that of the pharmacist.
Requests, for pharmacists and/or technicians were declined. Reasons for the refusal were lack of both justification and budgetary support for the ''extra positions''. It is the author's opinion that the organization had an imperfect conception of the place of pharmacy and its

3 cadres within the department, division, and organization. Of interest, it seemed, the organization deemed the pharmacy assistants -the oldest cadre-to be the de-facto technicians while the technicians were ''alternative pharmacists''. There was thus pressure to sell and see the pharmacy technician -to the organization, sponsors, and trial monitors-as a ''pharmacist designee''. This thinking was to be challenged in 2017 by the Guidelines for the conduct of clinical research which created a regulatory demand for study pharmacists. The guidelines withdrew the ''legitimacy'' of the technicians-it lumped technicians, dispensers and ''other staff'' in a single category of pharmacy support staff.

Pharmacy wars: Due to some fortuitous events, during 2016-2022, pharmacy technician numbers rose from 2 to 7. Although, employed to serve on trials, these technicians were based in pharmacy. Naturally they were assimilated into the pharmacy pool. This created immediate challenges. As the number of technicians started growing, the dispensers became agitated. They resented the technicians for earning more for doing the ''same'' job, they were vociferous about the ''unusual'' dispensing mistakes made by the novice technicians. Compared to the dispensers, the technicians were also more culturally and demographically diverse. The technicians themselves became restless. Technicians turned to the pharmacist to validate them as trained professionals. They sought to have certain roles withdrawn from the dispensers (and transferred to both them and the pharmacists). They were adamant that ABC should phase-out the dispensers. Thus, the pharmacist was now fighting wars within and outside pharmacy.

Pharmacy group identity: There were 4 different generations of workers: the founders, those who transferred into the dispenser role from other functions, the early pharmacist and technologists and the late arrivals. Further, one pharmacist, and 6 (of the 7 technicians) were *outsiders* seconded to pharmacy by some of our customers. Thus ABC had 4 different professional groups from 4 different generations. A new group identity was needed.

Research questions.

Shortage of pharmacists and technicians, intra-professional wars, lack of clear group identity, and politics were the key problems facing the pharmacy team at ABC. To address these problems, at least 4 questions required to be explored: -

1. How could one create, justify, and sustain effective demand for each of the 3 pharmacy cadres?

2. How could inter-dependence amongst the 3 cadres of pharmacy in the clinical research and the hospital practice environments be achieved?

3. How could each of the cadres be supported for optimal productivity?

4. How could the efficiency of the pharmacy unit in an institution be enhanced?

Significance

1. Pharmacists have a professional obligation to use their position and capabilities to ensure productivity of their team members and efficiency of their units. It is important that pharmacists take the lead in managing tensions amongst team-members (Zellmer et al., 2017).It is their business to identify and address bottle necks to productivity and efficiency.

2.The tensions between pharmacists and the technicians constitute a long-standing bottle neck to the realization of the full potential of the pharmacists and the pharmacy profession. the feud between Kenyan pharmacists and pharmacy technicians remains unresolved, has assumed a political character, and is escalating. The tensions are now ''unhealthy''.

3.Globally, intra-professional tensions in the pharmacy workforce will likely become more significant as more countries implement licensure /regulation of technicians.

4.The Kenyan pharmacy technician is relatively well- trained. It is critical that this cadre's potential is harnessed.

5.Despite their experience and on-the-job training, dispensers are not recognized as skilled manpower let alone health professionals. Thus, dispensers are an underused pharmacy resource.

Action: problem investigation, solution specification, development, and implementation.

Problem investigation: analysis, insights, and options

1. The hostility experienced in my workplace emanates from the real world of interprofessional tensions between pharmacists and technicians. A more fundamental cause of the tension between pharmacists and technicians is lack of professional leadership. This is the root cause. Some explanation is needed: pharmacists ought to have set the bar much higher, the pharmacists should have unified the cultures of the two ''professions''.

2. Diversity: pharmacists and technicians belong to two distinct groups with different professional cultures. Pharmacy dispensers do not have a professional guild-they derive their identity and culture from the workplace and the workforce itself.

3.The growing number of technicians posed new problems: dispensers became a minority, the new technicians pushed pharmacy dispensers away from the pharmacist and ''elite work''. A new layer of supervisors was created, the boundaries between professional staff and other staff became clearer, and a professional hierarchy emerged. The hierarchy so created became an issue for contention.

4. There is war-pharmacists are fighting to preserve the status quo while technicians want to change it. Technicians fight through parliament while pharmacists get their way through the PPB. The war is fought through the two professional guilds. This war also plays out in the hiring of pharmacy professionals in the public sector. The two cadres belong to two different trade unions which means that the two groups are unlikely to collaborate in industrial action to safeguard or improve their welfare(https://tinyurl.com/48b53w7y). It is

5. The pharmacy team was made up of diverse groups. There were instances of political behaviour- dispensers rejecting the technicians, technicians advocating for elimination of the dispensers, technicians seeking to build alliances with the pharmacists, the pharmacists distributing power and influence to the 2 support cadres, etc. Of note, the technicians' resolve was emboldened by their numbers and the lack of pharmacists. Technicians wanted to have a say in the role of the dispensers; the dispensers did not want to do more than they were paid for but were keen on having a job description that captured the value of their work. On a higher level of analysis, both pharmacists and technicians have been employing political means to advance their sectarian interests.

Solution specification

Given the prevailing pharmacist and technician deficit, delegation was inevitable. There was need to delegate extensively but creatively. Effective task shifting requires planning, support and transparency (Schalkwyk et al., 2020).
The deployment and use of dispensers had to be structured.
Keeping pharmacy work within the pharmacy space should be a strategic objective of the profession: the choice between the pharmacist delegating to a pharmacy dispenser or

technician as opposed to another professional was an easy one to make.

Staff should be empowered to do their work. Thus, delegation would have to accord with the law, and good regulatory practices to ensure quality and patient safety. Such delegation should enhance productivity and team efficiency.

Solution development and implementation

The first step was to identify activities that require pharmacist input. The next step was to specify activities that, reasonably, could be delegated to technicians. The third step was to institute measures to maximise supervision of both technicians and dispensers.

It is necessary to integrate dispensers into the pharmacy profession. It is also critical to redefine the role of the technician vis-à-vis those of the pharmacist and dispenser.

This paper describes a process of incremental team building and development undertaken, over a period of 3 years, with a view to enhancing team productivity and efficiency: -.

Phase 1: With 1 pharmacist and 5 more technologists on board, it became possible to transfer some roles and tasks from both the dispensers and the principal pharmacist to the technologists. Further, the principal pharmacist was able to share or even transfer part of his responsibilities to the second pharmacist. SOPs and job descriptions to support rational division of labour were created. Specifically, a hierarchy- with pharmacists being accountable for the performance of the pharmacy service- was created. Pharmacists would lead teams, provide technical, clinical and pharmaceutical advice, support project planning, provide external liaison make professional decisions, create product specifications, set quality standards, policy ,SOPS, resources and tools to be used by the other staff; technicians would implement decisions made by pharmacists ,provide product information, supervise dispensers and ensure compliance with set standards; and the dispensers would perform standardized or less critical tasks including clerical and office operations according to SOPs and as directed. Technicians would originate documents and records which would then be reviewed and/or approved by the pharmacists. The 3 cadres would work together to facilitate the orientation and training of new staff, students, and pre-licensure interns.

Phase 2: To ensure patient safety and to optimise productivity, staffing thresholds for pharmacists and technicians were set: a pharmacist would be responsible for no more than 4 vaccine trials, and a pharmacy technician would support no more than 2 trials of any kind.

Minimum pharmacy staffing requirements for clinical trial projects were defined and some technicians supported to ''specialise'' in a responsibility or two: champions were designated for inventory management, supply chain, cold-chain management, quality assurance, staff coordination and welfare, induction & training, etc. Where there were overlaps, the SOPs and job descriptions clarify decision-making authority and reporting / communication channels. Hierarchies based on seniority emerged amongst each support cadre.

Phase 3: Lastly to leverage on the diversity, efforts were made to support the workplace culture based a group identity. Through a participatory process, a mission statement for the clinical research pharmacy was developed. Next, the infrastructure for internal communication was improved: -

- Group email address: the group email would be used by other departments to exchange information with pharmacy team members.

- A rota for regular bimonthly meetings: at each general meeting updates would be provided on ongoing and planned clinical research-related activities; during the training meeting, a pharm-tech or pharmacist would be required to provide group training on some aspect of the unit's work. Both the email and the meetings created awareness and transparency on what key team-members do outside the pharmacy. This helped to flatten the hierarchy, and to foster a sense of team pride and solidarity amongst the 3 cadres.

Innovation

In response to a shortage of technicians and pharmacists, ABC conferred professional status to a hitherto unrecognized cadre. This created a third professional group (dispensing clerk or dispenser) in a workplace dominated by 2 warring cadres-pharmacists and technicians. The response of the middle cadre, the technicians, uncovered a second war front. To calm the storm, the author engaged a gradual process of rational labour division and culture-building amongst the 3 cadres. The process addressed adherence to standards, customer interest, the mission of the unit, the need for inter-dependence, the value of each cadre, and the imperative to optimise the use of skill and manpower. The innovation increased teamwork, team spirit and harmony, productivity, efficiency, and patient safety. The process generated lessons that can be applied in other settings.

Outcomes

Pharmacist: This innovation spares pharmacist time for the most critical of things including patient care, problem-solving, protocol development, trial project planning and management, pharmaceutical due diligence, sponsor engagement and liaison with regulatory authorities.

Technicians and dispensers: With both the technicians and dispensers working as pharmacist extenders with limited authority; each cadre works at the top of its ''license''; all cadres are interdependent; multiple staff collaborate on each project. The innovation addresses the role of the dispenser, and the challenges of pharmacy intra-professional tensions and workplace politics; it fosters a pharmacy group identity, consolidates pharmacy space.

Workforce: There is role clarity. The innovation simplifies work and optimises supervision and training. The pharmacy has transformed into a virtual service organization for the delivery of pharmacy work. The team has expanded its reach to ensure adequate ''pharmacy cover'': for instance, a pharmacy vaccine team made up of pharmacists and technicians allows a single pharmacist to provide oversight for multiple trials, simultaneously.

Organization: The foregoing has benefits for the organization: - the staff are more focussed and own their roles- there is team-ownership of results; there is reduction of employee stress, and of patient safety risk. An integrated pharmacy team supports optimal use of pharmacist time and skill leading to enhanced productivity and efficiency. This ensures that the organization gets value for money.

Profession: The innovation has made pharmacy more visible within the organization. The innovation facilitates departmental workload analysis and workforce rationalization.

Discussion

Pharmacy requires introspection and dialogue on the need for the 3 cadres to work together in a single setting. A genuine concern for pharmacist and technician productivity will demand a solution that brings together the 3 cadres in joint or shared action.

The innovation confirms that all the 3 pharmacy cadres are essential in ensuring productivity and efficiency.

Lessons learned.

Conflict can create opportunities for learning and innovation:-   .

Lesson 1: Pharmacy is under constant political tension. Getting space and resources for pharmacy in a multi-disciplinary organization is a political struggle. External ''hostility '' towards pharmacy helped the unit to pull-together and to consolidate its identity (professional space). The team understood that the innovation would increase the effectiveness of pharmacy.

Lesson 2: Being able to notice, uncover and leverage on opportunities was key in the actions of the author in creating the transformation reported in this paper. ''Policy entrepreneurs'' (or pharmacy leaders) should be on the lookout for ''policy-making windows'' or opportunities (Brouwer & Huitema, 2018). Some of such opportunities include what is referred to in this article as ''fortuitous events''. They are fortuitous because they did not result from the author's own efforts. For example, there were team members who aspired to or embraced ''pharmaceutical excellence'', managers who had worked in the Northern Hemisphere where clinical pharmacists play a prominent role in hospital care, and project leaders who agreed to second their staff to the pharmacy team.

Lessons 3: There is a professional role for dispensers; pharmacy technicians and dispensers have the capacity to act professionally. The three cadres appreciate the need to work safely, collaboratively, and within their own scope.

Mechanism of success

In therapeutics, knowledge of the mechanism by which a medicinal product or therapy brings about its effect(s) is essential for validating an intervention. It seems several factors contribute to the success of the present intervention: -

*leadership***:** Leadership from pharmacists will create value for both the profession and the consumer. One of the functions of the 7-star pharmacist is leadership. Avolio and Gardner comment on the construct of authentic leadership : '' we believe authentic leadership can make a fundamental difference in organizations by helping people find meaning and connection at work through greater self-awareness; by restoring and building optimism,

confidence and hope; by promoting transparent relationships and decision making that builds trust and commitment among followers; and by fostering inclusive structures and positive ethical climates,"(Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership is characterised by self-awareness, balance, transparency, and sense of morality. The author, being aware of the moral obligation to protect patient safety, initiated and undertook transparent action to address team challenges in a fair manner.

Right organizational context: An interaction between need, challenges, opportunity, individuals, and organization gave rise to the innovation.

Participatory process: Consultations with the cadres on the proposed job descriptions primed the ground for success. During the process of job evaluation each cadre negotiated a ''strong job description'' that truly reflected its worth and contested perceived unfavourable outcomes. There was comprise: each cadre had to give up some role or responsibility. The process thus helped the cadres to confront the tensions amongst them and attain closure. At the end of the process, each cadre, owned and cherished their negotiated place at the table.

Long-term benefits for stakeholders: The innovation held the promise of resolving a big problem facing the pharmacy unit at ABC .All the 3 parties stood to gain from the arrangement:- 1) to enhance his own visibility , the Head Pharmacist needed a back-up pharmacist; pharmacists embraced the other cadres as pharmacist -extenders, 2) the pharmacists helped to secure the place of the technician 3) the dispensers gained professional status.

Meeting higher needs: The innovation created job resources: the dispensers freed the technicians to perform supervisory work; each cadre realised workload reductions. As expected, every team member now had the opportunity to do meaningful work (Napier et al., 2018).

Perceptions and attitudes: the innovation redefined roles and scopes leading to heightened stakes: dispensers had to prove themselves to technicians; technicians had to demonstrate competence to both pharmacists and dispensers; pharmacists had to supervise more empowered subordinates. Changes occurred in perception of self and others for the 3 cadres. This shifted attitudes towards increased professionalism.

Redistribution of power: the innovation empowers and supports each cadre. It transfers some power from one cadre to another. Redistribution of power creates a new hierarchy

that guarantees support for each role.

Re-enforcement: Inter-dependence creates respect. Thus, every team- member had the knowledge, confidence, and support to do their best. The resultant increase in team spirit and staff morale created positive reinforcement.

Novelty

The simplicity of the proposal is striking - professionalise the dispenser, integrate the dispenser, re-align the technician, redefine the hierarchy, attain a new equilibrium. At the author's previous worksite (community pharmacy chain) having the 3 cadres, technicians were deployed as substitute pharmacists supervised by a chief pharmacist. In public health system facilities, there is an apparent division of labour: whereas technicians work at all levels of the system, pharmacists do not work in facilities ranked lower than level 4 (Republic of Kenya ministry of Health, 2006). Thus, there are many establishments in which technicians work without pharmacist supervision.

The scope of dispensing privileges of the dispensers under discussion is much wider than that of the technicians and the 2 levels of dispensers obtaining in the Republic of South Africa. Another distinction is that the immediate supervisor of the dispenser may be a technician rather than the pharmacist. This is to be contrasted with the South African set-up in which community pharmacy dispensers (pharmacist assistants) are supervised directly by the pharmacist.

This innovation creates inter-dependencies and supports each cadre to work safely. Interdependence proceeds from the premise pharmacists and technicians need to delegate to be productive and effective; whilst technicians and dispensers need the guidance, supervision, and support of the pharmacist to ensure patient safety and compliance with good practice. Interdependence emphasizes the supervisory functions of both pharmacists and technicians. Pharmacists would share responsibility with associates in performing common work activities.

The pharmacist could direct, supervise and review work performed by sub-ordinates either directly or indirectly through delegated subordinates and /or by use of information communication technology.

Theory development

According to Bolman and Deal(Bolman L.G & Deal T.E, 2017),organizations consist of people, structures, politics, and symbolism. The 4 elements form a complex mesh. The central features of the political frame are power, conflict, competition, and organizational politics. Groups in an organization seek to develop agenda and build power bases. They project their activities as advocacy.

The pharmaceutical industry in Kenya is dominated by pharmacists who are a minority group. Critical theory informs us that the intra-professional feuds in pharmacy are class struggles for control of power and resources. According to Critical Theory, bridging the practice gap between pharmacists and pharmacy support staff cannot serve the best interests of pharmacists and pharmacy. Seen through the lens of Conflict Theory, the intra-professional tensions are a class struggle created by inequitable access to power and resources. Conflict theory teaches that social classes within groups are both inevitable and necessary. Thus, the tensions between pharmacists and technicians are political cannot be eradicated. There is need to acknowledge and manage the tensions i.e., work with the tensions. The tensions create opportunities for a ''political settlement'' which settlement consists in redistributing power between technicians and others. The marginalization of pharmacy technicians and pharmacy assistants is reduced by ''adopting'' pharmacy support staff as pharmacy professionals. This adoption re-orders the conflicts. The settlement creates and maintains an equilibrium of ''law and order'' in the pharmacy group: formalizing the supervisory authority of the technician over the dispenser addresses ''role misunderstanding and threats to self-identity''(Gregory & Austin).The arrangement confirms, even *dramatizes*, the leadership position and statutory authority of the pharmacist. The resulting ''law and order '' is a command structure which creates interdependences as suggested by Mwawaka (2023).

Implications for pharmacy

Pharmacy requires introspection and dialogue on the need for the 3 cadres to work together in a single setting. A genuine concern for pharmacist and technician productivity will demand a solution that brings together the 3 cadres in joint or shared action- pharmacists should be accountable while the other pharmacy cadres remain responsible for critical processes in pharmacy practice.   -

Being victims of professional marginalization themselves, pharmacists should be morally obligated to optimise deployment and use of other cadres in the pharmacy workforce.

-This work suggests how the 3 cadres ought to interact amongst themselves: the 3 cadres belong to a single profession and are *interdependent*. The equilibrium generated by the integration of dispensers will likely have influences upon further development of the 3 cadres.   -

Leadership from pharmacists will create value for both the profession and the consumer.

Summary

A system to help the team to work harmoniously, productively, and efficiently was devised based on the following tenets: -

- Inter-cadre tensions in the workforce are of a political nature. Resolution of these tensions ensures optimal use of professionals, time, and skill. This leads to enhanced team productivity, and patient safety.
- Pharmacists need to embrace both technicians and dispensers as legitimate professionals.
- Professionalizing the dispenser cadre relieved tensions between pharmacists and pharmacy paraprofessional staff. This consists in the redistribution of power amongst the 3 professional cadres to create new command structure and inter-dependencies.

Change occurred incrementally over time. A suitable organizational context, a participatory process, long-term benefits, meeting higher needs and re-enforcement contributed to the success of the innovation.

- The present case study aligns with Bolman and Deal's model, Conflict Theory and Critical Theory.
- Lessons learned can be applied in other settings**.**

Conclusions

There is a professional role for dispensers. Professionalizing the dispenser moderates inter-cadre tensions between pharmacists and technicians, and between technicians and dispensers. This serves the best interests of the consumer and the profession. The innovation works because all parties gain from the resultant arrangement. It ensures that

the organization gets value for money. This approach can resolve inter-cadre tensions in other settings.

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Reflection, pracademics and Cognitive Apprentices

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This paper is focused on the concepts of reflection, pracademics and Cognitive Apprentices used within work-based learning contexts. A hermeneutic phenomenological dialogic exchange was conducted between the authors to gain an in-depth interpretive analysis of the concepts of reflection, pracademics and Cognitive Apprentices. It is evident that reflection is not easy to teach and that modelling it as a practice as 'thinking out aloud' could be beneficial for a novice in their own reflective development. Whether, however, pracademics are best suited as Cognitive Apprentices is still contested and debated. Whilst it is undeniably challenging to achieve the "tri-professional" role of the well-rounded academic (subject expertise, research expertise, and pedagogic expertise), and perhaps realistically no academic is likely to have an equally weighted pie chart of professional abilities, our argument is that to be an academic means embracing the notion of developing in all these arenas.

Keywords: Reflection, Pracademics, Cognitive Apprentices, Work-Based Learning, Cognitive Wrappers

Introduction

This paper will define, describe and explore the intersection between three key concepts: reflection, pracademics and the Cognitive Apprentice. However, first the context of work-based learning (WBL) as the learning framework will be explained.

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WBL bridges the skills gap as well as the gap between academia and practice (Gerhardt and Annon, 2023; Konstantinou and Miller, 2021; Rowe et al., 2016). WBL is a specific mode or form of teaching within Work-integrated Learning more broadly where the student as learner is in full time employment as part of their course (Cooper et al., 2010). For example, in the UK Higher Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs) is a growing form of WBL where a student is 80% on the job and 20% off-the-job while learning (Horden, 2015). These work-based learners are regularly engaged in academic study and as such are regularly taught by staff from an academic institution. Some academic staff are permanent and often discipline specific while other staff are part-time from professional backgrounds or active industry practitioners. It is the latter 'academic' which is labelled the pracademic and valued as educators on courses more explicitly linked with industry or professional backgrounds. The pedagogical competence of these pracademics, especially in reference to reflection, are vital to the delivery and quality of Work-Based Learning (WBL) such as in HDAs in the UK (Bell & Bell, 2020; Gerhardt and Annon, 2023; Konstantinou & Miller, 2020; Konstantinou & Miller, 2021; Rowe et al., 2016). WBL such as HDAs or many postgraduate courses with mature learners already in work, endorse learning environments that depart from traditional lecturer-led passive learning (Mode 1 learning) to an increased emphasis on constructivist approaches, including action-orientated experiential learning, problem-solving and project-based learning (Mode 2 learning) (Bell & Bell, 2020). The authors of this paper represent such a WBL course, one as the pracademic (academic supervisor) and the other as a mature student in work an English teacher doing their master's degree).

The contentious concept of a 'pracademic' (due to differing definitions) (Hodgson & Garner, 2023) generally refers to people at the nexus of the academy and the professional world of practice, a scholar practitioner (Campbell, 2022; Chaaban et al., 2021, Friesen, 2021; Kolber & Heggart, 2022). Pracademics are people who design, facilitate, and engage in forms of education and professional learning (Campbell, 2022; Hollweck & Doucet, 2020; Hollweck et al., 2022a), a situated telling of experience (Chaaban et al., 2021), often involved in transformation, agency and social change (Friesen, 2021). They either develop a dual sense of self, as both practitioners and academics, or develop entirely new professional identities (Chaaban et al., 2021), a third space (Mynott & Zimmatore, 2022). Some argue that the dualism is unhelpful, perpetuating a false analytical dualism of theory and practice (Eacott,

2021; Hodgson & Garner, 2023; Hollweck et al., 2022a). Nonetheless, Chaaban et al. (2021) argues pracademics should be recruited and valued for exactly these purposes, acknowledging the existence of the theory-practice gap (Thomassen & Jorensen, 2021). As such, pracademia includes the identity of the pracademic, being a noun and an adjective (Hollweck et al., 2022a), and how they interact with communities (especially the academic and professional communities), how they are situated with/in communities (especially the sense of connection and belonging) and how they engage in the dynamic interplay between their identity, the other, the space and consequential action, communication and collaboration (Campbell, 2022). An enduring tension is that the worlds of practice does not necessarily value (or understand) the work of research and scholarship, and universities do not always fully value (or understand) the knowledge and work of practitioners (Campbell, 2022; Eacott, 2021; Konstantinou & Miller, 2021). This tension aids the development of a "socially-embedded identity not just as an individual operating across the 'in between', but a member of a group of those operating similarly in hybrid, dual or multiple education spaces" (Hollweck et al., 2022b, p.14; Mynott & Zimmatore, 2022). Pracademics, as a dual citizens (Hollweck et al., 2022b; Mynott & Zimmatore, 2022) exemplify the role of guide, as they are naturally "engaged in practice and in scholarship (in various forms and ways), they connect and integrate theory and practice, they span boundaries, broker and translate research and practice knowledge, they network and collaborate, and they engage in professional learning and development" (Campbell, 2022, p.100). It is acknowledged that the definition of who is a pracademic is contentious, but for the purpose of this paper the accepted definition of a pracademic includes people who teach part-time in Higher Education as they are active professionals in industry at other times or university educators with an industry background.

An apprenticeship style interplay between master (pracademic as guide) and novice (the WBL student), is called the Cognitive Apprentice. Cognitive Apprentice is a pedagogical approach that emphasises the significance of a process in which an expert teaches a skill to a novice (Collins et al., 1989), in this case, reflection. The Cognitive Apprentice (i.e. the pracademic as guide) centres around an expert making their learning processes explicit to the learner (the WBL student), so that the learner may initially emulate the expert thinking processes before moving on to regulating the processes independently, becoming reflective

knowledge transformers (Akhavan & Walsh, 2020; Porcaro, 2011), also called incidental learning (Konstantinou & Miller, 2020; Wong et al., 2016). The pracademic as Cognitive Apprentice supports a learner's progression from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence (Porcaro, 2011), a master becoming (Reddy & Shaw, 2019; Schedlitzki, 2018), and helps develop "higher-order or metacognitive skills" (Matsuo & Tsukube, 2020, p.489). The focus on reflection is significant since it is the rope which binds the processes, a crucial skill when developing metacognitive, cognitive, and motivational abilities (Cash, 2016). This paper therefore focuses on the reflective proficiency of pracademics as a Cognitive Apprentice in WBL.

Author A was the MA supervisor of author B, who actually did their research project about the Cognitive Apprentice in teaching English as a language. Author A would self-identify as a pracademic and author B, a full time English teacher, is a quint-essential example of a WBL student although not an example of HDAs. The concept of the Cognitive Apprentice was so fascinating for both student and supervisor that they agreed to explore the concepts in a dialogic exchange with reflection as the key shared phenomena.

Literature Review

The review of literature to follow will focus in more detail on the concepts of the pracademic, their role as a Cognitive Apprentice in WBL in relation to the concept of reflection.

Educator as Pracademic

The challenge for the pracademic is not to have learners mirror teaching but rather to guide them to internally construct meaningful and functional representations of the outside world (Bell & Bell, 2020). Significantly, "pracademics are argued to have the potential to collaboratively contribute to changing the culture of education, improving knowledge and practice, responding to systemic challenges, challenging and changing the orthodox status quo, and bringing about educational innovation and improvement" (Campbell, 2022, p.101). The social environment created by the pracademic facilitates or scaffolds the learning process (Thomassen & Jorgensen, 2021), enriched by reflection (Gerhardt, 2021).

In experiential learning, common in WBL, pracademics guide learners as they work within a social setting to achieve greater levels of understanding through the process. This approach goes beyond merely teaching the theory, to the teaching "for", which develops learners' skills and competences ready for or teaching "through", which supports learning by practising. Approaches to experiential learning can be based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which draws on the earlier works of Dewey (1963), and Piaget (1950), and others, who emphasized the role of experience in learning and development. According to Kolb (1984, p. 38), "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) therefore proposes a (social and exogenous) constructivist theory of learning through which "social knowledge is created and re-created in the personal knowledge of the learner" (Bell & Bell, 2020, p.990). It is dynamic, a holistic experience–based learning process, learning "by" and "through" doing (Bell & Bell, 2020).

In WBL, pracademics encourage the practice of professional enquiry and the formulation of new knowledge (Campbell, 2022). The duality of identities, hybrid-specialist and multi-member (Hollweck et al., 2022b), of the pracademic contributes to frictions and frustrations, having multiple and changing identities, possessing the mindset of an academic as well as a practitioner yet not really exclusively belonging to each (Campbell, 2022; Mynott & Zimmatore, 2022). However, this may be beneficial, as it adds the value of coalescence, collaboration and intentional multiplicity (Hollweck et al., 2022a). However, the friction of being part of the professional collaboration, but also apart from it due to their role as pracademics, constant identity renegotiation (Chaaban et al., 2021), duality as a revolving door (Hollweck et al., 2022b), identity construction and deconstruction (Chaaban et al., 2021), contributes to a feeling of isolation (Campbell, 2022), and marginalisation (Hodgson & Garner, 2023) especially if they are not full time academic staff. If academic staff, pracademics are often on teaching contracts rather than research contracts (Kolber & Heggart, 2022). This isolation is evident in the critique offered by some such as Eacott, (2021, p.58), "appearing as hostile". "The pracademic becomes the outsider to at least one of the professional worlds they inhabit" (Hollweck et al., 2022b, p.14).

The pracademic is seen as a "bridge", "a ladder", "dismantling the Wheel" of traditional conceptions of research and practice and valuing the importance of working simultaneously within, between, and beyond the demarcated spaces of practice, policy, and academia (Campbell, 2022, p.102; Hollweck et al., 2022b). Pracademics are a boundary spanner of the ethereal world of academia as a scholar, and the pragmatic world of practice (Chaaban et al., 2021; Eacott, 2021; Friesen, 2021; Kolber & Heggart, 2022). As such they can also be described as an interpreter, translator, speaking the languages of research, academic and practice, a connect, an interface, a synergy between academics and practitioners (Chaaban et al., 2021; Friesen, 2021).

Pracademic as Cognitive Apprentice

The Cognitive Apprentice builds on a core common thread within Vygotsky's constructivism (1978), Sweller's cognitive load theory (1988) and Bandura's social learning theory (1977) by creating a relationship between the learner and the environment (de Bruin, 2019), developing tacit knowledge through personal contact with and observation of others, working under an experts' guidance, interacting with them and adjusting performance accordingly (Cheng et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2016). The Cognitive Apprentice weaves theoretical features together within a sequential and systematic pedagogical tapestry, cycle of planning, monitoring, and evaluating, to support novices becoming experts (Porcaro, 2011). The Cognitive Apprentice methodology of modelling, scaffolding, and coaching progresses on to exploration and generalisation (fading) as the student reaches expertise (Munby et al., 2003; Matsuo & Tsukube, 2020). Explicitly teaching novices how to become consciously familiar with the methods they use to learn, how and why they work, and when and how to apply them, could help them think more like experts (Sweller, 1988). Shanahan et al. (2011) established that, through performing a 'think-aloud' process, it was clear that experts think differently from novices. Reynolds and Rush (2017) observed that experts, through their think-aloud methodology, create an internal dialogue with themselves whereas novices act at a surface-level comprehension, looking for a single right answer.

The Cognitive Apprentice demands a trifold approach to apprenticeships: (1) a cognitive apprenticeship to learn to think like others in their profession, (2) a practical apprenticeship

to learn how to perform like those in their profession and, (3) a moral apprenticeship to learn how to act with moral integrity (Best et al., 2021). Munby et al., (2003) refer to the latter as dispositions (values, attitudes, and preferences) which influence how an individual constructs knowledge and is therefore a more broader component together with knowledge and skills of the 'becoming' journey (Reddy & Shaw, 2019). These cognitive skills are not fully observable so pracademics as Cognitive Apprentice are required to make expert tacit processes explicit (Hale, 2021; Matsuo & Tsukube, 2020), thinking-aloud. Tacit or procedural knowledge is opaque and acquired from experience, but learning is derived from decoding tacit knowledge rather than simply the experience itself (Munby et al., 2003). The Cognitive Apprentice therefore adopts the paradigm of situated learning, a concept in which learning is grounded in authentic experience (Munby et al., 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Reddy & Shaw, 2019), linking to values and dispositions. As Munby et al. (2003, p.96) state, tacit knowledge is more readily acquired in unusual situations, a-typical (Johnson & Senge, 2010), when experts increase their use of metacognition. It is often in these circumstances that a novice will miscode, not recognising the change in conditions warranting a change in routine/action.

This is done through effective modelling, exposing the thinking of an expert learner (Quigley et al., 2018). It is a tool which allows pracademics as a Cognitive Apprentice to develop student skills gradually by dismantling the process into small chunks of declarative and procedural knowledge. A recent review on 'think-aloud' modelling studies (Traga Philippakos, 2021) considered the impact of metacognitive modelling on writing instruction, and discussed the effectiveness of coping models compared to mastery models. Mastery models perform the task error-free, establishing a positive attitude towards task completion and high levels of confidence (Sherrington, 2019). Coping models, on the other hand, show a level of empathetic teaching by illustrating hesitations and errors in the writing process yet with a gradual progression towards improvement and successful completion (Sherrington, 2019). Independence is the goal of students as they journey along the continuum of novice to expert – reaching a point when they can enter a disciplinary discourse without being prompted (Didau, 2015). Structured help in the form of coaching and scaffolding, enables them to achieve this (Cullen, 2019). Collins et al. (1989) defined coaching as assistance from an expert; it is not a sequential activity but rather the chain that binds the entire

apprenticeship experience (Hale, 2021). Paz Dennen (2013) draws out a second term which shares many of the same qualities: mentoring. She defines it as one who mediates expert knowledge for novices, helping that which is tacit become more explicit; they provide strategies such as verbal descriptions and visual aids to reveal expert knowledge to the learner. Mentoring implies a reciprocal process of growth where the novice and the mentor obtain diverse benefits from multiple sources depending on their own improvement areas and professional needs (Aravena, 2018; Wilson, 2021). It is an active experience based on advice, reflections, counsel and professional development in different contexts for both the novice and the mentor (Aravena, 2018; Wilson, 2021).

Pracademics scaffold by guiding learners, encouraging them to think deeply and leading them through the questioning process and reducing support as the learning process continues (Bell & Bell, 2020). Learners look to the pracademics as a Cognitive Apprentice for guidance, direction and prompts when they are unable to proceed without some temporary intervention that will enable them to take part in the active learning process, defined as a 'cognitive wrapper' (Soto, 2015). The 'wrapper's' focus is on prompting students' metacognitive skills, and this indicates a high level of reflective proficiency required from the pracademic.

Reflection

The "disciplining" role of self-reflection is a mechanism for internalised self-regulated surveillance operating within discursive practices at work and occur through processes such as planning, monitoring and evaluating (Munby et al., 2003). However, Lester and Costley (2010) suggest companies restrict the potential for critical reflection where an uncritical approach to organisational norms and values can lead to "game playing" by employees and managers, which inhibits learning. It is a potential tightrope walk for the pracademic as Cognitive Apprentice who needs to keep the balance between facilitating the individual's self-assessment development against this concrete benchmark, whilst also enabling the individual to understand the importance of social context in relation to the self (Schedlitzki, 2018). WBL relies on reflection and the ability of the pracademic to be a reflective practitioner because reflection is seen as an integral component of work, a necessary

element in evaluation, sensemaking, learning and decision-making processes in the workplace (Bravenboer, 2018) and thus an integral component (Gerhardt, 2021). Engaging learners in critical reflection processes is not easy (Schedlitzki, 2018). It is through a focus on reflection that the needs of production can be reconciled with the needs of employees to have satisfying engagement with their work (Bravenboer, 2018). Boud et al. (2006) argued, that "productive reflection" can help to address some of the complexities and uncertainties that organisations face and the theory-practice gap. Productive reflection emphasises the social collective aspects of reflection – people reflecting together in the workplace (Bravenboer, 2018; Munby et al., 2003; Thomassen & Jorgensen, 2021).

Schön (1983) described an alternative way of learning based on "reflection-in-action" through which learners learn by critically reflecting on theory and re-evaluating that knowledge in action. Dewey (1938) referred to this process as 'self-correction' (Dewey, 1938; Thomassen & Jorgensen, 2021; Thurgate, 2021) but this may be not be evident in the novice. Seeing the Cognitive Apprentice doing this is therefore vital. The combination of reflection-in-action with reflection-on-action provides a deeper understanding of the potential value and role of reflection in experiential learning. Transformation occurs when learning encourages deep questioning of "long established frames of reference" leading to the creation of "new meaning schemes" (Mezirow, 1990, p.5). Experiential learning can provide the opportunity to engage in transformative learning, which can result in a change to learner "identity" (Bell & Bell, 2020).

Reflection can be taught (and learnt) through strategic teaching intervention and appropriate scaffolding (Bell & Bell, 2020), and modelling by a master i.e. the Cognitive Apprentice. There is a strong alignment between the development of critical reflective capacities and enhanced context-dependent 'operant competence' (Bravenboer, 2018). Reflexivity adds further value because it provides a process through which critical reflection can occur (Bouten-Pinto, 2016). Furthermore, critical reflection, as a valued business benefit, has the potential for significant cultural change within the organisation (Bravenboer, 2018).

The pracademic, who now takes on the role of coach or developer as a Cognitive Apprentice (Mueller & Anderson, 2014), can encourage the practice of 'reflection-in-action' (Schon, 1983; Thurgate, 2021). Reflecting during the experience allows learners to re-evaluate their logic and strategy based on their current outcomes, and make adjustments accordingly to enhance the outcome of the experience.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to understand pracademics and their reflective proficiency as a Cognitive Apprentice in WBL. The authors aimed to understand a phenomena (pracademics), through in-depth interpretative analysis, as it presents itself to us as conscious human beings (Dibley et al., 2020), to reflect on experience thus far in relation to reflection i.e. temporality and historicity (Dibley et al., 2020) to enabled "dialogic exchange" (Dibley et al., 2020, p.94), to gain insight "into understanding the human experience of being-in-the-world in ways which resonate with others, achieving the 'phenomenological nod'" (Dibley et al., 2020, p.117). This paper considered the intersection of three key concepts regarding historicity (the situatedness of the experience) and thrownness (the predetermined way in which we are shaped and being shaped by the specific, familial, social and cultural environment) (Dibley et al., 2020, pp. 43-44). Authors echo the view of Schedlitzki (2018) that reflection is not easy to teach and implement and often ends up being a simple evaluation of practice satisfying lecturing staff and professional and regulatory bodies ignoring oneself doing the practice (Wong et al., 2016). Having reflective proficiency as a Cognitive Apprentice has an impact on 'thinking aloud' in reference to reflection and therefore enabling/guiding the novice in developing metacognitive skills (Matsuo & Tsukube, 2020). Experience within Higher Education ranges between awareness of 'pedagogical' delivery aspects as noted by Bell and Bell (2020), and focusing on values or dispositions as stated by Munby et al. (2003) and professional learning and 'becoming' (Campbell, 2022; Chaaban et al., 2021), even though reflection or metacognition would be implicit within the process. It is evident how a 'think-aloud' cognitive wrapper by pracademics as Cognitive Apprentices can improve the delivery and reflection within WBL by making students more explicitly aware of how they can further develop in their reflection by modelling, coaching and facilitating reflection. This 'think-aloud' process in relation to reflection can also aid tutors to be more aware of their own expert processes, making this more explicit to the novice. It is clear that the use and effect of reflection by pracademics cannot be assumed and therefore effectively being modelled as

a Cognitive Apprentice. They are however, better suited to be a Cognitive Apprentice. Pracademics are uniquely placed to deliver professional learning but need more support themselves to be even more effective especially as reflective practitioners and therefore as Cognitive Apprentices. The debate continues whether pracademics make a better Cognitive Apprentice within WBL.

Whilst it is undeniably challenging to achieve the "tri-professional" role of the well-rounded academic (subject expertise, research expertise, and pedagogic expertise), and perhaps realistically no academic is likely to have an equally weighted pie chart of professional abilities, our argument is that to be an academic means embracing the notion of developing in all these arenas. Defining yourself as a "pracademic" risks shutting the door on this, and self-limiting who you are as an academic. (Hodgson & Garner, 2023, no page)

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How compliant are physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services with clinical audit practice?

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Abstract:
The purpose of this project was to determine the extent to which physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services undertake the full clinical audit cycle. A sample of convenience was used to select physiotherapists that were in attendance over two conference days. Those who verbally consented to take part were asked to complete a survey and place it in an envelope which was immediately sealed to maintain confidentiality of responses. The majority of physiotherapists undertook clinical audit practice (94%). The common frequency of clinical audits was annually (77%). Most physiotherapists did not contribute their clinical audit outcomes into any quality improvement initiatives (42%). Occupational health services should encourage physiotherapists affiliated to them to identify and link their outcomes into broader quality improvement initiatives so that the full audit cycle can be completed.

Keywords: clinical audit, occupational health, physiotherapy, survey, practice

Introduction

Clinical audit is a quality improvement practice that aims to improve the delivery of healthcare through the systematic review of care against explicit criteria or standards (Lokuarachchi, 2006). Following completion of the clinical audit changes are implemented at individual and/or service level and further monitoring is used to confirm if the changes lead to improvement in healthcare delivery (Johnston *et al.,* 2000).

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In 1989, the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom (UK) introduced a White Paper titled 'Working for Patients' to ensure that the delivery of healthcare was reviewed and best practice was being implemented (Waclawski, 2009). Since the release of the White Paper clinical audit practice has become a requirement for health professionals working in the NHS. In addition, physiotherapists are required by their regulatory body, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), to undertake this practice as part of continuous professional development (Health and Care Professions Council, 2018).

In the UK, occupational health departments undertake clinical audit practice not just as a medical requirement but as a vital quality improvement initiative (Ujah *et al.,* 2004). A range of occupational health activities have the potential to undergo clinical audit, namely vocational rehabilitation, back pain, depression and anxiety, needle stick injuries, immunisations, pre-employment health screening, types of referrals and common health conditions, cost-effectiveness, skin dermatitis, and client satisfaction. A literature search revealed that physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services have undertaken clinical audits on clinical and cost-effectiveness of therapeutic interventions and client satisfaction (Addley *et al.,* 2010; Chetty, 2011, 2014; Smedley *et al.,* 2012).

A full clinical audit cycle involves more than just simply collecting information as a benchmark exercise against a standard. It is a process that involves undertaking repeat audits to confirm the impact of any changes implemented, sharing of outcomes to relevant stakeholders, and having a follow-up process that contributes into quality improvement initiatives (Benjamin, 2008). The purpose of this project was therefore to determine the extent to which physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services complete the full clinical audit cycle.

Methods

An initial online database search was carried out in Google Scholar, Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (Medline), and the United States National Library of Medicine (PubMed) using the terms: clinical audit, occupational health, physiotherapy. This

search informed the development of the clinical audit practice survey for the purpose of this project.

Data were collected at the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Conference in March 2022 in the UK. This annual conference is one of the largest international occupational health meetings with representatives from many countries. Occupational health professionals represented included physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, and researchers. The author elected to survey UK based physiotherapists attending the conference about their current clinical audit practice, related outcomes, and follow-up initiatives.

Data collection was undertaken by the author by convenience sampling, selecting physiotherapists that were in attendance over the two conference days. The author approached physiotherapists, identified by their name badge, between conference presentations, on route to the poster presentation area, and during rest breaks, who were affiliated to occupational health services. Participants who verbally consented to take part were asked to complete the clinical audit practice survey and place it in an envelope which was immediately sealed to maintain confidentiality of responses.

Data were collated in an anonymized manner on a spread sheet by the author at the end of each day. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Software for Excel (XLSTAT) package. This project was classified a service improvement and therefore ethical approval was not required (Health Research Authority, 2017).

Findings

In total, 34 physiotherapists provided verbal consent to participate in the survey. Of these, one was incomplete with only the demographic characteristics of the survey completed and was therefore excluded from the data analysis.

The characteristics of the physiotherapists are shown in Table 1. The mean years of employment were 17.3 years. In terms of job role, most identified as occupational health physiotherapists (52%), followed by advance practice occupational health physiotherapists (27%), and the least identified as consultant occupational health physiotherapists (12%) and

occupational health physiotherapy managers (9%). In terms of employment status, most physiotherapists worked full time (73%), followed by part time (21%), and occasionally (6%). The main employer was private companies (42%), followed by self-employment (31%), the NHS (18%), and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) (9%).

The responses to clinical audit practice of physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services are shown in Table 2. Overall, the majority of physiotherapists undertook clinical audit practice (94%). In terms of frequency, most physiotherapists undertook annual clinical audits (77%), followed by every two years (13%), monthly (6%) and weekly (4%). With regards to outcomes, 42% of physiotherapists shared their outcomes with both their employing organisation and organisations outside of their employment, 19% did not share their outcomes with any organisation, 23% shared their outcomes with only their employing organisation and 16% shared their outcomes only with organisations outside of their employment. Most physiotherapists did not contribute their clinical audit outcomes into any quality improvement initiatives (71%). Of those that did contribute, 13% contributed only to internal quality improvement initiatives, 6% contributed only to external quality improvement initiatives, and 10% contributed to both internal and external quality improvement initiatives.

Discussion

The main finding from this project was that the majority of physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services were involved in clinical audit practice. This is consistent with the clinical audit practices of occupational health physicians and nurses (Lalloo et al., 2016; Verow, 2004). Of those physiotherapists undertaking clinical audit practice most did so annually. This is in keeping with the Safe Effective Quality Occupational Health Service (SEQOHS) accreditation standards in the UK which require occupational health services including those affiliated to them to have an annual clinical audit cycle plan (SEQOHS, 2018).

The majority of physiotherapists shared the outcomes of their clinical audit with both their employing organisation and with organisations outside of their employment. Informal feedback at the end of the conference revealed that physiotherapists shared their outcomes internally during team development and training sessions, and in professional domains such

as conferences and peer-reviewed publications for audiences external to the employing organisation.

The majority of physiotherapists did not contribute their clinical audit outcomes into any quality improvement initiatives. Once the outcomes have been defined and disseminated, contributing them into relevant quality improvement initiatives is required to ensure that broader healthcare processes and structural deficiencies are identified and a sustainable action plan for improvement is developed and implemented (Johnston et al., 2000). The strength of this project is that it is the first to evaluate the clinical audit practices of physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services in the UK. A main limitation was the small sample size despite the convenient access to a wide number of physiotherapists at the conference.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this project serves as an introduction to understand the clinical audit practices of physiotherapists affiliated to occupational health services. The majority of participants were involved in clinical audit practice and were mainly carried out annually. Very few physiotherapists contributed their outcomes into quality improvement initiatives. A future project is needed to understand the barriers faced by physiotherapists to identify broader quality improvement initiatives and how occupational health can support physiotherapists affiliated to their services complete the full clinical audit cycle. Occupational health services should also encourage physiotherapists affiliated to them to contribute their outcomes into broader quality improvement initiatives so that the full audit cycle can be completed.

Acknowledgements

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Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Population (N=33)

Variables	N	%
All participants	33	100
Years of experience	17.3	
Job role		
Occupational health physiotherapist	17	52
Advanced practice occupational health physiotherapist	9	27
Consultant occupational health physiotherapist	4	12
Occupational health physiotherapy manager	3	9
Other (please specify)	0	0
Employment status		
Full time	24	73
Part time	7	21
Occasional	2	6
Other (please specify)	0	0
Main employer		
National Health Service	6	18
Ministry of Defence	3	9
Private Company	14	42
Self-employed	10	31
Other (please specify)	0	0

Table 2: Responses to Clinical Audit Practice of Physiotherapists affiliated to Occupational Health Services (N=33)

Audit	N (%)	Frequency	Outcomes	Follow-up
Yes	31 (94%)	Weekly = 1 (4%)	Internal only* = 7 (23%)	Internal only*** = 4 (13%)
		Monthly = 2 (6%)	External only** = 5 (16%)	External only**** = 2 (6%)
		Annually = 24 (77%)	Both internal and external = 13 (42%)	Both internal and external = 3 (10%)
		Every two years = 4 (13%)	No sharing of outcomes = 6 (19%)	No follow-up initiatives = 22 (71%)
		No repeat audits = 0 (0%)		
No	2 (6%)			

*shared with employing organisation
**shared with organisation(s) outside of employing organisation
***contributing into quality improvement initiatives of employing organisation
****contributing into quality improvement initiatives with organisation(s) outside of employing organisation

A professional doctorate with purpose in mind: developing an identity workspace for DBA candidates

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In postgraduate business education there has been an increasingly loud call for courses to do much more than simply provide a qualification. The 'acquisition' approach of 'getting' a postgraduate qualification has been challenged for example by Roos (2014), who calls for the development of value-based practical wisdom, with as much attention paid to developing the identity of the student as thoughtful, creative and influential individuals as there is spent on subject matter. This is particularly relevant for the study for a professional doctorate, where developing an identity as a 'scholarly practitioner' is an essential area of focus.

The Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) at London Metropolitan University has a particular commitment to developing the identities of its candidates as scholarly practitioners with an awareness of equality and social justice (London Metropolitan University 2023). By seeing the course as an 'identity workspace' (Petriglieri and Petriglieri , 2010: 44), the difficulties associated with developing identity are acknowledged (Markus and Nurius 1986). The course therefore aims to provide a safe space for identity work (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010; Kets de Vries and Korotov 2012; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010). This is a particularly helpful concept for the development of a professional doctorate course which aims to develop value-based 'scholarly practitioners'. Scholarly practitioners are practitioners who are able to integrate scholarship and practice in their work, and show the practical wisdom so necessary for being influential despite the complexity and chaos that often characterises contemporary organisations (Banerjee and Morley 2013).

Models of identity structures that are relevant to this definition of a scholarly practitioner are that of a 'critical person' (Barnett, 1997) and also that of a person capable of 'self authorship' (Baxter Magolda 2004; Kegan 1982, 1994). Barnett suggests that a 'critical person' has an identity which is capable of integrating knowledge, knowledge of self and action for meaningful decision making. Simliarly, a person capable of self-authorship is also seen to be able to integrate these three elements into sense-making then meaningful action. Interestingly, both models emphasise the challenges associated with integrating the three elements and then taking action. Barnett (1997) considers that 'critical energy' is deployed and Baxter Magolda (2004) and Kegan (1994) draw on the work of Winnicott (1975/1953) to suggest that a suitable environment for development might be described a 'holding environment', one that is safe and challenging at the same time.

This concept is also deployed by Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) when they suggest that the 'holding environment' that is essential to an identity workspace acknowledges the challenges associated with developing identity and so provides an environment that 'reduces disturbing affect and facilitates sense making'. This type of environment may be created by an individual (Winnicott 1975/1953) or a group (Drago-Severson et al 2001). Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) suggest it has three main characteristics:

- Conceptual frameworks and routines that help with sense-making
- Communities that provide a combination of belonging, support and challenge
- Rites of passage that facilitate and recognise role transitions and identity development

If the course is to provide individuals with the opportunity to develop their identities as scholarly practitioners, another conceptual area that provides help with creating the right kind of environment relates to seeing the course as a liminal space (Turner, 1987), a time of identity change, role transition, disruption and potential growth. This concept aligns well with the ideas involved in promoting a identity workspace as it anticipates changes in roles and attitudes. Being 'betwixt and between', a work in progress, anticipates having chances to try things out and be imaginative and playful. Bigger (2010) points out, however, that the state of liminality needs to be facilitated and channelled if it is to be productive.

It follows therefore, that if entering a professional doctorate like a DBA is to be seen as an identity workspace and exists in a liminal space, there needs to be a structured approach through the three main areas named above to promote development.

At London Metropolitan University, characteristics of the DBA identity workspace include the following:

• **Conceptual frameworks and routines that help with sense-making**

During the first part of the course the candidates are required to create action plans for their own development as scholarly practitioners and to reflect upon their progress. The candidates are provided with frameworks to guide their plans for development which include:

An adapted Vitae Researcher Development Framework (Vitae 2020), the 'PRDF' Practitioner Researcher Development Framework

The Open University 'Digital and Information Literacy Framework'(DILF) (Open University 2023)

The seven elements of digital literacy (Jisc, 2012).

The Open University 'Researching Professional Development Framework' (Open Learn 2020)

Practice Capabilities for Professional DBA at an Australian University (Kimber (2001) in Banerjee and Morley (2013)

The inquiry wheel (Harwood 2004).

• **Communities that provide a combination of belonging, support and challenge**

From the outset, the course aims to provide a shared space and a spirit of 'communitas' between the candidates as they develop as scholarly practitioners. In particular there is an emphasis on authentic activities of the research community and:

Relationships, reciprocation and responsibility

Developmental processes involving self- awareness and interdependency

Recognition of the influence of group culture on learning and development

Providing opportunities for meaningful participation in authentic research development activities

Encouraging habits of self and group reflection and developing self awareness

A particular activity that aims to include all of these is the PRG (Practitioner Research Group), a monthly meeting where candidates present their developing research ideas to their peers and guest academic tutors. The PRG provides collaborative supervision before individual supervision commences, and the members provide productive feedback to their peers, so that each becomes familiar with authentic practice of the research community

- **Rites of passage that facilitate and recognise role transitions and identity development**

London Metropolitan University holds an annual Staff/Student Research Conference where research students are encouraged to present lightning talks and research posters. All of the DBA candidates are encouraged to take part, with the aim that participation in this authentic research activity marks their identity development as a scholarly practitioner

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Why no professional doctorates in Norway

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In 1975 the first formalised program for training of doctoral candidates was established at the faculty for Mathematical and Scientific studies, at the University of Oslo, after considerable resistance from the other faculties, and within 20 years all four universities and scientific colleges had established programs for their respective faculties. In 2003 the Ministry opened for other tertiary education institutions to prepare for the establishment of new doctoral programs and aspire for university status. A national accreditation system was established to monitor the reform. All doctoral studies were renamed from association to the professions, such as dr.juris, dr.med., dr.scient., dr.oecon., etc and organised under the PhD-umbrella. The Council for Higher education, a member organization for alle HE-institutions designed a unified set of rules and directions for the establishment of new PhD-programs. Following criticism of the rigidity of the PhD, adjustments have been made to open for new innovative doctoral programs catering for interdisciplinary and professional areas of study. However, there seems to have been little movement from the scholastic tradition of the PhD to expand the focus and genres of research and documentation within the realm of the PhD. Since the late 1990-ies proposals to include a program for tenured lecturers in HE into a professional doctorate has been turned down consistently, due to the alleged openness of the present PhD. However, two government funded projects aimed at the industry and public governance have been piloted over the last 15 years. In spite of attempts to move from an overwhelming domination of conventional PhDs to a more practice based one, some evaluation reports suggest that these two pilots leave candidates and programme owners with few clues about what the alternative path to a PhD is. This paper argues that the academic drive of even allegedly progressive doctoral programmes undermines non-scholastic and practice based doctoral studies. The theoretical as well as practical implications of a move to a more practice-based conception of a doctoral study is seemingly underdeveloped in the Norwegian context, or at least insufficiently acknowledged and explicated to policymakers and stakeholders. This

paper aims to formulate a basis for a PhD-programme based on these insights nationally and internationally.

Keywords: professional doctorates, doctoral candidates, Norway