CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0 Prologue

This chapter is intended to provide you, the reader, with an understanding of who I am, what I am doing, how I am doing it and an indication of when and where the process started and indeed how it has continued.

I commence by defining my target audience (academics and professional practitioners) and then proceed to describe my field of research interest, effectively the improvement of my professional practice[5]. I describe the background to the theory of continuous improvement and identify my philosophical position in terms of ontology and epistemology. At this point the reader will have already become aware of my use of the first person singular which is emblematic within the living theory tradition.[6] This field utilises action research as a methodology and I describe both the concept of living theory and the genre of action research in order to make clear the underpinnings of my methodology. In addition to use of the first person singular I also use metaphors, soft systems methodology, diagrams, photographs and quotations. The purpose of this to provide the reader with greater context to facilitate understanding and hence achieve one of my main goals. Additionally it fulfils one of van Maanen's principles (1988) in the pursuit of effective communication – 'to recount striking stories with interest'. Richardson (2000) would add a combination of scientific and aesthetic criteria to Van Maanen's, namely: "is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex and not boring? " In both respects I hope the reader is not disappointed.

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[5] Practice may be defined as the contribution a professional makes in their rôle in society. This includes all aspects of behaviour, including ethical positions and periodic critical reflection (Higgs, Horsfall, & Grace, 2009).

6 Examples of recent theses in this tradition include:Van Tuyl (2010), Crotty (2012) & Hughes (2012).

The difficulty of measurement is as there are multiple potential methods of measuring improvement but these critically depend on what exactly one wishes to improve. I discuss possible types of measurement before proposing my preferred option.

The spiral of action research requires continuous self-examination, critical reflection and consideration of future plans and so therefore, to be successful in this enterprise I need to consider my personal competence and capability in this area. I conclude that for various reasons I do possess the necessary credentials to embark on this research.

In order to provide the reader with context I briefly describe myself in terms of age, background, socio-economic class and perspectives on life before going on to describe my research methodology. I describe my methodology as a qualitative case study employing Habermas's critical social theory perspective within a phenomenological, reflective practitioner approach. This thesis also underlines the rôle of creativity and indeed tacit knowledge, based on a thorough understanding of existing theory, empirical observation and abductive reasoning which can result in inspirational thought which results in the discovery of patterns new to existing human knowledge.

Becoming a proficient reflective and reflexive practitioner requires adopting a life-long learner approach to work, career, family, health and social interactions. All of these domains overlap and interact with one another. The language of English is also of import, as indeed is the structure of language. The thesis explores the philosophical conceptualisation of business and how it is experienced from an emic perspective. Hidden frames of reference can provide a barrier to understanding and hence this research provides a richer insight into language within the business context.

I conclude with an overview of the thesis and some deeper reflections on what further insights I am now able to identify. Indeed this cycle of reflection followed by deeper and yet deeper reflection is a characteristic of all chapters.

1.1 What am I doing?

Following the typology of Shankar (2009), there are two main potential categories of reader of this thesis. The first is fellow academics who will judge its worth by the usual academic criteria. The second is professional practitioners, possibly in Marketing or perhaps in other fields. Clearly in order to be considered successful I need to satisfy the first group. But it is to the second group that the greatest value may obtain. By my writings, I hope to effect an androgogical (i.e. pedagogical but specifically focusing on adults) communication that will too, allow others to improve their practice.[7] By detailing my experiences and what I have learned from them I can present you, gentle reader, with a picture that enables you (hopefully) to transfer insights into your own field and utilise the knowledge to create possible solutions to your own issues and problems. In this sense, my thesis[8] is an educational narrative. It is also necessarily an interpretive approach where reality is only given meaning by understanding social interactions and the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967) or multiple realities (Twining, 2000).

A key point that I wish to make about interpretation is that it is grounded in something that we have in advance, "Vorhabe" (Heidegger, 1962), our own understanding of the context colours the picture that we are seeing. Interpretation is not something that one *does* it is something that one is directly involved *in* (Gallagher, 1992). Praxis[9] (Schwandt, 2002) is the name given to the engagement embedded in communally

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[7] The use of multi-media explications was enthusiastically proposed to me by Professor Jack Whitehead when I met him in Bath, Somerset in the summer of 2011. The video "What am I doing?" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaJj-GAW3gk&lr=1&user=JackWhitehead covers this point in little over a minute.

[8] I use the term 'Thesis' for higher degrees by research only, and 'Dissertation' for higher degrees by coursework, including a research project. (Dick B. , 2002, p. 169). I mention this here because I was once told by a Professor at London University that there was someone in the University who knew exactly what the difference between a Thesis and Dissertation actually was, but that he himself did not know who that person was.

[9] More fundamentally "Praxis" refers to the application of theory into practice (Lather, 1991).

shared understandings and values and depends on their everyday linguistic usage (Dunne, 1993). Hence the two categories of reader of this thesis will necessarily both receive slightly different interpretations of what I am saying because their "vohabe" and experiences are also different. This may or may not be desirable, but it is most certainly unavoidable.

The acid test for both categories of reader can be found in the standards of "Truth Claims" (Habermas J. , 1976) which, broadly, include whether the thesis is convincing, honest, original and leads to increased understanding. Lytotard (1984) suggests that the acid test is determined from the perspective of the practitioner as s/he will be able to determine whether it is good theory/research from a practical or technological point of view – or to be more specific can it guide ***action?***

In order to understand any narrative some context must be given, in terms of locations, dates and political, economic, social and technological background. I do this as accurately as I can but I also assist the reader by providing as rich a contextual picture as I can. Language is important and I will also try to augment this with illustrations, metaphors and any device which I believe will assist in this endeavour, as indeed Max van Mannen (1989) would concur. This is necessary but I will endeavour to cut out the purely anecdotal by using the twin principles of reflexivity and Occam's razor.

Methodologically there is of course circularity in this. My own interpretation is based on my own praxis and therefore my vorhabe will heavily influence this. The concept of reflexivity[10] (which questions not only the process but also the objective or the question and also examines the relationship between the object and the researcher) allows some of these binds to be cut – but only some. It should go without saying that under no circumstances should I allow myself to drift into an ego-orientated quest based

[10] The problem of reflexivity's impact on Scientific method was identified by Karl Popper (1957)

narrative. (Frank, 1995); (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). I need to continue in a critical rather than a self-congratulatory manner (Harding S. , 1986).

1.2 Problem Statement and Research Objective

The central problem that I start with is "How do I improve my professional practice"

I see myself astride two complementary professions – that of an Academic and a Marketeer[11]. I re-entered academia in 2009 after some 30 years in the corporate world. This was not an idle move, I had taught previously back in 1981 and it was always my intention to return. But more on this later.

The technique that I shall be applying is that of Action Research, this is the theory of how through a continuous cycle of action, assessment, reflection and subsequent amended action a process, system or organisation can be steadily improved upon (Schön D. A., 1983). I will describe Action Research, its place in qualitative research and its' underpinning philosophical tenets in some detail later in Chapter I. However, the specific research methodology I follow is that of the Living Theory Paradigm (Whitehead J. , 2000), (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002) and (Wong E. S., 2003) (2004). This paradigm utilises a number of different cycles of reflection and the deeper levels of reflection have been termed by Moon (2004, p. 97) as critical reflection, perspective transformation or reflexivity.

The concept of the Living Theory has been defined as:

[11] My spelling is intentional. And the Economist Style Guide would indeed agree with me (c.f .Black Marketeer, Free Marketeer etc.). But my professional body (the CIM) is driving its' brand image strongly away from any pejorative connotations and prefers the use of the term "Marketer".

> "…an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they live and work." (Whitehead J. , 2009).

Professor Whitehead explains his threefold approach to Living Theory in a video (16th April 2014) in which he explains how people perceive their embodied values and how this has influenced how they have lived and worked.

Figure 1.1 Living Theory

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoCwS89m1jo

Jack Whitehead (2000) also states that Action Research reports can be judged in terms of whether the author shows that s/he is offering explanations, rather than only observations and descriptions of practice by living out their declared values. From there I very much want to communicate what I have learned such that both the theory of marketing and the experiences of those working in it are enhanced as I contribute to the body of marketing knowledge. A former Professor of mine once said: "through the denial of feelings, imagination and the human spirit, concealed assumptions, rigid sterile and inappropriate methods of inquiry and the enlargement of trivia into problems of consequence, we, you and I preserve our employment prospects to the detriment of our souls, our fellow men and society" (Pym, 1993, p. 234).

This view is echoed by Leitch & Day (2000), Swan & Bailey (2004) and Bolton (2005) who believe that the rôle of emotion[12] needs to be recognised in understanding and developing one's capability in self-reflection. This concept of emotional insight (Moon J. , 2004) is similar to that of Mezirow (1981) who called it "affective reflexivity", more recently Cathryn Lloyd (2010) used the term "affective reflection".

In a sense, my study is an emic ethnographic investigation into the field (or society) of Marketing.[13] It is not, however, a conventional ethnographic study based on positivistic assumptions, but more of a critical ethnographic approach. Critical ethnography aims to not only critique but also posit better options for future action. Following Van Maanen's (1988) typology my approach is "realist" as opposed to confessional or impressionist.

Burawoy (2004) identified two types of knowledge; instrumental knowledge is concerned with solutions for either practical or theoretical problems. On the other hand reflexive knowledge is more about questioning the ends. The focus of instrumental knowledge on deriving an answer rather than querying the question is a weakness identified by Paul Feyerabend in his seminal book – Against Method (1988). Reflexive knowledge recognises that it is not value neutral so that critical evaluation once again depends on "vorhabe". Thus, the epistemology of what we call Critical Theory is essentially subjective.

In order to improve my practice I can do this by means of informational or instrumental learning by way of reflection. But if I do this within a constant frame of reference, then

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[12] See for example; Fineman (Emotion in Organizations, 1993)

[13] There are a number of extant research methodologies identified in the literature, Marxism (from which Feminism and Critical theory could be said to be derived), Structural Functionalism, Hermeneutic Inquiry, Phenomenology, Ethnography, Action Research, Post-Modernism etc. But these methodologies are not separate distinct methodologies which are mutually exclusive; they overlap in three (or four) dimensional space in much the same way as Euler's circles. I see my thesis as incorporating elements of a number of these methodologies. Furthermore I see this as a clear strength and by no means a weakness.

I have not achieved what Kegan (2000) described as Transformational Learning. In order to achieve this, I also need to re-examine my understanding of meanings – indeed my own epistemology.

There is also an element of self-care in the reflexive process as identified by Mead (1934) and Garfinkel (1967). Through reflection we can make sense of what has happened and create (or possibly recreate) a sense of order. This sense of order or control over our recollections of the past also provide an element of control (Giddens, 1991) and also potentially empowerment. Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) also discuss the idea of "attending to feelings" but also suggest that emotions and feelings can be both positive but also barriers towards learning from the past. Hence a benefit of this thesis can be to provide clarity, order and empowerment to the author, but only if I take on board the fact that my emotional feelings and reactions may cloud learning, unless I take care to avoid this.

I will go on to describe in some detail my Objective, Goals, Strategies, Measures and tactics in a later section[14], however, I think it is important to clearly state the overall objective right at the beginning of this thesis.

To communicate how I improve my practice as a Global Professional

To achieve this, I must first understand how I can improve my practice and then endeavour to communicate it in a manner which brings insight and understanding to the reader and potentially enables future improved action for other professionals. I will elucidate in further sections upon the importance of Fluid Intelligence and Tacit Knowledge to the rôle of a professional Marketeer. Essentially these concepts relate how an individual can adjust to new problems using past experience as a guide but more

[14] See Figures 1.10 and 1.12 in Chapter 1.

importantly their skill in adapting to a rapidly changing and turbulent environment. By empowering the individual with awareness, understanding and reflexivity, they can become far more capable and effective in their various rôles in life.

Similarly in a later section I will describe my methodology in great detail. Suffice it now to say that I am employing a Self-reflective, Action Research methodology within the Critical Realism paradigm. The reasons for this are that (as I will later explain) Life Experience is a fundamental and critical input to Fluid Intelligence (see section 2.4) and Tacit Knowledge. This being so my life experience can add to the nexus of knowledge whilst simultaneously providing the philosophy of understanding. This hermeneutic reflection warrants my actions, which has considerable import to the truth, validity and reliability of this work.

1.3 Critical Theory within the Corporate Context.

One criticism of Marketing is that far too little research is conducted in the reflexive area and the research conducted in the instrumental area is focused almost entirely on academic issues with little relevance to Marketing practitioners (Piercy, 2002).

There has been some application of action research in Marketing (Gummesson & Perry, 2004), but it has not been a rich field of enquiry. There had been no prior research in the area of marketing action research before 2003 (Kates & Robertson, 2004). One attempt to look at the work practices in one organisation and then applying the findings to another organisation did seem successful (Thompson & Perry, 2004). The interesting thing about this particular piece of work was that one paradigm (critical theory) was applied to the first organisation and a different paradigm (realism) was applied to the second. On one level this simply suggests that the same explanation may be observed by way of different lenses, however, it also gives rise to the incommensurability thesis

(Kuhn T. , 1970), which states that useful dialogue across paradigm boundaries or between two paradigms is impossible as they have no common frame of reference. I do not accept this position without serious reservations. In my view, triangulation (observation of certain phenomena through different lenses) can add corroboration and validation to assumptions that one paradigm on its own would be incapable of sustaining I do, however, agree that different paradigms applied to separate problems can make interpretation of results and potential agreement on generalisable theory, extremely difficult.

The concept of generalisable theory is the primary objective of all researchers – managerial or of any other discipline. Sadly, the applicability of much managerial research is evaluated as not much more than useless by many academics (Behrman & Levin, 1984).

More fundamentally the vast majority of Action Research relating to the continuous improvement of professional practice has been in the areas of Social Services, Education, Hospital Services and other industries which could be referred to as either Caring Professions or Vocational work (McNiff, 2010, p. 41) Indeed the early work was by Lewin himself in the field of Education and it was he who coined the term 'Action Research', but the earliest work was probably by John Dewey who advocated teachers to examine their own practice. (Dewey J. , 1929). Action Research continued to be popular within Education into the 1950s[15] but interest then gradually declined for a time.

The differentiating characteristic of this kind of research as opposed to my approach is that the "Client" group are in some way disadvantaged, weaker or in a more dependent position. Within the Marketing arena, the protagonists will also have different

[15] See for example Stephen Corey, Action Research for improving Practice, (Corey, 1953)

perspectives, conflicting objectives etc. But all of the stakeholders (generally) are in relatively strong positions. Red Ocean strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 1995) describes the blood in the water of a cut-throat business environment. Machiavelli describes the best course of action to deal with potential rivals (kill them quickly before they become a threat). One of my line managers (i.e. my direct superior at the time) had a copy of "The Prince" by Machiavelli amongst the few books on his bookshelf and followed his thinking very closely. I have twice been in a position where I have been feared as a potential rival and instantly suffered the consequences. This is by no means, to suggest that politics do not exist in all organisations, wherever there are people, then politics will exist, rather my point is that outwith[16] the Caring/Education sectors (where so much Action Research is conducted [17]) comparatively few of the actors are in a dependent/weak position. Consultation/involvement with rivals is clearly a complex minefield to navigate. I attach in Appendix A a description of a shadowing exercise conducted on my activities in this regard by a London Business School MBA Student (Aurichio, 2004) in the early 2000s. In this, it can be seen that networking and attention to potential threats is a key component of modern corporate practice.

I show below the four quadrants proposed by (Johnson & Duberley, 2003) which characterise the philosophical foundations of management research. These are based on Subjective and Objective Epistemologies and Subjective and Objective Ontologies. Epistemology[18] relates to the theory of knowledge and Ontology is concerned with the theory of being – or in more simplistic terms issues of the nature and reality of truth.

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[16] One of my favourite and most useful Scots words – which bears no relation to its English faux amis "without" but rather means - not included.

[17] See, for example' (Whitehead J. , 2012) for a number of examples in this field.

[18] The term epistemology was also introduced by a Scot – James Ferrier (in about 1854) who like Adam Smith was also a Professor of Moral Philosophy.

Much of objective ontology is based upon what is called the correspondence theory of truth.

This is by no means the only way of identifying the main types of theoretical frameworks available but it has the beauty of simplicity (as well as following the well-worn business academic tradition of fitting neatly into a two by two matrix).

My approach is Post-Modernist in its style of writing and I could also apply this theoretical underpinning to my Action Research as advocated by Brown and Jones (2001), albeit with some misgivings. In my view, however, the subjectivist ontology of Post Modernism runs the risk of *everything* becoming relative and hence nothing more can be usefully said. Alvesson & Sköldberg see that the mark of good research is not the method, but the ontological and epistemological quality of thought (2009, p. 8). My position is with an objective ontology but my epistemology subjective, hence placing me in the environs of Critical Theory or Critical Realism. Taking the advice of Bob Dick (2002) I wish to be clear on both my epistemology and methodology, the diagram below should assist in this process.

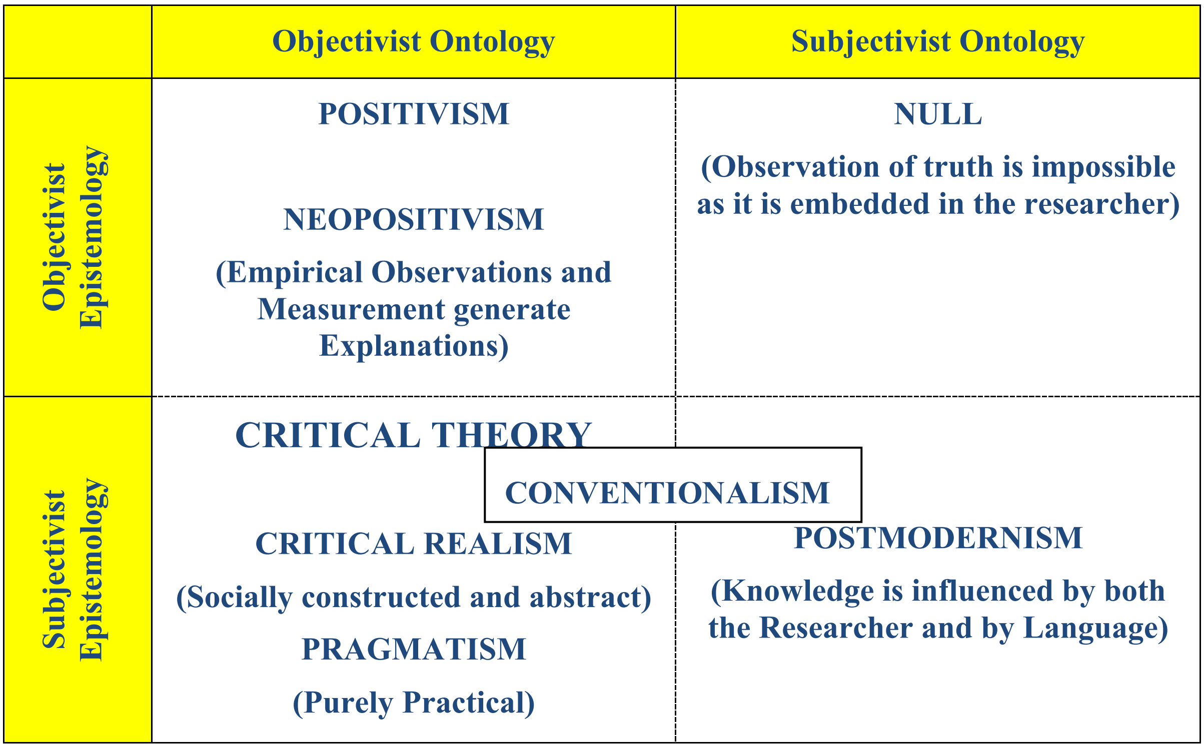

Figure 1.2 Reflexivity & Management Research

The above diagram is of course, a relatively simplistic two by two grid which does not really fully describe the overlaps and similarities between the different theories. The Null box is useful in that it shows how a Subjective Ontology and Objective Epistemology render truth unattainable. However, it also prevents a more detailed examination of the lower half of the Boston Box.

A useful alternative to the 2 by 2 box is to view Conventionalism, Post Modernism and Critical Theory in a Venn diagram.

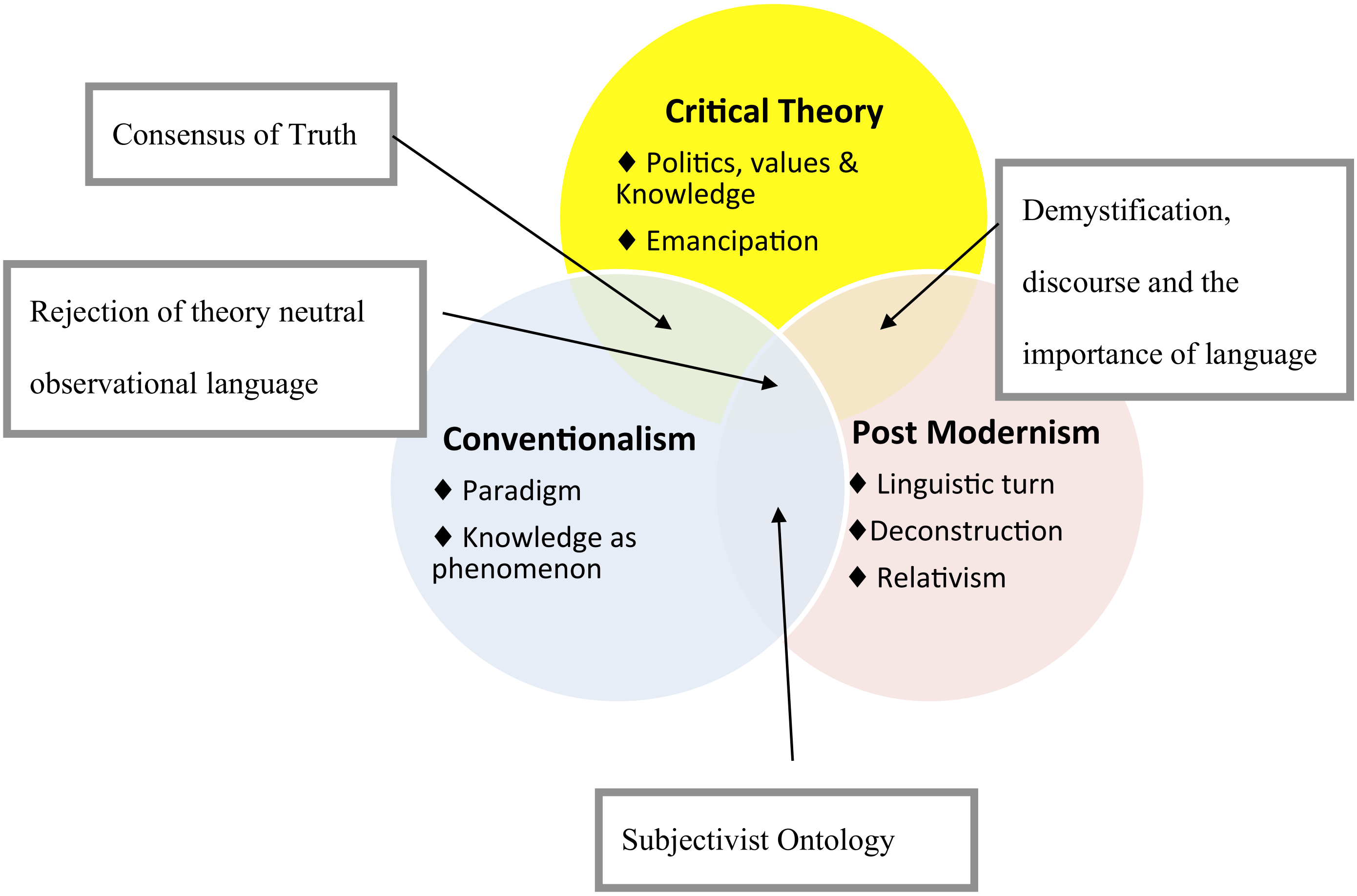

Figure 1.3 Similarities between Critical Theory, Conventionalism and Postmodernism adapted from Horkheimer (1989)

There are indeed, many overlaps between Critical Theory and Post Modernism but the main gap is the lack of a speech (language) framework within Post Modernism. In addition Best & Kellner (1991) criticise post modernism for its emphasis on individualism and lack of acceptance of criticism. There is one term in the above diagram which requires further explanation which is that of "Linguistic Turn" (Rorty, 1967). I have already alluded to Wittgenstein's language games and indeed games, interpretation and nomenclature are all relevant here. As Goodman (1978) has described colours as potentially Grue or Bleen, similarly some species are colour blind (cats for example are red/green colour blind, yet they can see far more in the dark than humans). Some species such as butterflies and bees can possibly perceive different shades of Ultra-Violet – which are beyond the limits of human perception. Snakes have a form of infra-red vision enabling them to see prey in the dark and some species (such as Cuttlefish) can detect the polarisation of light, which gives them further competitive advantages. Certain women (the gene responsible for this only exists on the Y chromosome) have four types of cones for perceiving colour (as opposed to most of the human race who only enjoy three); they are known as tetrachromats and can identify many different hues that for the most of us are identical. As a result, the names or labels we ascribe to certain observations – be they a table, a flower, a traffic light or a managerial conflict are limited by our own vocabulary, metaphors and experience. I can describe in great detail how I conceive of the colour white to a member of the Innuit but their understanding may vastly exceed mine. In Taoist philosophy there is a distinction between "ming" (the name) and "shih" (the actuality) (Fung, 1948) and this in my view captures the reality of the difference between the two. I will explain this in greater detail in later chapters.

The idea that language either determines thought or at the least influences it is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Skerrett, 2010). This in a way could be interpreted as a problem for critical theory. If indeed thought is influenced by language then many dominant articulations of the world are possibly pre-social or even biologically based, hence 'ultimately anathema to critical theory' (Pennycook, 2004, p. 222).

In a similar vein we have the issue of smell, taste, sound, feel and possible additional sensory perceptions. Many mammals are known to have better auditory capabilities than us, bats navigate by a form of radar and birds and snakes, it is thought, can navigate by means of magnetic orientation. All this goes to prove is that our perception of the "real" world is not, perhaps, perfect and also clearly not the same as other species or indeed (and more importantly) not even the same as all other members of the human race. That is to say that we all perceive and understand the world in different ways based on our own understanding and utilising our own language. I can tell you how I perceive the smell of the colour pink but if you have no prior experience of this level of understanding then you will be unable (even if you are willing) to conceive of my perception.

1.4 Reflexivity

I would now like to move on to the subject of Reflexivity. Reflexivity could be defined as questioning the question or as reflection on a number of different levels. Buroway (2004) looks at reflexivity as being more interested in the means than the ends. Reflexivity is not value neutral and necessitates examination of the consequences of the knowledge production or more fundamentally the knowledge on which it was based. More specifically; what is the purpose of this knowledge and who is it for? When I am with a class of students (undergraduate or postgraduate) and I give them an article to analyse, the key questions that I always ask them are:

- Who wrote this and what are their biases?
- What do they want me to believe?
- Does their evidence back up their claim (remembering that much could have been omitted)?
- Overall do I agree with their analysis and conclusions?

George Monbiot of the Guardian newspaper offers similar warnings with perhaps a slightly more alarmist tone. [19]

The issue of reflexivity can be divided into two categories (Harding S. , 1987), epistemic and methodological. Epistemic reflexivity focuses on the researcher and how

[19] By George Monbiot, published on the Guardian's website 29th November 2013

his or her beliefs may change dependent on the time, location and values. By means of a researcher's biography, it is possible to analyse what influences have impacted their understanding of extant knowledge (Ashmore, 1989). Methodological reflexivity is more concerned with how the researcher's behaviour can influence research results and hence is loved more by those of an objectivist ontology. Whilst those of a subjectivist ontology will be more drawn to epistemic reflexivity (Wong, Wong, & Musa, forthcoming). Hyper-reflexivity obtains when a researcher pursues both types of reflexivity simultaneously. I would position my research as primarily epistemic but with elements of methodological reflexivity creeping in. I would not, however, describe this research as hyper-reflexive.

Continuing the theme of improving my professional practice into the second domain of my career - that of education - it would seem that there also is a lacuna as identified by "the failure of marketing academics to represent practice or to alter it in significantly positive ways" (Catterall, 1999). This seems to still largely be the case as exemplified by several writers (Schroeder, 2007), (Tregear, Brennan, & Kuznesof, 2007).

Indeed, there may be a requirement for greater interaction between marketing scholars and marketing actors, if significant advances are to be made (Tadajewski, 2010). On a more general level, a criticism of management research is that much of it serves the primary purpose of Cultural Doping, that is as a method of influencing employee's attitudes to work, employment and management (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). This is a feature of Critical theory, that it regards much of management theory as an agent of capitalism. Critical theory does not suggest that values should or can be removed from research (Prasad & Caproni, 1997), but that the researcher needs to continuously evaluate their values and how they may be influencing their findings (Calhoun, 1995). The theory underlying this is that people are social beings and need to be aware of coercion and hidden influences hence achieving enlightenment and emancipation. Thus, whilst theories in the natural sciences are objectifying, critical theories are reflective (Geuss, 1981)

Methodologically this, however, begs the question as to whether this is even theoretically attainable. Quantz (1992) for example doubts the ability of critical theory researchers to dissociate themselves from what he terms "false consciousness". That is to say, in practice it is extremely difficult to not impose your own voice or values onto the study. I therefore cannot guarantee that I will achieve a continuous reassessment of the impact of my values. I will, however, endeavour to do so.

1.5 Continuous Improvement

Writing a PhD is a major undertaking, see for example Connell (1985), Phillips & Pugh (1998) and Wong (2007) amongst many others, that requires discipline, effort, time management skills, creative writing skills and (hopefully) also positive feedback from colleagues who have offered to read and comment on various sections and not forgetting my Supervisors. Reflection on what one has written and subsequent crafting and re-crafting are also called for. Past experience has taught me that the best way to succeed in writing a lengthy written report or plan is to firstly, have a clear block of time in order to make a good substantial start to the task and secondly, a hard (albeit sometimes arbitrary) deadline. Past experience has taught me that this way does work. Past experience has also taught me that it does not work terribly well.

The first problem is finding a sufficiently clear block of time. This is sometimes referred to as "A" Time where tasks that are considered "Important" but "Not Urgent" are undertaken (Covey, 1989). In theory, one is meant to block out clear periods where such "A" time issues are addressed. Unfortunately, in real life it is frequently difficult to carve out these sanctified oases of calm and solitude. More likely, other pressing demands come your way and the irksome task is postponed once again. This is often referred to as Gresham's Law of Planning. Similar in concept to Sir Thomas Gresham's[20] idea of bad (i.e. adulterated) money driving out good coinage, this explains why effective planning and organisation are so difficult in practice. I remember this as I used to study at City University Business School under a wonderful Economics lecturer called Dr. Jonathan Boswell on Gresham St – named after Sir Thomas Gresham. [21]. Bob Dick (2002, p. 168) has also identified four traps of procrastination whilst undertaking an action research thesis or dissertation, which have an oddly intoxicating circularity to them –

- Postponing data collection until all the relevant literature has been read
- Postponing analysis until all the data has been collected.
- Postponing action (i.e. intervention or development moves) until all data has been interpreted.
- Postponing writing until all other aspects of the research are complete.

In addition to lack of time and procrastination, there is also the question of the deadline. This does indeed pressurise one into frenzied activity. However, this mitigates against Quality and can lead to stress and risks complete failure when force majeure dictates that some other really important task takes priority. In addition, the time available for reflection and re-crafting is reduced and Quality[22] also suffers.

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[20] Sir Thomas Gresham (1519-1579) was an English merchant and financier. He provided funds for the establishment of Gresham College in London in 1597.

[21] Indeed as an alumnus of City University (or CASS as it is now known) I now bear the sobriquet of "Gresham Grasshopper".

[22] I take Quality not to mean some physical/engineering measurement of goodness for purpose, but more metaphysically as perception or related to the interface between the user and the object/service. (Jacoby & Olsen, 1985)

Oddly enough, I am actually quite good at explaining deadlines to my Students. I can clearly differentiate between a hard deadline (such as flight SQ52 SIN-BNE departs at 16:30) which cannot be negotiated (sorry the traffic is terrible, is it ok if I am 15 minutes late please?) and a soft deadline (please submit the Vietnamese scripts to the exam office by Tuesday). The reality is that sometimes, soft deadlines can be as useful in precipitating action as hard deadlines.

As I now reflect on my professional career, I realise that this has been very much my modus operandi. I have become quite good at it and indeed often took pride in my ability to take on complex tasks at very short notice and still be able to make rather a good fist of it. I will reflect on this further in the section concerning my analysis of the content of my dreams.

But I now realise that I was merely creating a rod for my own back and that my work could have been so much better.

The answer lies in the well-known Taoist quotation – The Journey of a Thousand Miles starts with a Single Step (Hoff, 1982, p. 12). This has been rather neatly applied to the problems of creative writing by Gray (2005). She relied fairly heavily on the work of Boice (1990) who had come to the conclusion that the solution was to write a small amount every day, about 15 minutes or so. Gray went even further and opined that once reaching 30 minutes, one should stop.

The major purpose of my action research is to identify ways in which I can improve my professional practice. And as a result of reflection, I have made one very substantial correction to my modus operandi which I believe will have many long term benefits to my productivity, job satisfaction and health. The improvement has been my resolve to write a wee bit every day, whether on a written paper, case study or magazine article. This has been compared to both the practice and benefit of meditation (Furman & Kinn, 2012), frequent practice and incorporation into a daily routine reduces writers block and also sharpens the finished article (if not the pen).

Continuous improvement [23] to a process or system was one of the concepts introduced by Deming (1986 & 2000) to Japan after the Second World War (WWII).

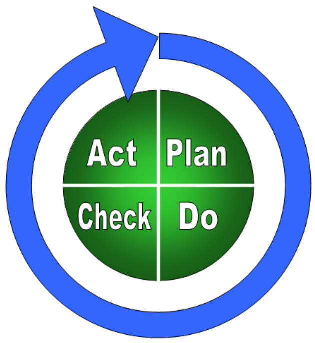

Figure 1.4 Deming's Circle of Quality

In many ways, it can be seen as similar to the work of Lewin (1946), who is known particularly for his work on change management, but the underlying idea is the same. Using a process of Unfreezing, Implementing the change and then Refreezing, somewhat akin to the idea of working with a block of ice. With the addition of a feedback loop it mirrors Deming's Quality circle. For example workers may participate in a discussion as to what was good about the process and what was bad. From this, ideas can be generated as to how the process can be improved. Surprisingly enough this seems very similar to the cycle: Plan.....> Act.....>Observe.....>Reflect... (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In this cycle the "Observe" is commensurate with Check, but the "Reflects" activity makes sense as an additional check, and "Act" and "Do" in Deming's circle appear very similar.

[23] "Kaizen" in Japanese

The word Kaizen in Japanese is interesting in its etymology (not that I am a student of linguistics). On initial examination, the first symbol (Kai) means ‘Change’ and the second (Zen) means ‘Good’, which might seem obvious enough. However, the first symbol also encapsulates Self and Whip marks, i.e. self-flagellation. So, to undertake change necessarily involves pain. The second symbol (Zen) shows a sheep or goat on a sacrificial altar, hence sacrifices must be made.

Figure 1.5 The Chinese symbols for Kaizen

I find this interesting from a cultural perspective as in the West ‘change’ is often portrayed as progressive and the negative aspects are usually glossed over.[24] The understanding that some hardship and sacrifices will be required seems to be a valuable mind-set preparation. Fortunately the pain that I have experienced in life has been quite minimal, compared for example to Moira Laidlaw (2012) who has written of adapting to culture shock whilst battling a painful disability in isolation. It is useful to remember that no matter how bad you feel your situation to be, there will always be many more people in even less invidious positions and yet they too, can pull through.

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[24] In Scotland the term used for the masters of change in the 18th Century was “The Improvers”, yet the people whose crofts were burned down to make way for sheep on the hillside may not have seen this as anything remotely related to a Pareto improvement (Hobsbawm, 1980). However, it is true that through change, that advancements are made (Smout, 2012)

Kant (2005) recognised the importance of both sacrifice and luck (or serendipity as I refer to it). Sacrifice may be a necessary condition for achieving a rich and fulfilling life but this is no guarantee of ultimate reward, luck plays its part too. Luck alone may deliver some tangible payoffs in life, but improvement will necessitate both effort and pain in order to achieve an updent[25] to behaviour patterns and efficacy of one's actions. I will refer to the drivers of my own improvement in later sections but suffice it to say that both sacrifice and serendipity (or more practically – making your own luck) play key rôles.

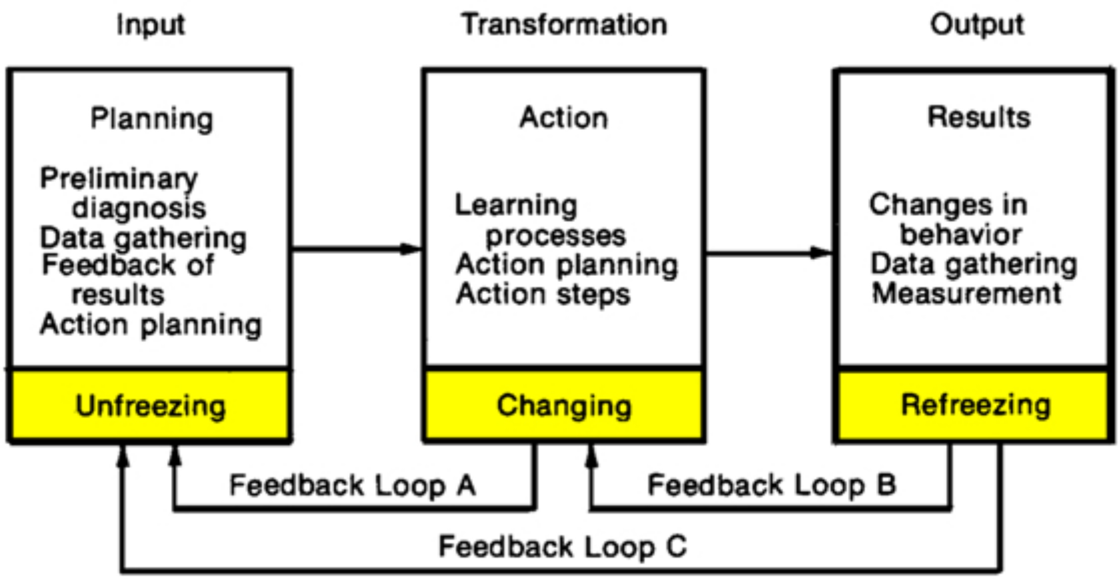

Figure 1.6 Kurt Lewin's Change Model

Kurt Lewin is less well known for his work on Field Theory. Lewin defined a field as a totality of co-existing facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent. Hence individual behaviour is a function of the group environment or field. Action Research draws on both Field Theory and Group Dynamics to understand how and why

[25] See Abbreviations & Definitions

individuals operate in certain situations (Burnes, 2004). The interaction of coexisting mutually interdependent facts is now seen as very similar to the concept of complex (or non-linear) systems used in Chaos and Catastrophe theory (Back, 1992), (Bechtold, 1997) and (Black, 2000). Chaos and its apparent randomness seem to also fit well with both my 'Gently' theory (explained in a later section) and that of Lewin's Field Theory. "The flap of a butterfly's wing in Brazil can set off a tornado in Texas" (Lorenz, 1995). If a butterfly in Brazil can set off a tornado in Texas – what are the implications of my actions and those of my colleagues? My study may be seen as applying Grounded theory (Glaser, 1998) (Glaser & Strauss, 2009) to the Field of Marketing. It is a Constructivist rather than Objectivist approach as the former rejects the idea of only one reality (Charmaz, 2014).

Lewin (1946, p206) described Action Research as proceeding in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact finding about the results of the action. The underlying foundations lay in the area of Gestalt psychology whereby change in individuals can only occur by helping people to reflect and gain insights into their position. Action Research relies on Field Theory to understand how group behaviour will influence the individual. This is the Spiral of Continuous Improvement which is shown in the Figure 1.7 below, this has been termed the "Virtuous Spiral" (Dick B. , 2002, p. 164). With each turn of the spiral, you are able to simultaneously test your interpretations and refine your plan for further improvements.

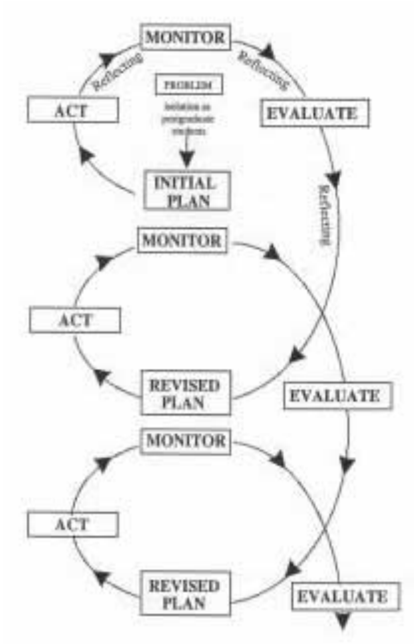

Figure 1.7 The Spiral Circles of Action Research Methodology

Kemmis (1988, p. 29) has what I consider an apt description of this spiral of circles "analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, more fact finding or evaluation and then a repetition of this whole circle of activities".

One necessary condition for the success of an Action Research initiative is the acceptance of the need for change. This corresponds to the unfreezing step in Lewin's change model and follows from an individual internalising the discord between the current and desired position followed by the determination to act upon it.

The purpose of Action Research is to improve practice, enhance skill levels and develop the researcher's ability to critically evaluate his or her actions. This then leads to a virtuous circle whereby the researcher is able to look at different courses of action and more regularly, select effective and efficient solutions. This history and development of action research was very much in the area of education – and still much of the literature is education based, and indeed there is one academic journal specifically dedicated to it – 'Educational Action Research'. There is a slight semantic difference between Action Research & Action Learning which I would like to clear away now at this early stage in proceedings. To all intents and purposes they are the same thing. However, the difference could be said to be that Action Learning relates more to a Group than an Individual. More specifically in Action Learning different participants draw different conclusions from different experiences, whereas in Action Research a team of people draw collective learning from a collective experience (Dick B. , 1997). Is has also been referred to as Action Science (Argyris & Schön, 1989), with some differences, but this term is not currently in vogue.

There are a number of big differences between "normal" Social Science Research and Action Research which I summarise below.

Social Science Research	Action Research
Theory to inform practice	**Theory developed through practice**
Largely deductive	**Largely Inductive**
Outsider	**Insider**
Theory driven	**Change Driven**

Figure 1.8 Social Science Research

Source: Associate Professor Dr. Tony Harland (Higher Education Development Centre, University of Otago) from the AKEPT conference in November 2009.

I might also add that traditional research is necessarily focused on the past and possibly the recent present. Action Research is focused on the present and very much on the future.

In my case, the circle does indeed come back to Education. However, the starting point is a career in Marketing from which I have moved to that of an Academic in a University. It could be said that the purpose of my thesis is to benefit society primarily through my students, but also marketing practitioners by means of my written papers. I do this by firstly understanding and critically reviewing my past actions and then seeking specific learning points as to how I could improve my practice. My hope is that I may also be able in some small way, to imbue my students with the same reflexive or critical perspective on what they hear or read (Mingers, 2000).

I have followed this ideal of continuous improvement (or Kai Zen) right from my early days as a Market Analyst in the Automobile Association back in 1973 when I first reviewed a retail process change at the main Members' Service Centre [26] in Leicester Square in London. The technique that I used then was essentially the same as I now use today, essentially it was to describe the two best things about the change and the one worst. As I recall, I was not successful in eliciting much qualitative (or indeed any useful) feedback on that first occasion, but I have experimented and improved on it since. And indeed, it now fulfils a central rôle in my methodology.

It is, however, unusual to apply Action Research to the corporate arena, van Tuyl's (2010) PhD thesis being one of a few notable exceptions. Much of the literature relates to education, social services, the police force, and hospitals etc. i.e. areas where the client is typically in a low power position. For example, if we examine the Mission statement from the Action Research Center at the University of Cincinnati it is:

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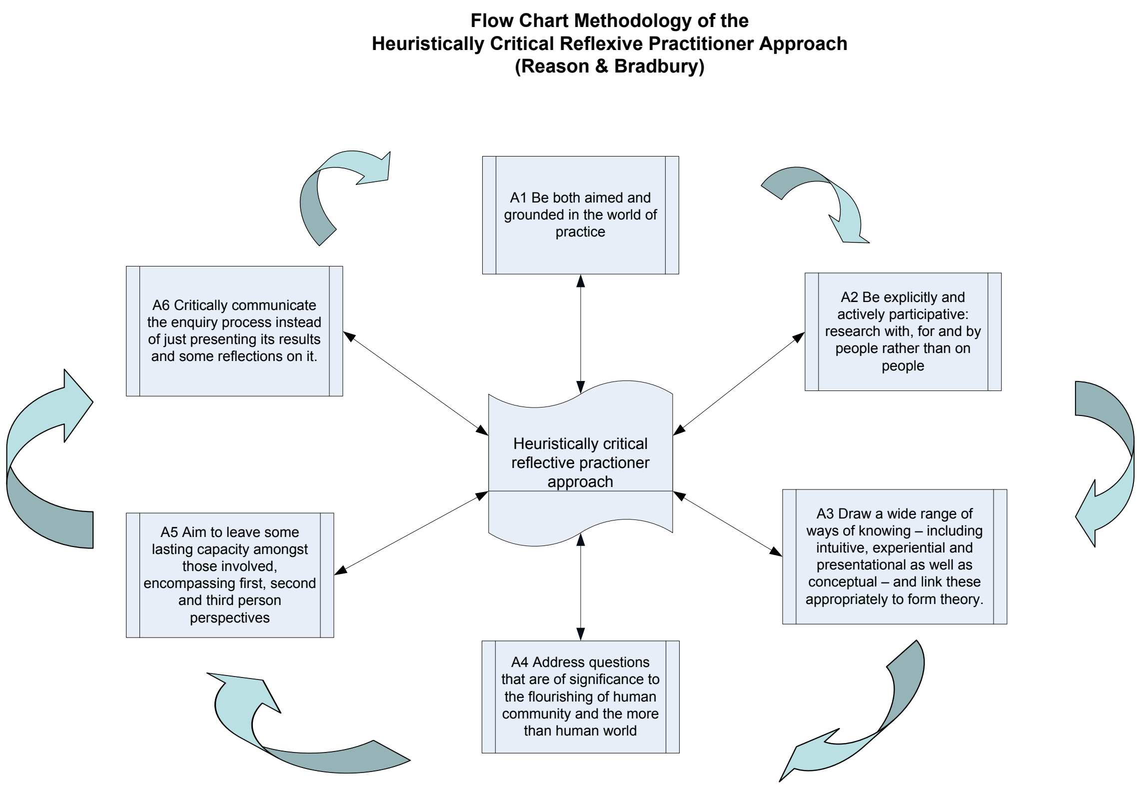
[26] Service Centres was the term used by the AA for a retail outlet. In the early 1970s, the employees in the Service Centres were referred to as Member Service Operators (or MSOs) which reflected the then non-profit ethic of the members club.

"To promote social justice and strengthen communities, locally and globally, by advancing research, education, and action through participatory and reflective practices."

The process is seen as been collaborative, participatory and democratic and with the objective of empowering the community. This is clearly not the language of business.

At some stage in my analysis, I need to consider academic rigour, and this is certainly something that at least one segment of my target audience will also be justifiably concerned with. Academic rigour is tied to concepts such as validity but one can also assess the pragmatic outcomes. In this sense, rigour may be defined as "an outcome of those research methods which yield useful models". (Dick B. , 1999).

Figure 1.9 Flow Chart Methodology of the Heuristically Critical Reflexive Practitioner Approach (Reason & Bradbury, 2006)



Reflection from the West has connotations of an individual (selfish?) perspective. From an Oriental perspective, it is more orientated towards the common weal[27]. I wish to include both orientations in this thesis, partly because I have lived and worked in both geographical regions, but more particularly because I believe this to be a more solid philosophical perspective.

It would be remiss of me not to mention my own professional body, The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and what they do to assist in terms of continuous personal development. They operate a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme (which is essentially self-administered) whereby suitably qualified Marketeers may log their learning, writing, presenting etc. activities with the Institute – backed up by various types of evidence (hard copy, web log in for Webinars etc.) By maintaining a minimum number of hours per year, the status of "Chartered Marketer" may be retained. Although, this system may indeed encourage Marketeers to participate in seminars and professional training there is no test of whether any real improvement in professional practice is actually realised.

It is for this reason that I have never enrolled on the programme although, I do avail myself of whatever educational updates or webinars that they may offer from time to time. I must admit I am also suspicious of the "Chartered Marketer" status and very much doubt if it carries any weight in any professional situation. As with many things in life, I am quite prepared to be proved wrong on this. The openness to constructive criticism is fundamental to the action researcher as s/he undergoes continuous cycles of reflective analysis.

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[27] Using Scots terminology: the common welfare; public good., (Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, 2010)

Marketing as a discipline has tended to be far less concerned with introspection and far more concerned with raising its professional profile whilst simultaneously convincing the business community that it truly works (half my advertising budget is wasted, the only problem is that I don't know which half)[28]. Possibly, for these reasons very little has been published about action research in Marketing. Similarly, a critical theoretic approach has also been lacking despite the fact that similar professional disciplines like Management Accounting did so over thirty years ago (Burton D. , 2001).

1.6 What is it that I wish to improve?

When I teach Strategy, I always emphasise the importance of a clear Objective followed by specific Goals, aligned Strategies, quantifiable Measures and coherent tactics. The OGSMt model for short. It is also common to require the approach to be SMART (Doran, 1981), i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound.

There is of course, some confusion both in the English Dictionary (which asserts that Goals are of a broader and more long term nature than Objectives) and also in management literature as to which is of the higher order – Goals or Objectives. In this thesis, I am using the word 'Objective' to denote the overarching single thing that one wishes to achieve (e.g. Win the War)[29]. Peter Drucker also used the term Objective in that sense, although for him it was in the plural, i.e. Management by Objectives not Management by Objective. He did, however, agree that direct line reports may have an individual objective (adding up to a number of objectives) but for the General Manager these could be aggregated into one overall Objective. Goals may illustrate how we can

[28] attributed to John Wanamaker, 1838 – 1922

[29] The word 'Strategy' comes from the Greek word 'Strategos' which means to lead an army; thus it is no accident that so much of the terminology has military connotations.

assess how close we are to achieving our Objective. In some ways they are similar to "Milestones" in Project Management terminology but also necessarily include some tangible "deliverable". (E.g. neutralise the airport, knock out the radio station and capture the Capital). I am somewhat reassured on my terminology on re-discovering one of my old textbooks on Corporate Planning (Argenti, 1968), which does indeed refer to the 'Objective' in the singular "Step 1: Determine the company's objective and decide on a target" (p. 27).

I believe my Objective to be clear. The process of Self-Reflection is one of my strategies but I need to be rigorous in the application of both Goals and Measures or else the enterprise is nugatory.

What I wish to improve is self-determined, but improvement has to be relative to past behaviour and therefore evident to others (my target market, if you wish). Self-assessment introduces a potentially fatal methodological conundrum.

Goals are in some senses easier to determine than measures. A Goal should indicate achievement along a route to a particular Objective. The selection of one Goal over another is not necessarily critical, they are merely signposts as to whether the mission is on track or not. The same is not true for Measures.

"You cannot manage what you cannot measure.

And what gets measured gets done".

Bill Hewlett of Hewlett Packard (House, 1991)

This line of thought derives from Peter Drucker and the theory of Management by Objectives. On the other hand, there is also the Goodhardt's Law which states defining a measure and making that measure into a Target, is akin to trying to measure the width of a balloon using a tight string, this will cause expansion elsewhere so the measure becomes meaningless at best and counterproductive at worst. Focusing on certain areas to the detriment of others, as Deming said in his Fourteen essential points of Quality, is once again pointless.

As an Economist[30] , I love apposite measures – no matter how idiosyncratic as I believe this drives insight. Sir Edward Heath (at that time the UK President of the Board of Trade,) was frustrated with the Civil Service during the era of the UK Balance of Payments problems and could not understand why the 'flash' statistics were available so quickly and were so accurate whilst the 'real' numbers took months to calculate. Eventually he took the Chief Statistician to task and enquired whether it would not be possible to just introduce a bit more rigour into the flash statistics and release the official numbers much earlier. The reply surprised him – that they would then have to *add up* the value of all the import and export transactions which would take just as long as the current method. The flash method on the other hand was simply to *weigh* the import and export documentation and use a simple correlation to estimate pounds weight to pounds sterling.[31] So, in summary, both an effective and accurate measure.

I remembered this example when I worked in MSAS and for reasons unbeknown to the rest of us, the CEO seemed to have an amazingly good idea of how well we were doing even before our weekly statistics had been issued. The Managing Director would ask me to speed up the production of the data but with the best will in the world the following Tuesday was the best that could be humanly achieved. Yet the CEO would call on the Monday morning to tell us; whether the week had been good, average or

[30] Following Douglas Hague's (Hague, 1969) typology whereby Marketing is a sub-branch of normative micro-economics or managerial economics (as pioneered by Joel Dean (1951)) concerned with the application of theory to industrial problems which require a pragmatic solution.

[31] New Scientist, 9th September 1976, p568

poor. The MD was distraught and wanted to be able to converse with his line manager on an equal footing of information. Desperate but futile efforts to speed up our reporting system followed. Sometime later, we discovered the source of the CEO's insight. The Courier who delivered materials to our Head Office in Bracknell on a Monday morning also worked in our warehouse over the weekend (Friday was by far our busiest day of the week). He was asked how much overtime he had been able to work – none, a bit or a lot. Using this simple metric, our CEO was able to ascertain how good our week had been.

I now find that there is also a very high correlation between the marks of my MBA students in their final exam and the numbers of pages that they have written. It is unlikely that any exam board would ever accept such a measure, but it surely would enable far faster release of results.

Deming also said "beware of numbers and know how to use them". Hard statistics may seem difficult to argue with, but the costs of a training course are easy to measure on today's balance sheet – whilst the benefits may endure for decades but are difficult to quantify as Herzberg has pointed out. A real life example of this was an accounting supervisor in DHL who was told that the average cost of sending a dunning letter to a creditor was in the region of £10. From this s/he calculated that any sum that we were owed that was less than £10, was not financially worth pursuing. Following this change in policy, we rapidly discovered that our cash flow was deteriorating, as was our revenue. An analysis of major customers, account losses and credits failed to reveal any fundamental problems.

Eventually, the source of the problem was identified (and easily rectified). But the numbers were correct. The cost of sending a letter to a Customer was indeed in the region of £10, but in addition to the time spent to pen the letter, the cost of the stationary, stamp etc. had also been added on the lease cost of the office, the maintenance and utility costs, HR and the Managing Director's salary – all as part of our Activity Based Costing method in which every cost has to be allocated to a product and/or an activity. So the relevant number for deciding whether to issue a dunning letter is not the average cost – but the marginal cost (probably in the region of about £1).

I detail below the control sheet that I use for this thesis, showing the Objective, Goals, Strategies Measures and tactics[32]. It is a living document in the same sense that Deming intended, rather than a static one off statement of the current position. Tactics may well change on a frequent basis, Strategies less often. The Objective is very unlikely to change, but if it is found to be unrealistic or unattainable then it must, necessarily, be re-evaluated and reformulated. Setting the bar high may well ensure that "you do not end up with a handful of earth" as one of my previous line managers once said. But set too high and disillusionment, hopelessness and retreat will surely follow.

Strategies may not work for a variety of reasons. The strategy selected might be the wrong choice, making fundamental mistakes on the underlying assumptions or misreading likely competitor moves (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). But it is possible that it was the correct (or optimal) strategy and the only reason that it has not worked, is that the overall market is in decline[33]. More fundamentally it may simply be that one has been unlucky. I once observed a football match in which the away team dominated the game with silky skills and outshot the home team by a factor of two to

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[32] There is no definitive agreement on the hierarchy of Goals and Objectives, different writers also use other terms like Aims and Targets. See for example (Richards, 1986).

[33] In conversation with one of my former adversaries in a bar in Brussels, I discovered that the reason for the FedEx withdrawal from Europe in the late 1980s was that they thought they were losing market share. In fact our analysis at that time showed that they were doing very well in a recessionary market.

one. Somewhat surprisingly,[34] after some 60 minutes play they were 0-3 down. The question for the coach is what should s/he change? Analysis is key, if the strategy has not yet had a chance to work or Lady Luck has turned her back then changing strategy may not actually be the best move.

I once had the opportunity to interview David Sainsbury (of the Sainsbury Supermarket chain in the UK), the topic was Operation Checkout and the Grocery Price War. In a competitor reaction to Tesco's withdrawal of Green Shield Stamps and vigorous price reductions, he noted that a positive response was required, simply because to continue "the game" under the extant rules would mean defeat.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">OBJECTIVE:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">GOALS:</td></tr>
<tr><td>STRATEGIES:</td><td>tactics:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">MEASURES:</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1.10 OGSMt Framework

As regards Measures I could adopt Bloom's (Bloom, 1956) taxonomy of Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor skills. These would be most relevant if I perceive myself

[34] Or not, depending on whether you are a student of probability or statistics (Moroney, 1956)

as a lifelong learner[35] but they can also be applied in more general situations. If I consider myself purely in the rôle of a University academic, then I require measures that relate to Teaching or Research or indeed, both. If I perceive myself as an international Marketeer then a Competency Framework developed for international executives would be more applicable. I detail the Competency Framework as it was in use in DHL in the early 2000s below.

DHL COMPETENCY MENU

PERSONAL	COGNITIVE	INTERPERSONAL	LEADERSHIP/ PEOPLE MANAGEMENT	BUSINESS
Accountability Adaptability Commitment to Excel Confidence Initiative Tolerance for Stress	Analysis Attention to Detail Decision Making Information Seeking Innovation Planning and Organizing Understanding the Key Issue	Building and Managing Partnerships Communication Influence Interacting with People Negotiation Organizational Awareness Teamwork	Building and Leading Teams Building Competitive Advantage Constructive Challenge Developing People Maximizing Individual Performance Visionary Leadership Shaping Direction	Business Acumen Customer Orientation DHL Knowledge Global Perspective Job Expertise Market Focus

Competencies are any *essential* skill, knowledge, and individual qualities, which lead to *superior* performance in a job role.

Figure 1.11 Managerial Competency Framework

The Competency Framework is more rigorous, but I also need to consider who I am and what I am doing in order to select the most apposite measures. Additionally, I should select a methodology which is forward rather than backward looking. The Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan, 2001) is in theory the best approach for a number of reasons, the

[35] I do see myself as a lifelong learner, or as Socrates put it – touched with the madness of philosophia, the love of wisdom (Plato, 2005), others might see me as merely a perpetual student.

main one being, that it considers all of the major areas relevant to the long term success of an enterprise. That is not to say that it works well. The Devil hides in the detail and this was what DHL discovered in the early 2000s. The key data required were not available so the numbers which were available (although not necessarily relevant) were used instead.

As my intent is to advance the theory of a Global Professional using Action Research as the most appropriate approach (Perry & Zuber-Skerrit, 1992) with the Managerial Competency Framework but enhanced, where possible, with forward looking rather than lagging indicators. For this reason, I rate Personal and Industry Networks as a particularly useful additional measure. Additionally in terms of informational content I do not find "Business" a useful descriptor, Commercial Acumen seems more apposite.

I have already referred to the Global nature of my career. Within this context, it is likely that inter-cultural adaptability is a likely determinant of success. This is termed intercultural maturity (King & Magolda, 2005) and can be divided into three attributes; Understanding (the cognitive dimension, sensitivity to others (the interpersonal dimension) and a sense of oneself that enables one to listen to and learn from others (the intrapersonal dimension). This latter attribute relates to understanding how one's existing paradigms and epistemologies may be deficient or at the very least, in need of questioning.

OBJECTIVE: To communicate how I improve my practice as a Global Professional.	
GOALS: 1. Publish 5 peer reviewed articles in ISI ranked journals by end 2013 2. Complete a 1st thesis draft by end 2013.	
STRATEGIES: 1. Benchmark best practice in the field of Qualitative Research. 2. Establish effective and efficient work routines. 3. Elicit feedback from professional contemporaries. 4. Receive critical peer feedback and reflect on how this feedback should be utilised.	tactics: i). Attend a PhD course on the Philosophy of Managerial Research (2011). ii). Discipline of writing 15 minutes per day. iii). Subscribe to the AEROL on-line course on Action Research (2013). iv). Maximise on-line contacts (Linked-In, Facebook, e-mail etc.) v). Present at an International forum (2013/14) vi) Complete a Bahasa Melayu exit exam.
MEASURES: Articles Published, Date of 1st draft completion, Competencies (Personal, Cognitive, Interpersonal, Leadership, Commercial acumen, Inter-Cultural Maturity).	

Figure 1.12 OGSMt Framework for my thesis

There is scope for some confusion here as I am effectively operating two research activities simultaneously; the first is the core action research designed to answer the question of "How do I improve my professional practice", the second is my thesis research. As Zuber-Skerritt & Fletcher (2007) identified there is a dynamic inter-relationship between the two modalities, however, in this case the 'interference' of collaborative influences are limited.

Note that each tactic may support one or more Strategies, there is no necessary one for one relationship. The Objective does not change through time, but the Goals and tactics may be updated or revised regularly. The Strategies are unlikely to change, although this is possible – particularly if they appear to be inappropriate or failing in some respect.

It is a criticism of modern management (Goddard & Eccles, 2013) that planning and control are the enemies of creativity. In the diagram below, they suggest that organisations are fixated on the left hand (Control) side to the detriment of experiments and idea generation (the Learning cycle shown on the right). I would support this position, but would go further to say that Action Research (and indeed Action Learning) need to be more positively embedded in individual and organizational work practices.

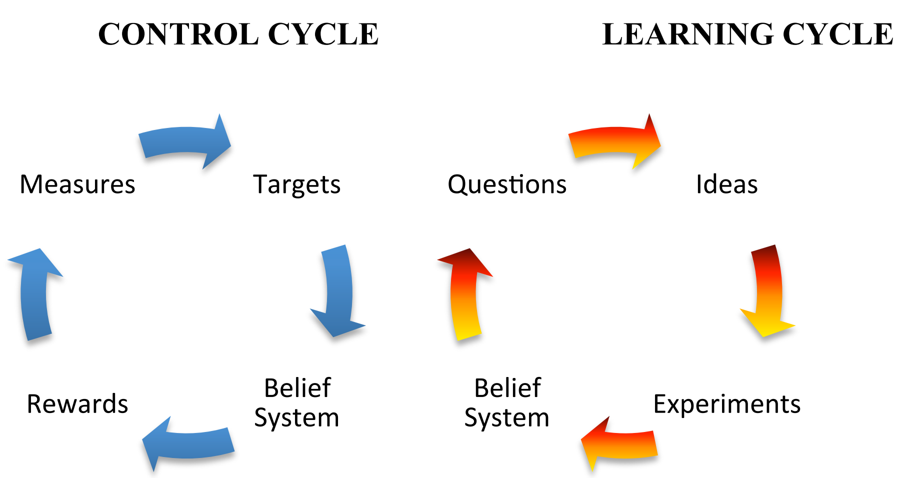

Figure 1.13 The Control/Learning Cycle

Chris Argyris (1964) also suggested that experimentation and discovery could only incur after an inversion of beliefs.

1.7 Self-Reflection (?)

So a key question to answer early in the piece: Am I naturally self-reflective? In other words – Am I qualified in my own mind to undertake this journey?

Firstly I need to differentiate between 'reflection' and 'reflective practice'. Reflection is considered by Dewey (1933) & (1938) as a process or activity that is central to improving practice. Loughran (1996, p. 14), building on the work of Dewey, defined reflection as *"the deliberate and purposeful act of thinking which centres on ways of responding to problem situations".* So, reflection is concerned with thinking about problem definition and solutions.

'Reflective practice' entered the lexicon with the works of Schön (1983) and he differentiated between reflection **on** action and reflection **in** action. The former relates the process of considering prior practice with a view to future improvement, whereas the latter includes the interaction of doing and thinking which lead to a tacit improvement. Tacit improvement relates to capability and competence in action, it is (by definition) hard to codify but it is possibly more important to the formulation of the elixir of success than is perhaps more commonly recognised and this is a central contention of this thesis.

As I reflect on this, and I consider my answer carefully, I conclude that there are some strands that would seem to suggest that I am naturally reflective. I also suspect that I am going to have to reflect on this a good bit longer before I can fully connect all the strands. Perhaps I might need to commission a holistic detective agency to provide a complete answer. But this may be a task to be undertaken only after this particular work is completed.

My Father kept himself physically fit for all of his life, until he died, suddenly, of cancer the very year he retired. He did smoke (as many of his generation did) either cigarettes or (probably for effect) a pipe. But otherwise, his alcohol intake was modest and he exercised regularly using the Canadian Air Force 5BX plan – this book and a very few others are all I have left in the way of tangible mementoes of his life. So of these strands. What are they? Well, I seem to have picked up on my Father's drive for fitness and have regularly engaged in active sport of one form or another all of my life (Football, Squash, Cricket, Cycling, Running, Karate and Diving) although, I have never been particularly good at any of them. Karate includes brief spells of meditation in the Dojo at the beginning and end of exercise as time for reflection. In the early 1980s, I attended some of Professor Eileen Barker's undergraduate classes on Ethics and Moral Philosophy[36] at the London School of Economics as I searched for some satisfactory explanations of life. I found this experience most satisfying. I did indeed discover that there were no simple answers but I felt that I now had the toolkit to discover for myself the meaning of life and my place in it.[37]

On reflection, the thing I think I gained most from this period of my life was the ability to think reflexively. That is, to actively consider the purpose and essence of my existence. I cannot say that I have moved too far in sketching the outline of an acceptable answer to this question. But I did fully understand that being true to oneself was a necessary building block on the route to self-actualisation. To quote Carl Jung "The only meaningful life is a life that strives for the individual realisation – absolute and unconditional- of its own particular law... To the extent that a man is untrue to the law of his being... he has failed to realise his life's meaning."

Sometime in my Bucks era (i.e. 1984 to 1997) I decided to undertake a Transcendental Meditation (TM) course. I did this for very pragmatic and practical reasons: Firstly so I could I waste less time on sleep and secondly, to become more effective in my work.

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[36] The clearest distinction that I can find between Ethics and Morals is the one supplied by Ronald Dworkin (2011) which sees Ethics as related to how to live well whereas Morals is more concerned about our behaviour towards other people. This, I would extend (in the case of Morals) to all sentient beings, and as Science now advises us, this may be a far larger set of life forms than we had originally envisaged.

[37] I now realise that just reading Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy (Adams, 1979) might have got me there a lot earlier and with a lot less effort. Zen and the art of Motorcycle Maintenance (Pirsig, 1974) would probably have helped too.

Was this experiment successful? The answer to the first was “No”. And to the second “Possibly”. But more importantly, I had suddenly discovered self-reflection. Seeing the gestalt without focusing too much attention on the detail may also be worthwhile traits. Tremmel (1993) suggests that Zen Buddhist concepts such as ‘mindfulness’ and ‘paying attention’ are given insufficient attention when engaged in critical reflection. Other writers such as Langer (1997)and Senge et al (Senge, George, & Bryan, 1999) realise that cognitive development depends on both formal and informal infrastructure support mechanisms. In other words, the opportunity to develop depends on the ability (and time) to reflect and how rigid (or flexible) previous forms of social schema or cognitive frameworks have proven to be.

I have maintained the TM discipline, not religiously, but when I have the time or feel the need. I mentioned in a previous section the decay process implicit in Fluid Intelligence and the risks I face of this faculty disappearing through the passing of time. However, the good news for me (and possibly you too, gentle reader) is that the process of Transcendental Meditation assists in maintaining creativity through the ability to access free-flowing mental states (Travis, 1979), (Jedrczak, Beresford, & Clements, 1985) & (Claxton, 2002).

More specifically Fluid Intelligence has been found to significantly increase (along with General Intelligence) in numerous studies, in standardised tests (Dilbeck, Assimakis, Raimondi, Orme-Johnson, & Rowe, 1986), higher levels of moral reasoning (Alexander, et al., 1990), increased flexibility of perception and verbal problem solving (Dilbeck, 1982), and increased creativity and fluid and culture fair intelligence (Tim & Orme-Johnson, 2001). Additionally, it was found to operationally increase ‘wisdom’ in a ten year longitudinal study by Chandler (1990).

As ever it would seem in my life, I did not reach this revelation by hard work and rigorous research, but rather stumbled upon it by chance. Some might call it "Luck".

Wadsworth (2010) maps the Plan, Observe, Act, Reflect cycle onto the Myers Briggs Type Inventory (Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998) and came to the conclusion that any individual can inhabit any of these zones but s/he will still revert to preferred behaviour for much of the time. The ENTJ[38] (of which I have been variously tested to be) has a tendency to Plan based on the Wadsworth map. The art is to be able to move around the circle and not stay grounded in any one area. According to Wadsworth one of the objectives of the Mother and Daughter team was to facilitate self-improvement as well as helping others. More specifically, there were a number of applications in fields as diverse as institutionalisation, socialisation, criminalisation etc. (Wadsworth, 2005) (2008). Her analogy can also be coupled with the metaphors employed by Reason & Bradbury (2006) of the Compass, the Map and the Magnifying Glass and the Mirror. This is, I feel, a useful set of analogies, although my love of walking and cycling, maps and navigation may also be an influence here.

The idea of using pictorial metaphors within academe is not common but it possesses a well based foundation known as soft systems methodology (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). The technique applies the concept of rich pictures to assist in understanding complex issues (Hicks, 1991) (Williams M. C., 1998). Rich pictures can be symbols, cartoons and photographs which help the reader gain a fuller understanding of the issue or problem and will appeal to different audiences in different ways. Some people respond better to numbers or words, some respond better to pictures, the most effective communication will make appropriate use of all three hence, reaching right brained, left brained and people of a more centrist disposition.

[38] ENTJ: Extrovert, Intuitive, Thinking & Judging

Reflecting both on my written work and also career as a PowerPoint Ranger I have much evidence of this form of andragogy right back to my late teens and early twenties. In addition to greater understanding, a rich picture or metaphor shifts people from one line of thinking about a subject into a parallel one which provides (in my view) a fresh perspective and hence greater appreciation of the problem or issue. It also provides a mental break which provides a rest in detailed subject matter and potentially some humour also. Once again, 'Fun' is a central theme to my life approach which I will refer to in later sections.

There are of course limitations to what self-reflection can achieve. As it is based on individual experiences and then related to theory it may not be capable of contributing greater understanding at a societal level. Hence, whilst it adds perspective, it is not sufficient to explain the workings of power and privilege in society (Noffke, 1997, p. 329) (or indeed the corporate context).

Self-Reflection is one essential component of critical thinking. Another is the hunger for knowledge. There are a number of measures for what some writers describe as "Curiosity" (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) or more specifically "Typical Intellectual Engagement" (Goff & Ackerman, 1992). In terms of academic success Von Stumm found that Curiosity accounted for as much of the variance as effort and that curiosity and effort combined could have a greater impact than intelligence alone (Von Stumm, Hell, & Chammorro-Premuzic, 2011). I do consider myself as something of a Polymath, which I also recognise as not necessarily a good thing, but it is indicative of a hungry mind.

A third component of critical thinking is what Kegan (1982) (1994) termed the 'Level of Consciousness'. According to Kegan I have possibly (hopefully?) reached Order 4, this level of consciousness is characterised by the ability to be self-reflective and to employ critical thinking. Order 0 is that of an Infant. Order 1 is that of a child aged two or over. Order 2 is also that of a child, but one that has developed logical organised thought. Order 3 is where this is developed into that of a socialised mind.

The most interesting of these is, however, Order 5. This is what Kegan describes as the Self-Transforming Mind. This is where individuals are able to project beyond themselves and more fully understand the interconnectedness of life, systems and other people. "This level is infrequently reached and never reached before the age of forty" (Kegan, 1994).

Research (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, & Goodman, 1988) suggests that, at any given time between half to two-thirds of the Adult population have not fully reached level (Order) Four.

In order to write authoritatively about the career of a Global Marketeer, this must necessarily be done with a sufficient history to be credible. But more importantly, had I embarked on this thesis much earlier, I could not possibly hope to achieve an Order 5 perspective, far less derive any Order 5 transformational learning.

Jackie Stewart once talked about the perfect drive – not on the circuit –but somewhere simple like work, or to drop his children off at school. He said he had never been able to achieve it. He could always see possible aspects of improvement. If this applied to Jackie Stewart (a three-time Formula 1 World Champion) then, *a fortiori,* it would also logically apply to me.[39]

I have maintained the practice of meditation ever since (less so during stressful or busy periods – which is when it would probably be of most value).

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[39] This tendency of looking for constant improvement has also manifested itself in my desire to improve my driving; firstly whilst working at the AA and taking the Institute of Advanced Motorists test and later in Florida with the local state driving exam and later with Police Riding courses and Advanced Riding courses in the UK after I had bought a motorbike.

So in answer to my question "Am I naturally self-reflective", I would have to assert that for the most part I am.

1.8 Who Am I?

1.8.1 Overview

To be brief; I am a 64 year old, Caucasian male[40], married with two children in their early thirties from a previous marriage. I am still on good speaking terms with my ex-wife who lives in England whilst I am based in Kuala Lumpur where I teach on undergraduate and post-graduate programmes for a local private University. I have also taught regularly on franchised programmes in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam.

I have worked for a large multi-national in a variety of marketing rôles at Country, Regional and Global levels on three different continents (Europe, the Americas and the Far East). During that time, I have mainly worked in Travel and Transport (Sea Freight, Tour Operations, Travel Agencies, Road Freight and Road Express, Air Freight and latterly Air Express and International Mail), nearly always with a strong Global dimension.

I have had a direct reporting line to a variety of nationalities; Britons, an Indian, an Australian, a Dutchman, a Mexican, a Dane, one Malay, one Malaysian Chinese and two New Zealanders. Nearly all of these have been a pleasure and an education [41] to work with. However, I did encounter the odd corporate psychopath (Morse, 2004) on the way. Correspondingly, I have had an even wider range of nationalities in my

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[40] Hence I am researching in an area dominated by other older, white males. This could be viewed either as a strength (as an emic researcher who tacitly understands the culture) (Headland, 1990) or as a handicap (due to perceptual bias). One remedy is to view the problem through the lenses of a variety of intellectual paradigms (Burton D. , 2009)

[41] I have kept my own list of the key things I have learned from each of them. In all cases they had at least one thing that they could teach me.

teams, in addition to the above I can count: Peruvians, New Zealanders, Croatians, Belgians, Italians, Germans, Greeks, Nigerians, North Americans, US Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Chileans, Colombians, Brazilians and Malaysian Tamils (Indians).

In my work, I have interacted with Europeans, Americans (North, South and Central) and Asians. I have also had some minimal experience in Africa but virtually none in the Middle East. At the last count I had visited and/or worked in some 80 different countries and territories.

1.8.2 Early Beginnings

I come from a middle class British family. My Mother is Scots (although, born in India where my Grandfather was working as a Doctor in the Colonial Service). My maternal Grandmother became ill and died in Fiji whilst my Grandfather was travelling around the Island of Mokani. He possessed the only drugs that may have saved her. My Father was from Devon and an Electrical Engineer (as were my Paternal Grandfather and my Uncle) who became interested in Marketing and ended up working in a marketing rôle for the Central Electricity Generating Board in the UK in the late 1970s. I was born in Edinburgh in the early 1950s and am therefore of the post-war Baby Boomer generation.

My parents divorced in the mid-sixties and I returned to Scotland with my Mother and Sister where I finished my secondary education. As a result of my Father changing jobs fairly frequently, I attended my first primary school in Cornwall, another primary school in Huddersfield yet another in Sheffield and then on to a Grammar School in Derbyshire.

Figure 1.14 Dore Village School c.1970

I finished my secondary education in Perthshire in Scotland. So with 5 different schools in the space of 13 years, I got very used to changing environments and adapting to new situations and making new friends. This skill has stayed with me over the years and I think I have my childhood to thank for this. As my Uncle Howard likes to describe the Dent family – “Here Today, Somewhere Else Tomorrow”.

Theories on early childhood development suggest that frequent changing of schools introduces stress but if this is handled successfully then the individual is likely to become quite adaptable. The impact on personality is currently less well researched. Divorce in the mid-sixties in the UK was far less common than today and is also, of course, a major stressor in childhood development.

My Mother, who had trained as a Nurse before marrying was successful, after the divorce, in gaining a post as the Matron of a small cottage hospital in Perthshire where we lived comfortably. Although money was tight, and it was not until my last year of High School that she was eventually able to afford a car.

Whilst at school in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Perthshire I earned extra money as a Paperboy, as a Golf caddy, even singing in the village church choir in Dore, Sheffield where I was remunerated in the case of weddings and funerals. In Scotland I worked in a Fish & Chip shop and then as a waiter in a hotel that specialised in Dinner/Dances. Later, when I was hitchhiking home from Perth, I was given a lift by the owner of a hotel 'up the Glen' that offered me a job as a barman. In these times, I learnt a number of things, how to handle dogs, why pedalling a bicycle through deep snow does not work and (to some extent) how to interact with people.

On turning 18, I left to return to England where I lived with my Father and Stepmother for a year or so before renting my own, rather squalid, bedsit in Kingston upon Thames.

I found my Stepmother exceptionally hard work, although bright, intelligent and very successful. I owe much of the eradication of my rough edges to her insistence on manners, decorum and etiquette[42]. She was kind and generous to those she loved and I was lucky enough for her to lend me her company car (for which she had no use) during the week whilst I attended College. She too, was from Scotland, from a poor family and had worked her way up the ladder with little formal education to a senior position as Head of HR in a large, publicly quoted, London based company.

Having bounced between Scotland and England three times, I found my identity to be somewhat confused. I spoke mainly Scots vernacular but with an English accent (and indeed to some extent still do). I had decided I was of Scots nationality on moving to Blairgowrie in Perthshire in 1966 – partly out of loyalty to my Mother but probably more pragmatically to avoid being picked upon in the playground. This was after all, the year that England won the World Cup, which did not go down well in Scotland.[43] This identity crisis was to revisit me again in the late 1980s on which I will elucidate

[42] It was indeed the premature removal of my table napkin whilst others were still eating that caused the final fracture between my Father/Stepmother, myself and my (now ex-)Wife.

[43] Jim McCalliog of Sheffield Wednesday scored the winning goal at Wembley the following year to cement a 3-2 victory for Scotland against England thus becoming the first team to beat the World Champions, and on their home ground to boot.

further upon in following Chapters.

1.9 Methodology

I have already alluded to the circular and recursive nature of certain types of management research (e.g. Deming, Lewin, Reason and Bradbury amongst many others), so it will come as no surprise to discover that I too, am in favour of this style of endeavour. The methodology that I have chosen to adopt is that of Wong (2007), which is that of a case study applying an ethnographic reflection on my professional practice. There are three distinct phases which I explain below, but Phase 1 does not simply feed into Phase 2, nor Phase 2 into Phase 3, rather they are all recursive. That is to say that there is a constant revision of philosophical perspectives, data and reflections as a result of earlier reflections.

Phase 1, as already identified, is commenced with an inter-pretavistic perspective using a critical social theory approach. Reason (1988) describes the first phase as a tentative holding phase whereby initial thoughts and premises are held sub-judice. Phase 2 is based on the recall of my professional practitioner data, which recognises that my recall will be both faulty and itself, subject to my own re-interpretation, a view supported by Habermas (1987, p. 342) "experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions (which) are never identical to the lived experience itself". These data are then "interpreted" using a hermeneutic approach.

Nietzsche also recognised the dangers of retrospective analysis, whereby the individual episodes in time can be nicely packaged into a coherent plan to arrive at some distant objective on both a miraculous and wonderful way. But he also recognises the importance of "how one becomes what one is" (Nietzsche F. , 2004, p. 34). Although

I am clearly not Friedrich Nietzsche, I am going to allow myself the luxury of going against his recommendation and employ a similar methodology myself.

Phase 3 is the last stage, but as explained above, will only be reached after multiple reiterations of Phases 1 and 2. This phase applies a critically reflective approach to what has been termed a Meta-Matrix of data (Lavertu, 2007)

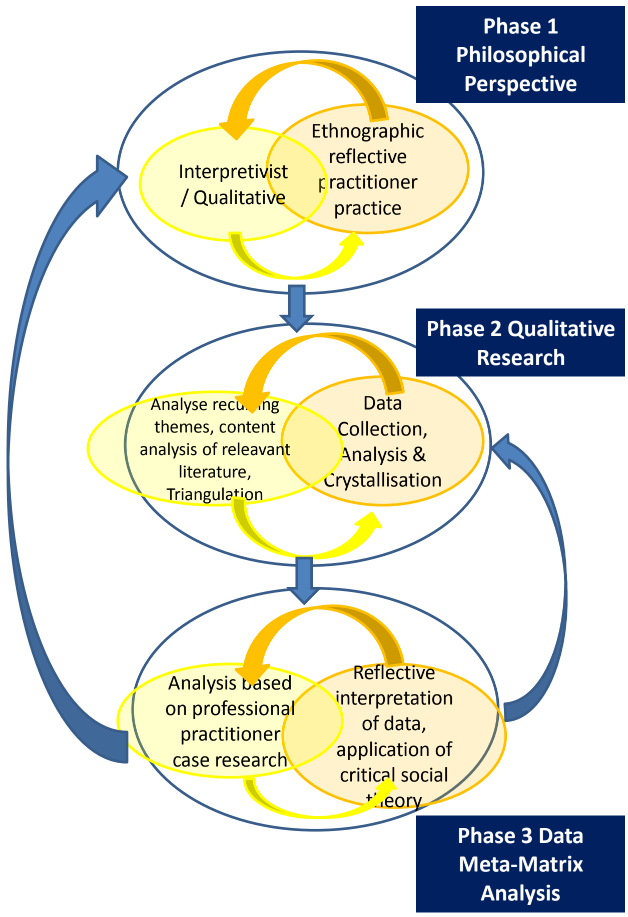

Figure 1.15 A Qualitative Case Study Methodology, employing Habermas's critical social theory perspective within a phenomenological, reflective practitioner approach. (adapted from Lavertu (2007).

This methodology employs heuristics applying both depth and breadth of reflections on my experiential material thus producing insights into the field of international marketing. I feel that I have been consistent with my brand map, in which my espoused theory is mainly consistent with my lived theory (Jack Whitehead (1993) & (2009)), although I recognise that this has not always been the case. Self-awareness is vital to the correct recognition and identification of the inconsistencies between espoused and lived theory (Noffke, 1997). My writing is within what Jack Whitehead calls the "Living Theory Paradigm", where he asserts that the use of the first person singular ("I") is not only acceptable, but also recommended, encapsulating as it does the subjectivity of the paradigm. Enquiries of "How do I improve what I am doing" involves the clarification and evolution in the cycle of action reflection, action plans, data and subsequent reflection on the effectiveness of the actions and then evaluation. This is then followed by the modification of the action plan and the cycle continues (Whitehead J. , 2012).

Third person research is, by far and away, the most common modus operandi of academic literature, and aims to move from empirical observations to generalisable theory. Second person research is more concerned with the capability of an individual to competently investigate a particular field of inquiry (Reason & Marshall, 1987), (Reason & Torbert, 2001), (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Action research is (typically) conducted in the first person and is concerned with how the individual researcher and the processes/project/organisation s/he is working with/for can improve their own modus operandi. This latter type of research can be characterised (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010) as either Upstream or Downstream. Upstream would examine assumptions, desires, intentions and life philosophy of the researcher. Downstream would inquire into actions and behaviour. Qualitative research can look into three dimensions of time; the past, the present and the future. In practice, much social science research focuses on the recent past, action research on the other hand builds on the past and suggests strategies for future action (Chandler & Torbert, 2003) I believe this to be one the fundamental functions of Economics (in its widest sense) – the requirement to make accurate predictions about the future and recommendations as to future strategy. I would like to think that Adam Smith, the founder of modern day Economics, but who considered himself primarily a Philosopher (Phillipson, 2010) would have approved of my *espirit systématique* which he associated with true philosophical thinking as opposed to the English method; "the English seem to have employed themselves entirely in inventing, and to have disdained the more inglorious but not less useful labour of arranging and methodizing their discoveries, and of expressing them in the most simple and natural manner" (Smith, 1755). I sometimes think that this is the cause of the current malaise in 21st century academic research and that there is still much to be learned from Adam Smith.

I have no intention of criticising the more traditional methods of deduction and induction, but the scientific community itself is now recognising that the pursuit of publications, new discoveries, lack of replication studies and the misuse of statistics and statistical over-fitting and tuning of data has led to some question marks over their efficacy (see for example Ioannidis (2005)).

The extent to which I reveal my inner self is necessarily limited, but even so, I have exposed many of my weaknesses, mistakes and prejudices to the reader with the intent to further validate the authenticity of my work.

Finally, I would like to re-iterate that the proof or disproof of hypotheses is not either my intention in this thesis, nor is it applicable to the field of heuristic research.

1.10 Contributions & Limitations

I have drawn upon a number of different disciplines in order to place my learning in context and to give you, the reader, a better understanding. This approach integrates the many ways of knowing and understanding to more accurately perceive the inter-connectedness of life (Kegan, 2000) and the complexity of organisations and systems (Wadsworth, 2010). Yet, I have strived not to follow an eclectic approach by merely cherry picking those theories which are particularly appealing to me. Rather I have tried to remain true to my chosen methodology of critical theory but without declining assistance from other fields (notably post-modern marketing) where greater insight can be gained. Researchers who are multidisciplinary, adaptable, self-critical and tolerant of complexity tend to be better forecasters (Tetlock, 2006). When I was a junior Market Analyst at the Automobile Association (the AA) in the mid-1970s, we did something rather controversial and without any philosophical or rational underpinnings: We took the Economic forecasts from the NIESR, London Business School and the Cambridge group, added them up and then divided by three.

Some many years later Nate Silver's research into the Society of Professional Forecasters found that such crude averages were in fact about 20% more accurate than those of any one economist.[44]

However, I was asked on a number of occasions by the Manager of Corporate Planning at the AA to declare my allegiance for either Keynesianism or Monetarism (after Milton Friedman of the Chicago School), which in the late 1970s was a particularly topical and divisive debate amongst members of the Economics fraternity. Partly out of uncertainty and partly because I could see merit in both camps, I replied that I refused to commit myself to either. This is not as irascible as it may seem. Within the natural sciences there are two extant and contradictory theories – those of General Relativity and Quantum Theory. The recent successful identification of the Higgs Boson brings the two possibly closer together but a single Universal Theory remains hidden at this point of time.

[44] (Silver, 2012, p. 197)

Reflection

Different perspectives, different tests and different conclusions from the same results ***are*** symptomatic of life in the 21st Century and indeed throughout time. If the woman we drown in the river is proven not to be a Witch (as she failed to float as we had predicted) then we have not disproved the existence of Witches – we have added to the body of evidence of a valid test for Witchcraft. Hence the ability to accept different interpretations and explanations is essential to the not just Critical Theory but to all science. Blind acceptance of the dominant paradigm is represented by the broad and straight road to Hell. Indeed, when I was at the AA, one of the front covers of one of our Spring Planning Conference papers, which I designed, showed a route map (as one may expect from the AA - as that was one of our most popular member requests) showing three possible routes; a broad, straight road, an almost hidden narrow path covered in briars and thorns and a heather bounded track heading into the hills.

I am fond of this analogy as I believe people are seduced by the easiest path – but may live to regret it. The nettle strewn stony path is that represented by religion – a hard way with an uncertain pay off, and the bonny, life loving, mountain people approach to life as represented by Elf land. Sadly I no longer have this piece of artwork which was drawn for me by a friend. The idea came to me from an English folk song by one of my favourite bands – Steeleye Span – Thomas the Rhymer.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h44ZIsB374c.

Thomas returned from fair elf land as a prophet – or in 21st Century parlance, an Economist. Although in terms of substance the difference between a Witch and an Economist, in my view, may seem minimal at best, Clark & Salaman (1996) would likely agree with me.

Figure 1.16 Thomas the Rhymer meets the Queen of Elves

From *Thomas the Rhymer* (retold by Mary MacGregor, 1908) "Under the Eildon tree Thomas met the lady," illustration by Katherine Cameron

Insight is all about understanding and better understanding enables better prediction. Better prediction of likely outcomes in any field of endeavour will lead to improved performance, which is what I seek.

This is a case study, hence, it is essentially a contribution of but one observation, yet the practitioner case study approach requires more additions to the (limited) bank of existing knowledge, or as Whitehead (1989) put it – "claims to knowledge may then be validated by groups of critical peers and thus, eventually contribute to the dynamic pool of living theory". More cases enables greater scope for cross case analysis and comparison and the investigation of specific phenomena in different settings (Yin, 2003). I have described my philosophical position earlier in this chapter as being with a subjective epistemology but objective ontology. This is key to the validity of case research as one's epistemology depends on one's ontology and vice versa. This inconsistency leads to a metaphysical contradiction (Chatterjee, 2013) as ontology, epistemology and methodology do constrain each other. Hence, case studies can provide neither sufficient nor necessary support of causal relationships.

Utilising an ethnographic approach the researcher strives for phenomenological validity such that the analysis provides a way to understand the mode of behaviour regardless of whether the researcher is working with texts or documents, rural Fijians in island villages, financial analysts in New York or Paris or cosmopolitan intellectuals in Vietnam (Toren & de Pina-Cabral, 2009).[45]

Becoming a proficient reflective and reflexive practitioner requires adopting a life-long learner approach to work, career, family, health and social interactions. All of these domains overlap and interact with one another. The language of English is also of import. The thesis explores the philosophical conceptualisation of business and how it is experienced from an emic perspective, in this way it possibly provides a fuller understanding of language in the business context. As I explain later in Chapter 3 the theory of epistemology now accepts the idea of "memes" – or knowledge which was specific to one individual but could be communicated to others (Dawkins R. , 1976) (Moritz, 1990). Memetics focuses on the development of knowledge by means of social processes. But rather than knowledge being the product of these processes, it positions a social system as something developed by the sharing of knowledge processes. In this way, a social group can be defined by those members all sharing the same meme (Heylighen, 1992). I would suggest that one of the extant failings of marketing is to fall into this trap without the fuller understanding of the underlying precepts, assumptions and models of contemporary thought, this again is a fundamental tenet of this thesis.

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[45] This adds no validity to my thesis whatsoever. But I can record that my Mother was brought up in Fiji, my Sister worked in Paris, I have stood at the top of the World Trade Centre in New York and I now teach in Vietnam.

Fundamentally, the process of action, critical self-reflection and writing empowers the writer as a thinker and hence more capable of superior analysis and action in the future. The results produce insights both for future international businessmen and also researchers and teachers in the field of business administration.

My contribution may be small but it is (hopefully) a worthwhile addition to this nexus of action research.

I have sought advice, critical feedback and new ideas from many friends, colleagues and other sources, any errors or omissions which remain are, of course, my responsibility.

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

In this section I provide an overview of the structure of the thesis with some explanations of the contents of each chapter.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research problem and my approach to it. I discuss in some detail what it is that I wish to improve and various methods for measuring my progress. I give in insight into my family background and commence the critical reflection process. I detail my philosophical position within the environs of Critical Theory and then give some background to the development of the theory of continuous improvement commencing with Deming and also discussing Lewin's Action Research feedback loop and Reason & Bradbury's work on the heuristically reflexive practitioner approach. I conclude with some observations on the actual revealed benefits of the critically reflective cycle.

Chapter 2 is a long chapter reviewing the literature which I consider relevant. As is normal in action research it is not possible to determine which literature is relevant *a priori* and much is only discovered *en-route*. I commence with how epistemology impacts on my research, the drawbacks and circularities involved and then move on to discuss how the concept of warranted knowledge can help deal with some of these issues.

The next section (2.2) is also theoretical, building the foundations for that which is to follow. It focuses on the work of Habermas on Critical Theory and then moves on to discuss how relevant it is to Management Research. This theme is continued in Section 2.3 with a deeper analysis of the detail of Critical theory and how Philosophy has developed over time both in the East and the West.

Section 2.4 looks at my own identity and how I can apply critical theory to my career and finally in the conclusion reveals my true purpose which is to voice and put on record my thoughts on social justice. This might be termed "the Socratic project of creating a better world through the use of liberating human reasoning" (Wong E. S., 2012, p. 6).

The last section of my literature review gives a detailed account of the theory of the reflective practitioner and the case study approach. It then applies two marketing tools (the Brand Map and the 5C Analysis) to the author to help identify potential areas for development.

Chapter 3 contains my published papers on which this thesis is based. I am the first named author for all five articles which were written by me with input and guidance from my Supervisors Professor Nazari bin Ismail and Dr. Edward Wong Sek Khin. To an extent much of the material contained in these papers is repeated in some of the chapters which follow. Some of the material has also been discarded as part of the reflective cycle described in my methodology section.

Chapter 4 is less theoretical and more applied, relating events and then reflecting on how this fits with my current understanding, whether I need to review my past actions and then further consider what other options may have been preferable. This last chapter provides an overview of the insights which I have gained whilst writing and reflecting on my written papers. I then attempt to move on from the specific to more general but also more fundamental issues which may have been hidden from view. I describe a phenomenon of inter-connectedness, which in today's increasingly global economy, I foresee becoming more prevalent in the future. The backdrop for this analysis is my movements across the Globe in various marketing rôles. I conclude with some reflections on past dreams which reveal a sense of fear and a drive for achievement which provide a deeper understanding of motivations at the time.

I conclude in Chapters 4 & 5 with a final twist in the spiral of continuous reflection. I consider the impact that a few critical events can have on one's career. I move on to also consider both Luck and Religion and the place they take in determining how to improve one's professional practice.

Appendix A details a shadowing exercise conducted by a London Business School MBA student on myself in the latter part of my DHL career. Appendix B contains a Case Study written by the author on the acquisition of Airborne Express by DHL. The Afterword is a personal statement on the process and efficacy of the PhD process.

1.12 Reflections

Non, rien de rien
Non, je ne regrette rien

Édith Piaf 1915-1963

Reading any autobiography the reader may be entreated to "learn from the Author's mistakes". (See for example Terry Curran (Regrets of a Football Maverick, 2012) amongst many others).[46] Alternatively, the author, less frequently, may claim "Je ne Regrette rien" possibly with less plausibility. But even so, regretting nothing is not quite the same as maintaining that no mistakes were ever made. The key learning point from Deming's Circles, Kurt Lewin's change processes and the spiral of Action Research is that, in order to improve it is necessary to clearly identify mistakes made and more importantly to learn from them. More pragmatically it is important to identify and code the mistakes made and enumerate the frequency of each type. By code, I mean categorise the mistake into groups (financial, interpersonal, factual etc.). Only by doing this is it possible to self-analyse where the major weaknesses in your portfolio lie.

It is not possible to progress relying only on a line manager, colleague or partner to point them out for you because, as Johari's window[47] points out, that person cannot have access to all the information relating to you. S/he may well be able to identify some mistakes and development areas that you were not aware of but unless you are completely open (almost a psychological impossibility) then a candid view of your own weaknesses is dependent on your own critical analysis.

[46] I should probably confess my allegiance at this point to Sheffield Wednesday which was coincident with Wednesday's FA cup final defeat and the separation of my parents in 1966.

[47] q.v.

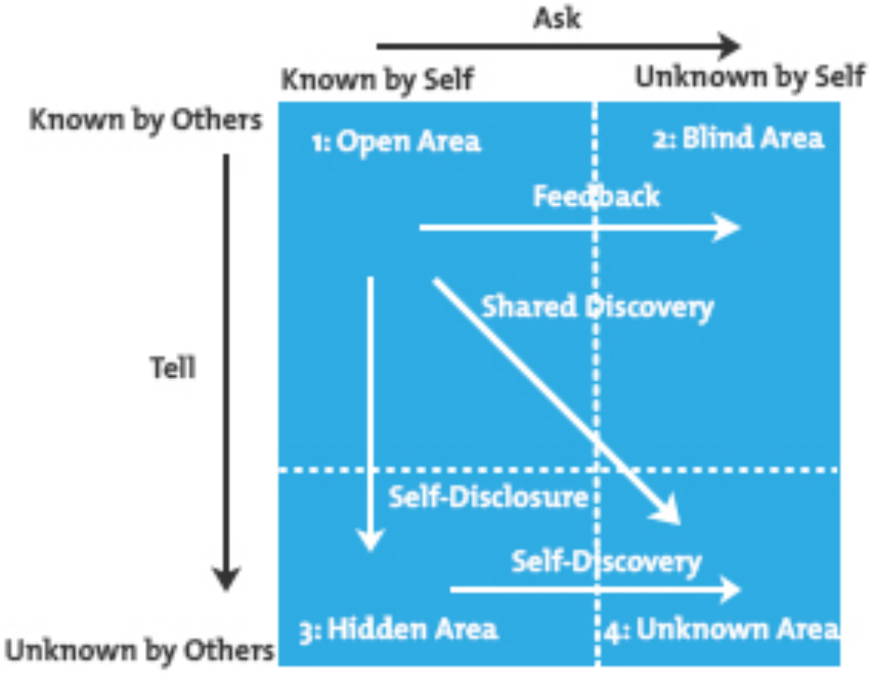

Figure 1.17 The "Johari Window" [48]

Robert Burns referred to what is the Blind Area as a giftie - a small gift. "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as other see us."[49].

So on reflection, I now realise, a fortiori, that a list of one's mistakes is a very valuable tool. Frequent re-visitation and consideration of current problems may then help the avoidance of a similar mistake. Applying the Johari window over a long time period has a difficulty which is that my direct line manager changed with great frequency. The longest I had was for about three years and on one occasion the person that recruited me had already left by the time that I started my new appointment. Despite this handicap, reflection does permit "Self-Discovery" in addition to the more regular "Shared Discovery" at the time of the annual appraisal. I will refer again to the Johari window

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[48] The Johari Window is taken from the names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, who developed the model in 1955 (Luft, 1969)

[49] To A Louse, On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet at Church" 1786.

in the closing chapters. But if I may, I would like to add an Eastern perspective which I feel perhaps works more accurately as a metaphor and that is of the Balinese mirror. This mirror (usually beautifully carved as is the wont of the Balinese craftsman) has two wooden shutters, where both reveal clues as to what lies behind but with little overall coherence. One shutter can be opened to reveal half of the picture, whilst the other remains closed, even so the gestalt is now more easily conjectured and with further effort the remaining shutter can be successively nudged further and further but never completely open. I feel certain that this is a concept which is both helpful to you dear reader, and would also have proven a rich vein of art for René Magritte[50]. It provides a metaphor for the differing layers of reflection as I delve deeper into my professional practice.

Figure 1.18 mmd in the Balinese Johari Window

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that I now see myself astride two professions: that of a Marketeer and that of an Academic. The rôle of an academic can be divided into that

[50] René Magritte, (1898 - 1967) one of my favourite surrealist artists and like me a past resident of Schaerbeek in Brussels.

of Teacher and that of Researcher. What exactly a Teacher is, depends upon one's values, beliefs and intentions and more specifically there can be no neutral ground from which to understand another person's teaching (Pratt, 1992). On reflection, I can see that my dominant or preferred conception of teaching is "Developmental" (applying the Collins & Pratt (2011) typology) but also with a strong dose of Social Reform. Collins & Pratt found that most (50%) respondents identified "Nurturing" as their dominant domain, which is evident in my behaviour but not dominant. Apprenticeship may be seen as more appropriate for technical skills teaching and is not necessarily key for me at the present time. Transmission was very important to me in my early days of teaching at Basingstoke Technical College, where I now recognise that I was overly obsessed with covering all of the syllabus with little concern for whether this was what my Students either wanted or needed.

I think the Developmental domain actually overlaps with the concern for the individual which perhaps harks back to my time as a trained Assessor at DHL. And I can recognise that this is something that I am genuinely interested in and perhaps explains my success in team building. More recent academic thinking might position this as somewhat akin to Servant Leadership.

I can offer one vignette in support of this:

I had a young lady working in my Pricing team who was offered a job in Head office in Germany. There were many difficulties and in the end the job fell through. I felt it was my rôle to ensure that it did not and managed to finally engineer the hoped for transfer.

Sometime later I had another very intelligent young woman working as my Marketing Planning Manager in one rôle that I had in DHL. She was invited to fill in for a similar position in China for a short period – to which I quickly agreed as I saw this as a great opportunity for her and valuable experience for our department. She completed the assignment very well to the extent that an offer to a more senior position in China was soon forthcoming. I was loathe to lose her but I also saw this as an excellent developmental rôle for her and once again quickly agreed. To which my line manager asked how I intended to cover her loss in the forthcoming planning round? I replied that if she resigned and went to another company we would have to cope anyway. But this way she would feel more valued by the organisation and more likely to return (as my possible successor) in times to come. My boss was not impressed and imposed an embargo on the move.

I felt this as an affront to my leadership position and a waste of a good talent (who otherwise may well have just left the company) and through various machinations ensured that the international transfer went through. This did me no favours with my manager, but (I believe) gained me higher loyalty from my team.

Shortly afterwards, another member of my Pricing team was asked to fill in for a maternity cover position in Australia. This was something that the incumbent was extremely keen on – but his hopes were completely dashed by a ukase by the Country Manager against the move. In this instance I was unable to help him achieve his developmental move and had to council him as to the (limited) benefits of staying put. I felt this as a personal failure.

Reflection: This failure and antipathy to a Manager who could not see how he was scotching[51] the hopes of young talent in our organization was merely my own immaturity and lack of emotional intelligence. I could empathise without difficulty with members of my team. But I failed to recognise the fear of being left without key members of staff in Quarterly review meetings with the Regional COO which was the concern of my Country Manager. If I had developed my relationship with him to a higher level I would have been well aware of this.

At the time I was not aware of the work of Daniel Goleman and the concept of Emotional Intelligence. I now realise that I have strengths in this area – but also big weaknesses. By tuning into the concerns and priorities of Senior Management I could have been far more effective in my management and leadership rôles.

Insight

But why has Social Reform elevated itself up my hierarchy to the number two slot when Collins & Pratt found it almost insignificant (3%)? I would refer back to my Objective which is to communicate my experiences as a Global Marketeer. And now that I *do* think about it, I *do* want to influence the future behaviour of my Students and hence (hopefully) change Society. This is indeed consistent with Action Research

[51] I could not help using this verb which essentially means to spoil someone's plans and entered the English language at about the same time as the word Welch. Both terms were used in a derogatory context about England's troublesome neighbours but have now entered the common lexicon.

which is designed to promote *action* in a field. This action has an impact on people which has both political and moral implications and therefore, is of direct interest to policy makers (Feldman, 2003)

I do have strong views on certain things, Politics for sure, but I do try conscientiously to not succumb to the temptation to peddle my beliefs to my Students (although, I recognise that it is almost impossible to totally eradicate this predilection (Shweder & LeVine, 1984). On slightly safer ground, I have always been interested in transport (the Automobile Association, train spotting on Doncaster railway station with Michael Palin, hitch hiking back home to Scotland from London at the end of term etc.) and this was reinforced to me by Professor Michael Beesley at London Business School who enthralled me with his work on the value of Travel Time, The Hong Kong Mass Transit Authority and The London White Taxi Cab Association. As a result, I am very supportive of the idea of trains and trams (as were my Father and Uncle Howard) mainly because of their efficiency, safety and environmental benefits. Similarly, I am an active proponent of Cycling (and indeed walking – although neither are popular pastimes in Malaysia) and hence integrated transport solutions.

As I have mentioned before, I am interested in driving and riding and continuous improvement in this area, my interest in cycling is more linked to my interest in travel and physical fitness. I have cycled across England, down through France to the Mediterranean, across the Alps and also from London through the Mountains of Holland and across the Afsluijts Dijk. As a result, I am passionate about transportation, the environment and the societal benefits of green logistics.

The ways in which I attempt to inculcate my students with these views is primarily through assessments and Socratic questioning[52]. I do recognise that this is indirect influencing but I feel no guilt as I consider this a noble objective. I also now can see that what I see as noble, may be perceived by others as both undesirable and ill-considered course material. But supporting me are Reed & Anthony (1992) who regard Management educators who perpetuate morally impoverished philosophies as contemptible.

Regardless of this, I feel that this is a legitimate mission with sound moral and ethical underpinnings which requires communication to any audience who is interested or concerned, a position which Ulrich (2000) when he talks of the value of reflective practice in civil society would (I trust) agree with me on. Ulrich also points out that having an idealistic perspective is insufficient and that the correct epistemological, ethical and questioning tools need to be applied. At the idealistic level, this could be said to be based on my pursuit of the Aristotlean ideal of 'eudaimoni' (completeness or happiness, q.v.), the Kantian kingdom of ends (Kant, 1785) or on a slightly more practical level - similar to the Deming (1986) and Argyris (1964) and their concept of respect for the individual. The examples I have given above could be said to mainly relate to green logistics but I have other issues on which I claim a voice, notably ethics in organisations, the societal cost/benefits of Marketing, cultural considerations in international business etc.

The Sheffield Wednesday connection is partly chance and partly psychological crutch.[53] Neither my Father nor any of my family had any interest in football. I only discovered the game in 1966 and indeed the first team I watched play was Sheffield United. I later

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[52] The LBS Shadowing project in Appendix A identifies this as one of my characteristics.

[53] Team identification is defined as "the extent to which a fan feels a psychological connection to a particular team" (Wann & Branscombe, 1993)

watched the FA Cup Final in 1966 on my neighbour's brand new colour television[54] and the tragedy of Wednesday going Two-Nil up in the second half and still somehow managing to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory and lose 2-3, thus, becoming the first team in history to lose in the Cup final after being two goals ahead. The World Cup was an added bonus, I was able to meet many of the West German players who were based in Sheffield (Beckenbauer, Tilkowski et al) - I had ambitions to be a goal keeper at age 14 - and also train (well stand in goal – whilst the shots whistled by me) with the Swiss national team. Moving to Scotland was another testing time. I have no recollection of being afraid, concerned or worried about the move. The impact on my Sister was greater I fear, and for my Mother it was a last chance saloon jump to safer ground.

The impact of this level of stress may lead to Post-traumatic growth which can be accompanied by an increase in well-being, but distress and growth may also coexist. (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1998). For me this was the first of a number of such shocks…

My address was Matron's Cottage, Strathmore Hospital, Blairgowrie, Perthshire, Scotland. And from there, I penned a letter to Jim McCalliog (scorer of Scotland's winning goal versus England at Wembley in 1967).[55] To my surprise he wrote back – probably assuming that I was in traction or worse. I was delighted by his reply and like so many football fans once infected, the disease (like my Grandfather's malaria) stays with you for life.

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[54] Contemporaries assure me that this was not possible as colour TV did not come in until a year later. I am uncertain as to whether I was watching some kind of closed circuit transmission or my memory is deceiving me.

[55] A fellow countryman playing for the team was found to relatively important in the reasons given for supporting a particular team (Kerr & Emery, 2011)

Figure 1.19 One of the two wards at Strathmore Hospital in Blairgowrie.

So why did I invest time and emotional capital on a sport which my upbringing and heritage had no interest? I suspect I was clinging on to a stability zone in a world where all was uncertain. Moving from one country to another,[56] a different education system and all without one's Father is not a mission to be undertaken lightly. The stability zones identified by Alvin Toffler (1972) were People, Places, Things, Ideas and Organisations. I have always tended to reduce these to socially related stability zones; namely Work, Family and Social friends. And for many years I have advised any of my direct report's, who have asked, to endeavour to preserve some element of separation and continuity in two of them before making a change in the third. My move to Scotland encapsulated all three; Work (aka School), Family and Social (having to make new friends). In order to curry favour with potential new friends is it any surprise that I attached myself to the Sheffield Scot who had put the "auld enemy" to the sword at Wembley? Additionally, I am throwing out a message in a bottle to other

[56] Similarly association with a home town or country was found to be an important emotional driver of identification with a Sports team (Kerr A. , 2009) (Greenwood, Kanters, & Casper, 2006)

Wednesday fans that I can identify and possibly form future positive social interactions with. (Wann & Schrader, 1996). [57] [58]. This is clearly what Toffler referred to when discussing Organizations – identifying one's self with a favourite Club.[59] I could have chosen religion (especially given my links to the Church Choir and my Mother's links with the (Derbyshire) tradition of Well Dressing), but this held no great interest for me.

On reflection, I realise that Places and Things are also very important to me. I cannot take places with me, but photography to capture memories is a strong driver for me as is the history of my family. My ex-wife was always puzzled by my need to revisit houses that I have previously lived in, perhaps I just want to check that they are still there or that I did not imagine them? Objects (Coffee Cups, T-shirt's, my Bicycles etc.) all provide quite vivid memories of where I was when I acquired them, who I was with and what I was doing at the time. If I lose one of these possessions I become quite upset – even although the replacement cost of the object is low. To give but one example, one day whilst driving to the South West of England with my (now ex-) wife we stopped off at a small pottery and bought a set of 4 beautifully fine wine goblets. Over the years one became chipped, one developed a crack and one was dropped. Eventually after some thirty years one was left. I walked back into the kitchen (it was dark at the time) and placed it carefully onto the work counter where it toppled over as a result of being placed on top of a slender power lead for a telephone charger. It broke into about

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[57] Which has in eventuality proved to be of significant value to me.

[58] Strangely enough, I had an encounter with a fellow Wednesday fan who now lives in Thailand in February 2014 where we discovered that we had both played in the same London Owls Cricket team in the 1980s and I had (in)famously lost us the match by hitting our wicketkeeper in the face with a fast ball (which the batsman had wisely avoided). Two overs earlier I had, apparently, broken a wooden spine of the wicket keeper's leg pads. One of our player's wives had to drive our injured Captain to Guy's Hospital for stitches in their 3 day old car and was rewarded with blood all over the passenger seat. We lost the match despite being in easy reach of the total as we had thus run out of batsmen (having only had 10 players to start with).

[59] The importance of the identification with a team becomes a component part of an individual's own personal self-identity (Murrell & Dietz, 1992). Hence team affiliation becomes a sub-component of my own brand map which I will elucidate further upon in later chapters.

seven pieces, despite a standing start and only a few centimetres fall. I was distraught and still feel a sense of overwhelming loss, even now, as I think about it. Not rational. But this is who I am. Freud would term this *objektbesetzung* (or cathexis in English).

At the beginning of this chapter I describe one of my direct superiors who had a strong penchant for Machiavelli, he was one of the three most difficult people I have ever worked with (it is probable that he viewed me the same way) we were bitter rivals and when it came to the day when the Marketing Director position became vacant he was successful and I was not. Then followed a few days of palpable fear as I was certain that my career in the company was both metaphorically and literally over. I did take preventative steps, speaking to both the outgoing Marketing Director and the Managing Director and three days later on a Friday night my rival approached me to say that my job was safe. My actions had probably saved my career at that point. I was later told that the Managing Director thought that I was an essential counterpoint to the new Marketing Director's possibly 'risky' approach. Looking at the negative side this could be construed as meaning that I had not

On further reflection, I can now see that photographs, objects and locations are powerful stimulants to my memory, I believe, far more so than for other people. I can often recall in great detail past events when I see an object associated with that time, whilst up until that point the event had been long forgotten.

Insight

been seen as adventurous or challenging enough for the rôle.

I have also mentioned the Indian Prince that I worked for. One of his favourite sayings about teamwork was that he did not want to be riding down into the Valley of Death and having to check behind him to see if his army was still behind him. I mention this as Machiavelli[60] would turn in his grave at how I missed my next opportunity for advancement.

I was called into the Director's office (i.e. my erstwhile rival) and asked for my opinion on firing one of his senior Sales managers. I agreed quite readily with his logic (in terms of performance) but pointed out that the Sales Manager's familial relationship within the company (to an individual far higher in the Corporate hierarchy than the Country Manager) would cause him serious problems. To this day, I still do not know exactly why I did this. From a game theory perspective I should have

Being true to my held moral stance therefore seems to be of paramount importance to me, rather than capitalising on Gift Horses. There is no doubt in my mind that a more "relaxed and flexible" attitude to such shibboleths would have aided my career. But to my mind this is no improvement to my professional practice. My Brand Map has this characteristic "hard coded" into the core values. It may serve, however, to make me both happier and also more authentic as a leader.

Insight

[60] Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), author of The Prince, a treatise on how leaders actually lead. Nowadays the term has acquired negative connotations of underhand diplomacy, deception and ambition untrammelled by any moral constraints.

encouraged him in his endeavour and then stood back to reap the rewards.

On deeper reflection I think there was some kind of professional consultant inside me that overcame the opportunistic careerist. This characteristic of authenticity by which I see what I am doing with a high level of self-awareness was much debated by Jean-Paul Sartre, Heidegger and Adorno (Taylor C. , 1995). Not a good move by me by any measure, but again, strangely, not one that I regret. To return to the Bhagavad Gita this seems an unlikely triumph for detachment over selfishness. Curious…

Kant might have approved, as he viewed any action motivated by self interest as highly suspect but those actions motivated by a sense of duty as 'unconditionally good'.

More fundamentally am I Scots or English or neither? Nietzsche might describe me as a doppelgänger with two maybe even three faces. Scots, English & European. I perhaps might even qualify for four as I actually see myself as Global (Nietzsche F. , 2004, p. 106). I like to portray myself as Scots (even now) but, in reality I left the country at age 18 and have barely been back there since except on the odd occasion. I am passionate about the current Scottish Independence debate, and I can see some direct implications for myself. I actively try to divorce my own (selfish) preferences against the common weal (q.v.) and only consider the economic and political and philosophical arguments. Regardless of the result (at the time of writing mid- September 2014) I can have no impact on the result as I am not resident in Scotland and hence have no vote.

I am clearly British but now see myself as more of a ('good') global citizen. National Identity is a strange thing; I would not pass Norman Tebbit's cricket test[61] as an Englishman, and indeed now living in Malaysia and listening to various Tamils talking about allegiance to India rather than Malaysia, I realise that culture and identity trumps national credentials. And yet the Tamils themselves reject their supposed national of language of Hindi and hence India now finds that its de facto national language is English. My problem is that both my culture and national credentials are a mess. Even more regrettably, I am betrayed by my own accent which is more Yorkshire than Scots with a smattering of Home Counties and the odd loan word from the United States, Dutch expletives and Manglish[62] expressions. This despite the fact that my Sister (who has lived in all the same places as I have (up until I reached the age of 18 when I re-joined my Father in London) has a clear Scots, Perthshire accent. If I were to have further children they might be further confused as my wife is half Black American/Jamaican and half Filipino with a Palestinian/Iraqi Step-Father, a Filipino/Swedish half-brother plus a Palestinian/Filipino half-sister & two half-brothers.

Some religions propose a system of continuous re-incarnation – moving from a base level thru intermediate levels of consciousness and understanding to ultimately higher levels and potentially final awakening. Coupled with this Eastern philosophy is the wheel of life, the Yin/Yang cycle and belief that to become a Master one must also become a learner again. The Black belt of Karate Master will through time and numerous wash cycles begin to fray, fade and gradually become white once again. In a

[61] Norman Tebbit was a member of the Conservative Government and subsequently Chairman of the Conservative party in the UK during the 1980s. The 'Cricket Test' was a hypothetical question to be asked of second generation immigrants as to whether they would support England in a Test match or the country of their parents or grandparents.

[62] Manglish is a combination of English and Malaysian.

sense this illustrates the circular nature of this thesis, from a Student, to a Practitioner, to a Master and back to a Learner.[63]

Figure 1.20 The Black Belt of my Karate Sensei; Lee Chee Keong (7th Dan)[64]

But to take this back to Edith Piaf – it is not so much having no regrets as realising that what is past is past and there is no virtue in agonising about it. What one can do is consider how one might handle a similar situation in the future. This epitomised in the Gibbs reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988) which culminates in the "Action Plan" – if this situation arose again what would you do? This strikes me as a very worthwhile addition to the Deming cycle or indeed typical action research heuristic. The aim of this thesis is to enable the reader to make their own generalisable conclusions which can enrich their own professional practice. This has been termed 'relatability' where you, gentle reader, can identify the degree of relatedness on whether knowledge gained from one context is relevant to, or applicable for other context, or the same context in another time frame (Dzakiria, 2012, p. 46).

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[63] The Six Sigma approach of statistical quality control utilised by General Electric also uses the Black Belt metaphor, trained practitioners moved around the organisation offering enlightenment to their Green Belt acolytes.

[64] I have subsequently discovered that Master Lee was once offered an honorary 8th Dan, but as the price for this award was US$1,000 he declined.

1.13 Conclusions

The purpose of this Chapter was to give the reader an overview of the subject matter, an introduction to the research problem (i.e. How do I improve my professional practice?). I discuss both the contributions and limitations of the research and provide an outline of the thesis structure.

I conclude that Self Reflection, if applied correctly, can enable one to empower oneself to be able to deal with future complex problems in a more efficacious manner. It is most probably in this technique rather than the specific cases discussed that my major academic contribution lies. Nonetheless there may be some important lessons for future practitioners to consider. My academic colleagues may find my reflective technique applied to a brand map of interest, also my views on employee/organisation loyalty which I think merits further research. Similarly the "Gently" (see Chapter 4) phenomenon that I detect to be increasing in both frequency and magnitude may be worthy of further research. The process of articulating my thoughts has undoubtedly made a difference to how I perceive myself. This has allowed me to re-prioritise my Goals, focus on improving aspects of my behaviour that provide the biggest incremental benefits in comparison to inputs and sharpen my intellectual thinking. With luck, this has also made me a more effective communicator and hence, able to promulgate the art of critical reflection to my Students in the future. As Saren et al (Critical Marketing:Defining the Field, 2007) put it: being critical is the *raison d'être* for all academics.

Chapter 2, my literature review, is intended to build on background and methodology provided in Chapter 1 by explaining the importance of epistemology to management research. More fundamentally it explains why it is important to my chosen methodology and why I devote time in Chapter 1 to discussing my philosophical position. It endeavours to provide an overview of the main epistemological debates in social science and tries to show that these epistemological debates lead to different ways of undertaking management and organizational research.

Chapter 3 contains the published papers on which this thesis is based. As these are original documents the page numbering reflects that of the journals and not of the thesis. I try to link all five papers into a comprehensive whole by means of my introductory and concluding chapters.