SYNOPSIS

This synopsis should be read in conjunction with the thesis abstract, I have endeavoured not to overly duplicate content. The primary purpose of this section is to link the five papers that I present and demonstrate how they combine with each other in my research programme. The papers were written over a period of about 3 years, although the publication dates do not reflect this. My research methodology is based on a continuous spiral of reflection and hence my position and understanding changed as I continued through the research programme (see diagram on the following page).

In this synopsis I detail the methodology and an explanation of how the published papers are linked together based on the paradigm of Critical Theory and utilising an Action Research methodology with interpretative and hermeneutic foundations. The overarching approach is known as Living Educational Theory as promulgated by Professor Jack Whitehead of the University of Bath.[4] The specific approach I use is referred to as "The Living Thesis", the methodology that I have chosen to adopt is that of Wong (2007), which is that of a case study applying ethnographic reflection to my professional practice.

In all of the papers listed below I have been the primary author. My Supervisors at the Universiti Malaya, Professor Nazari bin Ismail and Associate Professor Edward Wong are my co-authors. I presented at the ALARA conference in Brisbane in September 2013 and have also had (subsequently) an article based on my paper published in their Journal.

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[4] Whitehead, J. (1989). Creating a Living Educational Theory from Questions of the kind 'How do I improve my Practice'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 19, pp41-52.

The Diagram below provides a concise overview of the methodology employed which is based upon an understanding of the philosophical constructs of this research methodology, reflective writing, triangulation with secondary data sources and literature and finally analysed as part of a meta data matrix

A Qualitative Case Study Methodology, employing Habermas's critical social theory perspective within a phenomenonological, reflective practitioner approach.
(adapted from Lavertu (2007).
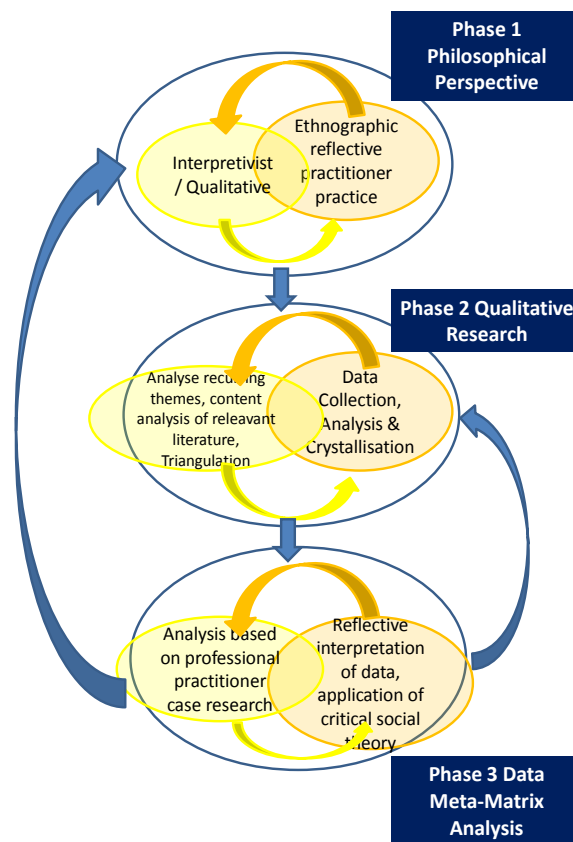
This methodology employs heuristics applying both depth and breadth of reflections on my experiential material thus producing insights into the field of international marketing. I feel that I have been consistent with brand map in which my espoused theory is mainly consistent with my lived theory (Whitehead (1993)), 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", 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)

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. 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.

The published articles all relate to the problem identified above, some cover the theory and epistemological foundations of my research, some the overall gestalt of my career and some cover vignettes illustrating critical moments or lessons learnt. All conclude with reflections on the implications for the theory of the philosophy of management.

The research methodology does not require the generation of new rules for behaviour or explanations of organizational behaviour, nonetheless three observations are made which may prove of value to future researchers. This is partly the role of Action Research, to provide fuzzy answers to fuzzy questions which can then generate more precise questions and research methodologies appropriate to the new problems identified.

As an output of my published papers and subsequent reflection I would put forward three observations relating to Critical Moments, the Gently phenomenon and the value of Tacit Knowledge.

Critical Moments

Over time some events are quite momentous and others fairly insignificant. However, on reflection it becomes clearer that some were seminal and others merely bright shooting stars. These are also sometimes termed critical moments of decision. I would differentiate between critical moments, which I see as key decision nodes in one's life or career and critical events or incidents which relate to a change in one's external environment which result in a significant impact on one's planned or expected future.

The Gently Phenomenon

Various writers on organizations (Back, 1992), (Bechtold, 1997) & (Black, 2000) utilise Chaos and Complexity Theories to posit a view of multiple dynamic interactions within a company. On reflection I now see this as even more complex still – there is also an industry dimension where the same actors come into contact with each other in different roles at different times in different organisations. I refer to this phenomenon in many of the papers. In the absence of a suitable name for this principle of interconnectedness I will refer to it as the "Gently" phenomena.

I refer to the Gently phenomena being the probability that in any one person's career that they will come back into contact with past colleagues in other organizations later in their career. Given, geography, educational background, the job specifications, age group etc. this (in my experience) is quite common. The way I would describe it

would be similar to that of the basic nuclear model, with the Organization represented by the centre of the atom with various professions (Marketing, Engineering, Finance, IT, HR etc) orbiting around each other.   Any individual may be closely attached to his professional discipline or area of expertise or more closely attached to the organization itself.   Nonetheless some people would leave and join other organizations - usually within the same discipline. The reason that the Gently Phenomena is important is because these individuals may know more about you than your current work colleagues (c.f. the Johari Window) which can provide either a positive or negative influence on your career.

Tacit Knowledge, Serendipity & the Science of Being Lucky

I now realise that tacit knowledge is of critical importance, far more so than qualifications or time served in a particular role.   The ability to anticipate the moves of others is the key to being in the right place at the right time. Many would describe this as luck, but I would reply that in many cases people (to a large extent) can make their own luck.

I have been described by many people as a very lucky person.   And I do agree that, for the most part, life has treated me most kindly. The important question is why have I been lucky? I posit that my modus operandi, interpersonal skills and learning from past failures have equipped me to handle complex situations and extrapolate potential solutions as a result of the meditation and reflection.   In other words experience and practice are slightly improving the probability of success.   Indeed skill and talent can often be seen to be subordinate to practice (Syed, 2010).   I attempt to illustrate these learning situations and critical moments at various points throughout the five papers.

One of the Agency planners gave me some advice early in my career – make friends before you need them.   I think this has to be one of my key learning points from my own reflections.

The counterpoint to this would be the danger of a new line manager – particularly one who does not know you, has no loyalty to you and who may have conflicting objectives. In my case this has proved to my detriment on three separate occasions (once in the UK, once in Belgium and once in Malaysia).   Whilst this is unsurprising the learning point is identical to the one above. Make friends before you need them.   The difference is that between that of opportunities and threats.   Maximising opportunities and minimising threats would be the mantra.   Both require maintaining strong networks and creating favourable impressions but the latter may require more of an external rather than internal focus.   After many years in not only the same industry (which was itself consolidating) but also in the same company I found that my external networks were actually quite weak.   In retrospect I should have been more active with the Chartered Institute of Marketing and certainly monitored external job opportunities more closely. Networking and taking advantage of the Gently phenomenon could have proved serendipitous.