

CHAPTER 4

FLEETING MOMENTS: NEW WAYS OF BEING-IN-THE-WORLD?

‘The *present moment*...has a sense of meaning in the context of a relationship...are what we experience as an uninterrupted *now*...is structured as a micro-lived story with a minimal plot and a line of dramatic tension...is thus temporally dynamic...’
Stern, 2004, p 245

What I want to do in this chapter is show that it’s possible to alter the learning experience of students in written online interchanges during what can be regarded as asynchronous ‘moments’ of the kind: ‘student writes - KK responds - student has an “aha” experience’. Barnett-Pearce has referred to these minimal communication patterns as ‘conversational triplets’ (Barnett-Pearce, 1989). My primary claim is that the process of *presencing of developmental possibilities*, the key coaching activity introduced in Chapter 3, can be initiated and energised within these momentary ‘fleeting moments’ of educational influencing, brought about through the skilled, situated, and timely use of a range of verbal and text-based dialogical interventions. These improvisatory interventions which are offered into the ‘space between’ one response and another, are both anticipatory and suggestive. As Bahktin (1993, p 32-33, as quoted in Shotter, 2008, p 53) says: ‘everything that is experienced is experienced as something given and as something-yet-to-be-determined, is intonated, (and) has an emotional-volitional tone’. In commenting on this Shotter suggests that ‘when one has finished speaking and the other has to respond, the bridging of that “gap” is an opportunity for a completely unique, unrepeatable response, one that is “created” and “crafted” to fit the unique circumstances of its utterance...it is on the boundary between...two subjects, that the life – whatever it is that is “living” in the communicative act – is manifested’ (Shotter, 2008, p 55)

These ‘movements’ which may be marked through a tonality, a particular gesture, or an apt phrase, are in the MA offered mainly in online text-based communications, as well as in less frequent telephonic, Skype, or face to face interactions. I believe that a ‘fleeting moment’ of educational influencing arises when a comment, gesture, tonality, facial expression, metaphor, or set of words, *reframes* the direction of meaning flow. This to some extent catches the recipient ‘offside’, and has the effect of momentarily jolting or nudging them towards a different way of orienting themselves towards their ongoing experience in a particular situation. As Wittgenstein says: ‘the origin and primitive form of the language-game is a reaction’ (Wittgenstein, 1980). This ‘now’ moment may only take a few seconds but ‘as the drama unfolds it traces a temporal shape like a passing musical phrase’ (Stern, 2004, p 4 as quoted in Shotter, 2008, p 129) to infect and influence the explicit and tacit sense making process related to the issue of orientation, as the student continues to work at its resolution.

TEMPORALITY AND SENSE-MAKING: implicit communication

According to Shotter’s detailed analysis in Shotter (2008) of thinkers like Bahktin (1993), Voloshinov (1973), Garfinkel (1976), and Merleau Ponty (1962), these interchanges can be experienced as ‘dialogically structured’ (Bahktin, 1993) and so

allow/encourage us to anticipate and improvise the ‘developed and developing’ (Garfinkel, 1967) meaning(s) of what we are talking about. Further, using Wittgenstein’s ideas about ‘primitive reaction’ and ‘language-game’ (Wittgenstein, 1980), I want to show that through the textual ‘gestures’ in my written responses, that I effectively ‘body forth’ when I’m writing them (Merleau Ponty, 1962), I provoke students to react in new ways i.e. think again and re-orient themselves to ‘how to go on’ with the issue they are addressing. This can initiate a potential new language-game which in time will become more fully fleshed out through ‘indwelling’ activity (Polanyi, 1983) during what I’m calling ‘development episodes’ - which I explore in detail in Chapter 5. And so this *joint work* (Shotter, 2008) - admittedly taking place in an asynchronised manner – will have initiated the presencing of a developmental possibility to re-orientate and learn how to go on in the particular situation/exchange that the student is engaged in. And potentially in the medium term, it will be also be identity influencing in its effects and therefore ontological in nature.

Can implicit communication lead to *mutual* understanding?

Let me start with a brief example to illustrate the kind of *implicit* communication that I believe permeates this whole process and so allows much to be achieved that may not be immediately apparent. In talking about Stern’s idea about the ‘temporal unfolding’ of experience, John Shotter (Shotter, 2008, p 130) recounts a story related by Stern (2004) about watching a talented street mime who is surreptitiously mimicking the moods, postures, and walks of passers by, to the amusement of onlookers. But one woman who realises this, upbraids him. Unfazed by this, the mime simply continues to mime her upbraiding him. Then she begins to imitate his imitating of her, and he vice versa, till both of them laugh, shake hands, and part while the onlookers clap. At that point Stern stood up to go, as did a couple of others sitting near him: ‘We looked at each other, smiling, raised our eyebrows, tilted our heads in a funny way, made some kind of indescribable facial expression, and opened our hands, palms to the sky – as if to say, “it’s a crazy, amusing world”. Then they went their way, I mine.’ (Stern, 2004, p 21) Stern notes that the unfolding events happening between people in such moments of meeting create shared knowledge to do with relations with each other that is often understood *implicitly*, and need not be talked about to have its effect.

No words had been exchanged but everybody sensed each had participated in the others’ experience. Though very brief, a story had unfolded, a memorable *moment* that could be recalled time and again but that led to a variety of verbal formulations. As Shotter goes on to say (ibid, p 131), such moments matter to us in that they accommodate novelty or resolve a difficulty, particularly those of orientation or relations. They provide us with exemplars or examples to remind us of ways of relating that Wittgenstein (1969) felt were needed in establishing and teaching a practice, and in guiding us as to how we could respond to rules. I believe that as I seek inductively to help students relate differently to a range of basic human sense-making operations, this implicit meaning-making process is frequently at work.

Have a look at this excerpt from the video clip - *implicit communication* - first shown in Chapter 3, which illustrates what I believe is going on here. It’s taken from a supervision discussion between Jack Whitehead and myself and captures a moment when I’m recounting an example of what I called ‘intuitive influencing’ that occurred with one of my students, where I end by saying: ‘and she exclaimed – how did you know I needed *that?*’ The exchange plays out between 17 and 24 seconds from the start of the clip, with the crucial gesture coming between 20 and 22 seconds. At this point,

just after I've delivered the punch line, I touch my forehead, start laughing, and then my facial expression goes through several rapid contortions as I shake my head. This 'gesture' is immediately responded to by Jack's nod and hand movement – 'there you go', followed by a burst of laughter, arm movements, and close attention. Apart from Jack's 'it is fascinating that...the quality of an educator', no words are exchanged about what has just happened but, as with Stern's example, there's no need to say more. When asked to review the video clip Jack agreed that we seem to know exactly what sense we're making of that moment - a rueful 'well, you just can't account for some things, can you?' It seems to me to be just the kind of 'temporal unfolding' moment that Stern refers to in his work.



12. *implicit communication*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0ri167_0AA

Implicit communication as 'intervention'

To further illustrate the power of the implicit that can be energised by gestural means, like a glance or a few pointed spoken or written words, here is another brief video clip - *complacency and gestural nod* - from a review I had with one of my students, John, after he'd completed Phase 6 – the 'diploma' level - and was taking a break from the programme as he started a new life outside the military. Unlike both Stern's example and the preceding example with Jack Whitehead, where the gestures communicate some kind of implicit *understanding*, in this video the 'gesture' is intended as an *intervention* to get John to look again at something he'd said. Prior to this clip John has been explaining how he became aware of what he called his 'complacency' while attending an internal senior leadership programme. During this programme he'd realised that he had to do something about the mismatch between his self image and how his staff regarded him. This clip starts with him listing all the new assignments he was given right after this realisation; which in practice allowed him to procrastinate and leave the 'complacency' issue on the back burner. I'm nodding that all these job moves had put a great deal of pressure on him, giving him little time to address the complacency issue – but at the same time imply that these very challenges were unlikely to have allowed him to remain complacent in the way he had described.

The critical moment comes between 1 minute and 2 seconds and 1 minute and 3 seconds where, to get him to review this apparent loss of focus on his development needs, I innocently ask him if, when he arrived at Exeter, he no longer felt he was complacent. This seems to plunge him into deep reflection for some moments until I in a sense 'give the game away' by leaning forward and tilting my head towards him with

an expression of teasing inquiry. He (and I) immediately burst into laughter as we seem to recognise the provocation embedded in my question. Neither of us comment on what this moment means to us but it seems clear we both share an understanding which seems to suggest: 'OK, so I *was* complacent about my complacency'. As a result of this 'gesture', he launches into a detailed description of how he has in fact now been directly addressing any danger of complacency by e.g. 'sharing my [MA] essays' with immediate staff, thus opening himself up to the feedback he'd avoided in earlier periods of his career.



13. *complacency and gestural nod*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfNggM50Dp0>

So far I've offered a couple of examples of video evidence illustrating the idea that powerful communication can take place during the implicit 'temporal unfolding' that can take place within 'fleeting moments' of communication. Let me now position this idea more concretely within the MA educational process.

The structuring of the influencing process

To begin with I see learning and sense making as being situated primarily in the learning log interactions and the 'dialogically structured' (Bahktin, 1993) relationship and interactions that the student and I jointly create, week by week over the 18 months of the structured programme, prior to the dissertation. How might these be looked at, and what might they really be about? In my view these form the 'conversational background' within the overall 'hustle and bustle' (Wittgenstein, 1953) of everyday living that we are engaged in. It is here against this dialogically structured background, in the 'exchange' or 'moment of meeting' for 'yet another first time' (Garfinkel, 1967), where words can be experienced as 'instructions' (Vygotsky, 1978) or interventions 'within a temporal unfolding' (Stern, 2004). And these instructions can provoke what Wittgenstein called a 'primitive reaction' (Wittgenstein, 1958), the pre-cursor to the evolution of a new language-game.

Using this loose framework discussed by Shotter (2008) to map the complexity of these exchanges, I see the 'conversational background' as primarily being the back home work/life context in which the student studies, works, and develops, and *not* the WebCT (now ELE) distance learning system, which contains/presents/stores the formal learning materials/responses. So the student's sense making and learning takes place closer to the context of performance than the 'seat of learning', and illustrates what Gosling and Mintzberg have called 'close learning' (Gosling, and Mintzberg, 2006). Within this, I regard the 'exchanges' as the fleeting or 'now' moments that can arise at potentially

critical learning points in the student log/coach micro-interchanges, and which can either pass unnoticed, strike an immediate chord, or possibly lie fallow pending the arrival of a more appropriate educational context. Within these ‘developed and developing’ (Garfinkel, 1967) micro-interchanges I see the variety of interventions, taken from what I’m calling my ‘responsive repertoire’ (see Appendix 6 in Chapter 3 for more detail), as spontaneous but ‘specifically vague’ (Garfinkel, 1967) ‘instructions’ which from time to time can ‘call out’ new responses from students, that inaugurate the beginnings of a new language-game.

Wittgenstein says in Shotter (2008, p 74) ‘The origin and primitive form of the language-game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language - I want to say – is a refinement, “in the beginning was the deed” [quoting Goethe] (1980, p 31)...The primitive reaction may have been a glance or a gesture, but it may also have been a word’...(Wittgenstein, 1953, p 218). But what is the word “primitive” meant to say here?...Presumably that this sort of behaviour is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought (Wittgenstein, 1981, no 541)’ This last statement reminds me very much of Schon’s crucial distinction between ‘framing’ and ‘problem solving’ behaviours (Schon, 1983): this is very definitely ‘framing’ work as students seek to re-orientate themselves in order to establish an effective relationship with the context, others, and the issue they are addressing. So let me now look at how this re-contextualising process can begin within these fleeting moments of influence.

FLEETING MOMENTS: the beginning of educational influence

I will now examine in more detail the evidential justification for this conversational view of influence, and argue that though it generally arises and has been written about primarily in face to face situations, it also applies to the more asynchronous world of long term online text-based dialogues. I’ll provide both video and textual examples to offer evidence of this process in action. By doing this I hope to persuade the reader that the idea of momentary sparks of influence taking place within fleeting moments of dialogue can occasion significant examples of change in thinking/feeling, which over time can lead to embodied development and improved practice. And further that this development coaching process can be usefully framed as the ‘presencing of developmental possibilities’. Let me first offer some audio-visual evidence of these ‘fleeting moments’ in action that I believe play such an influential role in the development process.

Initiating ‘primitive reactions’

The video clip - *fleeting moment leading to a primitive reaction* - is similar to clips I previously showed in Chapter 3 to capture the emergence of the idea of ‘presencing developmental possibilities’, and earlier in this chapter to illustrate Stern’s ‘implicit communication’. But here I use it to demonstrate the instructive effect of a word/phrase/gesture in initiating a ‘primitive reaction’. As you’ll recall, Jack Whitehead and I had been discussing my experiences with one of my students who found several of my interventions ‘right on the button’ – in particular my intuition that she’d find useful something on ‘womens’ ways of knowing’ (Belenky et al, 1986): ‘how did you know that I needed *that!*’. In trying to understand what was happening here, I use the term ‘presencing’ that I’d come across in Scharmer’s writings (Scharmer, 2007), and say the phrase ‘presencing developmental possibilities’. The crucial interchange comes

between 1 minute and 3 seconds and 1 minute and 17 seconds. You'll notice that Jack immediately fastens onto this phrase saying that 'I've never heard that phrase before', repeating it in a deliberate and strongly nuanced manner. He then ramps up the overall gestural effect of the different tonality, his direct gaze, the leaning forward of his body, and so on, by slowly repeating the words 'the presencing of developmental possibilities'. Even though this duly becomes the centrepiece of my thesis, I don't immediately react in a 'wow', wide-eyed fashion to his statement, but instead segue into my own response – 'it's been in the back of my mind', and confess that I hadn't used that phrase until that very moment: 'well, I just thought of it now; it just came up!'



14. *fleeting moment leading to a primitive reaction*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDUU3P7W4Pc>

What we have here in my view is a clear case of a 'receptive, responsive, and relational' intervention (Rayner, 2010b) from my supervisor which shines a bright light on a critical 'something' that would normally just flit through the conversation and be forgotten, were it not for his timely intervention. In this instance what he 'bodies forth' (Merleau Ponty, 1962) is a combination of my words with a more intense tonality, gesture, and body energy to give the words a new sense of meaning. And though I'm not 'shocked' in the moment by his intervention, it does begin to worry away at the edges and grow in impact as I drive home and reflect on the session as a whole. Within days my thinking about my coaching work has been transformed and I realise that yes – this *is* a way of thinking about what I've been trying to do. And, perhaps in a similar manner to Judi Marshall, I've been not 'living a life of inquiry' (Marshall, 1999) but in this case living a life of 'presencing developmental possibilities'. Here's my first written response in an e mail to Jack on 19 November a few days later, when after a follow-up Skype conversation, this full realisation finally dawns on me:

You used the phrase 'using intuition to offer freely, and in response to what a student seems to be needing, ideas for future development'. This *is* what 'presencing future developmental possibilities' is about. You also talked about me 'presencing myself to myself' on the video of the session as a key example of this behaviour: so I use this approach for my own development too! An immediate example of this were my reflections towards the end of our conversation where I started to imagine how I was going to progress this discussion. So I'm using a process I have found effective for myself – it's an embodied behaviour - with others too, so there's a kind of mirroring taking place. This means I can use all of my own experiences related to this idea as well, in exploring and explaining this potential standard of judgement.'

Primitive reactions in online text-based interchanges

I've now demonstrated what I mean by momentary influencing in a 'live' face to face dialogue, and I hope you're persuaded that Shotter - and all the esteemed authors whose ideas he's working with - have a point of view that is worth considering. But such face-to-face interaction, while clearly illustrating how fleeting moments of influence occur, is not the 'stuff' of online learning. And so now I'd like to turn to look at how this process can also occur in *online interchanges* which are text-based, asynchronous, and embedded in what is customarily regarded as a 'distance learning' educational form. Obviously we can't experience and observe the instant effect of a gesture or an intonation that the face to face situation allows. So can this same phenomenon apply here, where the need to write distances knower from known, and the mode of transmission creates delays in one way communications between writer and reader? Is it possible to imagine that the literary medium of words might be potentially as potent as the oral face to face option, given the apparent capacity of writing technology when interiorized, to increase reflexivity and alter the sensual experience of communication (Ong, 1982)? To explore this further, I now want you to look at some examples of what can happen in the online medium, taken from learning logs/essays written by a range of students I've worked with over the past seven years. Before I offer the examples, I want to point out a few things about the differences between 'live' and 'text-based' dialogues, that I'd like you to bear in mind:

- The first thing is that though these log interchanges are *asynchronous* i.e. taking place over time rather than in time, and sometimes separated by days if not weeks, they can be experienced by student and coach as occurring in the present. Because I now generally *embed* my comments within the student's text, when they read the combined voices in the document they are in effect replaying a conversation by, in a sense, having to mouth both voices in the context of their emergence, 'now'. Or as Shotter puts it: 'There are...a number of reasons why a second-person role is important. The most obvious...is that...I need, if not your actual presence, then an imagined surrogate now (at each moment in my writing), as an audience to evaluate my attempts to write...It is necessary continuously to co-ordinate the management of our sense-making practices as our communicative activities proceed...*you* [my emphasis] provide the motivation for my remarks' (Shotter, 1989 , p 144)
- The second thing is that though I offer these as brief extracts, they are not single, isolated comments but part of a sequence of comments over many logs and many weeks – so these 'events' lead to 'patterns' of discourse being built up which prepare the student for certain experiences and reactions, and as mentioned earlier, create expectations and anticipations.
- Finally, it's evident from discussions with students that when they read my comments they are in fact imagining me saying these things, and picturing my expression and tone – which they would have had some exposure to in face to face, telephone and Skype interchanges. So what appears to be asynchronous and monologic pieces of text/feedback can be experienced as 'dialogically structured' (Bahktin, 1986) - a virtual dialogue, both in the head of the student when he/she reads over the material, and similarly when I think of my responses and read their responses to these. So we are in effect both 'rehearsing' their dialogical nature when we read and respond to them, and the patterns that develop, serve to foster a particular kind of educational relationship – something I talk about later in the context of what I call the 'development container'.

To provide support for this claim I provide here a short video clip - *learning log as conversation* – of one of my students, Ian, and I, as we review his early experiences on the programme. He is comparing it with the MBA programme he'd just completed which was full of face to face activity and team working. He confesses that at the very outset of the MA, he felt that an online process like this would just not work for a subject like leadership. As the conversation continues, it becomes increasingly clear that his early online experiences soon completely overturned this initial negative view; and that quite soon the learning log interchanges had become 'addictive', and that the kind of engagement he experienced really set him on a very productive developmental 'journey'. So it seems - 'primitive reactions' *are* possible in such online dialogues!



15. *learning log as conversation*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW74V5D8Exc>

PRIMITIVE REACTIONS: some online text-based examples

The first example I want to share with you is one of the clearest illustrations of how a thoughtful response can provoke an immediate *primitive reaction* in the student – which is the main process I want to map in this chapter - which in due course, as you will see in Chapter 5, can develop into a new 'language-game'. In my experience, the development and elaboration of the new language-game usually takes some time to form and evolve, so in this chapter I will focus mainly on showing how the initial 'primitive reaction' is created and captured in the learning log interchanges. Then in Chapter 5, through providing further text and video evidence, I will show you how these 'reactions' developed and why I feel I can claim that they did lead to new language-games, allowing students to alter their leadership practices.

The text sequences you are about to see are extracted from a series of learning logs completed by three students on different cohorts but all during the first phase of their programmes, as they respond to a series of pre-set guide questions based on readings and reflections they're encouraged to study and try out. The colour coding (introduced in the Preface to Chapters 4, 5, and 6) that shows the 'what', 'who', 'when', and 'why' for each entry, appears below. As indicated, there are two main 'voices' in operation in that 'present': the student's log entry (in black), and my first response to his/her log (in black underlined). I have subsequently added further 'voices' where those in **blue** are my later reflections on what I recall was going through my mind at that time with the **green** and **yellow** highlighted texts providing further relevant information 'in the

background' regarding this reflection. The remarks in **acqua** offers a meta commentary added during the writing of this thesis, designed to help the reader follow and appreciate different aspects of my argument.

Highlighted – dates/instructions for learning log entries

Black – original text of student in response to question/task

Black – original comments by KK on student's log entry/essay

Highlighted – key words/phrases that most resonated with and influenced KK's immediate response

Highlighted – key words/phrases/'gesture' that constitute the influencing action believed to lead to a *primitive reaction*

Blue – reflections by KK when reviewing the interaction at a later date

Aqua – positioning and linking commentary to assist reader understand the context/meaning/significance of the text that immediately precedes or follows

What now follows in this first extract are three pairs of interchanges with John (numbered 1-3) of 'student log followed by coach response' that take place over 10 days during the second month of the programme. At the start of the first 'pair' of learning log plus response, John is responding to what he's learned from applying Kolb's model to a learning experience of his own. In the later part of the log, he reflects on how he might best use his natural tendencies/strengths in his work with immediate staff, to improve the impact on the major project he's leading. In my own response I make several connected interventions including appreciating his frankness, affirming his learning, and proposing he builds on his strengths. Towards the end of my response I offer a specific recommendation that he 'ask for more and better' (**highlighted**) which is the *gesture* that I believe stimulates the *primitive reaction*.

JOHN – 'ask for more and better' (see Appendix 1 for more detail)

1.

Date: Sat 11th November 2006 7:42 pm Title: Phase 1 - Week 5 - Activity 2

Prompt: Think of a skill or knowledge that you have acquired recently. Try applying the Kolb Learning Style Model to that learning experience. Does it help you make sense of the process or not? Make some notes on your example and your reflections.

In the Kolb Learning Style analysis I am positioned well into the Accommodating (CE style)...quadrant of the model. I note that this is suitably the preserve of those in management, education and government and I am currently involved in each of these functional areas. This chimes with other leadership style analysis I have conducted in the past 6 years and is therefore not news; indeed I have attempted to strengthen areas of weakness (deductive reasoning and objective analysis in particular) but have not found this easy.

My biggest issue at the moment is the **■■■** programme which my College is involved in. Evaluation is complete and the period of decision taking and preferred bidder negotiation is about to start. I have been aware that I have delegated a significant amount of work to my project director; who is very definitely in the AC area, with great strengths in deductive reasoning, planning and objective analysis. **I see us being a strong**

partnership together although I suspect that he would like me to play a more hands-on role; or at least have a greater knowledge of some of the detailed analytical work. I cannot do this easily; I acknowledge I am weak in the field of verbal reasoning and process modelling and the fact that I cannot devote the required time to understand these aspects tends to make me avoid them.

I am also facing another issue at the moment in that my strong practical and subjective views are being subordinated in the evaluation to detailed analysis, scoring and financial investment appraisal. I have strong gut instincts about the most sensible way forward and this is tending to clash with the outcome of the more objective work. It is always too easy to then discredit the detailed analysis as being based on flawed parameters and weak complementing methodology. I have a habit of criticising such process but without the skills, time, knowledge or patience to suggest alternative methods.

There is a fascinating situation building in the [redacted] project which I would call the “3-dimensional” issue.

- 1st level – my own “accommodating/CE” style which I instinctively trust
- 2nd level – the deductive, logical AC style which predominates in this project
- 3rd level – the more “accommodating/CE” strategic and political decision taking level that is based on the second level for support but which has a different subjective agenda to my own

I can see that I should have been more involved in Level 2 issues to ensure that the required analytical and financial evidence was in place to influence Level 3. I am beginning to see that by sticking to my own “subjective guns” at Level 1 then I have failed to adequately influence the strategic debate. A major lesson learned and one which I can still try and influence. In summary, another useful exercise; but past experience indicates that I am so extreme in my leadership, personality and learning style that it is very difficult indeed to make changes to it. A second best must be to acknowledge the fact and compensate accordingly when appropriate.

Tutor comments: *added by "Keith Kinsella" on Tue 14th November 2006 10:02 pm*

I found this a very powerful log where you are being almost brutal in your honesty about your normal patterns/'strengths' of working and how these are playing out in the more dynamic, politically charged situation you are now working in. Full marks for a sound and insightful appreciation of the 'what is' situation - the first step in thinking creatively about how to 'go on'.

I use the phrase 'how to go on' - a phrase used by Wittgenstein in his major opus *Philosophical Investigations* (don't worry I haven't read it either!) - quite deliberately to conjure up the notion of people feeling their way forward in a constantly changing game (he used the term 'language-game'), not to a distant future but to the next step. If we follow some of the ideas of complexity theory, something that came well after his work, I think it becomes more obvious that he was on to something here. So we're talking about influencing the *next* steps which I'm pleased to see you are still including in '...A major lesson learned and one which I can still try and influence...' Yes!

In this section I show appreciation for his frankness and try to positively affirm what he has reflected on and accepted: the need to face up to the ‘what is’ situation first. And then, working with his ‘three level’ view of the issue, I use a version of Wittgenstein’s

concept of 'how to go on', to offer the possibility of being able both to change his pattern now *and* to focus on doing something about 'next steps' in the immediate future, rather than fall back on creating some abstract plan about future changes

The reader will notice that while I highlight (in green) many words/phrases that resonated with me at the time, I do not then respond to all of them in my own comments. Instead I focus on either what I sense is a crucial learning point that is associated with these, or on one or two that at the time I felt were most relevant/potent. So e.g. in my first response above, I value his insight into current patterns – the 'what is' – and using his phrase 'A major lesson learned and one which I can still try and influence' as an entry point, offer another frame for his 'still try and influence' intention, using Wittgenstein's notion of knowing how to go on (Wittgenstein, 1958) and take *just* that 'next step' with others.

I would strongly recommend you do not lose faith in your primary 'accomodating' style - for this I read your 'intuition'. This is your foundation and your trump card so use it wisely. You're right of course to talk about the relevance and application of other styles (like AC) according to the 'level' of work and the particular phase you're in - but you work within a network full of these other capabilities, so mobilise these in the service of the task and keep your own powder dry for those tasks/events where your stronger grasp and feel for the political dynamics of the situation is critical.

Here, because he has expressed doubts/negativity, I'm continuing to positively affirm his natural style/strength/sense of who he is e.g. his 'intuition', and to suggest that he could with benefit differentiate between situations where he might make his special contribution, and make more use of his 'network' of resources. By using the phrase 'in the service of the task' I'm also trying to get him to attend to the 'system' level in addition to his 'interpersonal' level.

You talk of '...I have strong gut instincts about the most sensible way forward and this is tending to clash with the outcome of the more objective work. It is always too easy to then discredit the detailed analysis as being based on flawed parameters and weak complementing methodology. I have a habit of criticising such process but without the skills, time, knowledge or patience to suggest alternative methods.' Isn't this an area to work on now?

Here I come back and quote this crucial and insightful paragraph in full and using the question – isn't this an area to work on now? - set the frame for my more direct and specific intervention which comes next

Perhaps, rather than using the combative tactics that have served you so well over the years on your climb up the hierarchy, it might be more effective to support/guide and demand more of these more rational/technical efforts of others with less experience than you. Don't fight them - ask for 'more and better' so that your intuitions can be tested against so called 'harder' data. You might see this as 'compensation' but equally it could be seen as shrewd use of your unique talents.

When I wrote this I was thinking of my experience of a coaching session offered by Bruce Reed, Director of The Grubb Institute, to a senior ITT executive in 1980, that I was observing. This was where I first came across this idea of shifting from a 'fight' to a 'support' stance to others, and got the impression that it made a difference to how the executive was thinking about an important relationship. I can see now that it is probably

related to what Wilfred Bion called underlying 'basic assumption' activity (Bion, 1961), in this context suggesting a move from the emotions of 'fight/flight' which support 'climbing up the career ladder' activity, to some mixture of 'hope' and 'dependency' that better supports the different kind of relations one needs to facilitate and support staff when one has reached a certain level in the hierarchy.

The idea of proposing that he 'ask for more and better' is probably linked to my experience of the effectiveness of Arnie Mindell's idea of 'amplification': by 'encouraging more' rather than 'pushing back or suppressing' (Mindell, 1995), he might well disturb the current dynamics and allow new patterns to emerge which might better 'service the task'. So my action here was shaped by a number of ideas that influenced me in the past, by my appreciation of the dilemma that John was expressing in his learning log, and by my wish to help him develop a new frame and behaviours which would disturb a current negative pattern and hopefully lead to more productive relations with his senior group (and ideally other groups in the future)

A possible 'chain of influence' might flow from the effect of the Reed/Mindell generic type interventions on my own appreciation of what might work here, the effect of my particular version of these ideas in this specific episode on how John might now think about and behave in the situation, and the consequent influence of any changes in his own behaviour/interactions, on the performance of his team. The latter two stages of this possible chain will obviously need to be checked out with John when we next talk face to face (which is picked up in Chapter 5)

You may indeed be 'extreme' in your patterns but let's wait and see on this. I bet that with careful observation you may well find you already have a wide range of alternate behaviours in your portfolio, perhaps not at your command but certainly close to your fingertips. If you can disengage a little from your 'dominant story' of who you are and how you behave, you might be surprised to discover lots of other patterns which at the moment don't get much recognition.

Perhaps now's the time to let them out into the daylight and give them some support?

This now continues the initial intervention by suggesting he takes his time and, by disengaging from his 'dominant story' i.e. 'I have a habit of criticising such process but without the skills, time, knowledge or patience to suggest alternative methods.', he observes more closely what he is actually doing. This comes from my experience and appreciation of Michael White's Foucault inspired version of narrative therapy: changing the narrative frame can allow currently unnoticed and unvalued experiences and behaviours to become visible and get 'voiced' (White, 1989). In other words I'm suggesting he already possesses the resources he needs and doesn't have to 'change' by making up 'lacks' as such; and should allow more of what he already has, to come out as appropriate to the situation, and take part in the emerging 'dance' with his colleagues. Here I'm encouraging a more *relational* view of his interactions with staff.

While there can be days/weeks between an entry and a response, in this instance there is an immediate response from John who acknowledges the usefulness of my 'ask for more and better' proposal, in helping him shift his frame from negative to positive. Though he doesn't provide any revealing detail about how he goes about this, he does sound more confident about how to proceed

2.

Date: *Wed 15th November 2006 7:46 am* Title: *Re: Phase 1 - Week 5 - Activity 2*

Thanks for that comment. I can see that asking for "more and better" is a tactic I can productively use now. I have been asking for this but in a negative way rather than a positive one - by reversing the negative psychology here the whole atmosphere could be far more productive and beneficial to the team.

When first reading this I'm pleased and surprised that my comment has produced a positive reaction, leading to a voluntary 'diary' type entry as against a 'directed' entry. It's a good example of the meaning of my communication being determined by the receiver – so only now do I know what I 'meant' when I wrote 'ask for more and better'! However I'm left wondering what was going through John's mind when he first read my response... and in particular the 'ask for more and better' point? What was it that caught his attention and persuaded him this was something he could 'productively use now'? And what would he need to do to again ask for this, but in a 'positive' way?

This last reflection reveals one of the particular challenges of text-based online coaching. In contrast to working face to face, I'm often left wondering about the impact of what I'm doing – students generally don't devote precious time to telling their coaches what they're finding useful even when prompted. Even when, as here, I am told that something specific was helpful, I'm unclear about what it was that enabled this to have its particular effect. This is why as you'll see in later chapters, I've felt it necessary both to hold face to face reviews to check out working hypotheses, and to explore other text-based means of assessing progress – see comments on my development of 'criteria of progression' in Chapters 3 and 7

My timelines are tight but I know exactly "where" to focus - the "how" to focus has become much clearer through this analysis. Developing alternative courses as all positives rather than negatives is feasible, and I am sure will help perceptions of others.

So this sounds like a breakthrough of sorts...but what is it about the 'how' that has become clearer, and how might he now 'go on'?

Because of the structure of the programme, students regularly get 'moved on' by the changing topics and focus in log entries that occur each week. So immediately after the 'intervention' on the 14th and John's response 1 day later, he's asked to comment on 'ideal leadership' and then on 'personality theory', each with their 'directed' logs. Nothing obvious appears in these logs about any further thinking about, and action in response to, the intervention except this next log four days later:

3.

Date: *Sun 19th November 2006 12:41 pm* Title: *Phase 1 - Week 6 - Activity 7*

Prompt: *Compare responses to Activity 1 and Activity 6: what are your thoughts?*

I now have the advantage of a portfolio of 360 degree feedback, MBTI preferences and psychometric analysis. As an ENFP hating routine, schedules and structure I am not overly-concerned about these results; I am more concerned about other people, their development and contributions as I see myself more as a figurehead within the organization than a "doer". I have previously commented on the critical stages of the I am involved in and I note that ENFPs: may not take care of details and routine required for implementing their aspirations; fail to apply reason and logic to assess their inspirations and decisions.

I certainly recognize the characteristics described and **have already taken corrective action in a number of ways** to ensure that reason and logic are being applied where necessary and possible. I have discussed this with my project manager who has affirmed that he is very comfortable working to my intent and providing the required analysis to support the vision. Believe there is more gain to be had by sharing the ENFP summary page with subordinates and discussing ways in which we can, together, optimize our management of the organization through greater understanding.

So here is one practical outcome – a new sharing of personal information with immediate staff to encourage greater openness and involvement. But I'm wondering what else his taking 'corrective action' might entail and whether these are to do with 'ask for more and better', what he and his project manager have 'affirmed', and what this 'sharing' activity has led to?

I have looked at the other 15 types and if there is an alternative category applicable it is INFP. Recognizing and respecting emotional and psychological needs of others, asserting my own viewpoint and sometimes withdrawing from people and situations are all characteristics I sometimes see. There is probably evidence here of introvert personality but **over-compensation** in a clear military leadership situation through extrovert behaviour...I am in a position to use this knowledge in the current, complex, environment I face and am more knowledgeable about the impacts on my development and that of my management team. **The key to me is having the self-discipline and rigour to use all this information and evidence.**

...

Perhaps **one immediate action** should be to **close my office door** in order to concentrate on strategic issues, rather than listen to everyone who visits my PAs office and immediately think how I can assist them with their individual problems – no matter how trivial. Or would that make me a worse leader?

Tutor Comments: added by Keith Kinsella on Tue 21st November 2006 3:42 pm

You do seem to be getting much clearer about your preferences with big increases in the E, N, F dimensions. This might suggest you have both been growing in confidence and also that others have been able to relate to you better as you've presented a more stable and visible communication 'target'. It might also have something to do with your role becoming less STJ in nature. Has this been your experience over the past 3 years?

Despite your very clear preference for E you say that there might be a strong 'I' in there somewhere that has been downtrodden by too many years in the military. Maybe now's the time to see whether this might be so...not in terms of psychologically introverted behaviour but in terms e.g. of the thinking styles that I's can employ to do deeper and more sensitive thinking? Again this doubt about your self discipline surfaces: 'The key to me is having the self-discipline and rigour to use all this information and evidence.' At least you can laugh (or offer prayers) about this, the first step in getting a bit of distance from a too onerous imposition of 'history' on yourself.

One approach is to work from strength, both in terms of your 'everyday' work, and your concurrent 'development' work to improve the 'everyday'. Closing the office door doesn't quite sound like that! **But like the 'more and better' fit for purpose response we came across a week ago (and in what ways was that an ENFP response?), you could ask yourself what a more 'strategic' ENFP orientated set of responses might look like. So not working or 'competing' at the same level as others, but like your 'figurehead' image**

above, working at a higher level in the service of the whole, to enable others to be more productive.

Apart from the single statement ‘...have already taken corrective action in a number of ways...’ there is still little evidence as to any practical effect the intervention has had, and/or if anything happened, how it was carried out. So in this response I go over the rationale underpinning the original intervention; using his thoughts on his MBTI profile, ‘strengths’, and the ‘figurehead’ role appearing in his current log entry, I persist and reprise the basic ideas of asking for ‘more and better’, focusing on ‘servicing the whole’, and working in a more collaborative manner.

Does this make any sense at all?

About 6 weeks later John completes his Phase 1 essay in which he addresses what he’s learned about himself and leadership, and there are several comments which are or might be linked to this intervention. As this is more to do with the development activity that follows/might follow the first ‘primitive reaction’ to the ‘ask for more and better’ stimulus, and that transforms the primitive reaction into a more fully fleshed out language-game, I’ve positioned these in Chapter 5

So here I’ve offered a specific and fairly extended example of a textual intervention i.e. ‘ask for more and better’, that is acknowledged as a learning influence in the log response of the student, and seems to meet my understanding of Wittgenstein’s *primitive reaction* that can lead to a new language-game. I will offer more to support this in Chapter 5 and show how in this instance, it does lead to a significant change in approach and behaviour with others. In retrospect it might seem to the reader that I’ve provided rather more text than is strictly required to identify and support this initial claim: perhaps I could have just shown the specific yellow highlighted passage and John’s acknowledgement?

However in my view, while it might appear in this example of a ‘fleeting moment’ of influence, that the ‘ask for more and better’ comment is the central ‘it’ of the intervention, I want to make the point that this is very unlikely to be the whole story. Following Stern’s idea of ‘temporal unfolding’ involved in communication that I mentioned earlier, I believe that everything I say that comes before the ‘ask for more and better’ is in fact preparation for this moment: e.g. ‘I would strongly recommend you do not lose faith in...your ‘intuition’ This is...your trump card so use it wisely...you work within a network full of these other capabilities, so mobilise these in the service of the task... Isn’t this an area to work on now?’. As is the dialogue that then follows the intervention – e.g. ‘you could ask yourself what a more ‘strategic’ ENFP orientated set of responses might look like. So not working or ‘competing’ at the same level as others, but like your ‘figurehead’ image above, working at a higher level in the service of the whole, to enable others to be more productive.’ All of these anticipate, shape and provide support for a particular meaning to emerge, grow stronger, and help energise the inner and outer work needed to transform this ‘primitive reaction’ into a full blown language-game.¹⁶

¹⁶ as I point out later on p 188 of Chapter 7, this passage (pp 110-116) provides a good text-based illustration of ‘presencing empathetic responsiveness to requisite situated practice’ in action. You might want to re-read these pages when you have reviewed that section in Chapter 7

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As I mention in the Preface to Chapters 4-6, I've selected materials primarily from just three students to illustrate and support the claims in my thesis, using examples from each of them in every chapter, but focusing on just one to provide the main evidence for each chapter. I selected material from John to illustrate the 'primitive reaction' concept here in Chapter 3 but in addition will show briefer examples of material from the two other students who will feature more strongly in the next two chapters. So the next text-based learning log example I want to show you – that of Colleen - is much briefer than John's as I'm going to use her work as the main illustration in Chapter 5 regarding 'development episodes', when I look at the nature of the 'indwelling' development work that takes place after a 'reaction' and evolves into a full blown 'language-game'. Fuller textual material will appear in that chapter and here I include just enough of Colleen's text to show that a similar process to that described above, seems to be taking place. By this I mean that a particular written comment performs as a 'gesture', catches Colleen's attention, and starts to influence in a significant way how she is judging her experience and orienting herself towards her development challenges.

The fuller excerpt you'll see later, covers a period of some 8 weeks or so, and shows the broad range of interventions and responses that were taking place over time. Here I'll just show you a couple of briefer excerpts from learning logs in Week 5 when the 'gesture' – 'stark choices' - is first offered and then when it is acknowledged in her essay at the end of the phase. During the earlier part of the phase, Colleen had been doing a lot of soul searching about an earlier career setback, and her ability and confidence to keep afloat in the face of a major restructuring, while bringing up a family. In a previous week she expressed concerns about holding down a job – 'pay the mortgage' – and fulfilling her ambitions to be herself – 'seeking harmony'. The following abbreviated responses show her continuing ambivalence and her 'dramatic' responses to the choices she sees facing her. The colour coding is as used earlier.

COLLEEN – 'stark choices?'

Week 5

Learning log: *a response about match between her Myers Briggs Type and work role:*
 ...This is an area that I am particularly interested in as the time comes for a restructure in my organisation, where all staff, including myself, will be put at risk of redundancy if redeployment is not a possibility. Will I allow myself yet again to be herded into a role to pay the mortgage, or should I hold out for a role that suits my learning style, with the implicit risks to employment?...

Comment: *added by Keith Kinsella*

... You pose stark choices: mortgage or harmony?; being herded or holding out? Hopefully there is more of a choice than this...even in the tightest bureaucracies there is usually scope to create mini-cultures where one can keep paying the mortgage while being a little different to the prevailing norm; and where you can hold out for something while being herded. Can you think of ways of breaking up these simple black and white

distinctions that seem so depressing, to generate a bigger range of more complex options that you might be able to create in your and others' minds?

Here I pick up on a tendency she has been displaying in earlier logs, to see things in black/white, either/or terms, and feed it back to her using her own metaphors e.g. herded or holding out, and my own phrase 'stark choices', to offer a frame for what she's doing in this entry. I challenge her to seek out some space beneath the 'gaze' of the bureaucracy where she can break free from these simple distinctions, and generate more options and choice.

Between the entry in Week 5 and the next entry I've selected which is in Week 7, Colleen continues to study other psychological profiles like Belbin Team Roles. In this entry she is commenting on how this profile is helping her see why there are difficulties in her own work team and why she often finds herself 'taking the blame' for problems

Week 7

Learning log: *a response to using Belbin to understand dynamics of her team*

...We are lacking in the Resource/Investigator, Co-ordinator and Shaper roles, and, as previously discussed, I realise that I naturally take on these roles in the group. This will explain a lot about why I feel so tired, exhausted, frustrated and even 'put-upon' at times, as I am prepared to take the blame for issues that are not actually of my making, on the basis that nobody else will!!

To me this is an issue...martyrdom or immaturity? The former is an unseen team situation that I do not relish but regularly find myself in - somebody has to take the blame and if nobody else will...in the latter situation, for me to be considered immature is a label that I would cringe from, as it was considered a weakness in my family....

Comment: *added by Keith Kinsella*

...Do you have any ideas why you feel it incumbent upon yourself to 'take the blame' because nobody else will? What is it about the situation and your own patterns of behaving that leads to this seemingly inevitable outcome? Do you like being 'put upon' and frustrated, and experiencing 'martyrdom'...are there some real 'gains' that I can't see that keep you coming back for more? And to take a different tack, are you ever able to duck/escape/trick yourself out of these inevitable situations, when you defeat your dominant story about 'Colleen'? Maybe it's possible for you to find an alternative story that you'd prefer to follow and that others would support? Again you offer yourself rather stark and dramatic choices - martyr or immature? Not a very enticing choice is it? I'm sure you can think of others given enough time and persistence!

There is further evidence here of her tendency at this point in time to be framing her experience and choices not only in a 'black and white' way, but also in rather punishing terms like 'martyrdom' and 'immaturity' which she confesses she would 'cringe from'. So I attempt to provoke her with the 'do you like being put upon' challenge, and, as I did in the example with John earlier, use the White narrative therapy technique asking her to find times when she has 'escaped' the influence of her dominant story, as a source of resources for a more uplifting perspective. Again I use the term 'stark choices' to remind her of how she is framing things

Students complete two types of log entry: 'directed' which ask them to respond to a particular question/task associated with the topics of the week; and 'diary' which they can use at any time to explore and/or reflect upon something more personal. As these latter logs are not required, when a student offers them it usually indicates that they are looking for some particular help. The next entry is of the latter type where Colleen is trying to sum up some of her main learnings during Phase 1 – in particular becoming more acutely aware of the basic dilemma she feels she faces - and what career options the MA might be opening for her.

Learning log: *Diary entry at the end of the phase*

I am definitely having a mid-term crisis! I am torn between the sort of leader that I want to be: passionate and capable, respected and authentic, and the sort of person who 'achieves' in my workplace, that is, passive with seniors but aggressive with peers, lacking in loyalty and very often in ability!

...During this term I have undertaken the set reading but also found that I wanted to stray into other areas which built on the reading and work undertaken on-line and in activity...

...One way for me to break the cycle is to consider self-employment as a consultant, and so it is key that I find what motivates me. However, because of my practical situation it also has to financially reward me. That is the ultimate dilemma.

Comment added by Keith Kinsella

Again those stark alternatives...although this time at least one of them is positive! Keep trying to break these simple either/or's up a bit more so there are more angles to look at. Phase 2 will help you do this I'm sure....and there's really no need to feel you have to go the 'passive with seniors but aggressive with peers' route to be effective and successful, even in the [redacted].

I persist with mirroring back to her the dramatic way she is viewing life – 'stark alternatives' – and continue provoking her to try and break out of the polarities she uses to frame her tactics here i.e. 'passive with seniors but aggressive with peers', even though this appears to be part of the received wisdom in her organisation

At the end of each 7 week phase of work, students are required to complete a 5000 word essay which forms part of the assessed work counting towards the degree (there are 7 such assignments). There is a different emphasis for each of these that is associated with the content of the phase and the particular focus of the learning during that phase. In Phase 1 – Leadership and You – the focus is on increasing self awareness, framing/choosing the kind of personal engagement with the programme the student wants, developing productive relations with the coach, and becoming familiar with the way the distance learning resources and systems work. Colleen had not done any academic studies for over a decade so she was anxious about her ability to tackle a testing programme like this, and how the 'e learning' nature of the educational process would suit her. These are some of the things she addresses in this first essay. In this very brief extract it's clear that she's finding the coaching process helpful and now has a new appreciation of her default strategy towards her life choices – 'obsessional and perfectionist' – and what she needs to do about e.g. being happy with 'good enough'.

Phase 1 Essay: *extracts regarding issue of 'stark choices'*

'...I have been greatly enlightened by my Learning Log, and my tutor's responses on several occasions, and the revelation for me is contrast - namely that I either see a positive side to outcomes, or a stark one. I find it challenging to compromise in my personal and professional life, as I appear to be *obsessional in attempting to achieve the best in both*. I am beginning to realise that my behavioural (and attitudinal) resolution must incorporate 'good enough' and 'compromise' as factors to embrace....

...

So here her response to my repeated 'provocations' is specific – 'a stark one'. Her use of the word 'revelation' also provides a good example of the idea mentioned earlier in Chapter 3, that one way of looking at my coaching, using Rayner's concept of inclusionality (Rayner, 2010), is to see it as *revelatory* i.e. not about making/offering new 'connections' but making 'rationally visible' (Garfinkel, 1967) what is already there.

Although this illustration of a 'primitive reaction' is not as concise as John's 'ask for more and better', and does not show up immediately in successive logs, the describing of her behaviour as seeming always to involve 'stark choices' does eventually reveal something important to Colleen. How this influences her and the other processes that seem to be at work, are covered in more detail in Chapter 5 where her work provides the central illustration of 'development episodes' and what might be involved in moving the quality and embodiment of learning from a 'primitive reaction' to a 'language-game'

* * *

The next example comes from work I did with Ian during his Phase 1 studies. I'm offering it here in Chapter 4 because it both offers a good but different example of a 'fleeting moment' of influencing, and because I will be using his development story as the central illustration of a 'reflexive biography' in Chapter 6 - this example provides an important insight into the nature of his development that will take place during the programme. These extracts are taken from a series of learning logs we exchanged early on in the phase at the very beginning of the programme. What these show, in contrast to the examples with John and Collen, is a situation where it is the *student* who offers the key intervention – leadership must be viewed in context - and the role of the coach here is to recognise, appreciate, offer resources, and so on, in order to amplify the 'signal' that has been provided. And further in this case, what is being worked with is not a few choice words like e.g. 'stark choices' but a higher level and more complex piece of communication - regarding the critical importance of context in leadership and leadership development - that will take some time to reach fruition . This log is a 'directed' one, the very first one, and Ian is responding to a question about his own personal experience of leadership.

IAN – 'leadership and context'

Topic: *Week 1 - Activity 2 - Learning Log*

Date: *Sunday, 5 October 2008*

Subject: *Context - different situations can change perception on leadership*

In leadership (when deciding if someone is a good leader) each situation needs to put into context. A person will be viewed as a good leader in one situation but in a different he may be seen as an autocratic tyrant. I remember a general manager at my time at [redacted] who was excellent in a crisis, motivating staff, taking decisions (and the responsibility if they turned out to be wrong) pulling everyone together, and eventually solving the problem on a new £65 million plant, which was experiencing major commissioning problems and lots of early life failures. The problem was that this manager took the same approach to managing in less critical times, causing his team to feel stifled and held back. On the one hand this manager showed good leadership in solving a problem; on the other (and in a different context) the very skills that won him praise in solving the problem were seen as an issue later on. He failed to adapt to the situation, taking a one style fits all approach to leading.

Comment: *added by Keith Kinsella*

What a good start – you’re onto the importance of ‘context’ already! Your example of the ‘command and control’ approach working effectively in a crisis but not in more routine situations, illustrates very well the point that Contingency Theory posits - that you need to fit the style to the situation, and so pick ‘horses for courses’. Situational Theory works on a different assumption suggesting that managers need to be able to flex their style to the needs of different situations. You’ll come across both of these approaches in several guises in Phase 2 next January. A little later on during Phase 2, I’ll send you a copy of a paper by Keith Grint who develops Contingency Theory a little further by connecting it to some new thinking on context and the manager’s ability to ‘constitute’ rather than ‘read’ context. In the meantime hope you enjoy Phase 1!

I’m very pleased to see this statement in an opening log - many students take much longer to appreciate the importance of ‘context’ – so I make a bit of a fuss about it: ‘what a good start’! Ian had recently completed an MBA so I suspected he’d had some exposure to some leadership models, like ‘situational management’; but importantly here he doesn’t use any academic terminology, and relies instead on describing and making sense of his own experience. This is something I would normally reinforce as many students find this difficult but for some reason here I choose to counterbalance this focus on experience with a very quick summary of some relevant theory – a tactic that I discover some time later, is one that really stimulates Ian’s learning. I also try and engender a sense of anticipation by pointing towards some interesting reading on ‘context’ in Phase 2, and trailing Grint’s provocative ‘constitutive’ model.

During this month I was also working with Exeter CLS colleagues Roger Niven and Jonathan Gosling in a development workshop with a defence electronics company at which the Grint paper on context was explored (Grint, 2005). During this event Roger showed me an HBR paper on leadership and context by Snowden and Boone (2007) which covered similar ground. I decided this latter paper offered a more straightforward and practical introduction to these ideas, having none of the social constructionist underpinnings that Grint employs, and which Ian would be introduced to in Phase 2. I decide to send it to him before Phase 2 starts to see what he makes of it. Encouragingly he reads it straight away and uses a ‘diary’ log to offer his reading of the article.

Topic: *Week 4 - Activity 3 - Learning Log*

Date: *Monday, 3 November 2008*

Subject: *Week 4 - Snowden and Boone*

Snowden, D., J., and Boone, M., E., 2007, “ A Leaders Framework for Decision Making”, Harvard Business Review, November, 2007: 69-76. Review of Article:

In this reflection I have added my comments under separate headings under each section, plus a summary at the end. The article is intended for managers and its purpose is to give a framework to enable better decisions to be made if the differing complex situations that occur in leadership situations. The authors put forward that not all leaders are successful when facing situations that require a variety of decisions and responses. The article draws on a variety of relevant case material to support their arguments... They believe that Leadership is not a one size fits all proposition.

Ian then goes on to provide a very detailed review of the model and how he can use it to help him understand a number of situations he's been involved in, and is now facing, which I don't include here. At the end of his log he summarises his views as follows:

...

The framework presented offers a useful analysis of the different situations and the behaviour that occurs in each context. In an earlier log I have discussed a manager I knew who was excellent in a crisis (chaos), but could not adapt very well to the other contexts. This model helps me understand what was happening there. On reflection on my own style I would suggest that I go into "command and control" mode a stage early e.g at the 'complex' context stage rather than the 'chaotic'. Moving in to control the activities in order to resolve the issue quickly. I see that using the model it makes a strong case for not doing this, rather letting the team get on with getting the job done. The main learning point for me on reviewing this paper has been the importance of changing my behaviour to match the situation I am in. I believe I spend the most of my time in simple and complicated contexts, I am the leader and an expert and the comments about entrained thinking in the article have made me reflect that I am guilty of this on occasion. In addition, it has allowed me to understand the way other managers who work for me and along side me behave when in discussions...

Comment: *added by Keith Kinsella*

You've done a thorough job in explicating what S and B's ideas are in this important area. I hope you found the framework useful, and I'm sure it's something that will prove of value in the future. Keith Grint has a slightly different and probably more interesting take on the same topic - certainly his writing style is rather more entertaining! Instead of 'simple' he talks about 'crisis' contexts in which *command* is the appropriate response: just give me the answer! He talks about *management* or offering process for 'complicated' contexts; and advises *asking questions* for 'complex' contexts - what is the question we need to find an answer to? In this he joins Ronald Heifetz in believing that the role of the leader in adaptive change situations is about engaging the collective intelligence of the organisation. The other kind of difference with Grint is what he calls the 'constitutive' position where both situation and style are things which the leader can define, espouse, and enact, rather than just 'read' and respond to i.e. using the social construction idea, context is not necessarily something real but something that a leader can take the lead in co-constructing with others. I'll give you the references to the Grint and Heifetz articles later this week. You are working hard on this material - good stuff!

I thought that Ian's log provided a very good example of what a student can achieve through reading a (semi) academic article on a quite complex topic, and applying what he'd learned reflectively to his own practical experience. This is what Ann Cunliffe (2002) in her writing on education terms 'reflective' learning – applying theories and models to ones experience in order to make better sense of it; as against 'reflexive' learning where the focus is directly on inquiring into our own experience – a turning back on self – in order to better understand the frames, assumptions, and values which

afford/constrain how we make sense of the world. At this stage I thought Ian was just entering this exciting territory and so felt I could bring forward the more challenging material written by Keith Grint (2005) and what I felt were useful supporting ideas from Ron Heifetz (1994), and encourage him to go further with this very fruitful line of thinking – ‘good stuff!’.

These logs also illustrate the considerable discretion the coach has on this programme, to tailor the specifics to the needs, interests, and readiness of each student. None of the articles worked on in this extract e.g. Snowden and Boone, Grint, and Heifetz appear in the ‘body of knowledge’ offered on the MA programme: some of Grint’s other work is used in Phase 2 and Heifetz gets a passing mention. I brought these forward into Ian’s Phase 1 programme because *he* had offered me clues and I had receptively and inductively responded to them. So the academic materials had been *drawn in* by the student’s interests and readiness, as against the more usual programmatic basis as in ‘we deal with Grint’s constitutive model in Week 7 of Phase 2’! In this way each student does have the possibility of working with the coach to co-create their own *personal MA* that is tailored in an emergent way to their learning, skill development, and practice improvement needs. I believe this approach is one of the key enablers for ‘presencing development opportunities’ on a timely and situated basis.

As in the first example of ‘ask for more and better’ involving John, and the ‘stark choices’ of Colleen, the proper recognition of the effect of the intervention becomes visible at the end of the phase in Ian’s Phase 1 essay. Again, as this is more properly part of what I’m calling the ‘development episode’ part of ‘presencing developmental opportunities’, I will come back to it in Chapter 5.

* * *

As I mentioned at the start, my primary claim in this chapter is that the ‘presencing of development opportunities’ can be initiated and energised within momentary ‘fleeting moments’ of educational influencing brought about through the skilled, situated, and timely use of a range of verbal and text-based dialogical interventions. So having provided both theoretical and practical evidence for this claim, in this last part of the chapter I want to review the various examples I’ve offered to show how it’s been possible to use the written word to create ‘psychological instruments’ (Vygotsky, 1978) which can ‘instruct’ us in new ways of ‘learning to direct [our] own mental processes’ (Vygotsky, 1986, p 108), which as Shotter comments, ‘bring otherwise unarticulated aspects of our own activities into ‘rational-visibility’ (Garfinkel, 1967), and thus render them amenable to critical discussion’ (Shotter, 2008, p 61).

Let me summarise the argument so far:

1. I began with an illustration of Stern’s concept of the ‘temporal unfolding’ that takes place in even very brief moments of communication, using his own example of the power of implicit communication between strangers while watching a street entertainer. Here the ‘moment’ is about an implicit sharing of understanding.

2. I then offered an example of my own using a video clip of a moment between Jack Whitehead and myself, to demonstrate the implicit but expressive power of even a momentary face/body gesture to convey and share an emotion and assessment. Here too, the ‘moment’ is about an implicit sharing of understanding.
3. I further supported this line of thinking by using another video clip of a moment between John, one of my students, and myself, where a bodily gesture I use – a leaning forward with an inquiring tilt of the head - leads to a burst of shared laughter and recognition, which then encourages the student to further explore what had happened following my original ‘ask for more and better’ intervention. In contrast to the previous two examples, here the ‘moment’ while also being about a shared understanding, has a more provocative feel to it, asking for comment on the issue of ‘complacency’. Though I don’t see this as a good example of Wittgenstein’s ‘primitive reaction’ it does begin to show how such work can stimulate a re-view of a current way of looking at matters.
4. Remaining in ‘live’ face to face video mode, I then turned to a very significant example of the ‘fleeting moment’ idea: my discovery helped by Jack Whitehead, of my central creation in this thesis – the ‘presencing of development opportunities’. In this example I believe we do have a very clear exemplar of Wittgenstein’s ‘primitive reaction leading to a new language-game’. Jack inductively responds to something I say, gesturally marking it through his intonation, gaze, facial expression and bodily movement, as well as by repeating the phrase several times and noting that he’d ‘never heard that phrase before’. Interestingly, though I acknowledge his intervention in the moment, it takes some time before the significance really dawns on me – so here we are beginning to get a glimpse of the different processes that can follow the ‘reaction’ part - which is the subject of Chapter 5.
5. Having demonstrated what I mean by a ‘fleeting moment’, I then showed how this can also occur in text-based communication. Here I provided three concrete examples taken from the learning logs/essays of three of my students, restricting what I offered to the reaction/‘fleeting moment’ part of my framework and leaving the language-game/‘development episode’ part to Chapter 5. The three examples covered the following ground:
 - *John* – ‘ask for more and better’: here we have a quite specific ‘instruction’ to be different and there’s an immediate positive response in the next learning log – so it’s quite easy to pick this ‘moment’ up. And then later in his phase essay and much later post-Diploma interview it becomes clear that this has evolved into a full blown language-game where John is behaving differently and more effectively with his staff.
 - *Colleen* – ‘stark choices’: the basic issue of positioning different situations as ‘stark choices’ takes time to evolve but supported by various preparatory and supporting interventions during the phase, does over time create a new perspective for Colleen which allows her to challenge her habit of framing issues in this punishing way. The medium term effects of this realization will be looked at in detail in Chapter 5.
 - *Ian* – ‘leadership and context’: this example is of a different kind in that there is no particular set of words/phrase that captures the intervention and reaction. Instead my initial inductive response of welcoming and

recognizing his opening view - about how the success of leaders he knows seem to be related to the 'context' they're in - 'marks' this as an important issue. Supporting this first with the Snowden and Boone article - which he analyses in great detail - and then later with the Grint article, seem to provide Ian with a new 'tool' which he immediately takes to. At this early stage, his 'reaction' I believe is limited to the idea that this is a useful 'tool' which - as a recent MBA graduate where 'tools' are of the essence - he probably feels he can use without any further development or changes in himself. However, as you will see, particularly in Chapter 6, this reaction does develop over time into an influential language-game which allows him to develop new ontological skills which completely transform the way he thinks and performs leadership.

6. These examples show that the interventions and the reactions that form these 'fleeting moments' can take a variety of forms and can be longer and complex: like my own 'presencing' example, or the intervention on the importance of 'context', or 'stark choices'; or can be very brief and even throwaway in nature, like 'ask for more and better'. And while in retrospect they may seem like I'm using quite specific 'tools' to do the job, they are in fact 'specifically vague' (Garfinkel, 1967) - that is, until feedback from the student makes them otherwise!

As a final comment to end this chapter, I'd like to re-iterate something I mentioned earlier in this chapter viz. that through my more recent practice of generally embedding my commentary/feedback within the relevant phrases of student's logs (see example in Preface to Chapter 3 to 5), I'm effectively transforming it into a *dialogue* of sorts: the student has to read what he said and then what I said...and then respond in his head if nowhere else: so the 'conversational triplet' (Barnett-Pearce, 1989) is played out in the head. Of course the student could just ignore it as of no import; or feel irritated and say 'oh yes, I thought of that and rejected it!'; or find it of interest and think of following it up; or find it takes him unawares and delivers a bit of a shock. Whatever the specific reaction, the student might then tell me about this in the next log/Skype or not; or if she/he doesn't comment on it, it may nevertheless show up in the next essay - as part of the 'development episode' level of the intervention; or even in a later essay or final dissertation, so forming part of what I've called his/her 'reflexive biography'. The key to this process is to expect, hope, anticipate - and be patient! - that one or more of the many suggestions/challenges I am making will have struck a potent chord at some point, to be observant about what comes up in the logs/essays and other contacts, and to be receptive and responsive in supporting (or to use Mindell's apt phrase [Mindell, 1995] to 'amplify') whatever signals of potential development and opportunities to work on these, emerge.

So here, we are not looking at a simple black and white, linear, 'one shot' action, but a more complex, multi-levelled, and non-linear process that takes place over time. I will also make the point after presenting further evidence in Chapters 5 and 6 on *development episodes* and *reflexive biography*, that this initiation of change is also just a part of a larger creative and mediated process. In this the 'provocative' presencing of developmental opportunities is going on at all levels all of the time, involving the immediate - 'fleeting moment'; the short-medium term - 'development episodes'; and the mid-longer term - 'reflexive biography'. In other words the development process is not just about a magic moment every now and again: everything I do is about preparing the ground, seeding the moment, supporting and extending the language-game, and

helping students integrate and embed their learning about ‘how to go on with others’ so that it becomes an ontological, identity influencing process.

I hope that in this chapter I’ve made some progress in persuading you of the existence of ‘fleeting moments’ of educational influence and what constitutes them, and to show you how they can be a precursor to the creation and evolution of new language-games. In my usage, these new language-games are essentially new ‘orientational’ framings that enable students to re-contextualize their experience of situations sufficiently, to ‘know how to go on’ to develop new embodied capabilities. What new language-games might look like in this particular context and what might it take to create these, are questions I respond to in the next chapter.