The Systemic Impact of a Consultant within an Organisational Field

A study submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Professional Studies

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ABSTRACT

My public work represents both a body of knowledge developed through valid and robust research and grounded in practice as well as evidence of a set of working methods and processes through which it has emerged.

- The body of knowledge it represents about the cultural sector as a whole, and the dance field in particular, is deep and I have evidenced that this has impacted significantly on the field.
- Through reflection on my practice, my working methods and processes, I have been able to extrapolate some key learning that may inform the way in which we consider the relationships between consultancy, leadership, organisational development and systemic change in organisational fields. I have proposed that the role of the consultant as thought leader and transformational change agent is potent.

My hypothesis is that a consultant working within a given field can have system wide impact because the leadership exerted extends beyond the boundaries of individual organisations.

This submission draws on an extensive body of research carried out over the last 6 years in my work as a freelance consultant. It relates the work to the above hypothesis in order to explore the interrelated processes. I extract learning from this exploration that will assist with the ongoing development of a body of knowledge concerning systems and leadership, consultancy, organisational and field development and applied research.

My work has crossed art form boundaries but, more recently (2005- present), has focussed on the dance field. The works to which this statement refers draw primarily on research carried out within the dance field between 2007 and 2010. I examine the primary works in dance to analyse impact in a specific field. A secondary body of work supports the analysis drawing from a range of different research projects undertaken within different art form contexts along with a body of experience that includes my non executive leadership. I examine these secondary works to analyse the role of the consultant as leader and then reference all works in examining the impact of applied research.

Susanne Burns

August 2010

“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who takes the credit.”

Attr to Harry S Truman

“Autonomous people working towards mastery perform at very high levels. But those who do so in the service of some greater objective can achieve even more. The most deeply motivated people – not to mention those who are most productive and satisfied – hitch their desires to a cause larger than themselves.”

Daniel H. Pink (2010)

“Leadership is not just a role we inhabit – it is also an attitude to life and its challenges. Leadership begins when we stop blaming others and making excuses when things go wrong. Leadership begins when we start to explore ‘How can I best make a difference’?”

Hawkins and Smith (2006)

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Preface

Due to the nature of this submission and the professional work upon which it rests, it has been necessary to remove some of the initial appendices submitted for assessment prior to publication. All appendices originally submitted are listed but only those that are in the public realm have been incorporated into this document.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank my beautiful daughters, Rivca and Lonya, who have offered me so much support. They have always understood the moments of pressure and have been unstinting in their belief in me and have celebrated both achievements and failure with me. This D. Prof. was for them. Secondly, I need to thank my extensive network of peers, colleagues and ex students who have contributed to this work in so many ways. Without being commissioned and entrusted with problems to solve and answers to find I would not have created the body of work, without my peers, with whom I have been able to discuss emergent issues, my reflection would be so much less valuable and without the challenges that many of them have offered I would not have completed this submission. In particular, I would like to thank Sue Harrison, Iona Horsburgh and Paul Bewick who have worked with me on some of the research projects contained within the submission. I would like to thank Professor Bill Harrison and Tamsin Cox for their careful reading of my work and I would like to thank Jeannette Siddall, a dear friend, who challenged many of my original ideas for the submission over many evenings of wine, food and conversation. My thanks also go to Sue Hoyle, Director of the Clore Leadership programme who pointed out to me in 2004 that I was already a leader.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr Carol Costley and Professor Chris Bannerman of Middlesex University for their supervision and support during the preparation of this submission.

Chapter One: Introduction

It is my contention that a consultant working within a given field can have system wide impact when the leadership exerted extends beyond the boundaries of individual organisations.

This statement will draw on my professional work relating it to the above hypothesis in order to explore the interrelated processes involved in transformational consultancy and the individual leadership role played by the consultant. I will attempt to extract learning from this exploration which will contribute to the ongoing development of a body of knowledge concerning systems and leadership, consultancy, organisational and field development and applied research.

As a freelance Development Consultant my work has crossed art form boundaries but, more recently (2005 to the present), has focussed on the dance field. The works to which this statement will primarily refer are the following.

Burns, S. (2010). New Directions: A Report on the Symposium. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Burns, S. (2010). Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Dance. London: Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Burns, S. & Harrison, S. (2009). A Window on Dance: Dance Mapping 2004 – 2008. London: Arts Council England

Burns, S. (2009). 'The Organisation of the Dance Field in England', AIMAC Conference Proceedings, July 2009 SMU, Dallas

Burns, S .(2008). Taking British Dance into an International Arena: An Evaluation of the Impact of British Dance Edition 08.Liverpool:Merseyside Dance Initiative

Burns, S. (2008). Fit to Teach: A Report on the Dance Training and Accreditation Research Project, London: Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance *http://www.dtap.org.uk/DTAP-report.pdf*

Burns, S. (2008). Creating Greater Opportunity for Young People to Dance: An Evaluation of the Impact of the Next Steps and Dance Links Projects. London: Youth Dance England

Burns, S. (2008). Evaluation of Jane Attenborough Dance in Education Awards. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Burns, S. (2007). Mapping Dance: Entrepreneurship and Professional Practice in Dance Higher Education, Lancaster: Palatine http://www.danceuk.org/metadot/index.pl?id=22529&isa=Category&op=show

Burns, S. (2001). 'Dancing with Figures: Changing Patterns in the Funding of Dance in the UK 1987 -1997' in Janssen, Halbertsma, Idjens and Ernst (eds) (2001)Trends and Strategies in the Arts and Cultural Industries, Rotterdam: Erasmus University

A secondary body of work will support this analysis drawing from a range of different consultancy projects that have been undertaken within different art form contexts along with a body of experience that includes my non executive leadership as Chair of the Board of the Foundation for Community Dance and as Chair of the Regional Dance Strategy Group for Arts Council England in the North West.

Burns, S. (2010) Artists Working in Participatory Settings, London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Burns, S. & Bewick, P. (2010). Interim Evaluation of In Harmony, Liverpool: Royal Liverpool Philharmonic

Burns, S. (2009). Curious Minds Organisational Review, Lancashire: Curious Minds

Burns, S. & Horsburgh, I. (2008). LARC: Structure Review, Liverpool: Liverpool Arts and Regeneration Consortium

Burns, S. (2006). Liverpool Biennial: Organisational Review, Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial

Burns, S. (2005). Market Scoping: MA Cultural Leadership, Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University

Burns, S. (2005). Culture Campus: Development Plan 2005 – 2010, Liverpool: Culture Campus

Chapter 2 draws from these secondary works in order to analyse the role of the consultant as leader. Chapter 3 focuses specifically on the primary works to analyse impact in a specific field. Chapter 4 will reference all works in relation to the impact of applied research. In addition, supplementary material is presented and referred to within the text, including my curriculum vitae and several academic papers which include a review of the literature on leadership. But before these discussions take place it is important to note some key aspects of dance that inform this work.

'How do we know the dancer from the dance?' (W.B Yeats)

In dance, the dancer and the dance become one. The body embodies the dance and it is through the body that the dance is realised and presented. In order to do this, the dancer's body is finely tuned and is responsive to its context, to space and to other bodies within that space. In dance the performer expresses desires, values and aspirations and the emotions attached to the performance create an underlying bond that connects the audience to the performers and the work as a whole.

This type of expression and intelligence, termed emotional intelligence or EQ, brings the ability to sense, understand and pass judgment on the emotions as a source of information and influence. It motivates us to pursue our potential and activate our desires. Cooper (1998) says, *"the word emotion may be simply defined as applying 'movement,' either metaphorically or literally, to core feelings."* This way of deriving movement from an emotion or attaching an emotion to a movement is of great interest to leadership studies.

In leadership, the exploration of our own emotions and our understanding of the emotions and responses of others is critical to enabling us to recognise the emotions of followers, allowing us to lead and react with the appropriate counter emotion.

I have become increasingly aware of my own ability to apply this form of intelligence through my work and, further to this, in my work as a trainer and coach, I have observed the ability of other dance trained leaders to apply it to great effect. It seems to stem from an awareness of the body in space, a trust in the body in space and its ability to 'read' others and 'read' situations. This could be termed empathy.

So, how can we distinguish between the dancer - the way I work - and the 'dance' - the body of work I have produced?

My work has been informed by my particular approach to it, my innate talents and abilities and by my developing skills and knowledge. An authority has accrued from this which has enabled me to continue to secure work through reputation and word of mouth. But perhaps most importantly, my work has been informed by an approach that stems from my dance training and background. I work with people, I 'read' them, I use my physical, kinaesthetic intelligence along with my emotional intelligence and my inter and intrapersonal intelligence to create solutions to problems with clients and generate a 'dance'.

This approach has informed the kind of consultant I have become. This statement will contextualise my work through an analysis of the consultancy approach I have developed and the systemic leadership impact it has made on the field in which I work.

Firstly, I will examine the notion of consultant as leader relating my approach to the literature and the secondary works listed above. I will then consider the primary works within the context of the

dance field, relating my professional trajectory to the development of the field. Finally, and very importantly, I will consider the practice of consultancy as applied research referring to both primary and secondary examples. I will then consider the impact of my professional work and seek to draw conclusions that may illuminate the interlinked concepts of leadership, consultancy, organisational development and systemic impact. I will also reflect on my learning and consider how I take this forward after completion of the professional doctorate.

The narrative of this study can be depicted as follows:

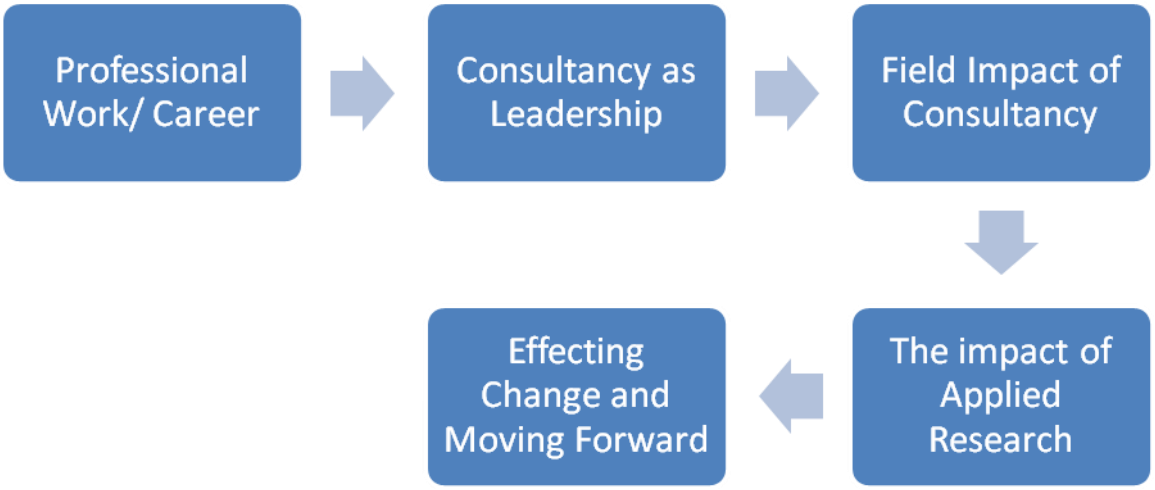


Figure 1: Narrative Structure

Chapter Two: The Consultant as Leader

In 2002, the attention of the cultural sector began to focus closely on 'leadership'. A task force report was presented to the trustees of the Clore Duffield Foundation (Hewison & Holden, 2002) claiming a 'crisis' of leadership within the sector and thus, the 'cultural leadership' era began. Since that date, the issue of leadership in, and of, the cultural sector has attracted significant attention and we have seen the establishment of the Clore Leadership Programme in 2004, the development of an ongoing research project under the Mission Models Money umbrella, the advent of new postgraduate courses at two UK universities, and in 2006, the launch of the national Cultural Leadership Programme (CLP).

Within this relatively short space of time (2002–9), cultural leadership has become a significant focus for policy intervention and private and government spending. My own engagement with this agenda began in late 2004. I had reached a critical stage in my career. At 47 I became aware I was at a critical point but not sure why or, indeed, what my choices were. I felt I had lost the ability to think clearly. I had realised that I was almost burned out. I was becoming stuck, risk averse and stale. I was stressed and becoming demotivated. I had decided to leave my full time role as Development Director with the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in October 2004 to start a freelance consultancy career and was fortunate that my Chief Executive, Eddie Berg, asked to retain me as an Associate Director for 12 months to work on key development projects. This provided me with a stable income at the onset of my consultancy career. I had previously worked on a freelance basis between 1988 and 1994 and was confident that I would be able to manage the challenges of working for myself.

With more than 20 years of experience[1], I had gathered a breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills across a wide range of organisations and art forms. I had held varied leadership roles and each had brought challenges along with opportunities for development and learning and new skills. I had engaged with:

- Policy leadership
- Project, consultancy and research leadership
- Leadership of small organisations in transition

[1] CV attached as Appendix 1.

- Academic leadership
- Leadership of training and development
- Leadership of teams – small and large
- Leadership of change

I had encountered many leaders from whom I had learnt and had tried to develop new leadership behaviours of my own. I had significant strengths in developing people, coaching, managing teams and managing change. I had extensive networks and was respected professionally. But, I had come to recognise that there was a mismatch between my own values and beliefs and the work that I was currently undertaking. This personal crisis coincided with the announcement of the Clore Fellowship Programme to which I applied but was unsuccessful – the first interview I had ever had when I hadn't got the 'job'! However, the feedback I was given provided me with much food for thought. It was felt that I didn't need the Fellowship to become a leader, as I already was one. In all honesty, I had never seen it like this. I was encouraged to find my own way and realised that I was not working in a way which felt authentic but instead was working in a way that was not true to my values and my beliefs.

I had already had some key moments of enlightenment when working as Director of Business Development at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and at FACT when I recognised that I could spend the rest of my career working to someone else's vision but not effecting the kinds of change that I wished to make. I also realised that I did not necessarily want to lead an organisation as my life work balance was also important to me. I therefore approached my new freelance career from a different angle. I knew that I wanted to return to working more in dance where my career had begun in the early 1980s and that I wanted to work in a way which effected change within organisations.

I worked with a design colleague, Jon Barraclough, to 'brand' my work. As a marketing specialist, I know that a brand is more than a logo. Instead it comprises a set of values and beliefs that underpin the 'product' being branded. The notion of branding an individual and a set of working methods was interesting to both Jon and I and it generated some challenging debate around my working methods that afforded me the opportunity to determine what I felt my values were. I felt that I wanted to work creatively with my clients, facilitating development, improvement and transformation rather than offering immediate solutions. I recognised that my strengths were in strategic thinking, the ability to think outside the box and to come up with innovative and new ways of doing things. (Appendix 2)

Looking back at my early writing and planning from that period, it is clear that:

- I saw a range of opportunities and functions that I could undertake as a freelance consultant
- I wanted to work in a particular way
- I was seeking specific outcomes at a range of levels

I therefore rejected the title 'Management Consultant' when I began my freelance practice and chose 'Development Consultant' as being a better way of describing the function I saw myself playing. My role was not to manage, but to use the skills I had in teaching, training, coaching and mentoring, writing, researching and evaluating to assist organisations with planning, strategy and change. I wanted to develop the organisations with whom I worked – to work with them in a transactional way which would transform their practices and their working methods and structures.

I had not formulated my thinking in such a clear way at the time, but reflecting back on the planning period and revisiting my records highlights an awareness of the potential impact I was seeking to achieve through my work. The diagram in Figure 2 seeks to illustrate the connections between the functions I undertake and the processes I employ and proposes that the outcomes range from personal growth, through to individual performance and field development. Thus, it is clear that my work has had impact on both a micro level and a macro level.

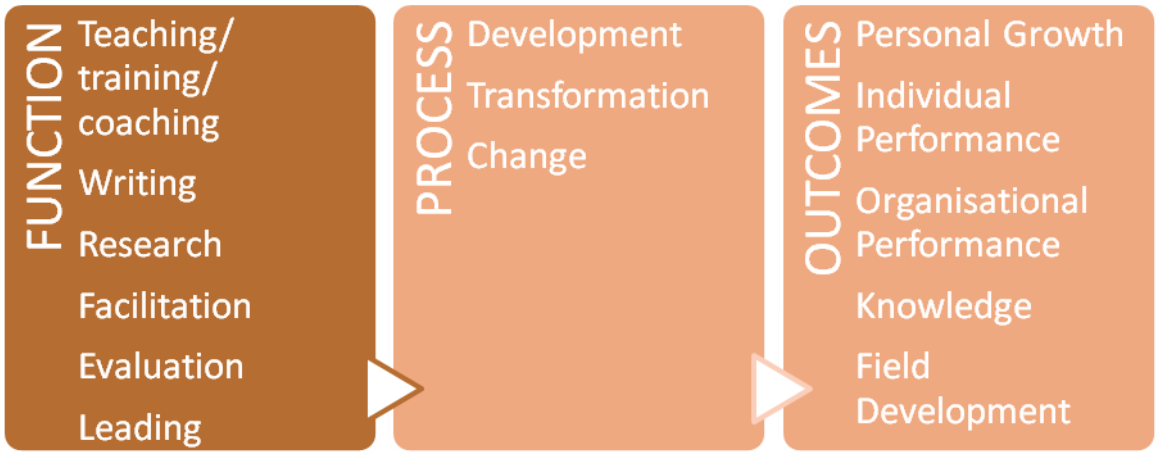


Figure 2: Functions, Processes and Outcomes

I knew that:

- I wanted to use the diverse range of skills I had gathered in my work to date
- I wanted to work as a catalyst for change
- I wanted to bring a degree of flexibility to working with clients which I believed few other consultants brought
- I wanted to work to build capacity within organisations ensuring there was a long term legacy to my work
- I wanted to explore how I could make a difference to individuals, organisations and the field
- I wanted to be a leader without a fixed organisational role.

Leadership

The idea that a freelance consultant is a leader is a somewhat controversial one. For the freelance without an organisational role, who are the followers and what is the organisational context? This idea challenges the notion of leadership as a fixed role and instead suggests that leadership must be premised on the individual's attitudes and values and on the desire to bring about change:

> *"Leadership is not just a role we inhabit – it is also an attitude to life and its challenges. Leadership begins when we stop blaming others and making excuses when things go wrong. Leadership begins when we start to explore 'How can I best make a difference'?"* (Hawkins & Smith 2006, p239)

I was clear that I wanted to make a difference. The journey I have taken since that time has been challenging but it has led me to explore many different theoretical approaches to leadership in the context of my own developing understanding of the leadership behaviours I exhibit. The quest to understand leadership, across various sectors and disciplines, has meant that the body of potentially relevant literature is vast. [2] After decades of research a generally accepted, comprehensive theory of leadership appears to elude us. The issues are complex and as Bennis and Nanus (1997) state:

> *"…leadership is the most studied and least understood concept of any in the social sciences."*

[2] Appendix 3 contains a review of leadership literature produced for the CLP/CCS commissioned reader in Cultural Leadership by S.Burns and K.M Wilson. Available at: http://creative-choices.co.uk/leadership/cultural-leadership-reader/

The social psychologists Richard Hackman and Ruth Wageman concluded that *" the field of leadership remains curiously unformed ... There are no generally accepted definitions of what leadership is, no dominant paradigms for studying it, and little agreement about the best strategies for developing it and exercising it. "* (2005)

Trends in leadership writing and research have not necessarily occurred chronologically or been surpassed by another at any point in time in terms of their significance, the attention paid to them and their relative credibility. Rather, different theories and perspectives on the study of leadership have occurred in synthesis, illustrating the range and implied value of critical approaches in the field. From an academic perspective, leadership has been studied from several different theoretical perspectives. Since the early 1940s scholars have sought to determine what constitutes a good leader. The literature is characterised by different approaches that have built upon one another and received attention at different stages in the development of the field of study. Early studies focussed on the *trait centred* approach. Levine (2008) offers a concise analysis of trait theory, explaining that whilst, in its earliest form, it began to explain the 'complex set of individual characteristics that together form a leader', and was rooted in the idea that *great* leaders are 'born and not made'. Levine also points out that this notion is 'no longer uncritically accepted'. When it became clear that studies of traits were indeterminate, the notion of *style* took hold as scholars sought to determine how leaders behaved in relation to their followers. In the late 1960s a new *contingency approach* emerged that distinguished between people oriented and task oriented leaders and sought to relate this to their degree of situational control. Thus, leadership is not only concerned with the individual characteristics of the leader, but with complex interactions between leader, followers and the situation, or the historical moment in which they are operating (Maurik, 2001). Critics of the situational model assert that the relevant balance of concern for task and production with concern for people is now inappropriate when dealing with 'the realities of constant change' (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2005).

This critique led to a new paradigm that focuses on charismatic and transformational leadership. The transformational leader is an effective agent of change, who thinks beyond the conventional bounds of the immediate situation and identifies opportunities for growth and increased effectiveness (Maurik, 2001). Transformational leadership seeks to motivate others by appealing to higher ideals and moral values, with the relevant leaders being expected to create a sense of trust, incorporating long-term vision, empowerment and coaching. Dulewicz and Higgs (2005) describe the transformational model as the dominant approach to studying leadership. Recent research conducted by key proponents and analysts of the transformational model (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-

Metcalfe, 2005) reports a new paradigm in transformational leadership which challenges 'heroic' approaches to leadership and focuses on the development of the individual within an organisational context.

This evolution of academic thinking has been premised on studies that have depended predominantly on quantitative research but leadership occurs in open social situations and there are so many variables it is perhaps impossible to create a predictive science of leadership. Keith Grint (2001) summarised this dilemma in *The Arts of Leadership*:

> *"The results are often informative but not definitive. The major problem seems to me to be the very complexity of the subject. There are so many potentially significant variables in establishing what counts as successful leadership that it is practically impossible to construct an effective experiment that might generate conclusive evidence on the topic."*

Thus, leadership is more an art than a science. The right leadership depends on the context and learning how to lead will occur in a variety of ways. Because of the transactional nature of leadership, it is often argued that learning from experience will be the most common and the most powerful way of developing these skills. This produces tacit knowledge, where experience and intuition combine to inform action.

My own experiences bear this out. I have never undertaken any leadership training. Indeed, I had little management training beyond a few Open University modules undertaken in the late 1980s. But, I have been lucky to learn from 'leaders' in many different contexts, including most importantly, leadership within a studio context through watching choreographers and directors work. I have learnt to rely on intuition and my ability to read situations and people and I have also made many mistakes from which I learnt.

Without realising it, I have been using critical reflection techniques throughout my career. I have kept journals since 1979 and had never really considered them as tools of learning and reflection as they had simply become something that I did. I have always actively sought to process my experiences, reprocessing and considering them and how they might apply to my own practice.

I have learnt that experience on its own does not generate learning. Reflection on experience is critical to the generation of knowledge and enables learning to occur. Dewey (1933) is concerned with the nature of reflection and how it occurs, the ways in which we manipulate knowledge or reprocess it towards a purpose. His work was furthered by many others including Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) and Hullfish and Smith (1961) who argued that the role of emotion, skills and

attitudes must not be neglected in the process. This seems to connect to the work of Schon and the notions of the 'reflective practitioner' and reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983). In the 1980s the Kolb cycle of experiential learning designated a clear role for reflection in the process of learning (Kolb 1984) and it is this making process of making sense of experience, conceptualisation of the observations and active experimentation that seems most coherent with the ways in which I have learnt:

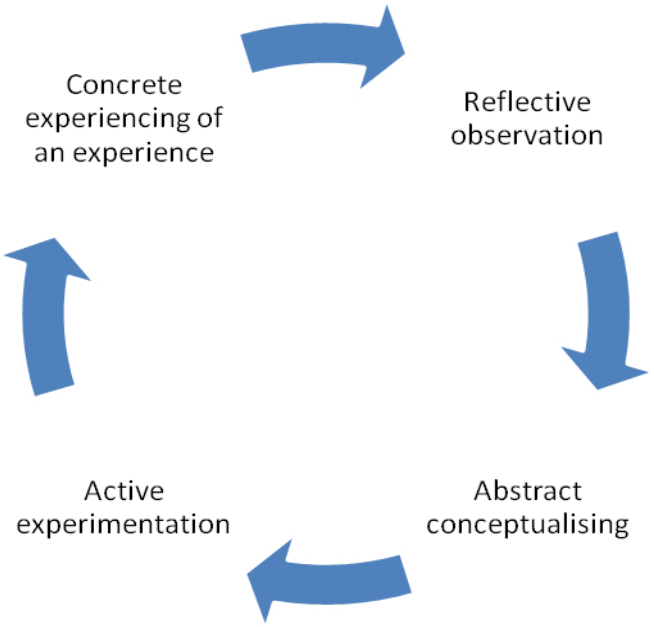


Figure 3: Learning and Reflection Cycle (after Kolb)

An early example of this occurring within my career will illustrate the point. I was shadowing a colleague, who has now become a close friend and mentor, when I was appointed to my first arts management role in 1984. I was shadowing her specifically to learn how to develop my skills in meetings. I remember that, although she was achieving the outcomes she sought in a particular meeting, I was not comfortable with her approach. She adopted a somewhat dictatorial style and 'told' people what she wanted of them. As a trained teacher, this did not sit comfortably with me. I was more comfortable with a less prescriptive approach so I experimented. I had many failures when meetings failed to reach conclusions and I had to learn to adapt and adjust my preferred style to the specific context, the task and the group. I continue to experiment.

Locke (1991) describes leadership as:

> *"…the process of inducing others to take action towards a common goal."*

He sees leadership as relational. It involves followers and the process is one where the leader does something that induces others to act, which has emerged as a practice distinct (although not mutually exclusive) from management. A now famous article by Abraham Zaleznik published in 1977 observed that the difference between managers and leaders lies in their conceptions of and response to 'chaos and order'. Managers, it is argued, embrace process, seek stability and control, and try instinctively to resolve problems quickly; whereas leaders tolerate chaos and lack of structure and are willing to delay problem-solving in order to understand the issues more fully. It seems to me that this process is akin to the consultancy process where the external consultant engages with the organisation to create better problem resolution and this seems to reflect my own preferred approach and would seem to indicate that in finding consultancy work, I may have found a better context within which to apply my own specific skills and preferred style.

When I first went freelance in October 2004, I took on several key contracts that afforded me the opportunity to experiment and reflect on the above approaches. Amongst these was a contract to work with a coalition of organisations on Merseyside to develop a business model for a new venture, Culture Campus.

The Culture Campus coalition included the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University alongside visual arts organisations, Tate Liverpool, FACT and Liverpool Biennial. Borne out of a shared agenda surrounding the need for better retention of graduates and the development of a stronger research base and post graduate community, the partners wished to explore the notion of a virtual campus based on partnership working. They were getting nowhere fast, no one was 'leading' and there was a danger that the idea would become lost within other priorities. I was asked to work with them to develop the business model. The processes I worked through served to develop a baseline methodology for my practice thereafter.

I worked across organisational boundaries seeking to find shared ground and an agreement on shared priorities

I facilitated debate and discussion around the problems, stimulating news ways of looking at them and generating new solutions

I sought to establish a strategic alliance of the partners that would move the concept forward structurally

This process took almost 12 months in total and the resulting development plan was published in August 2006. I continued to work with the partners for a further 12 months to build capacity, establishing a legal structure, generating funding and assisting with the recruitment of a Director for the initiative.

The report on the project is contained in Appendix 4.

This project taught me a great deal. It taught me to rely on my intuition and my reading of others, I learnt to read a meeting and assess the agendas of others quickly in order to be able to generate greater understanding and find a middle ground. I learnt how to work across a partnership generating shared objectives and priorities and learnt how to negotiate difference. The learning emerged as a result of the reflection on successes and failures.

Most of all, this project taught me a lot about the differences between management and leadership. I could have adopted a project management approach to the work but this would not have generated the value added that emerged from the intensive work on partnership building. Cartwright (2002) describes several, incremental, differences between managers and leaders, including suggestions that the leader innovates where the manager administers; the leader originates where the manager copies others; and the leader challenges where the manager accepts convention. The leader therefore adopts higher levels of creativity and risk taking. Sloane (2007) advocates innovation as the main distinction between managers and leaders. The Culture Campus contract involved me in innovating, originating and challenging – all leadership roles rather than management functions.

These are skills that I have continued to draw on since that time. A recent example serves to illustrate the point. I am currently Lead Adviser to two programmes funded through the Cultural Leadership Programme's (CLP) Meeting the Challenge programme where my role is to advise and support partnerships in realising a collaborative approach to leadership development. With one of these projects, I recently emailed the lead partner saying:

> *"There is a danger that this programme will fall into a carefully managed series of independent and disconnected CPD initiatives that will generate value for the individuals concerned but will not generate long term sustainable partnership working. I would suggest that time now needs to be taken to work though objectives at three levels, individual, organisational and partnership. The latter is the most important if you want to generate long term change." (Email dated 12th January 2010 from S. Burns to project leader)*

The result of this challenge was that the partners agreed to hold an away day which I then facilitated. A more innovative and holistic programme of interventions has now emerged.

The Culture Campus contract led to other work with several of the partners including two projects that were to be milestones for me:

- I was engaged in 2005 **by Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)to assess the feasibility of a new MA programme in Cultural Leadership** that would be developed and delivered in partnership with cultural organisations and would provide a trailblazing programme within the University to encourage greater collaboration with the sector by other departments. Initial market scoping led to the development of a programme that was validated in November 2006. This remains one of two accredited cultural leadership programmes in the UK at postgraduate level. I then went on to run the programme for three years and its first cohort of students graduated in July 2009. I am now Consultant Director for the Centre for Cultural Leadership at LJMU. (See Appendix 5)
- I was engaged **by Liverpool Biennial to carry out an Organisational Review** that led to a staffing restructure and an emergent dual leadership model. As a result of this I have continued to work with the organisation to facilitate planning and worked with the Chief Executive and the team to develop their new Business Plan for 2007 – 2010. (See Appendix 6)

This work, although distinct, was connected in significant ways. I was initially being contracted to provide support in change situations but, in each case, this led to new developments within the two organisations and I continued to facilitate these developments. My role was perhaps akin to an organisational coach who could assist in transforming the ways in which the clients were doing things. In both cases a longer term relationship developed from a short term consultancy project.

- In the case of **LJMU** the focus was on the university becoming more industry facing and more relevant vocationally to the cultural sector. A repositioning was occurring at a university wide level and within the Faculty of Media, Arts and Social Sciences there was a perception that with the advent of European Capital of Culture (ECoC), the arts and cultural sector could take a lead in this repositioning. My role was therefore wider than simply developing a new programme. I presented to colleagues on opportunities and on the programme in an attempt to generate new thinking about industry links and knowledge exchange. I worked with other programme leaders to make connections and led seminars and symposia that addressed these issues. I led on the partnership with the University of Liverpool to secure the contract for the evaluation of European Capital of Culture, Impacts 08. I also organised a series of open seminars with key industry leaders, 'Leadership Realities', that were open to the cultural sector as well as the University students and staff. All of these activities generated a stronger partnership between the HEI and the sector and

has resulted in many new developments and initiatives that were evaluated in 2010 by a colleague, Kerry Wilson with funding from Arts Council England.

- With **Liverpool Biennial**, I was initially contracted to facilitate a staff review day. This led to further facilitation work with both staff and board and a contract to carry out work on forward strategy and an organisational review. This was perceived to be necessary due to some funding issues that had revealed skills gaps within the organisation. The work was carried out with the staff team, engaging them fully in the process, rendered possible by the pre existing relationships:

  > *"The consultant had previously worked with the Liverpool Biennial staff team on staff development and the development of strategy and therefore had a clear picture of the challenges currently being faced by the organisation. It was therefore possible to proceed more quickly and without the need for extensive staff consultation....."*
  > *(Report to Board of Trustees, September 2006)*

  The recommendations of this report were accepted, a new Executive Director was appointed and I continued to work with the organisation to develop the new Development Plan. Since that date, I have continued to facilitate both board and staff development days and have supported the Executive Director and Chief Executive in their roles.

As organisations face increasing challenges to develop and change at an ever accelerating pace, they turn to consultants. This is perhaps why there has been a rapid growth of consultancies within the cultural sector. Many are companies with several associates but many more are sole traders like me. Arts Professional recently published *The Arts Services Guide*, a directory of consultants offering services to the cultural sector, and this listed over a 100 companies and individuals providing a range of different services to the sector. However, this represents only a very small number of those that are operating.

Finding my Consultancy Style

Consultancy approaches can fall into two distinct types. There are the 'expert' consultants who sell solutions and the 'facilitator' consultants who help the client find their own solution. Both have been

heavily criticised. The expert is condemned for importing solutions that are often inappropriate for the context and therefore not implemented, whilst the facilitator is condemned for playing back to the organisation what it already knows (Hawkins & Smith 2006). However, it could be argued that both have their place. The expert consultancy can help with technical solutions that will develop skills and competencies which will improve performance whilst the facilitative consultancy will help the organisation focus on its own development.

In my experience, the reality is that organisations often need assistance that is not delivered by one or other of these models. Instead, organisations need a form of intervention that is developmental and transformative:

> *"What clients require on occasions .... is a 'transformational partner' or 'organisational coach', who neither tells them what they already know or sells a pre-packaged solution, but who helps them realise their potential by 'walking alongside' and sharing their multiple experience as a guide, challenger and supporter." (Hawkins &Smith 2006)*

This type of transformational consultancy builds on and develops the traditions of organisational development pioneered by Lewin (1952), Schein (1985), Burke (2002) and Argyris and Schon (1978). Schein (1985) defined Organisational Development as "*all the activities engaged in by managers, employees and helpers that are directed toward building and maintaining the health of the organisation as a total system."*

This approach seems to most accurately describe the work I have outlined above with LJMU and Liverpool Biennial and it is this model that most closely matches my own practice and links closely to the transformational leadership paradigm outlined.

The consultant working in this way will be an agent for change, thinking beyond the conventional boundaries of the immediate situation and identifying opportunities for growth and increased effectiveness. She will be seeking to motivate others to take action, will be expected to create a sense of trust and will generate long-term vision and empowerment. Whilst this is a big 'ask' of someone working on short term contracts outside organisational boundaries and without the internal authority embedded within a role, I feel that my work with LJMU and particularly with Liverpool Biennial has illustrated how it can work.

Hawkins and Smith define transformational consultancy as *"Partnering an organisation to transform and align its leadership, culture and strategy, so that it can shift the nature of how it is organised, its performance and the value it creates for all stakeholders" (p85).* This is precisely what was achieved

with Liverpool Biennial. It involved transitioning and transformation and working in partnership and it depends on a skills set that is not well articulated within the leadership literature.

As part of this study, I decided to approach those early commissioners, LJMU and Liverpool Biennial, to determine what abilities they felt I had brought to the work I had done with them. Their responses were extremely illuminating in the context of the above discussion:

- The ability to build relationships quickly and then maintain them
- Sound communication skills both at an interpersonal level and in writing
- The ability to create a 'road map' that is feasible and practical
- Good problem solving skills
- Integrity and honesty
- A sense of humour
- A degree of humility – *"despite always turning out to be right!"*
- Maturity and gravitas that earns respect from others
- A respect for difference both between people and between organisations
- The ability to manage networks and connect the organisation to others with shared objectives and interests
- The ability to collaborate with others and work within teams and group situations
- The ability to 'nurture'
- Big picture thinking – '*you see the forest and not the trees'*
- The ability to challenge without threatening
- *'A positive, can do attitude that makes us believe we can do it!'*

This list, whilst not scientific, seems to underline some of the arguments put forward by Joseph Nye (2008) when he argues that the leader needs contextual intelligence, the ability both to understand an evolving environment and to discern trends whilst trying to shape events. Leaders with

contextual intelligence will be skilled at defining problems, providing a road map and meaning and will have the ability to balance what is desirable with what is feasible. Nye states that contextual intelligence *"consists partly of cognitive analytic capabilities and partly of tacit knowledge built up from experience."* (p 89) The skill brings with it the ability to see the forest rather than count the trees. This is the job of the transformational consultant but it also relates closely to the notion of emotional and kinaesthetic intelligence outlined above.

These abilities also suggest that there is a strong social element to the role. Leadership is a social relationship with three key components – leaders, followers and the contexts within which they interact. Because of this relational dynamic, leadership is an interactive art like dance where the leader is 'dancing' with the context, the followers and the objective, task or goal.

Drawing from all of the above, it is possible to conclude several things about my individual consultancy style:

- I work across organisational boundaries seeking to find shared ground and an agreement on shared priorities
- I facilitate debate and discussion around the problems, stimulating news ways of looking at them and generating new solutions
- I seek to establish a strategic alliance of the partners that would move the concept forward structurally
- I engage in innovating, originating and challenging my clients
- I support in change situations but also as someone who could facilitate new development within organisations – an organisational coach who would assist in transforming the ways in which they were doing things.
- I use multiple intelligences - contextual intelligence and a combination of cognitive and analytical skills with kinaesthetic and emotional intelligence to discern trends and guide development
- I bring a skills set and a wide range of social, cognitive and attitudinal abilities to the role
- I lead by 'dancing' with the context, the followers and the objective, task or goal.

I recently carried out a project with a colleague, Iona Horsburgh, for Liverpool Arts and Regeneration Consortium (LARC). The project was a structural review of the partnership and the eight partners were all familiar to me as I had previously worked with all of them either as a consultant or an employee. This was why I chose to work with an associate. I was afraid that my objectivity would be

affected but also aware that the familiarity and trust would bring strength. The project illustrates the above approaches I feel I adopt.

LARC is a consortium of eight major cultural organisations in Liverpool. The partners are Tate Liverpool, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, FACT, National Museums Liverpool, Bluecoat, Unity, Liverpool Biennial and Everyman/ Playhouse Theatres. The contract was to work with them to carry out a structural review of the partnership. The issue was whether they needed to incorporate the partnership is some way or to find alternative ways of structuring their partnership working.

LARC successfully bid to Arts Council England for a grant of £1.34 million from 2007 -2010 through the *Thrive* organisational development programme. The grant was to enable the LARC members to test new ways of working and to meet a series of demanding objectives.

The Thrive Liverpool programme had three clear aims are articulated in the Business Plan and the Memorandum of Understanding that was drawn up between the partners:

"Our key aims are to:

Develop the leadership contribution of the sector

Increase and improve audiences and the visitor experience in Liverpool City Centre

Research and develop models of delivery in arts-led regeneration, with a particular focus on North Liverpool"

(LARC Memorandum of Understanding 2007)

I was commissioned in late July 2008 to undertake a structure review that would *"help the partnership to assess what kind of structure might be needed to support its future development."* I chose to work with an associate with good legal skills that would support this process. The tender document stated clearly that there was an underpinning assumption that LARC would eventually require a separate legal structure from the partners:

"The intention to set up a shared company was clearly identified within LARC's business case for the Arts Council England funded Liverpool Thrive! Programme, and this consultancy is being undertaken as part of LARC's Thrive development process."

The need to consider the future structure of LARC had become more pressing during 2008 due to growth in the external funding the partnership was attracting.

The work was carried out during August 2008 over 14 days. This created a very tight timeframe.

The methodology adopted included desk research, semi structured interviews with Chief Executives, stakeholder interviews, a workshop with Steering Group, meeting attendance and observation and financial and legal advice.

A presentation was given to the LARC CEOs on 29th August 2008 outlining findings and structural options. After due consideration, LARC agreed, contrary to the original intention that its preferred option at that time was to remain unincorporated and a report was therefore produced that outlined the findings, provided a context for LARC to move forward with the existing consortium model and an action plan that should now be implemented if this option is to be taken forward.

In carrying out the work, I had to use all of these approaches identified as part of my individual style.. I was working across organisational boundaries seeking to identify the shared objectives and priorities, I was challenging the preconception that LARC should become a separate organisation through generating debate and I was using multiple intelligences to channel the trends and thinking and steer development. Importantly, it contextualised the work within an international context within which strategic alliances are becoming increasingly important.

The final report concluded:

"In our view this is more about psychological shift than structure. If we refer back to the three stages of maturity within strategic alliances, it is clear that LARC is at stage two as the partners have clearly recognised the long term value of partnerships and are making the investment in creating the processes and practices to manage them effectively. The potential to take the partnership forward as a consortium/ alliance/ coalition/ collective approach to shared aims and objectives is great and this could lead LARC to stage three where the consortium have embedded partnering into the very fabric of "the way we do business around here".

The partnership is now still working well with a federal/ coalition based approach that has strengthened the individual organisations as well as the partnership.

The report on the project is contained in Appendix 7.

In this contract, my pre-existing relationships with the organisations brought an initial authority that created trust and I was mandated as a result to 'walk alongside' the partners whilst challenging their preconceptions. My skills were used to the full and this then generated impact. I learned a lot from the project about partnership working. It was useful to me to work with an associate as this provided me with the opportunity for dialogic reflection and learning and provided a complimentary skills set.

Drawing on the work of Hawkins and Smith (2008), I have modelled the working processes I use. This is shown in Figure 4.

Firstly, my authority stems from my formal, informal and tacit knowledge, achievements and experience. I sometimes tender for work but more often I am invited to undertake work on the basis of my CV or recommendation. This creates a mandate. The client has chosen to work with me on the basis of what I know and what I have done.

Secondly, my presence comprises the skills, style and the respect that accrues from this authority. Thirdly, this will create **impact** through shifting mindsets and agendas and enable the transformation, change or developments required in the situation.

Finally this creates the opportunity for personal impact and development as I reflect and learn from the process. I also believe that this may create reflection within organisations and within an organisational field.

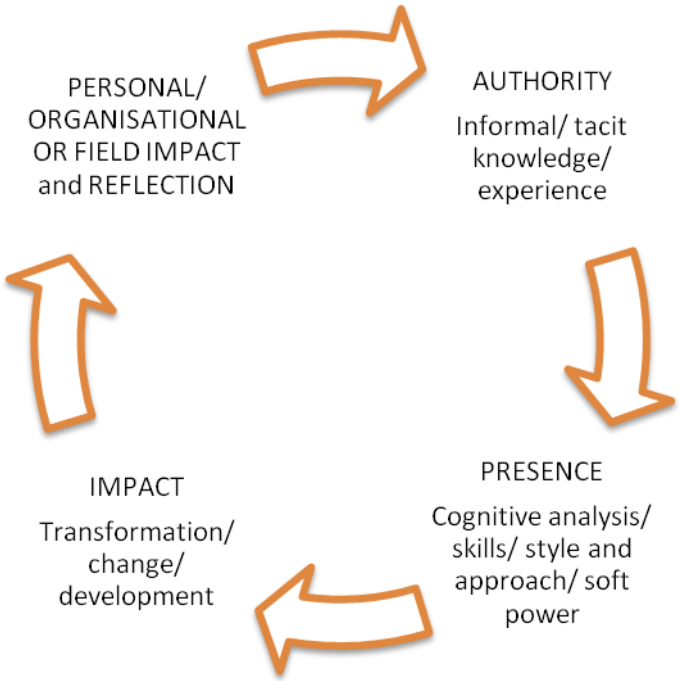


Figure 4: Working Processes

I have come to believe that consultancy is an interesting form of leadership, potent in its explicit power and the mandate it has to create change and enhance performance. The consultant is viewed as an expert in the field at a particular given time, trusted and relied upon to provide advice, insight and guidance. However, for me, it has always been important to reflect both on the role and the traditional approaches to it. Like a mentor, the consultant is paid to be an expert but this role of

expert can either empower or create dependency according to the approach adopted. My preference is to use expertise to develop people and organisations and unleash the real power that rests within the role to empower others to make the desired changes.

I have also come to believe that coaching, mentoring and consultancy are inextricably interlinked and connected by the notion of performance. The role of the leader is to motivate and lead a team towards optimal performance, the mentor advises and guides the mentee towards enhanced performance and the coach helps individuals and organisations to achieve, overcome barriers and attain goals. The sense of directionality underpins all three roles. Without a sense of direction and purpose all will fail. Merging all three within a consultancy context creates powerful interventions.

A more recent consultancy project was undertaken for Curious Minds, a new organisation formed in 2009 by the merger of two Creative Partnerships programmes, when Arts Council England (ACE) divested the funding of the programmes to Creativity Culture and Education (CCE). This project illustrated my approach well as it involved a training needs analysis of two pre existing staff teams who were now to merge into one organisation. Inevitably, there was duplication in roles but as a condition of the divestment of funding all jobs were secure. The challenge was to examine the skills of staff within the newly consolidated company, consider its potential strategic development and propose solutions for restructure and development. The process could have been threatening for the staff team, keen to protect their role and status as well as their jobs. I chose to adopt a coaching approach and used a strengths analysis method rather than approaching the training needs analysis from a deficit point of view.[3]

This work led to ongoing work with the new organisation to develop an internal coaching culture and has created long term shift in the way the new organisation works.

Strengths and Values

This project also led me to a consideration of my own strengths and values. Values are a critical component in defining an individual's working approach and sit at the heart of the way one works. My values are informed by respect, honesty, transparency and integrity. I am curious and committed to achieving the best results possible in any given context and will work with humanity to achieve this.

[3] See Appendix 8 for the full report of the project.

I came across a Gallup developed model for strengths analysis whilst undertaking the Curious Minds work and the research for this submission.[4] I have long believed that our emphasis in education, business and within organisations on addressing weaknesses through training and development is flawed. Instead, we should focus on maximising our strengths. Buckingham and Clifton define a strength as *"consistent near perfect performance in an activity"*. They argue that for an activity to be a strength you must be able to do it consistently. It is a predictable part of your performance. They also argue that you don't have to have strength in every aspect of your role to excel. Instead, you will excel by maximising your strengths rather than fixing your weaknesses. Weaknesses can be managed by a range of strategies including, as I have repeatedly done, working with people whose strengths and skills complement my own.

Buckingham and Clifton distinguish between strengths, talents, skills and knowledge. Knowledge consists of the fact learned and the lessons learned, skills are the steps of an activity and talent is an innate leaning. The combination of talent, knowledge and skills creates strength. Thus, to be able to confront others is a talent, whilst the ability to sell successfully is a strength. To persuade others to buy your product you must have combined the talent with product knowledge and selling skills. An understanding of your knowledge and skills can provide a basic sense of abilities but does not necessarily provide the reasons for success and failures. Instead, we need to understand our natural talents to achieve this insight.

Our talents influence every decision we make and therefore one would assume we are all intimately aware of them. Yet they are so interwoven into the fabric of life that the pattern may be difficult to discern. When I carried out the internet profile myself, my top five talents were[5]:

- **Empathy:** I sense the emotions of people around me and can feel what they are feeling. I am able to see the world through the eyes of others and am able share their perspective. I hear unvoiced questions and anticipate need.

- **Input:** I am inquisitive, I collect information and things because they interest me and one day it might prove useful.

- **Learner:** I love to learn, I love the process of learning and it energises me. The outcome of the learning is less important than the journey.

[4] The StrengthsFinder Profile is a patented internet programme accessible through access codes found in a number of different books. Developed by Gallup, it is premised on the belief that if we identify our strengths we can enhance performance. (Buckingham M and Clifton D.O., 2004, *Now Discover Your Strengths: How to Develop Your Talents and Those of the People You Manage.* Pocket Books, London.)

[5] The explanations are drawn from the test results and are not my own words.

- **Connectedness:** I feel that we are part of something larger, that all things are connected and this informs my value system. I am considerate, caring and accepting, a bridge builder.
- **Communication:** I like to explain, describe, host, speak and write. I like to bring ideas to life and generally people like to listen to me.

The results surprised me until I began to reflect on them. Guided by empathy I am able to see the world through others' eyes and in my consultancy this allows me to understand different perspectives and view points, anticipate needs and find the right words and tone. It also informs my teaching and training work as well as my facilitation work. It means I can read a room and meet the needs of diverse groups. My input and learner talents mean that I am inquisitive and curious, I collect information, books, articles and ideas. I love to learn. This makes me capable of moving from one assignment to the next, gathering and processing information fast and using it. My connectedness means that I am able to build bridges between organisations and people and seek to achieve a common sense of purpose and direction. My talent in communication allows me to bring ideas to life, inspire and create narratives. With hindsight, I can see that these talents have been with me all along and that unknowingly I have built on them with knowledge and skills to make them my strengths. In choosing to work as a consultant, I was unknowingly, choosing a career path that played to these strengths.

There are a series of issues surrounding status that are important in this context. Leadership and power are inextricably linked. You cannot lead if you do not have power. The leader needs the ability to influence others' behaviour to attain outcomes and for the consultant this power cannot derive from 'position' or rank within the organisation. Nye coined the term 'soft power' to denote "*the ability to shape the preferences of others to what you want*". (p29) He argues that this is not the same as influence or persuasion but that it the ability to attract and entice. In consultancy, one is not necessarily trying to shape preferences to achieve what you yourself want, but what you feel is right for the organisation or the work. The ability to persuade others to take a particular path is a critical skill and stems from the mandate given to the consultant on the basis of their perceived authority. You are being paid to do something and the client will listen to you as a result. But, the effectiveness of this also rests on a degree of humility.

The consultant is therefore often leading from behind, generating change through seeding ideas that are then embraced and owned by others. So, although not often perceived as leaders, the role of the consultant and its potency can be hugely influential if a systems leadership role is adopted and the work undertaken crosses boundaries and scopes the wider environment within which the problem

exists. For example, in the case of LARC this meant providing evidence that there were developments in North America from which lessons could be learnt. This systems role creates cross fertilisation and pollination of ideas and this will be examined in more depth in Chapter 4. A client once called me a 'good virus' and this seems to capture the function well.

In summary, I have concluded that consultants fulfil a powerful leadership role when their working methods are geared to working across organisational boundaries and developing transformative solutions. A more 'technical' approach to consultancy would not have the same impact. I have modelled this process and related it to my own strengths and values and I will now discuss the potential for achieving impact on an organisational field.

Chapter Three: Impact on an Organisational Field

Since the late 1960's the dance world has been adapting and changing more rapidly than other sub sectors and this may be largely due to its relative 'youth'. Often termed the Cinderella art form, its growth trajectory is unmatched in other art forms.

> *"Dance has witnessed an unprecedented growth in scale and ambition since the end of the 1970's. In 1991 Brinson wrote: 'Within the last twenty five years the profession has extended in so many directions it has transformed the character of national dance culture.' This growth is evident across the subsidised and commercial sectors as well as in increasing participation and engagement. The dance field is wide, encompassing a breadth of genres and styles and a profession that reflects this diversity and range of cultures. In all its manifestations, we can see an exponential growth: vocational training and higher education provision for the profession have developed to support the growth of the field; voluntary and amateur engagement has developed as public engagement in dance as a social form has increased; the informal sector has seen a massive increase in community dance and youth dance activity; and theatrical dance has expanded through the growth in production and touring provision, the development of dance agencies and enhanced programming and presentation in venues around the country."* (Burns & Harrison, 2009)

Whilst the history of dance in England is a long one, it is only in the last 40 years that dance has featured within the funding system as an independent art form. This coincided with the development of contemporary dance theatre and education from the late 1960's and into the 1970's. As the art form diversified beyond ballet, new dance forms emerged and diversity began to evolve within the theatre aesthetic with the emergence of South Asian dance artists and African dance companies. The funding system responded with significant increases in support for dance companies and artists and developed new infrastructural organisations that provided support for the growing field.

It is within this context that my own practice has been located. In 2008, I was given the opportunity to reflect on this when I was commissioned with a colleague, Sue Harrison, to carry out the evidence based Dance Mapping research for Arts Council England (ACE).We developed a timeline of dance development over the past 40 years in order to attempt to map trends and patterns. This is contained in Appendix 9 and the full mapping research is contained on Appendix 12.

My career could be said to have mirrored the development of the field.

- I have developed as a leader as the field has professionalised
- I have developed from an educational background into a broader field wide role
- I have been privileged to have been part of many significant developments and to have built networks that are robust and long standing.

My knowledge of the field is deep as a result and my authority within it comes, not from my 'role', but from this knowledge and connectedness. Rosener (1990) stated:

> *"Women leaders don't covet formal authority. They have learned to lead without it."*

My leadership role within the field is premised on an authority that stems from knowledge, from what I have done, how I have done it and the impact that it has had.

My engagement with dance began in the mid 1970's when I was a student and led the Modern Dance Society at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. I organised guest workshops with artists including Janet Smith and Robert North, Tim Lamford and Kate Flatt, Gill Clarke and Mary Prestidge. I attended Summer Schools at The Place and studied Graham technique as well as developing my own teaching in evening classes in Newcastle. When I left University I went to Amsterdam to study with Pauline de Groot and returned to embark on a PGCE. During this time, I also took short courses in Dance in Education with Margaret Dunn and other leading educationalists.

My first teaching job was in a new school in Washington, Tyne and Wear, where the head teacher wanted to introduce a whole school approach to teaching dance. I was lucky at this stage in my career to be mentored by Nadine Senior, who had pioneered dance teaching in Harehills Middle School in Leeds and then went on to found the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. In 1982 we were invited to host an Arts Council England funded Dance Artists in Education Scheme residency and this was my first encounter with the funding system. By 1984, my connections with the funding system had grown and I was appointed as Dance Officer to Northern Arts. As the second Dance Officer in the country, I was mentored in this role by Val Bourne who had held the first post at Greater London Arts but was by then Director of Dance Umbrella.[6]

I left this role in 1988 to undertake freelance work and led the Arts Council England funded South Asian Dance Artists in Education research programme during 1988/1989 whilst also working with

[6] At this early stage in my career, I learnt the value of learning from a mentor. I realised how important passing on knowledge and skill was and I believe this has influenced my own approach to mentoring throughout my professional life. I have continued to seek out opportunities to learn from others, never feeling that it compromised my position and have sought to return that to the field by mentoring others.

several companies and artists who were being encouraged to apply for three year funding. For example, I worked with Shobana Jeyasingh to support her transition from solo artist to company and with David Glass when he formed the David Glass New Mime Ensemble.

This was a period of major growth and infrastructure development. When the National Dance Agencies were launched in 1989, I carried out Organisational Development programmes for both Swindon Dance and Dance City. I also worked with Yorkshire Dance Centre at this time on an organisational review. I became Director of ADiTi, the national agency for South Asian Dance in 1991, and then set up Merseyside Dance Agency in 1994.

In addition, I mentored young managers on the Arts Council England funded Dance Administration Scheme and supported a wide range of other companies and artists. I also joined the Board of the Community Dance and Mime Foundation (now Foundation for Community Dance) and developed a degree in Community Dance at Liverpool John Moores University. The strands of my career were becoming clear.

I taught and developed others using my educational skills, I supported artists in developing organisational solutions to support their work and I was involved in start ups and agency networks which supported the dance field as a whole.

In 1994, I joined the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts as Head of Professional Development where I ran an undergraduate arts management programme but also trained artists in other disciplines in self management skills. After seven successful years in higher education, I realised that although I loved teaching, I missed the world of cultural organisations and was beginning to feel that I was losing my professional currency and therefore my relevance to the students. I didn't want to stay in an academic career but wanted to get back out into the field myself.

I was lucky to secure the role of Director of Business Development at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic in 2001 and from there I moved in 2003 to Foundation for Art and Creative Technology in a similar role. This widened my art form experience but, I missed dance, so when I returned to freelance work in 2004, I actively sought to build my portfolio of dance work and since that date I have been privileged to undertake some of the most significant work of my career to date including:

- Youth Dance England: Evaluation Study of Next Steps/ Dance Links (2005 – 2008)
- Palatine: Research Mapping Dance in HE (2006)

- Dance Training and Accreditation Project Research/ Development of DTAP Award for Trinity College, London (2007 – present)
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation: Evaluation Study of JADE Fellowships (2008 – present)
- ACE: Dance Mapping Research (2008-9)
- New Directions Research and Symposium (2010)

I also became Chair of the Foundation for Community Dance in October 2008 and am Chair of the ACE Regional Dance Strategy Group in the North West, both non executive roles that I feel have validated my professional standing and status within the field.

This latter period in my career, from 2004 onwards, appears to be characterised by a shift back to the work I undertook earlier in my career in the late 1980's and early 90's, when I was not rooted in one organisation but was making interventions that have been field wide. It has enabled me to bring the cross sector experiences, learning and research garnered from music and the visual arts back to the dance field.

It is evident that I have not followed a traditional path. There is much debate on the gender disparities in dance as in any other field and there are many reasons for this. There is not space to explore this here, but it is an interesting area for further research. In my case, primary caregiver responsibilities for two daughters militated against a role based organisational leadership. I could manage the life/ work balance as a number two but knew that it would not be possible as a Chief Executive. There was also something else that prevented me from taking the final step to organisational leadership. I believe that this was about impact. With hindsight, I have avoided organisational ties and preferred the autonomy, freedom and flexibility offered by freelance work. I can now see the patterns.

- A career dominated by new business start ups and innovative business practices;
- A career that has traced many significant moments in cultural policy development and specifically, in dance development in England and within which my role has often been that of change agent, pioneer and strategist;
- A career that appears to have resisted organisations and 'status' in order to generate variety, challenge, research and learning;

- A career in dance punctuated by short periods within visual arts and music that taught me much but, most of all, taught me that my heart lay with dance, the place from which I started.

This interest in the evolution of the dance field had informed my early research whilst working in higher education. In 2000, I developed a paper for publication, *"Dancing with Figures: Changing Patterns in the Funding of Dance in the UK between 1987 and 2000*." (See Appendix 10) The abstract for this paper states:

> *" The arts never stand still. Nor does the society in which they take shape." (Gerry Robinson, 1998)*
>
> *No industry is immune to change. But, the truth of Gerry Robinson's statement means that arts and cultural enterprises have been long familiar with change and the arts manager of the 21st century will continue to become increasingly intimate with the implications of managing the range of adaptation required if their enterprises are to be viable.*
>
> *Central to these processes of adaptation are a series of changes which have occurred in the financing of arts and cultural enterprises. As we enter the 21st century, our old categories have become outdated. It is no longer meaningful to label arts organisations as either non profit or for profit, subsidised or commercial. Different dynamics are at play. Empirical evidence suggests they have to be both. Survival requires an eye on the commercial properties of the work being produced as well as an eye on its social and public benefit. The resultant mixed economy has led to changes in industry structures, policies and funding regimes and organisational structures as well as changing competencies in the managers responsible for them.*
>
> *In order to illustrate these changes, this paper takes the example of the dance world in the UK and discusses the changes encountered within this specific sub sector between 1987 and 2000. Two specific companies, Adventures in Motion Pictures and Salamanda Tandem, both formed in 1987, are analysed in order to demonstrate some of the different ways in which the challenges have been met."* (Burns 2000)

This early work proved to be a major milestone for me. It was the beginning of my reflection on the field from a more academic and critical perspective. From that date on, I began to apply a more critical perspective to my work and began to study organisational theory in order to understand the sector more clearly. I became interested in field theory and studied the concepts of resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and the work of Di Maggio and Powell on homogeneity and isomorphism. (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983, 1991).

My evolving critical thinking was informed by many methodologies:

- Literature Reviews
- Desk Research
- On line surveys and searches particularly looking at other international models and organisational approaches
- Action Learning through my work and subsequent reflection on it
- Interviews – formal and informal – both in the course of my work and out of interest
- Attendance at conferences and events

But perhaps the most significant and useful approach has come from peer to peer learning and reflection. My networks are strong and I have many long standing peers from whom I continue to learn and I hope that, in turn, they learn from me. This network is of crucial importance to the freelance consultant researcher and supports in the same way that an academic peer review process would support the academic researcher.

This critical thinking led to a greater and more robust theoretical and academic underpinning and it began to directly inform my work, my actions and my consultancy practice when I returned to it in 2004 and I believe it has made it stronger. For the last six years research has been and continues to be a fundamental and necessary part of my consultancy role. Specifically, I believe that the application of more theoretical approaches to my empirical research in dance has strengthened its impact on the dance field.

The Ecology of the Dance Field

Between 2006 and 2009, I carried out two major empirical research projects that resulted in very significant and influential publications and led me to reflect on the structure and organisation of the field.

- The research commissioned in 2006 by Palatine, the HE Academy for the Performing Arts into Dance in Higher Education (Appendix 11)
- The Arts Council England commissioned Dance Mapping research (Appendix 12) carried out throughout 2008/09

Both studies sought to map the dance field and identify significant trends and issues being faced within it. In both, I turned to organisational theory in order to attempt to understand the way in which the field operated.

The dance field comprises many different types of organisations and this was classified as follows (Burns 2009 and Burns & Harrison, 2009):

Dance Agencies	Since the late 1980's dance in England has been supported by a network of organisations whose purposes include: • opportunities for engagement with dance • information • resources • safe-houses for dance artist • the provision of dance classes and education programmes • infrastructure development, training and professional development • dance production, touring and the presentation of performance independently and with partners. These operate at a regional and a sub regional level. For example, in the South West, Dance South West works with other regional agencies to create a regional network and infrastructure. The network of agencies was initiated by the funding system to provide a national building based infrastructure for dance.
Production and Touring Companies	There are four major ballet companies in England – English National Ballet, Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Northern Ballet Theatre. The other companies are often artist-led, create work unique to the company and normally, tour this work to venues in England and internationally. These companies will usually have an education and outreach programme as a part of their activities. It is important to distinguish between them in terms of the scale of the venues for which they produce and subsequently tour work, small (up to 250 seats) middle (250 – 800 seats) and large (800+ seats)

National Strategic Agencies	The primary purpose of these organisations is to represent the membership of a particular sector within the dance field. They tend to provide services to their members, information and advocacy for the specific sector and will often have an educational remit. They include the Foundation for Community Dance, Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association, Council for Dance Education and Training, Exceptionally, Youth Dance England was established with a specific sector focus and originated through government departments, in response to policy development for young people rather than through a membership group.
Venues	There are few dance specific venues in England – The Place, Laban and Sadlers Wells Theatre in London and small studio venues attached to several of the agencies – for example, Dance East and Dance City, Newcastle. There are a small number of venues for whom dance is a significant part of their programme. Large scale commercially run venues throughout the country present the work of the major touring companies: BRB, ENB and NBT along with touring West End productions.
Private Dance Schools	There is a thriving network of private dancing schools throughout the country that offer regular teaching to young people leading towards the examinations of the leading awarding bodies, the Royal Academy of Dance, British Ballet Organisation, International Society of Teachers of Dance and International Dance Teachers Association. Across the awarding bodies there are in excess of 15,000 registered teachers across England
Educational Institutions	Schools, colleges and Universities across the country offer education and training in dance at all levels. From primary education through to postgraduate provision there are a plethora of formal dance education opportunities.

Table 1:

The Dance Field in England

Source: AIMAC paper July 2009 (Appendix 13)

In the research carried out for Palatine on mapping dance in HE, I depicted the dance world as follows by way of showing that is a world that embraces many functions. (Burns 2007 page 12):

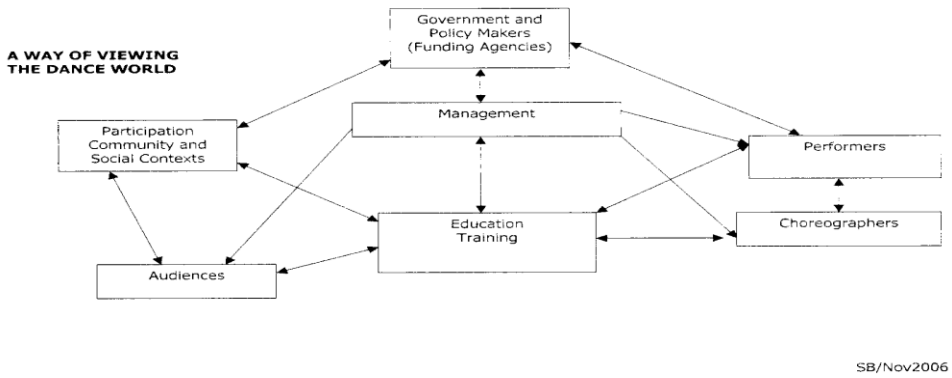


Figure 4: The Dance Ecology

Source: Burns, 2006, Appendix 11

Dance in England can therefore best be understood by considering the aggregate of organisations within it – its architecture. The notion of an organisational field is useful in this context.

> *"By organisational field we mean those organisations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognised area of institutional life: key suppliers, resources and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organisations that produce similar services or products*."
> (Di Maggio & Powell, 1991 p64)

In understanding any one individual organisation within a field, it is crucial to understand how it relates to other social actors in its environment (Pfeffer & Salancik 2003). Using this approach a field can be viewed as a network of organisations in constant struggles for autonomy and discretion, dealing with constraint and external control. Given the above dependency of key sectors of the dance field in England on public funding, this perspective termed the resource dependence perspective, is potentially critical in understanding the dance environment, the ecology and resulting economy.

Pfeffer and Salancik examine the phenomena of "externally controlled organisations" those that are dependent on their environments:

> *"To survive organisations require resources. Typically acquiring resources means the organisation must interact with others who control those resources. In that sense organisations depend on their environments. Because the organisation does not control the*

resources it needs, resource acquisition may be problematic and uncertain. Others who control resources may be undependable, particularly when resources are scarce." (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p258)

This perspective is an important one as it highlights the fragility and the uncertainty that the field experiences as a result of its external dependency. Political change and resulting policy shifts render resource dependent organisations vulnerable.

During the Arts Council England Dance Mapping research we noted that many of our dance companies and agencies 'look' similar and operate with a similar business model. Within an organisational field there is strong evidence to suggest that a process of homogenisation occurs:

"Once disparate organisations in the same line of business are structured into an actual field (as we argue, by competition, the state or the professions), powerful forces emerge that lead them to become more similar to one another." (Di Maggio & Powell, 1991 p65)

DI Maggio and Powell suggest several factors that create this homogenisation and call the concept isomorphism. Isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Hawley 1968). Institutional isomorphism occurs when organisations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and legitimacy. It is evident that the dance field competes not only for resources but also for legitimacy given its relatively short history as an independent art form within the funding system and therefore it would seem that processes of isomorphism are occurring forcing organisations to become more like one another.

Di Maggio and Powell suggest that isomorphism occurs through three mechanisms and these can be related to the dance field in a wide range of different ways:

	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES IN DANCE
Co-ercive isomorphism	Results from both formal and informal pressures on organisations by other organisations upon which they are dependent. Organisations respond to external pressure in order to maintain their resource base.	ACE established a network of dance agencies in the late 1980's that were required to fulfil a series of similar functions. (Devlin1999) ACE requires annual touring from the production companies it funds but also seeks evidence of innovation leading to the generation of new work on an annual basis.
Mimetic isomorphism	Results from imitation and	The predominance of artist led

	standard responses to uncertainty. An organisation models itself on other organisations deemed to be successful.	production and touring companies (eg Hofesh Schechter Dance Company, Michael Clark and Dancers, Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company) has influenced the dance field since the early 1980's. The agency network operate similar programmes and operational strategies throughout England.
Normative isomorphism	Results primarily from professionalization whether through formal education and training or through professional networks that span across organisations and across which new ideas may spread rapidly. A pool of almost interchangeable individuals emerges and staff may be filtered as they are hired from within the same industry.	The recent emergence of professionalization programmes in leadership (The Clore Fellowship, Cultural Leadership Programme) the development of regulatory frameworks for teachers (Dance Training and Accreditation Project, FCD's Professional Framework and the National College for Community Dance) are both evidence of increasing professionalization. There is evidence of a small pool of people working in the dance field who move from one job to another.

Table 2:

Isomorphism within the Dance Field in England

Source: AIMAC paper July 2009

Homogeneity and Differentiation through Leadership

When one thinks about dance and key individuals who have assisted in its development over the last 40 years, several key names come to mind. Robert Cohan, Val Bourne, Richard Alston, Siobhan Davies, Sue Hoyle, Hilary Carty, John Ashford, Shobana Jeyasingh, Janet Archer are but a few. In all cases impact has been wider than one organisation – it has been system wide. Organisational field analysis, and particularly the notion of isomorphism, is important in this context as it highlights the potential impact an individual can make on a whole organisational field.

The cultural sector is relatively small. In 2007 the UK's creative industries were estimated to make up 7% of the economy with two million people employed in creative jobs (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2008). The dance field comprises c 40,000 of this total (Burns & Harrison, 2009). Isomorphism is therefore inevitable. The 'pool' of people working within dance is relatively small and people move between organisations. If practices are replicated by individuals the field starts to look the same. Normative isomorphism takes place as staff may be filtered as they are hired from within the same industry. In addition, as we have seen, the field has professionalised and developed rapidly

within a short period. This professionalisation has occurred through a complex combination of formal education and training[7] and a growth in the professional networks that span across organisations and across which new ideas have spread such as the Foundation for Community Dance, Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association, Standing Conference of Dance Teachers in Higher Education, Council for Dance Education and Training and Youth Dance England.

The Dance Mapping research noted that this isomorphism was occurring within dance. For example, agencies look very similar in structure, mission and programme and our dance companies are predominantly artist led and named after artists. Most follow the same business models. Yet, the workforce is predominantly freelance and works in a portfolio way (Burns 2006 and Burns & Harrison 2008). This appears to create a set of contradictions that may point to a change over time. If the workforce becomes more flexible and is crossing boundaries, will this begin to break down the homogeneity that is currently evident? :

> *"The workforce survey highlighted the predominance of what could be called a hybrid professional. There is a potential tension here within a homogenised structural organisational field. As these hybrid professionals develop entrepreneurial skills and new business models to enable them to sustain careers we can see challenges to the existing organisational models and working structures." (Burns 2009)*

Whilst homogeneity may not necessarily be a bad thing, this discussion of the dance ecology raises some significant questions that connect back to Chapter 2. If an individual working within a specific field for a significant period of time can become a force for normative isomorphism, does this apply to the consultant or leader working within a field?

I believe that a consultant working across organisational boundaries must be aware of the need to treat all projects as unique and must try to share and disseminate learning, making connections where appropriate. They should not model organisations and solutions to an off-the-shelf, one style fits all approach, methodology or set of systemic solutions.

In commercial consultancies such as McKinsey and the Boston Consulting Group, toolkits and approaches are often adopted and consultants working in the field will adopt a form of 'house approach' using tried and tested methods and techniques. This can lead to solutions and interventions that are formulaic and not bespoke to the individual organisation.

[7] See Dance Mapping for evidence of this growth in training.

When I was considering my future in 2004, I was aware I needed new challenges, I found myself replicating the same approaches and falling back on the tried and tested models. At FACT I realised I was replicating fundraising systems, approaches and procedures that I had used and applied at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and yet the culture, structure and purpose of the organisation was very different meaning that the solutions were not necessarily appropriate. For this reason, my fundraising was not as successful. I realised I was relying on what I knew and what had worked in the past rather than examining things afresh. This realisation informed my decision to return to freelance work. I knew I needed time and space to think beyond the immediate requirements of one job or I would stagnate and that, in turn, would create stagnation for the organisation. Freelance consultancy provides this time and space and allows me to approach every contract from a fresh perspective, learning all the time and constantly making connections between different organisations and projects that are very different in their objectives.

One of my first major dance contracts was with Youth Dance England (Appendix 14) where I was asked to undertake a longitudinal evaluation and research study that would assess and measure the overall impact of a major strategic intervention in the field of youth dance for which they had secured significant funding, Next Steps/Dance Links. This contract was for a two year period and began in December 2005 ending in March 2008. The research was unusual for several reasons:

> *".... the Next Steps/ Dance Links project was an extensive national development project that took place over two years working across the nine English regions. It involved a multi tiered approach to development at a national level with major national programmes and projects seeking to support and lead the sector running alongside the appointment of nine agencies to manage nine regional projects with a set of prescribed outputs.*
>
> *The model was an experimental one and highly unique premised on the notion of simultaneous regional and national development that would collectively raise the bar for this burgeoning area of dance practice.*
>
> *Evaluation of the model was built in from the onset and has been premised on an action research based methodology. " (p 4)*

The research study proved to be both an exciting and a challenging one for me:

- It required immense versatility and diplomacy when dealing with a central managing body as well as nine regional host agencies and their Regional Coordinators. This tested my interpersonal skills as I had to learn to interact with each in a different way that responded to their particular cultures and personalities.

- The action learning research methodology meant that I was often engaged in problem solving with the managing agency and this was often not straightforward as the complex funding package underpinning the £1.3 million intervention meant there were many external agendas to also take into account.
- Solutions to problems being encountered within the regional hubs had to be very different – homogeneity was not an option

I was able to study ten dance organisations well throughout the period and gathered a very large and significant body of data on regional dance development that prepared me extremely well for the later Arts Council Dance Mapping contract. The project also highlighted a series of issues surrounding workforce development and the problem of a lack of suitably trained dancers to carry out the ever increasing work in this particular sector which in turn informed the later work I did on the Dance Training and Accreditation Project. (Appendix 15)

The final evaluation study report recommended a more strategic approach be adopted in the area of work and that has now been successfully put in place with a £5m investment in sustaining and further developing the national infrastructure for children and young people in dance:

> *"...the genesis of the Next Steps/ Dance Links projects was a combination of pragmatism and vision. The opportunity to secure significant resources for the area of work led to a unique model of national and regional development. The Next Steps/ Dance Links projects were output driven and this often distracts from 'vision' as the focus remains on the deliverables. There is now an opportunity to clarify the vision as we move forward together to develop youth dance across the country.*
>
> *It is suggested that the vision must be of a national continuum of inclusive, high quality provision that provides opportunities for young people to access dance wherever they live and whatever their circumstances. It must be led by a workforce that is qualified and skilled to deliver this work." (page 57)*

The evaluation report proved to be a major achievement and has had a significant impact on the provision of dance for young people through generating evidence of the value and impact of the intervention and assisting in making the case for continuation.

Over this same period I was commissioned by Palatine, the Higher Education Academy for Performing Arts, to lead a research project that would map dance provision in Higher Education.

"We wished to carry out a mapping exercise that would assess the scale of dance provision in the Higher Education sector with particular reference to how this provision developed employability and entrepreneurial skills in the student dancer. By mapping HE dance provision and identifying how courses encourage entrepreneurial thinking and behaviours we sought to quantify and clarify what is currently being offered. Through this we have sought to identify good practice."

The research used extensive desk research, a wide ranging review of the available literature and primary research in the form of a survey and interviews to obtain a picture of provision. An online survey was carried out of higher education institutions offering dance programmes to identify the scale and scope of the provision. Further to this, a sampling took place to develop case studies and a final symposium was held to validate and share the findings. This led to the final report which was widely disseminated through conference presentations and both paper and web based publication.

The research programme was also a challenging one as it required a fine tuning of my research skills and I was lucky to be supported in this by the Palatine team to whom I owe a great debt. Being embedded in an HE environment, I learnt a great deal about research methodology and refined my survey skills, my ability to carry out semi structured interviews and my ability to manage and interrogate data.

It had strong links to the YDE project that I was carrying out at the same time as it revealed much about the workforce development issues we were encountering in the YDE programme. The report stated:

"The demand side of the equation suggests that the dance world needs graduates with diverse skills. The research indicates that HE dance providers are seeking to address this in innovative and often inspiring ways. There is little evidence yet to allow us to assess how well this is working as there has been no research on assessing the quality of the graduate on 'exit' from HE. Indeed, the view gathered during the early interviews from the dance world, suggested that the impact of the approaches being adopted by many HEIs is not yet being felt within the profession. There was a view that HE is not yet sending graduates out into the world of work equipped for employment within it…..

As a result, there is a plethora of Continuing Professional Development opportunities being developed for graduates by dance agencies and training providers. Examples include the Dance Leaders awards accredited through the Open College Network and Youth Dance

England and NDTA's training programme, Making Links, targeted at dance practitioners wishing to work in schools."

But, perhaps more importantly, I realised that this research had significant implications that were system wide. The dance field had to address the problems identified within the research and needed to do so collectively:

> *"It is to be hoped that this mapping exercise has acted as a catalyst to further development and that the dance world can collectively address the issues it raises. The research has highlighted that there is great scope and will to join up provision. The HE sector is strategically placed to assist the wider sector. It is a relatively small economy and the links are intense between different parts of the 'world'. To link the profession increasingly closely to HE would ensure a collective approach which maximises resources and ensures that dance graduates are better able to enjoy long term sustainable careers within the dance world of work is achieved."*

In late 2006, a partnership of dance organisations met to discuss the issues surrounding workforce development using both the YDE evolving experiences and the Palatine research as starting points. Foundation for Community Dance, Laban, Youth Dance England, Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association and Council for Dance Education and Training all shared increasing concerns regarding the increasing number of dance artists/ professionals teaching dance to young people without appropriate or nationally recognised teaching qualifications.

The initial research phase of the Dance Training and Accreditation Project (DTAP), which emerged from this initiative, took place over a six month period between April and September 2007 and I was commissioned to carry out the research. (Appendix 15)

> *"The partnership is potent comprising the key agencies concerned with the delivery of dance to young people. The partners shared an increasing concern about the lack of recognised qualifications at an appropriate level that equip dance professionals / dance artists for the nature and range of work that they are undertaking with young people.*
>
> *This shared agenda and the concerns of these agencies reflect a fundamental and deeply held belief that the quality of dance provision for young people rests on the quality of the dance teachers and practitioners delivering this provision." (page 5)*

Research was carried out using a range of methodologies. The methodology was designed to create two principal outputs to the project, a report and a database. The approach combined qualitative and quantitative data gathering. 129 people were consulted through the above mechanisms.

The research concluded:

> *"There is a need for a major strategic intervention that will enable the large pool of dance artists and practitioners to gain the skills and confidence to engage in this work and for employers to obtain clarity on the necessary skills and qualifications to deliver dance effectively, safely and in line with current child protection requirements and with transparency about quality assurance and benchmarking.*
>
> *From the research, it is possible to conclude that in the longer term, we need a cohesive framework that will:*
>
> - *Enhance the quality of dance teaching for young people at all stages of their development and points of engagement with dance*
> - *Provide qualified dance practitioners to meet demand*
> - *Regulate the profession*
> - *Build capacity within the sector*
> - *And therefore lead to sustained participation in dance*
>
> *This must meet the needs of the three key parties, young people, the employers and the practitioners. Drawing on the research, it is possible to establish criteria for this framework that will ensure it meets these needs.* (page 73)

Subsequent work was undertaken with the partners to consolidate their partnership and a funding application was developed to secure £200k towards the implementation of the report's recommendations.

> *"The aim of DTAP, instigated by Laban in 2007, was to bring together key national dance organisations with remits for dance education and youth dance to discuss ways in which access to participatory dance for young people might be more readily available. The original project partners were: Council for Dance Education and Training, Dance UK, Foundation for Community Dance, Laban, National Dance Teachers Association and Youth Dance England.*
>
> *A report, commissioned by DTAP and researched and written by Susanne Burns was*

published in January 2008. It focused on the training and accreditation needs of dance professionals without formal teaching qualifications who work with young people both within and outside of the formal school sector. The research and findings were presented at a dissemination event (February 2008) attended by representatives from across the dance sector prior to the final publication of the report.

Following the research and publication of the report, the original DTAP partners took developments into a new phase with the creation of the Dance and Training and Accreditation Partnership thus maintaining the DTAP acronym. The group expanded its membership to include other partners that reflect the breadth of the dance sector that contribute to the provision of dance for young people. The Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership, established as a consortium, now comprises:

- *Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD)*
- *Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET)*
- *Dance UK*
- *Foundation for Community Dance (FCD)*
- *National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA)*
- *Standing Conference of Dance in Higher Education (SCODHE)*
- *South Asian Dance Alliance (SADA)*
- *Youth Dance England (YDE)*
- *National Dance Network (NDN) and Laban as consultative partners.*

As a result of the research, in April 2009 Arts Council England made an award of £200,000 from Grants for the Arts to the Foundation for Community Dance to support DTAP. This funding will enable the development of a qualification for working in dance with young people (led by Youth Dance England), the development of professional standards in community dance (led by Foundation for Community Dance), and research and development for a broader regulatory framework for the teaching of dance outside of formal education."[8]

This project furthered my hope that the dance field would begin to speak with one voice to address issues it was facing. Through three distinct projects overlapping in the same time frame, I was

[8] Source:http://www.dtap.org.uk/background/history_of_dtap.php?cat_id=53&scat_id=48&subid=53&level=2

enabled by the clients to make connections that would assist with whole field development. I have subsequently gone on to work with the selected awarding body, Trinity London, to develop the proposed award [9] and in my role as Chair of the Foundation for Community Dance I oversaw that organisation's management of the whole DTAP initiative.

The three projects outlined above took place at a significant time for dance. They interlinked in significant ways. Each was unique but the connections were clear to me from the outset. Collectively, I believe they illustrate that through strong cross organisational leadership an individual can make a significant impact on a field whilst also meeting the objectives of individual organisations. I do not believe that this level of system change can be enabled by one organisation or one leader but that it will occur through collective working and shared strategy. The role of the consultant in enabling this is powerful:

> *"The DTAP project is taking place at a significant time in the development of the UK dance infrastructure. It is therefore critical that the DTAP project carries the profession as a whole and acts as a catalyst for unity and collaboration. It is also critical that the work engages fully with the HE sector upon whom the development of our future workforce largely depends. Emergent training and accreditation models must be developed to address the needs of the existing dance professionals working with young people but must also take into account existing and planned undergraduate dance provision that will continue to feed new professionals into the world of work. There is a need to ensure that our knowledge of the sector and career opportunities within it is reflected in the content of HE provision in order to ensure employability for graduates but also to ensure that our future workforce is fit for purpose. The solution does not lie with one agency but with the sector as a whole. (page 74)*

Such system wide impact represents a form of coordinated leadership and has generated impact and legacy beyond one individual consultancy contract. It has generated:

- Professional Standards for Dance
- A potential regulatory framework for the sector
- Workforce development initiatives including the Diploma in Dance Teaching and Learning
- Greater recognition for the sector
- Enhanced professionalisation

[9] Appendix 16

- Better infrastructure (particularly for children and young people)
- Changes in Higher Education provision
- More informed national policy making

The work undertaken on DTAP was celebrated in May 2010, when the dance sector came together at the DTAP Conference for the launch of the new award and the field celebrated some of the achievements outlined above. The event was illuminating for me as it made me realise the truth of a quote attributed to Harry S Truman, *"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who takes the credit."*

Another key event in May 2010 reinforced this realisation. In 2008 I was commissioned to carry out the evaluation study of the Jane Attenborough Dance in Education Fellowships (JADE) for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) and have been working on this research since that date. The JADE Fellowships were awarded annually by the PHF to commemorate Jane Attenborough, whose distinctive contribution to dance and the arts ended tragically in the Tsunami of 2004. The Foundation have awarded five fellowships each lasting two years with the aim of enabling a dance company to provide practical assistance, mentoring and training to help a dancer coming to the end of his or her career to make a successful transition to education and community work. Three fellows have now completed their programmes and two are ongoing. The programme grew from the recognition that dancers have unique and precious experience which can be applied in different learning environments to enhance the experiences of participants and has provided long term support for five talented artists to make the transition from dancer to educator.

The dance field is multi talented and multi skilled comprising many people with fascinating career paths. Whilst the majority of people working within the field will have started their careers as dancers, many change direction at some stage, sometimes as an active choice but, in other instances, because it has been enforced by physical limitation or injury. Regardless of the reason, the end of a performing career after years of training brings serious challenges. The process of transition involves a loss of identity, often likened to bereavement, and can be traumatic and stressful.

In 2009, I suggested to PHF that a suitable legacy for the project might be the creation of a toolkit and an event that would celebrate the process of transitioning dancers, something that is often ignored. I brokered a partnership between PHF, the Clore Leadership Programme and Dancer's

Career Development (DCD) and acted as consultant to the planned symposium which took place on May 24th 2010. I also produced a report summarising the content of the event (Appendix 18)

> *"On May 24th 2010, these three organisations collaborated on a symposium, New Directions, which took place at the Southbank Centre and attracted a total of 80 delegates and speakers. The symposium was organised by the partners to bring together their experience of supporting dancer transition and career progression in order to shine a light on the issues for the benefit of artists and companies and as a means of stimulating greater debate and collaboration. In his opening remarks, Sir John Tusa noted that, "the last meeting to attempt what is happening today took place in 1989, so this is a very special event."*

Once again, system wide impact was achieved and my role was to catalyse and generate the action on the basis of my critical thinking about what the overall field needed.

Leading beyond organisational boundaries

Cultural leaders operate within a system. Leadership does not occur in a vacuum and nor do our organisations. This requires system leadership.[10]

Art is created as a result of the complex interaction of many organisations and individuals. This means that the cultural field is complex. It is multi facetted with a framework of interconnected employment sectors characterised by complexity, creativity and dynamism. It is a socio economic network. In social terms the focus is on the interaction of the people who work together to make art possible. It is an aggregation of many smaller micro-worlds or sub communities, a social network emerging from the cooperation of these micro worlds all with greater or lesser knowledge of the entire network. These sub communities are best viewed as 'art worlds' that involve collective activities and shared conventions:

> *"The notion of art world is a technical way of viewing the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised by their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for*." (Becker, 1984)

[10] See Appendix 17 for paper on Systems Leadership (Burns 2010) published in 'A Cultural Leadership Reader'. http://www.creative-choices.co.uk/leadership/cultural-leadership-reader/systems-leadership

According to Becker, the individual 'art world' comprises all the people whose activities are necessary for the production of the characteristic works that the world would define as art. He argues that we can define art by the collective activities that constitute the production of art, not by the end products (art works):

> *"The artist … works in the center of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome. Wherever he depends on others a cooperative link exists"*

Similarly, because individuals work within organisations this means that there is a complex network of organisations forming the 'world' or system. And this world or system connects through porous boundaries with other worlds and systems.

The notion of systems within organisational fields is of immense pertinence to the role of the consultant researcher. As someone who works across organisational boundaries, the consultant is able to make links and connections, transfer learning and cross pollinate ideas thus assisting with the management of complexity.

Any organisation is a complex system, irrespective of its function and size. Internally, it is composed of interrelated and interdependent parts. Externally, there are components and other organisations that impact on it and / or are impacted by the organisation. Just as it is with the human body, a physical injury to one part of the body affects not only the general physical well being, but also the mental well being, so it is with an organisation.

Systems theory is an interdisciplinary field that studies complex systems in nature, society and science. More specifically, it is a framework by which one can investigate and/or describe any group of objects, individuals or organisations that work together to produce some result. A system is best understood as a community situated within an environment. It is a dynamic and complex whole, interacting as a structured functional unit via semi-permeable membranes or boundaries.

The linked notion of systems thinking considers how local policies, actions or changes might influence the state of the whole system. Problems are viewed as part of an overall system rather than being in isolation. It considers the context, the linkages and the interactions and the relationships between different parts of the system and generates holistic thinking. The concept of systems thinking is about connecting small events to large changes. Acknowledging that an improvement in one area of a system can affect another area of the system, it promotes organisational communication and potentially avoids the silo effect where organisations operate in a vacuum from one another. A systems approach gives primacy to interrelationships, not to the individual elements of the system. Thus, in creating dynamic interrelationships, new properties of the overall system emerge.

An open systems approach to leadership is one where we view our leadership as reaching beyond the single organisation or sub sectors of individual art forms. This concept has a great deal to offer cultural leaders in seeking to influence the whole system in order to generate more sustainable futures for our organisations and for ourselves. By becoming 'systems leaders', cultural leaders can build social capital, create strategic alliances that will strengthen organisations, build capacity and generate long lasting social change.

This is 'outward facing' leadership characterised by:

- A commitment to building lateral capacity through collaboration and networking across the system
- A willingness to engage in collective action within communities and work beyond the boundaries of the organisation
- A willingness to take on system wide leadership roles not simply those within our own organisations
- The ability to transform cultural organisations into personal and professional learning communities
- A focus on enhancing the quality of all cultural activity and engagement
- The ability to empower and develop leadership in others

The notion of working beyond your organisation's own boundaries for the benefit of the whole cultural system may seem to be an obvious one and the role of the consultant is perhaps the most potent version of this. Free from organisational boundaries, the consultant can take on a systems leadership role that embraces learning and development and empowers and develops the leadership of others.

In summary, based on my research and my direct professional experience, I believe that systemic impact is achieved when a critical and strategic view of a given organisational field is taken, but will depend on the ability to work across and beyond organisational boundaries.

Chapter Four: The Impact of Applied Research

"Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" Kurt Lewin, 1946

Much of the work I have carried out and which is contained within this submission involved applied research. It is my belief that when action results from applied research, radical shifts and transformation can occur. Reports are not enough, action is essential.

Basic or pure research is driven by curiosity or interest in a particular question. The main motivation is to expand knowledge, not to create or invent something. There is often no obvious commercial value to the discoveries that result from basic research. However, applied research is designed to solve practical problems, rather than to acquire knowledge for knowledge's sake. One might say that the goal of the applied researcher is to improve the human condition or make a difference. Both forms of research have impact and can move a discipline forward and make a difference to the economy or society. But applied research may have a more direct or immediate impact.

My consultancy based research is applied research rather than pure research. My role may end at the point the research ends but often does not and this is how the impact becomes more immediate. For example, with the DTAP research outlined in Chapter 3, the role continued beyond the research into implementation and I have continued to 'walk alongside' the client supporting the implementation process where the findings of the research were consolidated into action and the new knowledge is converted through that action into transformation and change for the dance field. This is not an isolated example. Most of my research, including my evaluation studies, has resulted in action and my own role in this is often critical, providing continuity between the research and action stages. Recent work with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation researching training for artists working in participatory settings led to my appointment as Project Director of a new special initiative that will implement the recommendations and address the findings of the research. (Appendix 19)

I suggest that consultancy based applied research differs from traditional academic research in several key ways.

Firstly, it is commissioned and is therefore time sensitive, immediate and informed directly by the problem it sets out to solve and by the clients' needs. Thus, the DTAP research outlined in Chapter Three was designed to provide very clear outputs within a given time frame. In responding to a commissioning brief, it is therefore important to provide a workable and realistic methodology that will meet these imperatives.

Secondly, the fact that the work is commissioned means that it has consequences. By this I mean that the work will generate action and therefore the responsibility of the consultant researcher is to ensure that the research is valid and reliable and that conclusions are sound for immediate application. This often means that the research process must include an element of peer review to assist in ensuring validity. For example, the Dance Mapping research programme was steered by a panel of dance field experts who acted as checks along the way. In addition, the research process was started with a series of four national seminars in an attempt to engage the dance field in the work from the onset. As the research period concluded, further seminars were held around England to test findings and conclusions with peers. In total, more than 200 peers were engaged in scrutinising the research prior to publication.

Thirdly, its purpose is often instrumental. Research is usually commissioned to generate an evidence base to inform policy decisions and the recent Arts Council England commissioned Dance Mapping work provides a good example of this. However, it is not always this 'clean'. Research and evaluation may be commissioned more cynically as a means of creating evidence to match the policy making and make the case for the ongoing development of the work. Sometimes advocacy can replace evidence and damage the arguments.

The following argument was put forward to Youth Dance England in a tender in October 2005:

> *"There are many ways in which the evaluation study could be approached. To a large extent The approach adopted will depend on clarity about who it is for. In essence there are* ***inner*** *and* ***outer*** *audiences for any evaluation, It is understood that the project has succeeded in achieving support from a range of funders, policy makers, and other agencies. There is therefore a burden of justification which often accompanies reports to such stakeholders – to prove that it was money well spent - which may affect objectivity, stifle criticism, and promote advocacy. On the other hand, there is a large inner number of participants and partners (pupils, artists, steering group, schools) for whom a critical, but positive, approach is likely to be desired and valued. There is a further, outer audience, (international and national music, arts and education organisations) for whom an objective and accessible evaluation would not only considerably further professional debate, but also significantly raise the profile of YDE.*
>
> *Therefore it is likely that there are a number of internal and external audiences who would be particularly interested in the findings of the final 'report'. This complicates the questions of why, how, and who for, but it is strongly recommended that the research team reach a*

clear consensus on these issues, before agreeing the research programme. (Youth Dance England Tender: October 2005, Appendix 20)

It is therefore incumbent on the consultant researcher to ensure that the quality, reliability and validity of the data and the evidence are sound, that evidence is gathered and assessed objectively and with rigour.

Designing the Consultancy based Applied Research Project

Despite the differences, the process of designing an applied research project is therefore no different to that of a traditional academic research programme. From a review of the literature, a series of hypotheses can be determined and a methodology designed for testing them. Reliable, valid and representative data must then be gathered, assessed and analysed before findings can be posited. Data gathered will generally be both qualitative and quantitative. Primary research in the form of surveys, focus groups, structured and semi structured interviews will be supported by secondary research such as desk research, report reading and surveying of other organisations or contexts.

The Dance Mapping research illustrates this approach. The methodology was spread over three research stages. The project began in July 2008, the interim report was produced in October 2008 and the final report was delivered in May 2009.

Stage One set out to identify what was known about the state of the dance field. It collated and used existing research to examine existing Arts Council England investment in dance and attempted to locate this within a context of what we know about the wider field across the regions.

The following methods were used in stage one:

- data gathering and analysis using Arts Council England regularly funded organisations and Grants for the Arts data 2008–11
- data gathering and analysis using Arts Council England regularly funded organisations and Grants for the arts data 2004–07
- data gathering from regional offices of Arts Council England
- data gathering from government websites, HESA statistics, NALGAO, Youth Dance England etc
- literature review of existing research, publications and reports

- attendance at key events (e.g. Arts Council England Dance Conversation Days and meetings of the key strategic dance agencies)

Stage one was completed in October 2008 and an interim report presented to Arts Council England with a summary for dissemination on the Arts Council England website.
This research highlighted gaps in knowledge and allowed a refinement to the methodology for stage two of the research.

Stage Two comprised primary research that sought to plug the gaps in existing knowledge about the dance field and to generate a better understanding of the environment within which dance exists.
In stage two the following methods were used:

- primary research through online surveys of the dance workforce, venues and audiences and local authority engagement with dance
- primary research through interviews, data gathering and literature to create illustrations that enable us to better understand emerging themes and issues
- further in-depth research into the existing regularly funded organisations and Grants for the arts data including the 2007/08 annual regularly funded organisations returns
- Further research on the private sector carried out in partnership with CDET
- attendance at key events
- further analysis of reports and data provided by other agencies, organisations and individuals including analysis carried out by the Rural Touring Network, postgraduate dissertations and published articles.

Stage Three included consultation with key representatives from the dance field in four venues across England. It was after these events that the final report and Executive Summary were produced.

Thus, stage one established a series of hypotheses drawn from the literature and extant research, which were tested through primary research in stage two. Consultation then took place within the sector to encourage ownership and ensure validity which was felt to be critical if the research was to support the field and not only the Arts Council.

The Limitations of Consultancy based Applied Research

In addition to the above issues raised around advocacy and evidence, there are further complexities that are encountered within consultancy based research.

Much consultancy based research is concerned with assessing and measuring impact and is geared towards creating an evidence base that will prove the case. This could be termed 'policy based evidence making' as the evidence is being gathered to meet a policy agenda rather than being used to inform it.

A research contract I am currently working on provides a case in point -the evaluation of In Harmony Liverpool. This is a Department of Education funded pilot programme using music within deprived communities to seek to generate social change. A robust framework was established for data gathering and a clear set of indicators was established against which to measure impact over a two year period. The research began in April 2009 and will end in March 2011. The evaluation study was commissioned by the project lead, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic in July 2009. However, in early 2010, there was a request for an interim evaluation report that "proved the project is working". Whilst this was understandable given the looming General Election and potential vulnerability of Labour policy based programmes, the request implied that evaluation was simply about proving that the intervention worked. This had not been our approach and to have responded would have compromised the integrity of the process and rendered the evaluation meaningless as research. Our approach had been an action Learning approach working with partners to generate learning from what was working as well as what had not worked. We had sought to create a formative evaluative environment where learning is generated and problems can be solved on an ongoing basis. We resisted the requirement, providing some evolving evidence but indicating it was too early to draw any definitive conclusions from it. This protected the integrity of the programme of research and created a compromise. (Appendix 21)

I strongly believe that, as practitioners, it is incumbent on us to protect the integrity of our research and to work collectively as a more organised group to challenge this tendency to confuse research with advocacy. The ethics of doing otherwise are not acceptable to me at a personal level and would damage the credibility of applied research.

A further limitation occurs when attempting to establish a baseline for research projects. When evaluating or assessing impact, a baseline must be established to ensure that impact can be assessed against a clear starting point. This is often one of the hardest things for a consultant researcher to achieve as the commissioning process does not always precede the start of the project and may be

an afterthought. Indeed, I have seen research briefs for programmes of research relating to projects that have already been completed.

In the YDE evaluation study referred to earlier in this statement, it was possible to establish a baseline as the commission preceded project commencement. The study was longitudinal and by commissioning the study in advance of the project starting we were able to develop a research framework that was effective and robust. It was therefore a good model. But, longitudinal studies are rare within the field.

A pyramidic approach to data collection was adopted with the YDE research programme using the nine Regional Coordinators as on the ground data collectors and this data was then mined against the hypotheses that were extrapolated from the aims and outcomes established for the programme.

The value of this evaluation was noted in the preface to the report:

> *"This evaluation research was commissioned by Youth Dance England in December 2005 prior to the commencement of the Next Steps/ Dance Links projects. Our intention was to evaluate the work in a progressive way that would inform its ongoing development. Thus, the interim evaluation at the end of Year One informed changes to Year Two activity. The work informed the Tony Hall review during 2007 and allowed us to present data on the scale and scope of the youth dance sector at Conference 2007. The value of the evaluation has therefore been formative." (Appendix 14)*

With the evaluation research of British Dance Edition (BDE) 2008, significant problems were encountered from the onset. (Appendix 22) The event takes place every two years and is managed by different organisations. Since the first BDE in 1998 the event had been evaluated by the managing organisation usually as a means of reporting back to funders on outputs. As a result there had been no consistent methodology nor had the long term impact of the event ever been measured.

> "*It was apparent from evaluation reports of previous BDEs that the event has had a significant impact on many different groups. These include:*
>
> - *Artists and Companies*
> - *Promoters*
> - *Venues*
> - *The Host Agency*
> - *The Host City*

- *The Dance Sector*
- *Funders*

It appears that the impact on artists and companies increases the capacity of companies and independents to showcase and tour their work and to see their own work in the context of other companies and independent dancers. In generating increased touring, it also therefore generates earned income. BDE also appears to have increased the amount of dance being promoted and presented in the UK and internationally. However, this had not been tracked systematically. No consistent model had been applied that would allow for comparisons and benchmarking and thus when Merseyside Dance Initiative (MDI) were making the case for BDE 2008 it was difficult to provide robust evidence of impact and value. This was felt to be a major opportunity for BDE 2008. A more thorough approach to evaluation was proposed and an evaluator was contracted in late 2007 to design the process."

Thus, a toolkit was designed as a result of the 2008 evaluation and this was used by the organisers of BDE 2010 in Birmingham. This means that there is now the ability to compare like with like and assess impact in a longitudinal way across the years ensuring that evidence is gathered consistently and that true comparisons can be drawn. The impact of consultancy based research can therefore be far reaching despites its commissioned nature.

A final limitation is the fact that, due to the commissioned nature of consultancy based research, the impact of the research is often dependent on the commissioning agency taking the work forward. The impact of the research and its application required the commissioner to use the research. The consultant researcher can act as a 'thought leader' when the research is embedded as 'next practice' and converted into action. This diffusion required the engagement of national agencies. The work outlined above with ACE, with the DTAP partners, with the HE Academy's Centre for Excellence for the Performing Arts and with major funders such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation means that I have been able to collaborate with powerful and influential commissioning agencies. The knowledge I have generated is left in their hands and I have to trust that it is sufficiently compelling to be used and dissemination and diffusion will occur.

Systems Leadership through Consultancy based Research

In carrying out the Dance Mapping research our basic premise was that this was research for the dance field not about it. *"We have always stated publicly that this work was for the dance field and it has been carried out in collaboration with the field."*

Alan Davey, Chief Executive of Arts Council England stated in his introduction to the published report:

> *"The Dance Mapping research, A Window on Dance, offers a deep insight into the breadth and range of dance work now happening in England. It offers a snapshot of our funding over the period 2004–2008 and paints a vivid picture of how what the Arts Council funds impacts on the wider world of dance. It will provide a well of material for us to draw on as we shape our ambitions for dance, and will also provide useful material for the dance world as a whole." (page 9)*

Thus, the research was intended to inform policy making but also the field as a whole as it moves forward:

> *" A vision for dance in the year 2020 must be one of a confident field with a workforce that is fit for purpose. The workforce will be better distributed and so will the work ensuring that engagement and participation is possible no matter where you are in England. We see a field that is informed and guided by a holistic understanding and approach of what we mean by dance. .....*
>
> *There are many audiences for this research and making the narrative available will hopefully open up important dialogues between the different segments of the field.*
>
> *For example,*
>
> - *We need strong dialogue between the field and the trainers and educators to ensure that we are training the workforce of the future and that it is fit for purpose.*
> - *We need stronger dialogue between funders at a national, regional and local level and this needs to encompass potential funding partners in the social enterprise sectors of the economy as well as commercial for profit organisations and investors.*

For Arts Council England, it is clear that dance is a success story. The potential for dance to meet Arts Council England outcomes is rich but the field remains under resourced and lacks a building based infrastructure that will facilitate its growth. There is a need for the Arts Strategy to take this on board and consider how the overall portfolio can support the development of the artform. Furthermore, there is a need to consider the overall portfolio and the balance of provision currently being funded in order to ensure that the portfolio reflects the inclusivity of the field and does not perpetuate a cultural hegemony that precludes the above holistic approach.

There is also a need to make a robust and confident case for dance. The Arts Council has already taken a lead on this by commissioning this research. The research has engaged the field and will hopefully inform the field in moving forward.

The dance field needs to adopt a holistic view that recognises that dance is not just taking place within the subsidised/ non-profit sector funded by Arts Council England but that it is all around us. There is a mixed ecology of different styles and genres and a mixed ecology of different engagements with the artform. It is possible that key stakeholders are unintentionally creating a landscape that limits the expression and development of dance by constraining the debate to what is funded rather than the larger context and bigger map of the field. Nothing exists in isolation. Theatre dance is in dialogue with the society that creates it and we need to recognise that our discourse must widen to reflect this

The field needs to speak with one voice – encompassing 'dance' and 'dancing'. It needs to tear down false perceptions of hierarchy whether in styles and genres or in roles within the creative dance process and needs to be brave enough to challenge old models and ways of thinking and the hegemony of contemporary dance.

The field needs more joined-up investment between sectors, funders and those being funded as, if venues and production and touring companies worked more closely together significant changes in the touring ecology and economy would be possible. There must be more open dialogue about new ways of working to open up new business models and generate more sustainable companies, artists, agencies, promoters and most importantly, audiences.

We can do this together." (Page 254 -6)

Based on my research and my experience, it is my belief that this illustrates how consultancy based research can play a role in systemic change. By providing the evidence and the tools with which to make a case, transformation and change can be delivered and the dissemination of research facilitates this by creating critical communities who share knowledge and a will to effect the requisite change. In drawing up the national Arts Strategy, Arts Council England drew heavily on the research and its findings are now informing funding decisions.

I gave a presentation on the mapping research to the Canada Dance Alliance in September 2010[11] as they are planning a similar mapping exercise to inform future developments in the field there and I have also recently been asked to advise the Government of Western Australia on their Cultural Ecology Mapping work that will pilot network mapping with the dance sector. This is clear evidence that dissemination can be international and is adding a new dimension to my professional practice.

Reflecting on Applied and Practice based Research

In the opening pages of *Simulations,* Baudrillard (1983) uses the metaphor of the map and the territory to argue that, within contemporary society, the simulated copy had superseded the original object and the map had come to precede the geographic territory. This long standing metaphor has pertinence for any discussion of the relationship between theory and practice, academia and industry.

The 'map' of theory and frameworks does not precede the practice. Instead, the territory precedes the map and therefore theory should be a reflection of as well as a guide for what is happening on the ground in the practice. This iterative relationship between theory and practice has become fundamental to my own work and I constantly try to create theory from practice as well as using theory to inform it. Both are equally important, with one providing the territory and the other working to create the map that enhances understanding of that territory but does not replace it or supersede it in validity.

This approach suggests that the body of knowledge gathered through practice is as important as the body of knowledge gathered through theory. I therefore conclude that real development within the cultural sector will depend on a collaborative approach between academia and the field, that linking practice to theory will depend on closer working partnerships and on collaborative approaches to knowledge development and exchange, through research and reflection. Research should provide

[11] See Appendix 23

the conceptual underpinning of theories and frameworks upon which development can be built but, in turn, it needs to be informed by practice and grounded within real world problems if it is to have relevance and validity.[12]

It seems to me that the notion of lenses is important in this context. Knowledge can be viewed through different lenses: the academic, the practitioner and the learner. In the same way as we change lenses for reading, driving or sewing, an individual may look at knowledge in different ways depending on context. The challenge is to integrate this vision to make connections between the different approaches and, through reflection, to make sense of the whole.

The practitioner gathers a body of knowledge through experience and practice. Their research is applied and is often not shared or communicated to others beyond the contracting organisation. It may be structured research (audience surveys, box office data analysis or evaluation) but its primary purpose will often be internal to the organisation and it is often only utilised in a business specific context. This does not mean that it is any less valid or reliable, simply that its application may be artificially limited. Action learning and reflective practice occur in unstructured as well as structured ways. This knowledge is often not validated externally and as a result the practitioner may not have confidence in its relevance to others. The consultant researcher is often able to overcome such barriers as their work is usually commissioned for external circulation and publication.

The academic develops a body of knowledge through pure and empirical research. In general, this research will lead to the creation of theoretical frameworks which are published and disseminated through academic channels. The research may have limited relevance to the real problems being faced on the ground and even when it is of relevance both the discourse from which it has emerged and the contexts through which it is disseminated, may mean that it is not immediately accessible to the practitioner.

The learner develops a body of knowledge through the integration of the two – a kind of varifocal lens. I deem myself a learner, someone who attempts to integrate the above approaches to effect change. Learners can link the two processes and through applied learning and reflective practice can develop a more holistic approach to theory and practice – the map and the territory.

[12] When I presented a paper at the International Conference of Arts Management in Texas in June 2009, I was surprised at the number of papers that bore little relevance to practice and at the numbers of academics whose experience of the reality of the cultural sector was minimal. I sought out other practitioner researchers within the delegates and found that they shared this perception and I have developed my networks as a result with colleagues in Canada, Australia and North America. Many are consultants working in similar ways and I hope to be able to maximise this in coming years through generating some shared research and learning. However, all seem to share the difficulty of getting applied research projects accepted for presentation at academic conferences. There appears to be an inherent rejection of the work within academic circles and on several occasions when I have presented abstracts, I have obtained feedback that 'case studies' were not what was required. This perception that applied research is no more than a case study, is misplaced and misinformed. It ignores the value of applied research and ignores its rigour and robustness.

My argument is essentially that the consultant is a learner, developing a body of knowledge through applied learning, reflective practice and linking the two. However, one person's learning is not research. What has distinguished my work is that I have created new knowledge that has informed the field through this process. In research contexts this creates a rich and relevant body of knowledge that can be readily applied by others. As stated above, it is often timely and because of time pressure can be critical in informing the field and transforming practice. I would argue that the consultant/ practitioner researcher plays a critical role in thought leadership within a field. The role is often extended beyond research into action and the research itself will often be action research. The consultant researcher will be designing robust applied research projects whose application may be more immediate than the academic.

The examples contained within the body of work presented within this submission, provide a range of practical solutions to the requirements of a wide range of clients but in all cases the intention has been transformative. Transforming the youth dance terrain, transforming our understanding of the economic impact of a biennial dance trade event, transforming our understanding of the dance field in order to enable the field to continue to develop.

Impact

It is with this notion of transformation that the impact of consultancy based research can be measured:

- In economic terms – the evaluation of YDE's Next Steps/ Dance Links project secured more than £5 million for youth dance development, the evaluation of British Dance Edition 2008 demonstrated impact and generated funding for BDE 2010 and the ACE Dance Mapping research will affect future funding decisions for dance in England.

- In social terms – the DTAP and Palatine research has generated significant changes in training, workforce development and recognition for the dance professional, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation research has led to a major £1.5 million five year funding intervention that seeks to develop the arts workforce to deliver better participatory work. The evaluation of the JADE Fellowships led to a symposium that has instilled a greater confidence in the dance field about transition and career development.

I sought input from peers in reflecting on the impact of my research as I felt that it would evidence this more powerfully than my own interpretation[13]:

> *"I drew on your Palatine research in making the case for the BA (Hons) Community Dance course at the University Campus Suffolk. My initial role was to research options for the focus of the course/ qualification and the Palatine research made a clear case for a strong focus on teaching as an area of workforce shortage and limited competition. The impact of this work was that I was asked to write the course in collaboration with Dance East and the university and the first cohort of students started the course in September 2009."* (Jeanette Siddall, Independent Consultant)

Another stated:

> "*Susanne Burns is a very established consultant with a wide range of authored publications that have been key to the development of dance. As Director of Youth Dance England (YDE) I commissioned her to be Project Evaluator of the first national youth dance programme, setting up a national network of Regional Coordinators and devising national initiatives to stimulate activity, raise standards and improve progression routes for all children and young people. As Project Evaluator working over a two year period she had to sustain a number of partnerships within the newly formed network and also at base with YDE. The research methodology she designed fitted this project that was unique in its management structure, aims and partnerships. The resulting report outlined recommendations that were key to shaping the management structure and approach taken into a larger project made possible through a major investment in Children and Young People's dance that followed for 2008-2011.*
>
> *This work was a spring board for her re-engagement with the dance sector that has led to another piece of work that will have a major influence on the direction of dance. The Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership (DTAP), a group of national dance service organisations with an interest in developing the work force for participatory dance for children and young people, engaged her to do a major piece of research that scoped, initially, the role of a Qualification to develop the dance work force for CYP in the informal sector. This led her onto making much more far reaching recommendations for the dance work force, pointing to the ultimate aim of a creating a Regulatory Framework for the sector. This was a major recommendation that has influenced the direction of DTAP and as*

[13] Appendix 23

such a large part of the dance sector. Her research and writing style is direct, engaging and speaks to a variety of audiences. She brings a very clear conceptual approach to her work that is useful especially when dealing with research that has to be relevant to policy makers and opinion formers, as well as practitioners." (Linda Jasper, Director, Youth Dance England)

Another colleague commented on the impact of the DTAP research:

"Susanne's work has been instrumental in developing and supporting dance and its infrastructure not just for Trinity College London, but I believe for the dance sector as a whole. Most recently her work with the Dance Training and Accreditation Partnership and latterly with Trinity College London has meant that a dance qualification has been developed which addresses the need for quality assurance of teaching of children and young people in the informal sector. This is something which has not been achieved before and something which will have a great impact on the dance sector. In developing a business plan for dance within Trinity our research indicated that Susanne has not just had impact on this particular area of work, but that the research that she has undertaken over the past years has influenced and guided the dance sector as a whole. Again and again the information and evidence that we needed had been gathered, scrutinised and synthesised by in reports written by Susanne." (Maggie Morris, Head of Acting and Dance, Trinity London)

A colleague commented on the impact of my work with LARC:

"Susanne reviewed the organizational structure of LARC in August 2008. As a result of her work, LARC was able to take some significant decisions about its structure, and created a clear public statement setting out its vision and activities. This helped the partnership to operate more effectively, and helped to provide the basis for its successful development." (Belinda Kidd, LARC Programme Director)

My work with LJMU was summarised as follows:

"Susanne has had a very significant impact on LJMU's collaborative partnerships in the arts and cultural sectors, building very concrete relationships and programmes. She developed the MA in Cultural Leadership which has a wide range of institutional partners and students are able to access these organisations for their work experience, and as exemplars of their theoretical studies. She has undertaken a range of project work for LJMU in helping to determine the best way for the university to interact with the arts and cultural sectors, not

least in providing the scoping document for Culture Campus – a unique development in Liverpool which provides a consortium between LJMU, University of Liverpool, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial, FACT, and other related cultural and creative organisations." (Professor Roger Webster, Dean of Faculty: Media, Arts and Social Sciences, LJMU)

Finally, an ex student and now a commissioner of my work stated:

"I have known Susanne for 3 years in my capacity as working for MLA and Arts Council, as a student for the Cert Professional Development in Cultural Leadership at LJMU, and through working at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Susanne's impact on me personally has been substantial. As a Course Leader, Susanne helped me to focus and become more analytical in my work, and Susanne gave me the confidence to apply for my current position at the Phil. Most recently, my department has commissioned Susanne to evaluate the impact of our In Harmony music programme in West Everton. Susanne's professional approach is superb in supporting and challenging our organization, our practices and through interrogating information and questioning our assumptions. There is no doubt in my mind that Susanne makes a huge contribution to our work and is highly appreciated throughout our organization." (Peter Garden, Executive Director, Learning and Engagement, RLP)

Critical Community

These peers comprise my communities of practice, my critical community. My networks are extensive and are used in several ways as suggested in Chapter 3:

- As critical friends and sounding boards
- As support and mentors when problems occur
- As networks through which information is exchanged and new ideas developed and disseminated

But perhaps most importantly, they also provide a means through which I can actually carry out the research. For example, when carrying out the PHF research recently I consulted with 72 people, the Dance Mapping research consulted more that 300 people and surveyed over 1000. I look to them for support, feedback and knowledge. They provide a challenge to my thinking, can help in moving knowledge forward and also provide a means through which the knowledge I create can be disseminated.

When this works effectively, system level leadership occurs and this links closely to the notion of next practice as articulated by CK Prahalad (2004) and Charles Leadbeater (2006). In one sense 'next' practice is like tomorrow: it is never here. The term is meant, though, to convey the notion of genuinely new approaches rooted in practical understanding. Prahalad, remarked:

> *"There is a lot of research focused on best practice, but I focus on next practice. Next practice by definition has three problems: firstly it is future-oriented; secondly, no single institution or company is an exemplar of everything that you think will happen; and third, next practice is about amplifying weak signals, connecting the dots. Next practice is disciplined imagination."* (Prahalad, 2004.)

In an Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) pamphlet Leadbeater argues, on the basis of work in local government, that, *"Next practices - emergent innovations that could open up new ways of working - are much more likely to come from thoughtful, experienced, self-confident practitioners trying to find new and more effective solutions to intractable problems."* (Leadbeater, 2006)

The Innovation Unit's Next Practice model has clear links with my own working methods and approaches:

> *"Next Practice, which The Innovation Unit believes is a key contribution to the evolution of public service innovation and improvement, is a new approach to stimulating, incubating and accelerating innovation, which is strongly driven by users' needs.*
>
> *The Innovation Unit have identified a number of characteristics of Next Practice:*
>
> - *significantly changed methods of service delivery, organisation or structure, which, if shown to be successful, would hold implications for the wider system*
> - *in advance of hard evidence of effectiveness*
> - *not (yet) officially sanctioned and therefore maybe entailing some risk*
> - *consciously designed with an awareness of the strengths and limitations of conventional 'best' practice*
> - *generated by very able, informed practitioners aware of the existing knowledge base*
> - *informed by critical scanning of the wider environment*
> - *directed at serious, contemporary problems*
> - *user focused.*

Next Practice is keenly aware of conventional good practice - its strengths and limitations - but sets out to move it to a new level. In some cases, Next Practice will disrupt, profoundly evolve or revolutionise good practice.

Best Practice asks what works? Next Practice asks what could work better?"

(Source: http://www.innovationunit.org/next-practice/what-is-next-pratice.html)

I believe that my systems level thinking can stimulate innovation, for example in the DTAP work and the Dance Mapping research. At this stage the consultant researcher is analysing needs and problems, identifying potential models and innovations, generating options and scanning the horizon for ideas. Incubation occurs when ideas, alliances and partnerships are brokered and models are developed and acceleration occurs through communities of practice when the research is assimilated and synthesised and diffusion occurs.

It is this model that I am now applying as Research Director to the Paul Hamlyn initiative [14] through the development of a series of enquiry based pathfinder projects that will work as a community of practice to generate new ways of delivering training and development for artists at all stages of development and across all art forms. In some senses this enquiry based programme of applied research, which will last five years, is a powerful means for me to realise some of the learning I have accrued as a result of undertaking this professional doctorate. It will allow me to experiment with the concepts I have developed. It will allow me to ask, "What might work better"? How can we make a difference to the work being undertaken by artists when working in participatory settings both for them and for the participants with whom they work? I will be applying the model outlined in Figure 2 and testing the application of the next practice innovation model shown in Figure 6.

[14] Appendix 19 contains the Job Description for the Project Director as well as the research carried out that led into the initiative.

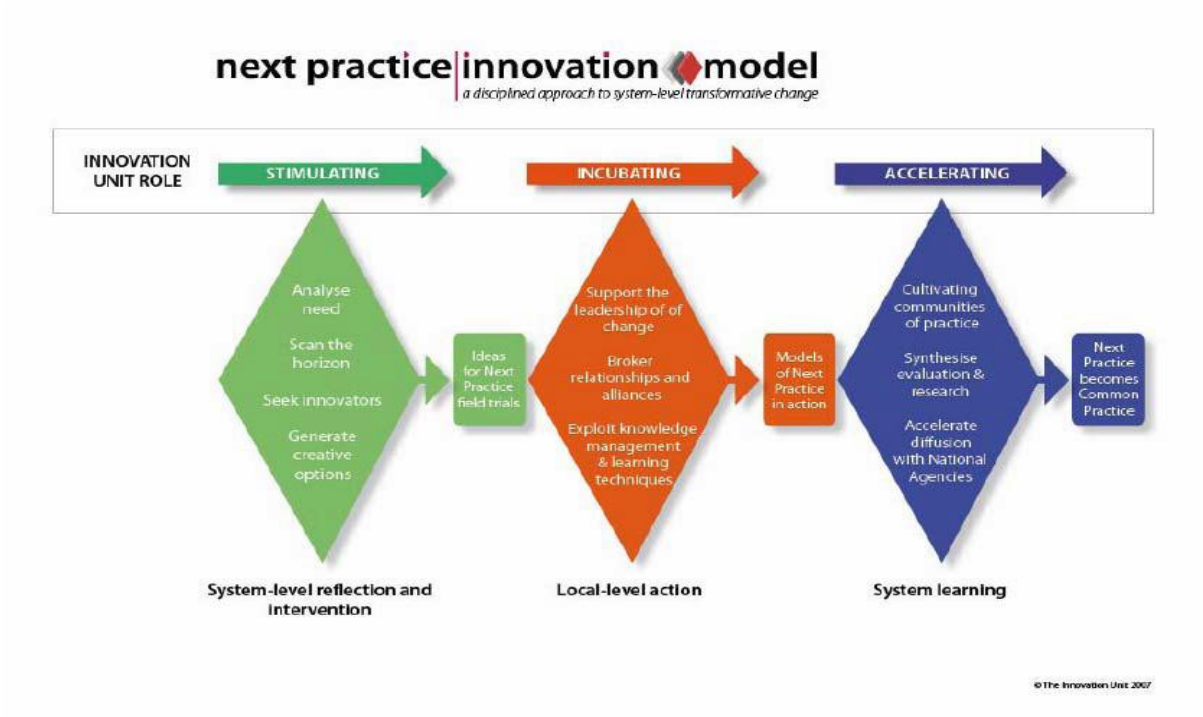


Figure 6: Next Practice Innovation Model

Source: The Innovation Unit, 2007

A note on ethics

Implicit within this submission there has been an awareness of the ethics that underpin my work.

Ethical dilemmas occur in consultancy on a regular basis particularly when learning is being shared across organisations as sometimes information and knowledge may be business sensitive and may require confidentiality. When it is appropriate to share information, permission is crucial and I always seek it.

Particular problems occur in evaluation when qualitative data is being gathered through interviews or surveys. It is important to respect privacy and confidentiality as, if the respondents are not confident that they are able to speak openly, they are not as open and honest as we require them to be. Thus, it is my practice to quote qualitative data generically – “a parent”, “a year 6 pupil”, “a local authority officer”. If case studies are produced these are often generic too, but in some cases when an organisation or individual is happy to be interviewed and attributed the text is cleared with them before publication. This was the approach we took within the Dance Mapping research and allowed us to provide some radical examples of new and emerging business models as well as career

trajectories. I respect confidentiality, seek permission to use quotations and ask the person quoted at all times to check that they are happy with what I am using even if it is lifted from a transcript. I work from a position of respect for others and always hold the confidence of individuals and organisations.

My practice has always been informed by values that include transparency and openness, honesty and integrity. I have found that this militates against conflict and enables solutions to be found should any conflict occur.

To this end, I have formulated a code in a sub conscious way and I am now articulating this for the first time:

- I work with clients in a **confidential** manner. I will respect the confidentiality of all business information shared with me in the course of a contract and will not disclose this information to a third party.
- I treat all people with **respect** and when consulting within an organisation or carrying out qualitative research will not attribute comments to an individual in writing but will render findings anonymous unless given permission to do otherwise. If information is attributed to an individual in writing, it will always be cleared with the individual before publication.
- I will respect the **brief** in any contract, working with the client to ensure timely delivery against required outputs and will ensure that any project is scoped appropriately at the onset to ensure it is feasible within timescales and budgets. If necessary and welcomed by the client I will work with them to reshape and refine the brief to ensure the most effective outcomes.
- I will maintain regular and open **communication** with clients to ensure that the consultancy process is smooth, transparent and open and that the integrity of the work is protected throughout.
- I will ensure **objectivity** is maintained throughout any contract and will ensure my position as external expert is not compromised.
- I will deliver work of the highest **quality** possible and will ensure that at the end of a contract the client is happy with the outcomes of the work.

Chapter Five: Reflecting and Moving Forward

My public work represents both a body of knowledge developed through valid and robust research and grounded in practice as well as evidence of a set of working methods and processes through which it has emerged.

- The body of knowledge it represents about the cultural sector as a whole, and the dance field in particular, is deep and I have evidenced that this has impacted significantly on the field.
- Through reflection on my practice, my working methods and processes, I have been able to extrapolate some key learning that may inform the way in which we consider the relationships between consultancy, leadership, organisational development and systemic change in organisational fields. I have proposed that the role of the consultant as thought leader and transformational change agent is potent.

The analysis has led me to draw some key conclusions that can be summarised in relation to the key areas outlined in the introduction: Consultancy as Leadership, Field Impact, Applied Research and Effecting Change and Moving Forward.

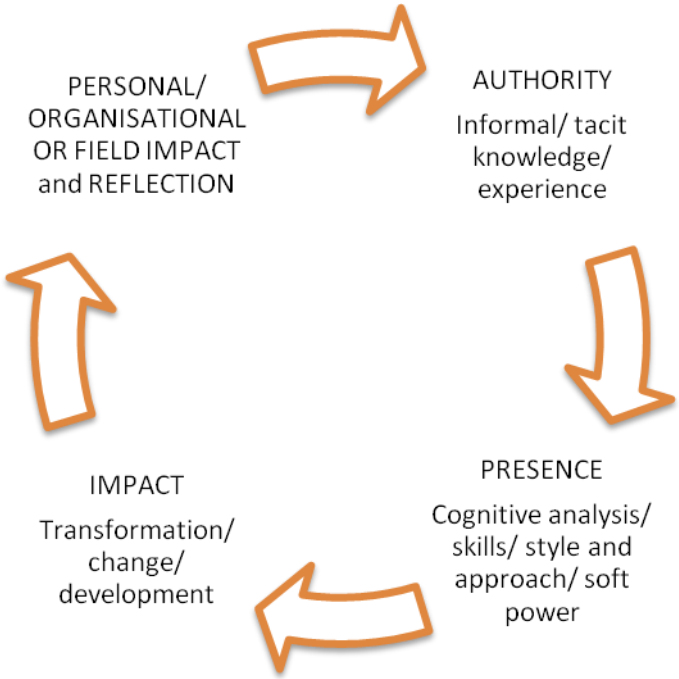
Consultancy as Leadership

The idea that a freelance consultant without a specific role within any one organisation can exert leadership is posited in this statement and the notion of consultants as leaders is explored with reference to their ability to effect change across organisational boundaries. It is proposed that this ability to generate transformational change and coach organisations towards new solutions is of major significance in an expanding field such as dance where new business models need to emerge to sustain the work.

I have argued that consultants are potentially highly potent leaders when their working methods are geared to working across organisational boundaries and developing such transformative solutions. I have also argued that a more 'technical' approach to consultancy would not have the same impact.

The consultant's authority stems not just from the mandate provided by the client to effect change and enhance performance but from the individual's authority and presence which combine to create impact. The working processes I have used are explored and analysed and I argue that they

constitute 'transformational consultancy'. A model of the processes and approach is proposed that presents a cyclical reflective learning continuum:



Field Impact and Systems Change

I have concluded that systemic impact is achieved when a critical and strategic view of a given organisational field is taken. The effectiveness of this seems to largely depend on the ability to work across and beyond organisational boundaries. In my work in dance and beyond, I have been able to work in this way generating a systems leadership role that has had major impact on the dance field in particular. But, it is also clear that my work has created some significant shifts in the ways in which organisations view collaboration and collective working.

It is clear that within the current economic and political climate there will be a need for substantial transformation in our business models, our ways of working and our overall view of the way the field is structured. It seems apparent that this will require a series of significant paradigm shifts. In particular, we need to see a shift away from the model of arts organisations as individual units competing for resources within an ever diminishing pool.

Fundamentally, I believe that the achievement of this shift will hinge on our ability to generate new collaborative working models that will maximise impact beyond that possible within one individual organisation. I can see a time when collaborative marketing effort across organisations will replace the existing competitive marketing strategies that predominate within the sector, where, collective

approaches to fundraising will generate greater private philanthropy and investment in causes rather than in organisations and where collaboration on shared services will generate greater economies of scale and more effective procurement. This notion of cooperative leadership and collaboration is not new to the arts sector but it brings serious challenges to a management culture that is focused on competition for audience share, competition for private sector philanthropy and sponsorship and competition for the additional public funding secured for social projects. The reality is that arts organisations exist within a system that includes both their fellow arts providers at all scales of operation and the plethora of organisations that supply them, procure from them and co exist within their local, national and international environments. This co dependency and the recognition that an organisation is not an island will lead to a more ecological and organic way of viewing the field and will lead inevitably to different operating paradigms. The collective power of complementary organisations is more potent than that of any one individual organisation. The organisational ego needs to be discarded in favour of the collective requirements of the system.

In my work, much of this thinking has been evident and is now beginning to take root within the organisations with whom I have worked. I look forward to continuing to develop this work with them over the coming years and hope to be able to continue to analyse and disseminate models and practices through my consultancy and research.

Applied Research

Whilst consultancy based research may differ from pure research in significant ways, I have argued that it has equal validity to academic research and, in some ways, may generate more impact because of its immediacy and purpose. This leads to more immediate application. The circumstances within which this impact can be attained have been explored and the limitations of applied consultancy research analysed.

I have argued that applied research can have a powerful impact on a given field in both economic and social terms. It can generate powerful systemic change as the research provides evidence and tools that critical communities can share and utilise. When action results from applied research, radical shifts and transformation will occur. My work provides evidence of this in many different ways and is beginning to have impact internationally. I have recently been invited to talk about the dance mapping research in both Canada (Canada Dance Alliance) and Western Australia (Government of Western Australia, Department of Culture and the Arts) where colleagues are

beginning to develop research programmes that will generate an evidence base for dance planning and strategy.

Effecting Change

The body of work gathered together for this submission and the reflection on it within this statement, provides clear evidence of the change generated through my practice. This has occurred at many different levels:

- An individual level where I have affected individual career paths through training, coaching and mentoring
- An organisational level where I have supported an organisation in developing new ways of working, generating evidence to support growth and expansion and developing new partnerships and collaborations
- A field level where I have supported field based changes that have impacted beyond individual organisations into the whole ecology

Most importantly, I have explored the personal change that has accrued from this work. My professional trajectory has mirrored the field that I have worked within, I have matured as a professional, developed new skills and strengths as a result of continuing reflection and developed an enhanced ability to synthesise theory making with my practice.

Moving Forward

At this personal level, the process of undertaking the professional doctorate has provided an opportunity for reflection and learning that has proved invaluable to me at this stage in my career. It has assisted me in obtaining greater clarity about my professional work, my practices and myself. It has been part of a process, a journey, and this will now be continuous. It has led me to conceptualise the working processes in a way that I have relished. It has allowed me the opportunity to connect my practice back to theory and explore the connections in a more coherent way.

I intend to build on this in future and will continue to seek to find ways to link my practice to theory. I would like to publish more and am currently developing a book proposal as well as several research proposals that I intend to proactively develop rather than waiting for research contracts to emerge. I have already had two papers accepted for academic conferences and have submitted abstracts for an international conference in July 2011.

I have been able to conceptualise my working methods and approaches and this will now continue to inform my work as I move forward. Indeed, it already is. A recent tender for a contract in Scotland afforded me the opportunity to demonstrate this learning and the enhanced clarity it has brought. The brief is contained in Appendix 24 and involves two organisations who are seeking to achieve cost efficiencies through collaborative working. The consultancy was initially outlined in two stages: a scoping stage where an operational review would be undertaken and a facilitation stage where options would be explored and the consultant would support the two organisations in moving forward change programmes to implement the chosen options. In tendering for the work, I chose to work with a colleague who brings a complementary skill set in data analysis. Our approach to the tender was heavily informed by my thinking on transformational consultancy. We proposed a methodology that would move from technical consultancy and research through to a facilitated implementation programme during which we would 'walk alongside' the clients supporting the change process. We proposed the use of coaching as well as Action Learning sets as a means of supporting this process. The proposed programme will last a year and will move from research into action as outlined in Chapter 4. Working on the brief demonstrated to me how much the reflective process has impacted on the way I can now articulate the way I work. Prior to undertaking the professional doctorate, I was not able to conceptualise my working processes with the same clarity.

The five year contract with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation will also afford the opportunity to implement some of my findings in relation to applied research and 'next practice.'

I have also decided to train in Action Learning and Facilitation and will start this programme in November 2010. I believe the skills will add to my 'toolbox', complementing the coaching and mentoring skills and supporting the processes I have outlined, leading to greater capacity within the organisations I work with.

The reflection that I have undertaken during the work on this doctorate has made me more acutely aware of my strengths and talents. Our talents influence every decision we make and therefore one would assume we are all intimately aware of them. Yet they are so interwoven into the fabric of life that the pattern may be difficult to discern. My realisation that my talents have been with me all

along and that unknowingly I have built on them with knowledge and skills to make them my strengths. In choosing to work as a consultant, I was unknowingly, choosing a career path that played to these strengths and it has confirmed for me that the path I have chosen is the right path for me. I have realised that I want to continue to work cross organisationally

This reflection made me consider the role of values and ethics in my work and this led me to articulate a statement that I will now incorporate into my tendering work.

I intend to develop a web site that will profile my work and have started to work with my design colleague, Jon Barraclough, revisiting the original branding work we did in 2004 and seeking to create a web based platform that will allow the sharing of learning and the development of a community of interest.

When working as a consultant, I have concluded that what is lacking in role, status and public acknowledgement is more than compensated by the gains. Pink (2010) argues that intrinsic motivation outweighs extrinsic rewards and suggests that for those inspired by intrinsic motivation the main "nutrients" are autonomy, mastery and purpose. People driven by this are self directed, devoted to becoming better and better at something that matters and connect that quest for excellence to a larger purpose. My role as a consultant provides me with these things.

Csikszentmihalyi (2003) stated: *"One cannot lead a life that is truly excellent without feeling that one belongs to something greater and more permanent than oneself."* This resonates with me. Fundamentally, my 'invisibility' as a consultant is underpinned by this sense of purpose. My commitment to working in the arts field has been a long one and I cannot ever envisage a time when I will not engage with what I love. I want to use my strengths and talents to make a difference in it that will last beyond my lifetime.

My autonomy and ability to work across boundaries to gain greater mastery and fulfil a more potent purpose inspires me. To lead without the formal authority invested in a role, to effect purposeful change and transform paradigms and landscapes, to make a difference for individuals, organisations and the field, to affect policy and to influence others: all of these things combine to make my work a great and precious privilege and I am now more appreciative of this privilege than I was prior to undertaking this professional doctorate.

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