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Citation: Bailey, Andrew and Harris, Kevin (2021) An autoethnographic study of realist knowledge translation within sport development. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 26 (1-2). pp. 41-59. ISSN 2375-0472

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1766376>
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/23750472.2020.1766376>>

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**An autoethnographic study of realist knowledge translation within
sport development**

**Submission for Special Issue: Community Sport Development: Managing Change
and Measuring Impact**

An autoethnographic study of realist knowledge translation within sport development

Purpose: This paper provides an autoethnographic account of the knowledge translation process taking place between an academic and a sports development practitioner, regarding mobilising a realist approach to sport development practice.

Approach: The paper provides autoethnographic accounts of the knowledge translation process from academic and practitioner point of view. Utilising the active voice allowed both authors to recreate and reflect on their experiences of the knowledge translation process which took place, applying the model put forward by Clavier, Sénéchal, Vibert and Potvin (2012).

Findings: This paper reveals that knowledge translation is neither linear, immediate, or guaranteed to be long lasting. The findings demonstrate how the power dynamics within the knowledge translation relationship changed over time. Moreover, the reflections demonstrate the impact of mobilising realist practices within sport development.

Practical Implications: Highlighting the importance of academics building relationships with key industry stakeholders such as managers and policy makers, the paper reveals that sustainable knowledge translation can only take place if it is done on an organisational level.

Research Contribution: Based on the reflections, a model has been produced, demonstrating how knowledge translation manifests itself. The model demonstrates that not one form of knowledge (academic or industry) should be privileged, along with demonstrating the intersection of the two camps.

Keywords: boundary spanning; capacity building; collaboration; knowledge translation; realist evaluation

Introduction

Within sport management and sport development (SD) there has been growing discussion over the last fifteen years concerning the lack of evidence discourse within the field (Coalter, 2007; Harris, 2018; Harris & Adams, 2016; Nicholls, Giles & Sethna, 2011). This discourse has focused consistently on the evangelical claims made about the power of sport to address social issues. This evangelism has subsequently made it very hard for Monitoring and Evaluation (M+E) practices in the field to evidence these claims, in addition to limited practitioner involvement in M+E practices. Whilst ‘participatory’ methods (approaches that involve practitioners in collaboration) exist across the globe, too often they involve academics or consultants parachuting into contexts that do not fully embrace local knowledge (Lindsey & Gratton, 2012) or involve local actors on the ground.

However, at the same time there exists significant gaps in practitioner Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in M+E. As Adams and Harris (2014) state, much evaluative practice in the field mainly extends to monitoring numbers and tracking progress in a technocratic age (Chouinard, 2013). This is despite most person specifications for SD roles requiring excellent competencies in evidencing impact and change. Yet to understand and impact change a practitioner needs to understand complexity and that not all interventions have the same effect for everyone. Moreover, much of the evaluation that takes place focuses on the outcomes and the impacts of the programme opposed to the processes and reasonings on behalf of agents that lead to them. This has subsequently led to significant calls within academic circles for more theory driven approaches to evaluation (Coalter, 2007; Harris, 2018) highlighting the importance of context and causality for understanding how and why change takes place.

Of the wide array of theory driven approaches to programme development and evaluation available, a number of authors (Chen, 2018; Harris, 2018 amongst others) have recently advocated the use of Pawson and Tilley's (1997) 'Realist Evaluation' within sport development because it attempts to make sense of what works for whom in specific circumstances and why. At the heart of realist approaches to programme development and evaluation is the intention to question: 'what is it about our programme that may bring about change?' These are all relevant issues and questions at the centre of SD given that the causality we see in these programmes is often hidden requiring deeper exploration (Bell & Daniels, 2018). Realist approaches are new to the SD field but they hold potential with their capacity to make sense of how and why programmes are working appreciating the role that context plays in influencing any capacity for change in a programme (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Westhorp, 2014).

However, a key question underpinning this paper is how do we introduce realist thinking into SD practices so that it does not become another approach forced upon practitioners where the views of power brokers (e.g. funders, academics and policy level decision makers are privileged (Nichols et al., 2011; Harris, 2018; Harris & Adams, 2016; Kay, 2009). This is important for realist evaluation because much of its existence and contribution has emerged from the context of academia. How can practitioners mobilise realist thinking in their own programmes and how can the practitioner and academic relationship be enhanced?

In this paper we explore the three-way knowledge translation process which took place between the two authors of this paper (Kevin, an academic; and Andrew, as a sports practitioner, who was formerly a student of Kevin's) within a SD context of a local National Governing Body (NGB). Specifically, Andrew as the practitioner had previously taken part in a realist M+E training programme at his institution of study

which sought to build student practitioners capacity to carry out realist programme development and evaluation in their own sport for development (SfD) programmes (see Harris, 2018). This then led to Andrew mobilising realist approaches in his own professional practice having secured a full-time position at a local NGB.

The concept of knowledge translation is central to our discussion here which Schailleé, Spaaij, Jeanes and Theeboom (2019) consider as a dynamic process of interactions between stakeholders to accelerate research outcomes. Within their paper Schailleé et al. applied Clavier, Sénéchal, Vibert and Potvin's (2012) model of knowledge translation, focusing on the three practices of translation: cognitive, strategic, and logistical. Cognitive translation refers to the meanings and content of the research, for example, is there a shared vision for research? Strategic translation involves raising and maintaining partner interest in the research, and logistical translation regards the coordination and organisation of the knowledge translation process. These aspects of Clavier et al.'s model were relatable to our context given that the cognitive, strategic and logistical aspects were very pertinent in the knowledge exchange process. By also implementing Clavier et al.'s model in our own contexts, we reflect, on our experiences throughout our own personal knowledge translation process and how this all intersected with the context of the organisation where the work was being applied. We also propose our own knowledge translation model combining the current literature base with our own experiences.

Moreover, this paper is unique in that it is underpinned by an autoethnographic approach, with the aim of recreating the experience of both authors in a reflexive way (Méndez, 2013). By taking an active voice approach through autoethnography, it allowed for us to intimately communicate the complexities of our experiences in such a

way which the passive voice would not allow, connecting the personal to the cultural (Cooper, Grenier & Macaulay, 2017; McIlveen, 2008; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

Before proceeding, it is important to briefly draw a distinction between SD and sport for development (SfD). The case study provided in this paper, refers to Andrew's traditional SD role and traditional SD projects focused on increasing and improving participation, ultimately focusing on development *of* sport. Linked, but different to SD is SfD, which places emphasis on development *through* sport, focusing on wider social objectives and using sport as a tool, for human development (Houlihan & White, 2002). This paper draws reference to a number of merited examples from both categories.

Conceptualising knowledge translation within sport development

According to Schailleé et al. (2019, p. 2) knowledge translation is the process of: “exchange, synthesis, and application of knowledge through a dynamic and iterative process of interactions between relevant stakeholders to accelerate the societal or economic impact of research”. Despite the many benefits associated with the knowledge translation process, examples within sports management and SD remain limited, and the concept itself is yet to be fully understood (Schailleé et al., 2019). It is argued that: “academic knowledge continues to be privileged, but also ignored” (Houlihan, 2012, cited in Adams & Harris, 2014, p. 144). As a result, seldom does knowledge translation take place within the SD context. Whilst there have been studies into knowledge translation in other sectors, particularly health (see Clavier et al., 2012; Graham et al., 2006; Greenhaigh & Wieringa, 2011; Mckibbon et al., 2010; Oborn, Barrett & Racko, 2013), there remains a need to observe and understand the effectiveness of knowledge translation (Clavier et al., 2012).

Issues concerning knowledge translation have been prevalent for some time across multiple sectors. More broadly speaking, Cairney and Oliver (2018) have

problematised the knowledge translation issue by referring to multiple factors representing impasses in the area. Cairney and Oliver particularly highlight barriers to academic impact because of over academic and jargonised reports which rarely fail to influence policy makers who require more simple language in shortened forms. This is compounded by bounded rationality whereby policy makers may find it hard to separate facts from ideology. He points out that to be successful with our evidence we need to blur the lines between policy maker and researcher. Whilst Cairney and Oliver's analysis centres more upon the macro level influence there are key similarities to how this issue manifests itself in SD practice whereby too often reports or evaluations are produced for practitioners and programmes, yet they are shelved because of perhaps their jargon and length which fail to inform future practice.

This is of course exacerbated by the level of participation practitioners have in knowledge translation practices, particularly in collaborative approaches to evaluation (Shulha, Whitmore, Cousins, Gilbert & Hudib, 2016). Within the SfD field Spaaij, Schulenkorf, Jeanes and Oxford (2018) articulate the need to focus on power, participation and reflexivity in participatory and collaborative approaches to research involving researchers and local actors. In relation to power, they assert the need to shift the role of the researcher away from the title of director or evaluator, towards facilitator or collaborator (Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). In a participatory sense they question to what extent all people involved in the research process are really involved and how active they are. As such they promote the need for deep opposed to shallow participation to avoid the subjugation of participants. They then assert that reflexivity is rarely practiced which broadly refers to: "an understanding of the knowledge-making enterprise, including ...the subjective, institutional, social, and political processes whereby research is conducted and knowledge is produced" (Alvesson, 2007, p. 498).

Clavier et al. (2012) identify three practices of knowledge translation within participatory research: cognitive, strategic, and logistical. These practices are identified with the acknowledgement that a balance in power relations, along with a two-way translation process are vital for effective knowledge translation to take place. Further developing Clavier et al.'s model, Schailleé et al., (2019) identify a number of specific practices to assist with effective knowledge translation. Strategic translation practices which seek to raise and maintain interest and commitment include: co-design; events to build a communal identity between researchers and practitioners; utilising different dissemination platforms; and adapting research products to ensure that research is presented in a way which engages practitioners and other key stakeholders. Three sets of cognitive practices are identified: linkage and exchange activities; the assembling of knowledge; and evaluation tools. Finally, three logistical practices which enable knowledge translation to take place throughout the different research phases from design to post project are outlined: boundary spanning in regards to bridging boundaries between researchers and practitioners; reconciling time scale problems that occur due to different agendas between researcher and practitioner; and policy outreach. In addition to these specific practices, Schailleé et al., (2019) also identify a list of enablers and constraints, framed around the individual, organisation, and external contexts. It is important to highlight however that knowledge translation is not the linear and mechanical process that reading the literature can often lead one to believe. Knowledge translation is rather: “the skilled crafting of cognitive, strategic and logistic practices that interweave the values, interests and ideas of each partner” (Clavier et al., 2012, p. 802).

The potential for realist evaluation in SD

Realist evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) is becoming routinely used within public health, and social care evaluations, and holds significant promise in exploring how and why sport and physical activity programmes work to produce certain outcomes (Harris, 2018; Pawson, 2013). This is distinct from conventional outcome focused evaluations that provide insight into programme outcomes and impacts but are unable to link specific outcomes to the programme itself. Realist evaluation takes into consideration the importance of ‘context’ (as in the social, environmental and personal circumstances that may lead and influence people to make certain decisions). This is crucial within any social change programme, which will involve the interaction of human decision making and structural conditions with programme resources (mechanisms of change). Realist evaluation gets to the bottom of how participants reason towards the resources provided in a programme to establish ‘what worked for whom, in what circumstances and why’ (Dalkin, Greenhalgh, Jones, Cunningham & Lhussier, 2015; Westhorp, 2014). This understanding can support learning, improvement and strategic direction towards sustainability. A key tool used in realist evaluation is the Context Mechanism Outcome configuration (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) depicted as follows:

-C= what conditions are in place for a project to trigger mechanisms to produce outcome patterns?

-M= what is it about a project that may lead it to have a particular outcome pattern in a given context (for example, how do resources intersect with participants beliefs, reasoning, attitudes, ideas and opportunities?).

-O= what are the practical effects produced by causal mechanisms being triggered in a

given context?

This realist informed thinking is valuable to the SD sector given that the majority of SD programmes are a process of change. These processes of change do not manifest themselves in the same way for everyone and no programme will work the same in different environments (Pawson, 2013). Moreover, SD programmes can create change but these changes and outcomes need to be understood by the activation of hidden causal mechanisms (Dalkin et al., 2015) that help us to explain programme outcomes. This explanation of programme outcome is seldom done in SD whereby the vast sum of outcomes are there in our evaluations yet with a limited story behind their emergence. Despite the rationale presenting itself for realist evaluation, its application within the SD field is limited, and could, arguably be explored more (Chen, 2018).

Background to study: the knowledge translation context

Academic context

Prior to becoming an academic I had previously occupied roles within the sport management sector. My first role was a Sport Development Officer and I then moved into the voluntary sector managing a SD programme. During my time as a practitioner I engaged in M+E practices, however, I soon realised when I entered academia full time that this was very superficial. In essence much of what I had been doing was simply monitoring practices, tracking information and collecting registers. In addition to this, I noticed that the curriculum I was teaching barely touched upon the role of evidence in sport and community development settings.

It was at this point through embarking on my own PhD that I was passionate about building M+E concepts into my curriculum. As a result, I constructed a ‘realist’ informed M+E framework built upon Pawson and Tilley’s (1997) work designed to

support my students (Andrew who was one of many) carrying out M+E in their community projects (see Harris, 2018). In essence these projects were designed and delivered by the students over a two-year period and aimed to use sport and/or physical activity as a tool to address a wider social issue. At the heart of the framework was my intention to encourage my students as practitioners to think consciously and realistically about their projects, and not to over inflate the power of sport in an evangelist sense (Coalter, 2007).

It is on this backdrop that I devised the following framework underpinned by realist programme theory development and evaluation that I introduced over two specific phases of delivery to Andrew and his fellow students. These are briefly outlined below.

The first part of the framework focuses on the development of the project and consists of three stages underpinning programme theory development. The first stage consisted of what Funnell and Rogers (2011) refer to as situational analysis exploring what is going on within the specific context of the intended intervention, identifying knowledge of previous interventions that may have run, and establishing the needs of those in the community (in a bottom up sense). This contextual awareness (at the heart of Pawson and Tilley's epistemology) informs the second stage where key specific outcomes can be identified and clearly aligned with what is really needed and achievable. This stage is particularly resonant with Coalter's (2013) critique of programmes of this kind embodying broad gauge programme with hard to follow outcomes. Stage three intends to explore how and why and for whom my students' projects could achieve their intended outcomes. This stage mobilises Dalkin et al.'s (2015) CMMO heuristic whereby students consider how the resources in their project

are released into a context (mechanism resource), and then reasoned against (mechanism reasoning) to explain the outcomes.

The second phase ‘programme theory testing’ involved me supporting the students to mobilise realist evaluation as part of their M+E. This was an iterative process where I helped them to develop evaluation questions, decide on appropriate methods to answer these questions with a realist underpinning for making sense of what it was about their projects that would lead to certain outcomes.

[Figure 1 near here]

Aside from the curriculum and in connection with the knowledge translation process for this paper, I encouraged the students (Andrew included) to think about their professional practice and to what extent they saw themselves mobilising this in their future practice.

Practitioner context

Having graduated from Kevin’s course in July 2016, I was employed by a County Football Association (CFA) which can be considered as a local National Governing Body, in that it receives money from the Football Association to develop and deliver grassroots football provision within the locality of a county. My role as Referee Development Officer (RDO) can be described as: recruiting, retaining and developing referees.

During my 28 months as RDO at the CFA I utilised Kevin’s framework for four different projects: a local development programme; a school engagement programme; a project engaging with a deprived BAME population; and a Talent ID development programme which fed into the national FA programme. These projects were unique in that no other projects delivered within the CFA were underpinned by a realist approach.

Rather, most projects were designed and implemented with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) being the main focus. I saw an opportunity whereby projects within the CFA underpinned by realism, would lead to a better understanding in regard to the complexities of how and why wider outcomes came about through projects being delivered by the CFA. Thus, I hoped that in time and through the knowledge translation process between myself, Kevin, and the CFA, that the CFA would be able to better understand the significance of mechanisms within the projects delivered across the organisation.

Methodology

In this paper, we as the authors use autoethnography to provide accounts of how the knowledge translation process occurred. Autoethnography is defined as “an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). McMahon (2016) suggests autoethnography should be viewed as a creative analytical practice. Whilst autobiographical in nature, autoethnography is not simply a subjective autobiographical account of a researcher's experiences (Hodge & Sharp, 2016). Rather, key features of an autoethnography include: “rigorous critical reflection and review through an ethnographic lens, and, importantly, an analysis of cultural practices that serves to offer additional breadth and depth to a case study” (Hodge & Sharp, 2016, p. 69). Anderson (2006) draws a distinction between the two main types of autoethnographic approaches; analytical and evocative. The analytical approach is directed more towards objective writing and analysis, compared to the more introspection, emotive and free form styled ways of the evocative approach (Méndez, 2013). The architecture of the analytical autoethnography approach rests on four pillars: group membership, textual visibility the author(s); reflexivity; and theoretical relevance

(Anderson, 2006; McCree, 2018). As this paper is committed to developing a better understanding of the theory and practice of knowledge translation within the SD sector, through our experiences and accounts, in line with Anderson's (2006) recommendation, we take an analytical autoethnography approach. Moreover, a collaborative autoethnography approach is taken, allowing for us both to interconnect and combine our experiences, allowing for sense to be made both individually and collectively (McMahonn, 2016).

Undertaking an autoethnographic approach has a number of benefits. McMahonn (2016) draws reference to a number of these associated benefits stated within the existing literature: assists the readers in seeing the actual world more clearly (Sparkes, 1999); enables the author(s) to display multiple levels of consciousness (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Sparkes, 2003); the author(s) have opportunities to be critically reflexive in a way the passive voice does not allow for (Hickey & Austin, 2007; McMahan & Penney, 2011); and the genre is open to a vast range of styles and usages, which in turn contributes to the account being more easily understood across diverse audiences (Allen-Collinson, 2012). Moreover, since the researcher cannot hide behind the illusion of objectivity, the scope for more emotive and passionate accounts with real meaning is greater with autoethnography (Pelias, 2004).

However, autoethnography is not a common research methodology within sports and leisure studies. According to Holt (2003, p. 25) this is partly down to the "academic suspicion" of autoethnography, due to contravening with certain qualitative research traditions. This has remained the case with few studies focusing on roles within sport such as administrators/support staff (Cooper et al., 2017) as this paper pertains to so.

Therefore, when considering whether to use autoethnography, we considered how we could justify and legitimise such an alien and suspicious approach within the

field of sports development academia (Hughes & Pennington, 2017b, chapter 4). The foundation of this study was reliant on both of us studying ourselves inwardly; in its most simple form autoethnography is the study of the self (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Moreover, by undertaking autoethnography, it allowed for flexibility in how we positioned ourselves in regards to social, cultural, and political contexts, which tend to be off limits to traditional empirical; approaches (Hughes & Pennington, 2017a, chapter 1).

Another concern that we were aware of was how to ensure our data and results were seen as valid and an accurate reflection. As with other research methods, triangulation can be used for autoethnographic studies to enhance the reader's confidence in the credibility of interpretations and arguments (Rodriguez, Shofer, Harter & Clark, 2018). We were able to triangulate our data from our internal interviews by sharing our individual data with one another to confirm or correct any memories which had been misremembered. Moreover, we also shared our data with an independent individual, familiar with our contexts being a practitioner and academic himself, to verify our narratives and offer insight to benefit the overall process. In addition to our internal interviews, we also analysed documentation which demonstrated how Andrew applied the realist framework over time, which again added another layer of much needed rigour for our autoethnographic accounts.

In terms of data collection, we utilised internal interviewing, supported by previous project documentation, ensuring the questions we asked ourselves and the project documentation exemplified critical reflexivity (Rodriguez et al., 2017). Out of the four types of reflexivity outlined by Dowling (2006), our understanding and application of reflexivity embraced the feminist standpoint whereby emphasis is placed on the research-participant relationship; we were both and our paper revolves around

our relationship, whereby we were able to use our own experiences and reflections to illuminate important meaning. Rather than viewing the intimacy of this relationship as problematic, we felt that this strengthened our data and final analysis in terms of triangulating our data (Dowling, 2008). Whilst “collecting internal data is the sine qua non of autoethnographic research” (Rodriguez et al., 2017, pp. 8-9), it was important to uphold academic rigour. Thus, writing down initial thoughts may have been a start, but to be of interest to anyone the account needs to be told well and contain a theoretical/analytical point (Learmonth & Humphreys, 2016). In order to achieve this we applied our internal data results to Clavier et.al’s model (2012), whereby we shifted away from the emic narrative data, towards a more rigorous and reflexive etic exploratory analysis of our data (Rodriguez et al., 2018). One of the challenges of moving from narrative to analysis was recognising that as we were the researched and the researchers there would be elements of subjectivity within our data coding and final analysis. Moreover, like Reyes, Carales & Sansone (2020), we found that our processes for data collection and data analysis were intertwined. Therefore it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where our data collection ended and our data analysis began.

In order to develop and maintain a suitable level of academic rigor, whilst embracing the philosophy associated with autoethnography, we used the criteria outlined by Richardson (2000) regarding reviewing personal narrative papers. In addition to Richardson’s criteria we also followed O’Hara’s (2018) step by step process of writing an autoethnographic account. It is hoped that by following Richardson’s criteria and O’Hara’s step by step process that this autoethnographic account provides a credible and unique reflexive insight into the knowledge translation process within the SD industry.

Analysis

We will now provide an analysis and reflection of the knowledge translation process from our own contexts within the industry and within the university environment. We do this with Clavier et al.'s model (2012) in mind, drawing reference to the three practices of translation: cognitive, strategic, and logistical. We conclude by summarising and comparing the two reflections, proposing our own knowledge translation model which combines the current literature base with our own experiences.

Practitioner analysis

Cognitive: a shared vision?

Having started my role as RDO in July 2016, it was not until the spring of 2017 whereby I first reached out to Kevin to discuss implementing his framework in some of my work. A reason for this time gap may have been that I was conservative in my approach during the first six months of being in post, trying to gain a better understanding of the context I was working in and how I could innovate in various areas. Equally, I may have questioned the value Kevin could give me beyond our student-lecturer relationship. At this point I did not expect our relationship to develop beyond our lecturer and student relationship which had ended in the summer of 2016.

Despite this, come the spring of 2017, having produced a project proposal which I would submit as part of a funding application, pleased with my work, I wanted to show Kevin how I was using his framework and ask whether he could give me any feedback on it. I distinctly remember Kevin replying back to me saying in an email: "what a wonderful exposition". Remembering this comment demonstrates the significance and impact of this initial logistical exchange between, no longer student and lecturer, but between practitioner and academic. Not only did this exchange form

the basis of our new relationship and scope for knowledge translation, it also provided me with the confidence to share my work with colleagues and the industry, having previously not done so. Thus, it became clear at this point that from a cognitive aspect that we shared a similar vision for implementing the framework within the sports and leisure sector. However, as I proceed to reflect, I struggled with linkage and exchange activities to generate a shared vision with colleagues and stakeholders within my role at the CFA.

Strategic facilitation: individually and organisationally

The exchange reported upon above also acted as a strategic exchange, whereby Kevin used the opportunity to raise my interest within the knowledge translation process along with the beginning of actual two way knowledge translation, rather than what could be considered as the knowledge transfer process as the student and lecturer relationship provided. I was now fully on board and applying Kevin's framework within the industry.

However, when sharing my realist project plans and conceptualisations regarding the school and BAME engagement projects, it became clear to me that those who held power in terms of line management and funding did not fully understand the significance and benefits of utilising the realist framework. For example, internally within the CFA I was very rarely provided with any meaningful feedback regarding the project framework which I had outlined. The perception I developed was one where colleagues did not understand the work I was producing but I was being harmless enough so could just get on with it. The BAME engagement project provided one of my main frustrations with the culture of the industry in regard to applying for funding. Having spent significant time conceptualising and developing programme theories for

the project, it was at the time frustrating and disappointing to be asked to condense and adapt this work into a one page sheet outlining what the project was, what funding was required, and how the funding would be used. This annoyed me as I did not feel that colleagues and stakeholders appreciated the time, effort and significance of the project proposals and the added value they provided. However, on reflection, this is an understandable response that I received.

[Figure 2 near here]

What I learned from this experience was the importance of presentation of project plans. I realised that in order to facilitate ‘buy in’ and understanding from colleagues and external stakeholders, I needed to shift away from Kevin’s academic framework, specifically in regards to the presentation of programme theories and move towards a more practitioner and industry friendly framework which would conform more to industry expectations and understanding (Cairney & Oliver, 2018; Schailleé et al., 2019). However, on reflection, rather than shifting away, I continued to apply the framework, but instead started to implicitly apply the academic principles. In essence this process can be described not as shifting away, but as adaptation and on the job improvisation.

As my time as RDO went on, I spent more time considering how I could adapt the framework to engage with more stakeholders within the industry. This occurred during my project conceptualisation and development of my final project, which was a Talent ID development programme, with initial conceptualisation taking place during the late spring of 2018. On reflection, during this time I became more empowered and confident in the relationship between Kevin and myself. Evidence of this included my proposals for adapting the framework in a way which would be more industry friendly. Kevin welcomed the discussions around these adaptations and supported me with them,

contributing to strategic co-design between the two of us. This made me feel valued and on a more equal footing with Kevin in terms of our knowledge translation relationship. Moreover, our shared vision for the realist framework continued to become clearer and stronger to us both.

For this final project, known as CFA CORE, a similar process outlined by Kevin's framework was completed in terms of the first stage (developing the project, identifying outcomes, and for whom). The programme theories were still designed using the realist CMMO framework provided by Kevin. What differed compared to the other projects was how I designed and presented these programme theories. Having understood how better to engage with colleagues and external stakeholders, I ensured the programme theories were designed and presented in a way which would stand a greater chance of being understood. To assist with ensuring that I did not lose the realist meaning and application, I met with Kevin to discuss my ideas and he provided me with positive feedback and gave me some additional helpful thoughts on the use of terminology. Moreover, for this project I had regular conversations with my line manager about what we wanted to achieve in this project and discussions around how we would do that and what would be feasible. This assisted in me developing the programme theories for this project. These exchanges with my line manager certainly helped secure funding from the CEO, as he had bought in to the project and could see how it would shape and operate. The programme theories formed part of an organisational formatted project proposal document, which also contained budgetary and sustainability information; significant areas for the organisation. Ultimately the project was agreed, and we received the required funding from the CEO, making it the department's most significant project from a financial aspect. Comparing the diagram below with the previous programme theory diagram for the BAME engagement project,

demonstrates the way in which my presentation of the programme theories strategically changed during my time at the CFA.

[Figure 3 near here]

Logistical: enabling the knowledge translation process

From a logistical point of view, Kevin provided me with opportunities to share and present my experiences at knowledge translation workshops which involved both academics and practitioners. This empowered me further and balanced the power relations between the two of us as it gave me the feeling that what I was doing was worthwhile and that Kevin could see the value in the process, and the impact it could have more widely within the sector.

In regard to enabling the knowledge translation process to progress from myself to the CFA as an organisation, I could have been more proactive in this. On reflection, to improve the knowledge translation within the CFA, I could have undertaken a number of strategies including: making more effort to develop meaningful and trustworthy relationships with colleagues across the organisation; including colleagues in the process of project conceptualisation, making them feel valued and see how the realist framework was used. This would have further developed and enhanced my role as a boundary spanner leading to greater cultural influence within the organisation (Jeanes, Spaaij, Penney & O'Connor, 2019). If I had done this then the realist approach may have been utilised by members of staff across the organisation and I would have not become frustrated by the stagnate technocratic culture. Certainly, there was a lot of crossover with the strategic and logistical dimensions of Clavier et al.'s model, however from my experiences, without a positive logistical dimension, cognitive and strategic knowledge translation is unlikely to be effective. Therefore, if I was to go through this

process again, I would make a greater effort of investing time in developing meaningful relationships with staff members, to allow more meaningful knowledge translation to take place.

Academic analysis

Cognitive capacity or subjugated application?

Over the last six years I have introduced programme theory development and evaluation to well over two hundred students. As stated previously, my main intention has always been to encourage my students as practitioners to occupy a realist lens which is what I believe (along with others: Bell & Daniels, 2018; Chen, 2018) to be the appropriate approach for addressing the multiple complexities within SD. Throughout these experiences I have been more than aware that the extent to which they would continue to mobilise realist programme development and evaluation further down the line would be variable. Based on my previous work (Harris, 2018) some would be more motivated than others to take it on and the contexts in which they would seek to apply the approaches would be a major factor. In regard to Andrew, he was a very competent student and someone who I felt could take the approach on. However, I was still unsure as to whether this could happen especially given the context of the industry and particularly the institutional practices of the CFA.

Throughout mine and Andrew's relationship I have always been reflexive about the power dynamics and to what extent practitioners are subjugated (Nichols et al., 2011) in the development and evaluation of programmes. For example, did I feel that Andrew would take this on in an empowered sense or a subjugated one? As the journey went on the answer to this question became ever clearer and it felt that in accordance

with Spaaij et al.'s (2018) analysis of power, that my role was more of a collaborator with Andrew opposed to someone who simply directed him and decided everything.

I believe that one of the key reasons for this centred upon the shared approach we established in the curriculum at Andrew in developing realist programme theory and evaluative methods. This collaborative environment was fostered around the eight principles of collaborative approaches to evaluation (CAE) set forth by Shulha et al. (2016) which as examples focus on: motivation for collaboration; fostering inter professional relationships; developing a shared understanding of the programme; fostering use; and developing evaluative thinking. There is not enough space here to go into each of these principles (see Harris, 2020) but these principles were key for building Andrew's capacity to mobilise realist thinking when he was in the curriculum and then outside it working in the CFA. For example, it was clear that there was an increased sense of evaluative thinking and critical consciousness in Andrew about how programmes were developed within the field of SD and then evaluated. Andrew was passionate throughout the whole process in trying to communicate the realist message of how and why things may work in social innovation programmes because I felt that he believed in the importance in making sense of context in programmes, and the ways in which certain mechanisms activate in practice to produce outcomes.

This shared vision was also facilitated by the tools and resources Andrew had at his disposal to apply realist thinking. As Andrew has highlighted above, his application of the framework extended as far as programme theory development. Nevertheless, the first phase of the framework enabled him to apply realist thinking in the form of the CMMO within his work which he has demonstrated in the previous sections. This application and embodying of the approach was evident when he showcased this at the Realist Co-Production Exchange Conference delivered at Solent University,

Southampton in 2018, where Andrew presented his application within industry to academics and those who worked in the SD field. Andrew reflected deeply at this conference regarding the value of the approach. He highlighted that the CMMO heuristic as devised by Pawson and Tilley (1997) and then adapted by Dalkin et al. (2015) was a valuable formula for identifying the generative causal processes, but at the same time challenging for others to understand. This coheres with Andrew's reflection above where he states that he soon needed to adapt the framework for his context so that it had a greater chance for being recognised. This was a key learning point for me as an academic to consider how tools such as my framework may need to be better simplified in practice. Moreover, it may well be that more informal linkage and exchange activities need to be established to explain these specific tools in more depth to people. Whilst Andrew's cognitive application and motivation was sound, within his own organisation this was not the case. Thus, if informal workshops (delivered by myself and Andrew) were delivered in the CFA context, perhaps Andrew may have had better success in others understanding it and embedding these tools moving forward. This is discussed further in the next section.

In summary, this critical cognitive consciousness surrounding the realist framework was clearly evident within the knowledge exchange process between the two of us. However, there were limits to how these tools and cognitive recognition was fostered amongst his stakeholders within the CFA context. This was further apparent in itself in Andrew's eventual departure from the CFA, due in part because he felt that the technocratic outcome driven culture (Chouinard, 2013) could not be challenged or changed.

Strategic facilitation and resolving barriers?

In accordance with Clavier et al.'s strategic dimension they highlight the importance of

co-design, dissemination and industry stakeholders in knowledge translation. This, then also links to their third dimension of logistics which refers to coordination and organisation in knowledge translation processes. These dimensions of Clavier et al.'s model were all pertinent in mine and Andrew's knowledge translation experience. Strategically there are two key points to be made about the level of co-design present within our context. The first point to make is that I felt the degree of co-design was at its highest when Andrew was working with me in the curriculum and it was only when he came to me after six months of being at the CFA that this began to manifest itself again. By this point Andrew had already encountered his challenges for mobilising the realist approaches which leads to my second point of their being limitations of co-design taking place between me, Andrew, and those actually within his organisation.

Whilst I was impressed with the independence Andrew showed to try and break through the institutional barriers of the CFA to try and implement realist 'thinking', there are a number of things I would do differently in the future now having reflected upon Clavier et al.'s strategic and logistical dimensions. Firstly, by being involved with Andrew earlier on in the process may have helped him to strategically assess the context of the CFA and where his ideas could fit, identifying opportunities and threats, potential dissemination platforms and key cultural intermediaries who we may have been able to influence. This would have been key strategically, especially as he was very new into the role, and had to establish himself. This strategic mapping of the context may have provided more scope logistically where I may have been able to help him establish a logistical timeline for how the realist approaches of my framework could be mobilised and to what degree. As Andrew has highlighted in this paper, a key challenge for him was securing 'buy in' from key members of staff to believe in the approach. He may well have had greater success on this level if I stood closer by him by contributing to the

different dissemination channels which I have already touched upon in the previous section. Attending meetings and promoting the realist message in collaboration to influence those within the positions of power, may have acted as a suitable environment to foster some of the CAE principles which are cognitively applied in the previous section. For example, Andrew himself may have had greater success and ‘buy in’ if he was able to establish motivation for collaboration from his colleagues, explain the methods behind his thinking, and foster evaluative thinking and curiosity amongst his colleagues. This could have been done with me there or in the distance as a critical friend.

It is here where the ‘boundary spanner’ (Jeanes et al., 2019) may offer value to influence knowledge transfer practices within and outside of organisations. As Jeanes et al. state, boundary spanners are dynamic people who possess knowledge of different contexts. These people are able to show an understanding of what is needed within an organisation but also influence thinking inside of it by instilling and disseminating knowledge in different ways. In a way, Andrew was a boundary spanner but it was too early for him to influence his thinking because of his juniority. It is my view that for innovative approaches like realism to have their influence, better strategic relationships need to be developed between academics and industry practitioners. Within the spirit of knowledge translation, there is major scope to create exchange activities whereby academics actually spend time (connected with their teaching or research) in industry. This should also be the case vice versa. It is then at this juncture that may lead to more positive logistical outcomes.

Despite some of these tensions, and barriers it was more than apparent that Andrew achieved a significant degree of success in embedding realist methodology within his role at the CFA. When Andrew did make contact, we discussed the issues he

was initially having. Clearly at that point Andrew's level of consciousness and improvisation had developed significantly to logistically put realist approaches in place. He presented to me how he had managed to embed realist programme theory within a number of documents connected to his work. Much of this application was more in line with the first part of my framework 'developing programme theory'. I was struck by how Andrew had embedded the CMMO configuration into these documents (one of which had secured additional CFA funding) in a creative way. As depicted in figure 3 Andrew had disguised the realist jargon of context, mechanism and outcome to phrases that were much more industry friendly. This for me demonstrated an implicit strategy of realist application by Andrew because he knew that it was very complicated for the stakeholders to understand, and in turn by breaking the terminology down he was still able to work at the levels of trying to understand the causality of his work. That above all is the main aspiration of realist thinking, to explain generative causality (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). I felt it was a contribution in itself to see this work illustrated within the context of the CFA (somewhere it had never been applied before) connected with operational work.

Summary and conclusions

To summarise, this paper through undertaking an autoethnographic approach has attempted to provide an active voice perspective of the knowledge translation process between Kevin (the academic) and Andrew (the practitioner) in regard to mobilising realist approaches in a SD context. By applying Clavier et al.'s framework (2012) of knowledge translation we have attempted to reflect upon some of the key cognitive, strategic and logistical dimensions.

It is evident from our reflections that there were many encouraging developments across the cognitive, strategic and logistical dimensions of our academic

and practitioner relationship whereby Andrew felt that he was able to take control and apply realist approaches to programme development in his own organisational context. Specifically, he was able to improvise and deal with barriers to his ideas being recognised by refining the framework he had intended to apply in practice. This led to a number of positive outcomes for achieving funding and actually making it into practice and documentation. This was also based on a sound meaningful inter-professional relationship (Shulha et al., 2016) between Andrew and Kevin where contact and collaboration extended way beyond the curriculum. What is also powerful is how the academic and student relationship became more reciprocal opposed to the one-way linear perception of knowledge translation. Whilst Kevin in the academic context had supplied Andrew with a context for the tools, in turn Andrew in his industry context was able to feed the reflexive learning of applying the framework principles back to Kevin for further refinement. This is crucial for knowledge translation processes to be effective and mutually beneficial.

However, in addition to the positive aspects outlined above, it is fair to say that Andrew found it a significant challenge to embed these practices and approaches more explicitly beyond his own remit within the organisational context of the CFA. Andrew left his role at the CFA in November 2018 and we are very sceptical that the realist approaches he applied, are now being used by others, therefore questioning the legacy and success of our example of knowledge translation from the academic world to industry practice. We have provided reasons for this within our reflections and there are lessons to learn here in how practitioners of the future mobilising what appear to be innovative methodologies can actually be mobilised in a field embroiled in technocratic practices. Whilst we have an academic field calling for more approaches like theory of change and the realist approach being mobilised, the cultural context for SD

organisations is one ultimately concerned with outcomes and measurable facts (Adams & Harris, 2014; Chouinard, 2013). This is problematic for those seeking to synthesise this outcome driven approach with more generative and complex ways for explaining outcomes and making sense of context (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). That, however, is not to say that this synthesis cannot be achieved. We would argue that one may still be able to focus on outcomes and indicators but still apply realist thinking to enhance the realisation of these goals.

Key recommendations moving forward focus on the importance of academics like Kevin building stronger links with industry stakeholders as boundary spanners so that new practitioners looking to mobilise approaches like his may be better welcomed providing a more welcoming context for new professionals. We have only touched upon this in this paper but building on and applying more collaborative approaches to programme development and evaluation (Shulha et al., 2016) may offer a contribution for establishing motivation for collaboration, fostering use and developing evaluative thinking amongst key stakeholders in a mutual way.

Having shared our reflections and evidenced the impact and success of the knowledge translation through Figures 2 and 3, we have produced a knowledge translation model, which based on our experiences demonstrates how knowledge translation manifests itself. The key to the model concerns how the knowledge ingrained in the two camps of industry practice and academia intersect. The model identifies that not one form of knowledge in one specific area should be favoured or privileged; this is demonstrated in how the power balance with our relationship shifted from lecturer-student to one of co-creation as academic and practitioner. Through the boundary spanning roles of the academic and the practitioner being able to occupy both environments, we may have some hope to influence a better synthesis of both camps to

enhance practice. There is much more to learn here in the knowledge translation environment. The model outlines a knowledge translation process which lasted four years. This demonstrates that meaningful and effective knowledge translation takes time to achieve not just on an organisational level, but also on an individual level.

[Figure 4 near here]

We hope that this model, based on our experiences as an academic and a practitioner and linked with Clavier et al.'s model, not only provides significant insight into knowledge translation processes within the SD context, but also gives an insight into how knowledge translation can manifest itself across a variety of fields and industries. Of course, this model is based on the context of a CFA and two individuals, therefore further research would be welcomed in exploring and comparing the similarities and differences of knowledge translation within different NGBs and SD organisations, along with organisations from different industries.

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