

AIM Capacity Building Workshop

Collaborative Academic Practitioner Research

Challenging *How we do* Research: Incorporating Rigour & Relevance

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Overview

- **What is practice and Why does it matter?**
- **Advancing Practice-Relevant Scholarship**
- **Delivering impact in management research**

Setting up the Agenda

- **We are all practitioners !**
- It is not what we do that matters. It is **how** and **why** we do what we do, in the ways we do it that **makes the difference.**
- Practices are a mirror of their creators – **we are our practice !**
- **Practices emerge from ideas** and ideas (like knowledge) are not solid objects we manipulate at will.
- Shifting our orientation from R&R towards **impact**

Exercise – Stage 1

Imagine ...

... if someone was studying our research practice what would they observe?

- What do we actually do when we do research?
- How does individual scholarly work on management and organization studies gets produced?
- What are the processes through which management research takes place?
- How do these practices determine the how our initial ideas get expanded, modified, discarded all together or eventually get published?
- The 'tools'/methods we use are only a glimpse into the rich array of aspects constituting our research practice?

What is Practice and Why does it matter?

The Questions We Ask...

- What is the added value of the concept of **practice** in understanding management and organization?
- What aspects of management and organization does the **practice** concept reveal that other concepts fail to bring to our attention?

The need to understand practice

- Practice as **action** (Bourdieu, 1990)
- Practice as **structure** (Turner, 1994)
- Practice as **activity system** (Engeström et al., 1984)
- Practice as **social context** (Lave & Wenger, 1991)
- Practice as **knowing** (Nicolini et al., 2003)
- Practice as **practising** (Antonacopoulou, 2008)

What is Practice?

What is NOT a practice?

- The opposite of theory
- A best way of acting
- Another word for culture - *the way we do things around here*
- An institution forcing institutionalisation & isomorphism

What could practice be?

- A means of integrating ideology and action (rhetoric and reality)
- A force supporting powerful connections in social interaction
- The ongoing experiences *formed, performed and transformed* as agents and structures trans-act

Practice (re)Defined

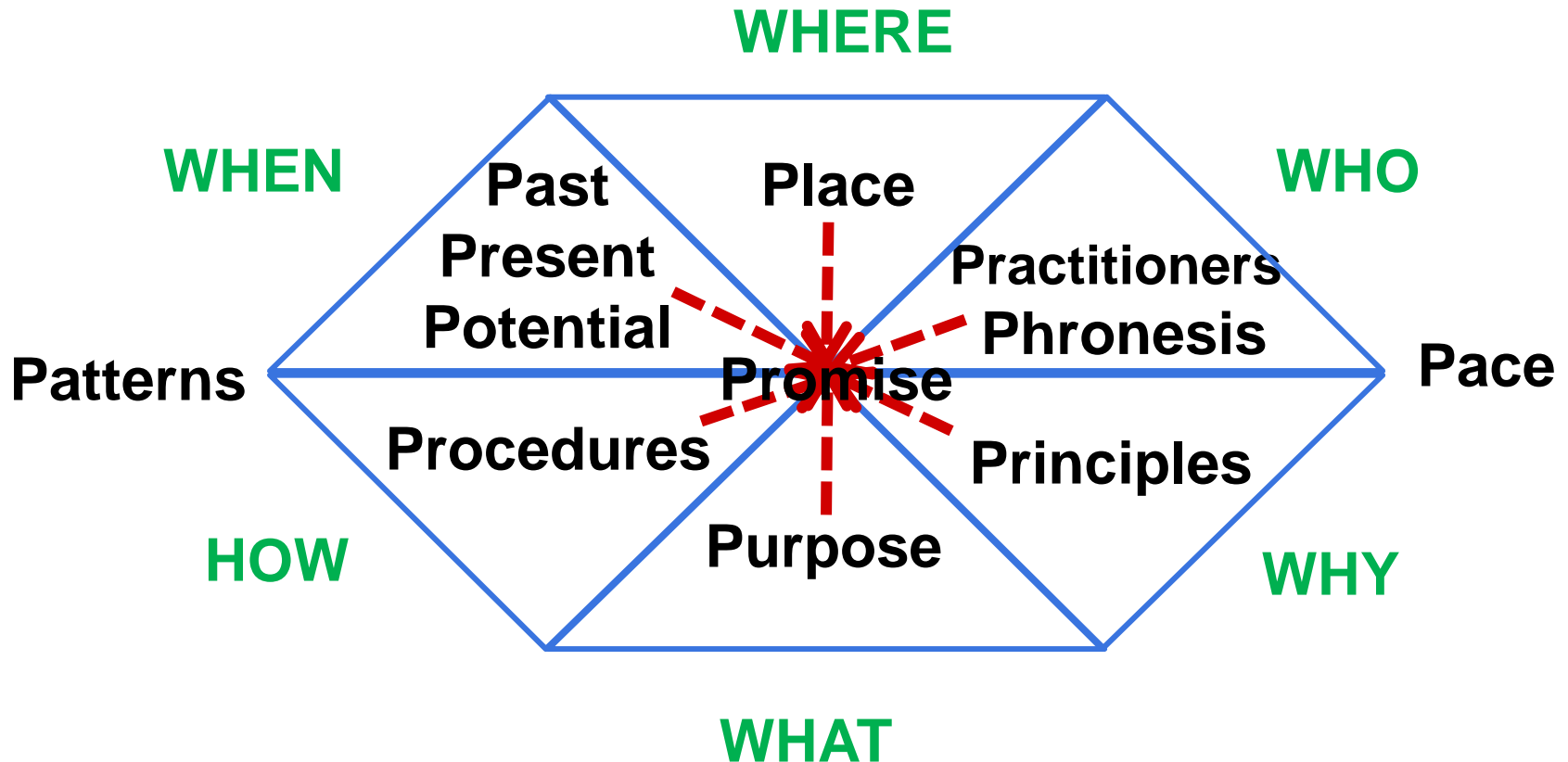
Practice is

the inter-connectivity between endogenous (intra-practice) and exogenous (inter-practice) forces, with *in-tentionality* to expand the space of possibility in the emerging internal and external goods

(Antonacopoulou, 2007; 2008)

Dynamics of Practice

12 Ps



PRACTISING

(Antonacopoulou, 2007; 2008)

Exercise – Stage 2

Play...

... with the various Ps of practice to account for different dimensions of your research practice.

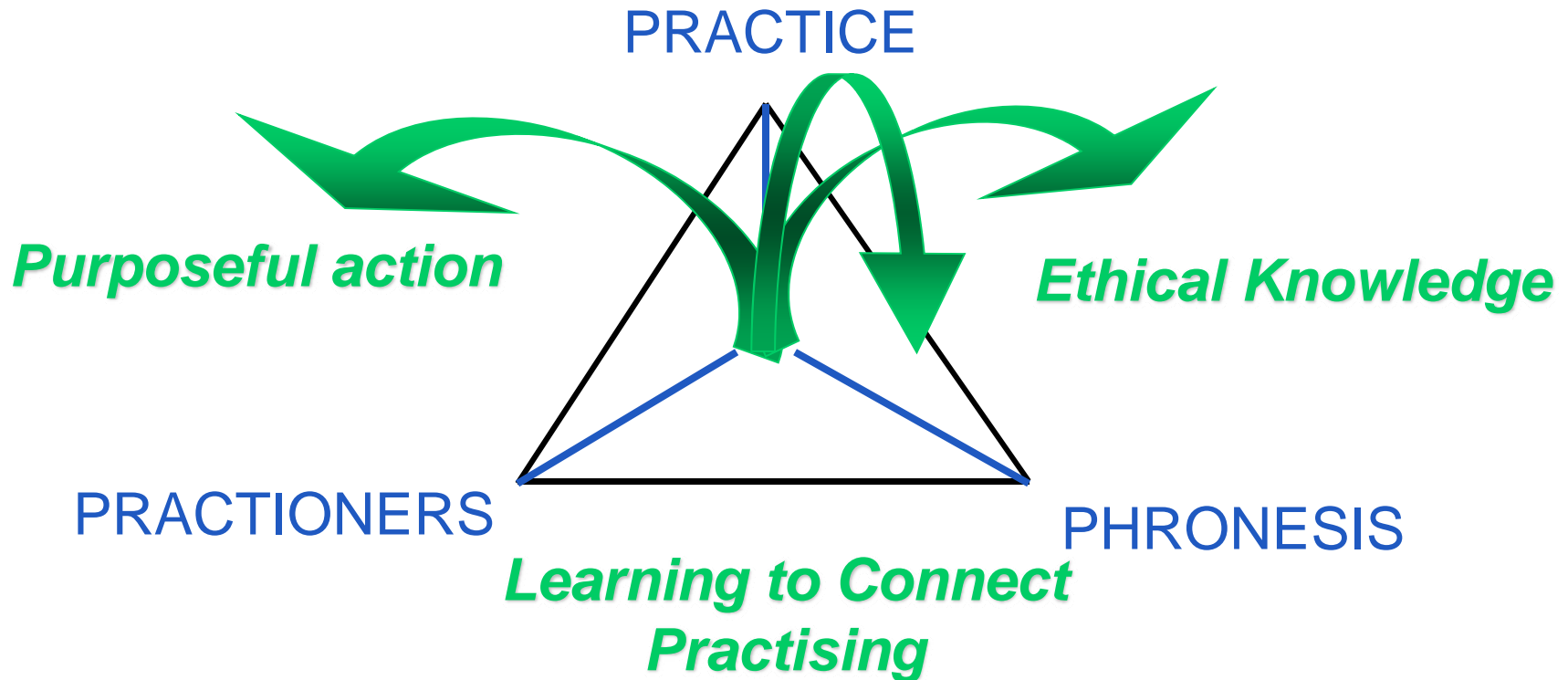
- What would be potential changes you would like to introduce to your research practice?
- What are the virtues of your scholarship?
- How can your research practice be also practice relevant?
- What are the promises of your research practice and are these delivered?
- Does it matter to you if your research has impact?
- What does impact mean to you?

Advancing Practice- Relevant Scholarship

The Rigour & Relevance Debate

- **A history of the debate** (Gulati, 2007)
 - The need for applicability of research and the effect on life in organisations
 - The need for rigorous investigation supported by sophisticated methods for data collection and analysis
- **The core problematic** (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006)
 - Knowledge transfer problem – inability or unwillingness to translate insights for practitioners
 - Relevant knowledge versus rigorous knowledge – epistemological and ontological distinctions
- **Who are we, and what are we here to do?**

Advancing Practice-Relevant Scholarship



Practice-relevant Scholarship is defined as that scholarship which embraces the potentialities to deliver impact across a range of communities through a relational engagement in re-search

(Antonacopoulou, 2010)

Delivering Impact

Why IMPACT, Why Now?

- **International Funding bodies** (RCUK, 2006; 2007; NSF, 2009)
- **Accreditation bodies** (AACSB, 2008)
- **EU initiatives** (TEEC, 2005)
- **Policy agenda initiatives by Governments (e.g. Finland - Lähteenmäki-Smith et al., 2006; Canada - Munn-Venn, 2006; UK - BERR, 2007)**
- **The Economic, Social and Political dimensions of impact**

Emphasis on Impact

- **The Research Councils in UK have been providing economic impact reports of their research portfolio to the government.**
- **Most creative prize: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)**
 - Papers produced/Citations
 - Contribution in solving real problems
 - Development of human capital and civic (!) knowledge
 - Improve quality of life (psychological/emotional implications)
 - Investments and value of artistic artefacts, import / export of cultural products

Impact and its Discontent

- **Impact is a very difficult notion to define.**
 - In medicine *impact* is on health
 - In Engineering could be *impact* on product quality
 - In Chemistry *impact* could mean reaction of two chemicals
 - In Social Sciences *impact* could be in terms of citations of publications or the *impact* of theory in society.
- **Impact could be thought of in a number of ways:**
 - Anticipated vs unanticipated
 - Direct vs indirect
 - Within target area vs outside target area
 - Technology/science based vs institutional/social based
 - Economic benefits vs social vs political vs environmental
 - Useful vs detrimental (Shrestha 2002; Lahteenmaki-Smith 2006)

➤ **Impact is always context/person specific**

Why IMPACT matters?

- Demonstrating the transformation from general information to meaningful knowledge.
- Bringing attention to neglected issues.
- Building confidence to explore and exploit knowledge in action.
- Celebrating difference and making a difference.

What does IMPACT mean for Management Scholarship?

- I = Influential** (weaving different modes of knowledge – technical, scientific and practical)
- M = Memorable** (as a lasting experience and a ‘measurable outcome’)
- P = Practical** (integrating knowledge about the practitioner, their practice and their practical judgments)
- A = Actionable** (engaging powerful connections based on authenticity)
- C = Co-created** (through learning-driven collaborations)
- T = Transformational** (unlearning to create new questions and possibilities)

What does IMPACT mean for Management Practice?

IMP-ACT

IMProving ACTION

Modes NOT Models