**Articulating practice through Provenance**

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**Abstract**

Professional practice literature acknowledges the value for practitioners inquiring into and critically reflecting on their professional practice (Brookfield, 1998; Kemmis, 2010). This approach to professional practice inquiry, initiated and undertaken by the professionals themselves, has been labelled ‘practitioner research’ (Stenhouse, 1981) in educational literature and ‘first-person action research’ (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) in research literature. The approach can also be seen as a response to Nicolini’s (2009) call for broader than ethnographic methodologies within the ‘practice-turn’ (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina & von Savigny, 2001).

The paradigm dialogue’s people-centred inquiry approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) generated multiple alternative investigative methodologies to the scientific method, an approach which until that time had dominated research practices. Several of the alternate approaches were relevant for professional practice investigation. The propositions within this paper are contextualised within one of the posited alternate methodologies, ‘practice-led inquiry’ (Gray, 1996), distinguished from other forms of practitioner research by its starting or initiating point within the inquirer’s own practice. This defining feature is problematic for some practitioners who have difficulty describing their practice, and specifically describing it in ways that open the practices to interrogation and inquiry and generate new knowledge and theory.

This paper posits Provenance as a strategy/process within practice-led inquiry to enable practitioners to recognise knowledge about practice arising from their own experiences and utilise that in their theory building. The term Provenance describes the history and ownership of a given artefact, and the artisans who have informed its making. We discuss professional’s utilisation of Provenance’s within practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996) to identify origins of their practice through nominating critical incidents and literature that have informed development of their practice (Finlay, 2002; Davies, 2008; Hill, 2014; Hill & Lloyd, 2015). Provenance thus creates a starting point and scaffold for practice-led inquiry, enabling a professional to interrogate their practice to build meaning about how a given professional practice can be understood and undertaken. This stands to contribute to the growing discourse about professional practice. Provenance can also support extended inquiry into a practice by scaffolding solicitation of other professional stories about a given professional practice.

Provenance resonates with action inquiry, both in iterative cycles of action and reflection (Hill, 2014) and in the use of ‘first person action inquiry’ (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). It allows professionals to connect back and identify turning points in their own professional development. It affirms the practitioner/inquirer’s own understanding and knowledge of their practice. The narrative that evolves from initial consideration of critical events, and sometimes literature that have informed development of professional practice, can be repeatedly revisited to remember, reflect and change more and more detail, generating new knowledge about the practice.

**Key words:** practice-led inquiry, first-person action research, Provenance, professional practice, practice turn, reflective practice

**Introduction**

Study of the professions and professional practice began in the 20th century following a surge in professions at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Dingwall & Lewis, 1983). Earliest forms of professional practice investigation focussed on codifying practice to ascertain which practices could be considered professional and which not (Moore & Rosenblum 1970, p. 5, in Glazer 1974, p. 347). Later, discipline specific professional practice investigations, such as dall’Alba’s (2004) study of medical practices, helped to define what constituted professional practice. The ‘paradigm dialogues’ (Guba 1990) or ‘paradigm wars’ (Klaes, 2012, p. 13), although external to professional practice discourse, signalled a shift in professional practice investigation with introduction of person-centred inquiry.

Lewin’s (1948) action research model, defined by its use of an iterative inquiry process, experienced a resurgence of interest during the ‘paradigm wars’ due to a perceived application to the study of practice. In this resurgence, action research was framed as ‘an orientation’ to inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1) rather than a ‘methodology’, and was defined as a ‘family of practices of living inquiry’ rather than a single orientation. Within this family, ‘first person action research’ was recognised as relevant for ‘fostering an inquiry approach to [one’s] own life’ (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 6) and thus relevant for investigation of professional practice.

Schön’s (1983) ‘reflective practice’ was another way for professionals to examine their own practices. Although initially directed towards ‘science based professionals, town planning professionals and management professionals’, Schön (1983, p. 123) broadened the appeal of reflective practice by positing it as a paradigm alternate to the scientific method or positivism. Although predating the official paradigm wars, ‘reflective practice’, because of Schön’s (1983) articulation of a paradigm, can be seen as one of several investigative approaches arising from the paradigm wars. In terms of Simpson’s (2009, p. 1330) description of Schatzki’s (2001) ‘practice turn’, that aligned the turn with a ‘new paradigm’ of investigating practice, Schön’s (1983) ‘reflective practice’ can also be framed as a forerunner or early example of the ‘practice turn’ (Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). In this regard, ‘reflective practice’ also represents one example of the broader range of investigative approaches called for in Nicolini’s (2009) critique of the practice turn, calling for approaches other than ethnography for investigating practice. A similar rationale could apply to Stenhouse’s (1981, p. 104) ‘practitioner inquiry’, which encouraged teachers as practitioners to investigate their own practice.

Both Reflective Practice and Action Research represent ways to investigate professional practice and stand to contribute to the growing discourse about professional practice. This paper focuses on a third example, ‘practice-led inquiry’ (Gray 1996) which, rather than predating the paradigm wars, emerged from them. The paper explores/proposes a catalyst for practice-led inquiry in ‘Provenance’, defined as the practitioner identifying and articulating the story of their development of their current professional practice as a start to investigating their practice.

This paper is organised as follows. Firstly we define practice-led inquiry and explore how the relationship between practice and theory in this approach invites a set of methodologies that support a practitioner’s investigation of their own practice. We draw parallels between practice-led inquiry and first person action inquiry. Secondly, we describe the methodological tool of ‘Provenance’ and argue for its migration from arts and antiquities where it originated to practice inquiry. Thirdly, we illuminate the benefits of Provenance we have found through practice-led inquiries into different professional practices. Finally we encourage researchers/inquirers to use Provenance as they embark on any of the forms of practitioner inquiry and specifically practice-led inquiry.

**Defining practice-led inquiry**

Practice-led inquiry is ‘research initiated in practice and carried out through practice’ (Gray, 1996, p. 3). The approach involves reflection in and on action (Schön, 1983) and has predominantly been positioned within a creative practice inquiry domain (Smith and Dean, 2009). Gray’s (1996) definition of practice-led inquiry was described as the ‘original and enabling definition’ (Haseman & Mafe, 2011, 213). Gray (1996, p. 4) positioned practice-led inquiry in relationship to the paradigm revolution (Kuhn, 1962 cited by Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

In the context of this paper we seek to draw attention to apparent parallels between practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996) and first person action inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Marshall (2011, p. 245) defined first person action inquiry as ‘the researcher adopting an inquiring approach to their own assumptions, perspectives and action, seeking to behave awarely and choicefully in a given context, and to develop their practice in some way.’ Marshall (2011) situated that orientation of action inquiry within Reason & Bradbury’s (2001) three territory framework. Like practice-led inquiry, first person action inquiry involves the researcher researching their own practice.

**Defining Provenance**

The term provenance, nominalised from the French provenir, "to come from" (Oxford English dictionary), originated in arts and antiquities discourse in which it referred to the life story of an item or art collection and a record of its ultimate derivation and passage through the hands of its various owners.

In addition to the already noted similarities between practice-led inquiry and first-person action inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), we also recognise similarities between what we describe as ‘Provenance’ and descriptions of historicising one’s practice such as ‘how we do what we do’ or ‘auto poiesis’ (Maturana, 2002, p. 34), ’reflexive ethnography’ (Finlay, 2002, p. 536), ‘self-reconnaissance’ (Dillon, 2008, p. 4), ‘reflection on the pre-reflexive consciousness of past experience’ (Hauw, 2009, p. 342), ‘auto-ethnography’ (Marshall, 2011, p. 249) and ‘fore-having’ (Johns, 2010, p. 14).

Our choice to migrate the term ‘Provenance’ into practice-led inquiry aligns with Finlay’s (2002, p. 536) use of Provenance in practice inquiry and Davies (2008) use in policy analysis, suggesting that the provenance leading into composition of policy, or an event or practice, shines a light on the disposition of that event, policy or practice.

**Provenance repurposed**

Practice is and can be perceived as an historic construction (Kemmis, 2010, p. 141) that draws on both practitioners’ historic perspectives of their practice, and the general discourse related to a practice, often available in literature. For example, a practice such as surgery is informed by those who practice as surgeons as well as the history of surgery in medieval barbering (Himmelmann, 2007). This dual source of knowledge about practice generates two different forms of Provenance: general or personal.

General Provenance is often evident when a researcher frames their particular focus within discourses relating to what is ‘known’ about their topic. This framing has been referred to as a ‘Literature Review’ (Bruce, 2001). What makes Provenance different from a literature review is that the starting point for Provenance is within the practitioner’s own practices. By reflecting on their practice, practitioners identify literature that has informed their own development of practice, and these identified sources are the beginning of a literature review pertinent to the practice they are investigating. An example of a practice being framed this way by discourse was given earlier in this paper when practice-led inquiry was framed in the paradigm dialogues (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Guba, 1990) discourse.

In addition to a general Provenance of a practice, many practice-led inquirers are aware of and sometimes inspired by their *own* experience with the issue or practice they are investigating. This personal Provenance illuminates their history of acquiring the nominated practice and the events leading to its placement in their repertoire of professional practice. Personal Provenance draws on the practitioner’s professional development that enabled them to develop and adopt this practice into their personal repertoire. Personal Provenance may refer to literature about the practice that has informed a particular practitioner’s practice and may also include the practitioner’s own publications about the practice.

In our practice-led inquiries related to several different professional practices we have refined our understanding of Provenance, and now see it as having several defining features:

1. Provenance is reflexive in that the practitioner is raising their consciousness about their practice and the issues and themes that may have influenced their exposure to and adoption of a particular practice.
2. Provenance is ‘critical’ in that the act of making tacit knowledge about practice explicit helps to uncover beliefs and assumptions about that practice (Mezirow, 1990) and raises questions about taken for granted assumptions related to the practice and the profession as a whole.
3. Provenance affirms the practitioner’s knowledge about their practice. It recognises the practitioner as an expert about their practice and creates a pathway for the practitioner into the general Provenance or literature pertaining to their practice.

In addition, our notion of Provenance is founded on several theoretical foundations/assumptions:

1. Professional practice is complex and inquiries into professional practice are thus tantamount to solving complex problems (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Hodges, 2012).
2. Practice itself cannot speak, but practitioners can make practice explicit by giving voice to their practice (after Wittgenstein in Nicolini, 2009)
3. Knowledge about practice emerges from reflection on that practice (Schön, 1983) and grows through iterations of reflection on practice to provide an experience base for the knowledge about the practice.
4. Practice is an historic construction and reflects both contemporary delivery as well as the historical development of that delivery (Kemmis, 2010).

**Provenance in practice-led inquiry**

Our notion of Provenance has its own history, including its usage in art and antiquities and agriculture to which we have already referred, as well as our own use of the concept in practice-led inquiries. Our use illuminates how the idea was initiated in conversations about investigating practice and evolved into its current form aligned with practice-led inquiry.

Hill’s (1997) first person action inquiry into ‘Human Sculpture’ as an organisational communication tool initiated our notion of Provenance. He explored his history with this particular version of ‘Human Sculpture’ from its inception in a university workshop, through its ‘naming’ in the context of a drama therapy practice and its emergence as a signature element of his management consultancy. In choosing to look backward on his engagement with this creative tool, prior to moving forward in formal cycles of action inquiry, the practice of provenance was evident but not as such ‘named’ in his inquiry dissertation.

When later supervising Lloyd for her doctoral inquiry, Hill advocated a similar iterative cycle of exploring her history with the creative processes at the heart of her inquiry using processes of backward reflecting like the ones that had informed his own study (Hill, 1997). This replication of a set of cycles of inquiry from Hill to Lloyd aligned with Lewin’s (1948) iterative action inquiry model, representing a second cycle of inquiry but undertaken by a different inquirer. Again, the practice of provenance was evident but not named in Lloyd’s (2011) inquiry dissertation.

Our supervision conversations related to Lloyd’s doctoral inquiry drew parallels between our hindsight reflection and Provenance; that is, understanding how and where practice has emerged and evolved, much like identifying the authenticity and passage of art objects. These parallels presented a new and migrated usage of the term. The conversations invited Lloyd to consider critical incidents in her development of the creative practices at the centre of her management consultancy, including exposure to some of the strategies that she was aware she was using. While her initial reflections may have been random, with chronological organisation and consideration under the umbrella question ‘How did you develop your practice?’, she formulated a personal developmental theory. Lloyd began to articulate this development in a story that explored how she came to adopt particular practices and how those practices developed within her professional experience. Iteratively revisiting her story in the context of supervision provided a means to reveal elements of her practice and make explicit her tacit knowledge about her practice.

An action research encyclopaedia entry on cycles of inquiry written by Hill (but not published until 2015) used the term *provenance* to describe the form of backward/hindsight reflection evident in both his and Lloyd’s inquiries, and proposed it as part of action inquiry. In collaborative inquiries following Lloyd’s doctoral graduation, focussed on our common practices of ‘Human Sculpture’ (Lloyd & Hill, 2013) and ‘using photographs to facilitate reflective discussions’ (Hill & Lloyd, 2015), we formulated a distinct definition of the process of Provenance. The definition aligned Provenance with a belief attributed (by Nicolini, 2013) to Wittgenstein, that ‘practice is demonstrably able to speak for itself’, but emphasised that with Provenance the practice itself was not speaking. It was the practitioner giving voice to the practice.

The process we described for Provenance (Hill & Lloyd, 2015) started with the practitioner identifying critical incidents related to development of their practice, then organising those incidents chronologically to posit a developmental story. By constantly revisiting the story, a practitioner added more and more detail generating depth and clarity of the practice. These iterations of inquiry also made possible recognition or illumination of the practitioner/inquirer’s bias in their practice. Vagle (2010, p. 403) cautions about this form of bias contaminating the inquirer’s analysis of the data drawn from their own story.

Our concluding thoughts about Provenance in our practice-led inquiry into the use of photographic images (Hill & Lloyd, 2015), aligned it with comments made by Marshall (2011, p. 249) about first-person action inquiry, drawing parallels that provenance, similar to first person action inquiry, opened up realisation of the ways in which practitioners frame problems, make assumptions and understand power (Torbert 1991) and located the inquirer or sense maker within the inquiry (Eikeland 2001).

Provenance is for us a work in progress responding to iterative cycles of inquiry as we advance the concept through both practice and reflection. This work in progress sense is evident in Hill’s (2015) articulation of a practice-led inquiry into his use of cabaret as a research dissemination practice. The discussion of this practice, which drew on both Provenance and Action Inquiry, further advanced the philosophical positioning of Provenance. This advancement was a posited connection between Provenance and reflective practice, suggesting Provenance acted as a ‘reflective lens’ (Brookfield, 1998, p. 200) through which the practice being investigated was viewed or considered. By examining one’s personal provenance with a practice, an inquirer could examine how problems within the practice development had been framed, and this framing helped to make explicit assumptions underpinning his understanding of the investigated practice (Marshall, 2011).

As we progress our thinking and ways of applying Provenance we have moved from using Provenance to explore our own practices to using Provenance as a tool for helping others to investigate their professional practice. For example, in her organisational consultancy work, Lloyd uses Provenance with professional groups to explore and generate deeper understanding of their leadership and management practice. She asks her clients how they believe they have developed their leadership and management practices, and what incidents they identify as critical in their development. Hill, as a Reader in Education, works with professionals undertaking doctoral inquiries into their professional practice. Both contexts have provided dissemination of Provenance that enable practitioners/inquirers from different professional sectors to gain greater awareness and learning as to what has influenced and informed their professional journey. Although both authors have developed their career paths associated with creative disciplines, in positing Provenance for practice-led inquiry we are suggesting that it has relevance to any professional practice and to action inquiry about professional practice in any discipline. In so doing, we also advocate broadening the application of practice-led inquiry beyond its perceived creative industries focus.

**What does Provenance involve? Collecting data.**

Finlay’s (2002) practice inquiry into reflexivity identified its Provenance. Her data for the Provenance started with a definition for reflexivity which she then elaborated with reference to different theoretical foundations of the practice. She also posited (2002, p. 533)

..the provenance of the concept of reflexivity can also be found within other theoretical frameworks, including phenomenological, social constructionist, and psychodynamic theories and participative research approaches. Here, competing, sometimes contradictory, accounts of the rationale and practice of reflexivity are offered.

Her Provenance, which included references to Phenomenology and Social Constructionism, enabled her to conclude that Reflexivity as a practice could be understood in a multitude of ways depending on the nominated research traditions.

In contrast, our undertaking Provenance relied on reflective practice. One approach was for a practitioner to recall critical incidents in their past associated with the practice. This was evident in Hill’s (1997) inquiry into Human Sculpture and his exploration of cabaret as an academic dissemination medium (Hill, 2015); It was also evident in Lloyd (2011) recognising the influence of her art and design background for the development of her professional practice using arts-based interventions as part of her management consultancy. A second reflective approach involved dialogue between practitioners as they teased out the similarities and differences in the ways in which they developed their practices. This was evident in Lloyd & Hill (2013) as they developed their use of Images for Organisational Analysis. A third reflective approach involved using artefacts to assist reflection, such as Hill (2002) used to elicit his memories undertaking a higher research degree based on the correspondence associated with that candidature. Hill’s (2015) recollections of events in development of cabaret as research dissemination were similarly elicited using artefacts of published papers about that emergent practice.

The outcome of Finlay’s (2002) Provenance was a conceptual map of Reflexivity. From our practice-led Provenance we generated several different outcomes including a professional narrative (Lloyd, 2011), an extended case study (Hill, 2002b), a cycle of incidents positing a developmental path (Hill, 1997; Hill, 2015) and an illumination and comparisons of different professional narratives (Lloyd & Hill, 2013; Hill & Lloyd, 2015).

Part of personal Provenance involves identification of literature which the practitioner believes was significant in their development of a practice. Finlay (2002) achieved this by identifying iconic texts in the various theoretical frameworks she identified as framing reflexivity. Hill (1997) in his Provenance for Human Sculpture recalled the specific text *Organisational Communication* in which Bordow & More (1991) posited a Provenance for the ‘Dramatistic Approach’, citing Mangham & Overington’s (1987) thesis around use of theatrical metaphors for organisational inquiry and their references to Goffman’s (1959) notion of ‘scripts’. This Provenance helped to position ‘Human Sculpture’ (Hill, 1997) as an example of the Dramatistic Approach. Similarly, Lloyd (2011) referred to the 2005 and 2010 Special Editions of the Journal of Business Strategy which focused on arts-based learning for business. These articles helped her to identify and locate her practice in a field of work such as arts-based learning for business.

Conferences and symposia also featured in several of the Provenance outcomes. Finlay (2002) referred to two significant gender conferences, papers which contributed to her understanding of reflexivity. Lloyd (2011) referred to influential critical incidents in the development of her practice including the 2002, IDRIART Arts and Business conference at Castle Borl in Slovenia. Hill’s (2015) development of cabaret relied on performances at several conferences that positioned the approach as a viable conference presentation strategy.

**How does Provenance tell us about practice: analysing the data.**

The data about practice generated through Provenance is descriptions of practice enriched with literature and critical incidents that have made the practice what it is.

Analysis of the Provenance data begins immediately the first critical incidents or initial ideas emerge on paper from reflection. As Finlay (2002) suggested, collecting the inquirer’s concepts related to the practices they are investigating must start from the moment the research is conceived to embrace the investigator’s motivations, assumptions and interests in the research to illuminate forces that might skew the research in a particular direction. Early identification of critical incidents provides the basis for subsequently shedding light on potential bias in analysis of the data. Ordering the critical incidents chronologically also presents an analytical tool, as it brings to light the ways in which one critical event informs other ones to develop the practice. This ordering can be further structured into a developmental plan, such as Hill’s (2015, p. 156) shaping of the critical incidents informing cabaret as an emergent conference presentation into ‘foundation’, ‘innovation’ and ‘development’ to posit a developmental path out of which might emerge a practitioner who publishes their research through cabaret.

The ways in which a practitioner frames their practices as they articulate their provenance provides another analytical tool for illuminating the practice. Identification of a key text situates a practice within a discipline and set of beliefs. Finlay’s (2002) thesis about reflexivity effectively does this to support her claim that the practice is understood differently depending on the identified theoretical frameworks. This was evident in Hill’s (1997) positioning of ‘Human Sculpture’ as part of the Dramatistic Approach. This framing positioned it within a discourse of organisational inquiry and a belief system that rested on a notion of ‘human scripts’ (Mangham 1979; Goffman 1959). It is also evident in Lloyd’s (2017) discussion of ‘Body Mapping’ (Devine 2008; de Jager, Tewson, Ludlow & Boydell 2016), as she established where the practice had been used by other professionals in different disciplines. These connections particularly highlighted the ways that ‘Body Mapping’ had been used as a form of inquiry to generate a voice for practitioners.

In some instances, Provenance made explicit the cross disciplinary nature of certain skills sets. For example, as Hill (2015) explored his Provenance for disseminating research through cabaret, what became evident was the skill set related to this practice that encompassed not only musical theatre skills, but research publication skills.

Analysis in some practice-led inquiries can be brought about by juxtaposing parallel stories. For example, the inquiries into the same or a similar professional practice of two practitioners using ‘Human Sculpture’ revealed different Provenances (Lloyd & Hill, 2013) as did similar practices associated with using images for reflective practice (Hill & Lloyd, 2015). The later indicated how one practitioner was influenced by design/visual arts training and the other was influenced by a Psychology background. While both practitioners used the same type of creative intervention, it was clear from the Provenance stories that different factors had influenced their choice of this strategy.

The juxtaposition and analysis of parallel stories may well invite critical reflection on the practices described, and allow a collaborative exploration of assumptions and beliefs that underpin those practices. In turn, this juxtaposition may lead to new initiatives and theories. Description of practice through Provenance and analysis of those descriptions occur iteratively such that the realisations through analysis of a description of practice help to reveal additional critical incidents and literature that then add to describing the complexity of the practice and it’s Provenance.

**Provenance: written descriptions**

Provenance is not only about establishing the history related to a practice. As a practitioner/inquirer becomes more familiar with the ways in which they have framed their practice, this can produce new insights and can also shift their practice. Such shifts align with a view of action inquiry that it will lead to an improvement in the issue or practice.

The intention in writing about a practice is to present something complex in a way that is still communicable. This writing involves presenting a theoretical framework in which the practice can be better understood. That outcome is effectively achieved in Finlay’s (2002) propositions for Reflexivity. She frames the practice within a complex web of theories.

Sometimes, the clarity of the framework is not readily available, For example, as the practice of using cabaret as a research methodology unfolded, initially no developmental path was evident (Hill, 2015). Adopting a chronological lens to make sense of the identified critical incidents helped to make evident a possible developmental path that was able to be posited as a theoretical framework for better understanding this particular practice. In turn, this theoretical framework emerging from reflection and analysis of practice informed the practitioner’s repertoire, and became a replicable process, one that may also continue to be adjusted over time. Thus hindsight becomes foresight and can be used to reveal tacit knowledge, and alert the practitioner to beliefs, values, assumptions and bias. In much the same way, we have written about Provenance to develop a theoretical framework.

**How did provenance help to raise knowledge about practice?**

Practice-led inquiries start with the premise that practitioners have implicit, tacit knowledge. Provenance helps professionals unpack their practice and tacit knowledge. The process enhances and brings into light hidden practitioner knowledge. It enables professionals to gain a deeper sense of where there may be gaps or a deficit in the knowledge about a particular practice. These gaps may be evident broadly in the literature or lack of literature about a practice, or may be more that the individual practitioner is unaware of the nature of their own practice. By the end of the Provenance process there is a sense that:

1. The practice has been illuminated.
2. Comparison and variance between practitioners are more evident and to some extent explained.
3. Theory is developed and gives substance to understanding that particular practice.

**Assessing ‘Provenance’**

Our initial assessment of Provenance is in our own use of it within our practice-led inquiries. There is a sense for both of us as practitioner/inquirers that we have greater knowledge about the individual and collaborative practices we have investigated. At a first-person action inquiry level there is a sense of having benefited from a process of interrogating our practice in this systematic way.

As practitioners, we also have a second-person action inquiry frame of reference in that for Hill as a Reader in Education at a university offering professional doctoral degrees and for Lloyd as a Management Consultant working with professionals in industry as they explore their practices, we have observed the traction Provenance has with professionals examining their practice.

Although we used Provenance in our practice-led inquiries both with a sense of excitement of adding something to the practice-led inquiry discourse, and a sense of satisfaction in positing a strategy which we believe addresses the difficulty faced by many practice-led inquirers starting their inquiry with practice, we are also mindful of problems we encountered in using Provenance to advance our practice-led inquiries.

As a reflective tool, Provenance is reliant on memory. This may impact what a practitioner recalls or doesn’t recall, particularly when some time may have elapsed since a practitioner initiated a new practice. On the plus side of this dilemma is the iterative nature of Provenance that triggers new and additional knowledge about a practice each time a practitioner reflects on where their practice has come from. New memories come to mind each time and these help to develop hindsight theories of developing the practice. Such reliance on memories brings with it questions about what counts as truth and what one recalls as they reflect on their development of their practice. Is it possible that they only remember positive experiences such that there is an unrecognised bias in the way in which the practice and its development is reconstructed? We have found that collaboration brings the benefit of a critical friend to this dilemma, and while one may recollect incidents through a particular memory lens, the other can act as the foil to raise consciousness of the biases and assumptions the practitioner may recall in relation to the development of their professional practice. Engaging in dialogue with another provides “a powerful strategy for fostering reflective action...in a way which encourages talking with, questioning, even confronting, the trusted other...and creates an opportunity for giving voice to one’s own thinking while at the same time being heard in a sympathetic but constructively critical way” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 41). Hatton & Smith (1995) also note that “having others...facilitate reflection” plays an important role.

Additional challenges in our positing Provenance in the context of practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996) relate more to the belief that Gray’s (1996) model is insufficiently critiqued and marginalised because its origin is a conference presentation rather than a refereed journal. Although presented as a conference paper, and not critiqued by double blind review, Gray’s (1996) approach has been identified by Haseman & Mafe (2011, p. 213) as the ‘original and enabling definition’. Part of our agenda in encouraging adoption of Provenance is to also provide broader review/critique of the foundational practice-led inquiry model.

Through detailing our view of Provenance we have been able to make explicit both our foundational assumptions for the notion/practice as well as what we perceive as the theoretical foundations.

We believe that the practice of Provenance and considering a professional practice in the light of its Provenance helps to build understanding about why a practice is or may be perceived as complex, and why every professional practice can be viewed as contested. Provenance provides a way for a practitioner to articulate their practice, and in that regard, give voice to practice. Provenance makes it possible for other readers to understand a particular practitioner’s practice and the factors that have informed and shaped that practice. Exploring one’s practice in this way is an additional way of reflecting on practice that is contributing to greater or deeper knowledge about the practice. Positioning a practice within its historic roots often helps to illuminate why elements of a practice are the way they are, and thus opens up those elements to revision and reconsideration. It invites the practitioner to consider the necessity of different elements of their practice as they consider how and why those elements emerged as part of a practice repertoire.

Perhaps the greatest value of Provenance for a practitioner investigating their practice is that in scaffolding their understanding of what they may have taken for granted, and in giving them a vehicle to give voice to their practice, they become empowered and knowledgeable about their practice. Provenance provides a practitioner with a form of practice literacy to articulate and interrogate one’s practice, which in turn creates opportunities to influence that practice from an insider position.

While we recognise in this illumination of a new practice that it may not be as straightforward as writing about it may convey, from our lived experience, Provenance has enabled us to unpack our professional practices and see their content in a new professional light. We believe that through Provenance we have shifted the value and focus of practice-led inquiry, from an exclusive creative practice inquiry domain towards broader usage for any professional practice. Unpacking Provenance has also helped us to better understand and apply it to thus benefit others undertaking practice-led inquiry whether in a formal educational environment or within an organisational workplace context.

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