The place of groupwork practice within the lecture theatre:

Promoting self-directed learning, student reflection and orbital communication via the entwined endeavours of teaching, role play and facilitation

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***Abstract**: Contemporary debates around matters of HE pedagogy must be understood within the context of a consumerist ethos of education (Love, 2013; Williams, 2013). Such a context is increasingly encouraging the 'lecturer' to facilitate the student experience whilst helping students manage their own learning. Notions of 'Student centred learning' appear laudable; however they often fail to comprehend the intricate activity of knowledge transfer, construction, assimilation and accommodation. Rhetorical notions of student centred learning therefore appear to encourage the determination of the worth of pedagogic content to the student, who as an undergraduate is, or likely to be, the 'novice'. The contemporary 'lecturer' is therefore placed in a predicament of trying to fulfil policy directives on the one hand whilst also trying to promote their discipline on the other. This paper argues that such a predicament can be addressed via a focus upon the interplay between the endeavours of teaching and facilitation (Douglas, 2000; Staddon and Standish, 2012), especially via the inclusion of groupwork with large cohorts within the lecture theatre. This paper provides insight into reflections of the 'lecturers' and 'students' engaged in such practice within a first year social policy module at a post 1992 university. The paper outlines how role play was utilised as a means of encouraging groupwork practice within the lecture theatre and how the principles of Fleming and Ward's (2013) self-directed groupwork informed the enactment of facilitation, in conjunction with 'teaching', practice. The paper argues that such practice provides a beneficial form of pedagogy as it encourages better learner reflection and engagement due to providing opportunities for students to connect and share lived experiences, via a form of orbital communication, with theory learnt. The pedagogy also provides opportunity for students to engage in and thus understand*

group dynamics and groupwork practices so as to be better placed to evaluate their own learning.

Keywords: facilitation; teaching; orbital communication; co-construction of knowledge; self-directed groupwork; large groups; higher education; role play

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Introduction

Groupwork is a familiar interactive method of engagement that spans across a range of helping contexts from consultative, guidance, therapeutic and educative settings - inclusive of primary, secondary, further and higher education (HE). Groupwork has the propensity to facilitate deep learning (Entwistle and Waterston, 1988), enhance active engagement (Kremer and McGuiness, 1988), provide participants a role in the construction of knowledge (Dolmans et al, 2001), whilst also promoting peer learning within university settings (Boud et al, 2001; Quitadamo et al, 2009). Considering such benefits groupwork can be deemed to be a useful addition to the lecturer's pedagogic repertoire so as to be used within seminars, as well as, this paper argues, the more supposedly inhospitable arena of the lecture theatre with large student cohorts. This paper therefore considers the current contemporary consumerist context of HE, so as to reflect upon the role and place of groupwork within the confines of the lecture theatre. It has been argued by many commentators (see Love, 2013; Williams, 2013; Colini, 2012) that such a consumerist context has increased pressure upon the 'lecturer' to facilitate the student experience whilst helping students manage their own learning. Notions of 'Student centred learning' appear laudable, however they often fail to comprehend the intricate activity of knowledge transfer, construction, assimilation and accommodation (see Towers and Gee, 2012; Staddon and Standish, 2012, for more detail). Rhetorical notions of student centred learning therefore appear to encourage the determination of the worth of pedagogic content to the student, who as an undergraduate is, or likely to be, the 'novice'. The contemporary 'lecturer' is therefore placed in a predicament of trying to fulfil policy directives on the one hand whilst also trying to promote their discipline on the other. This paper argues that such a predicament can be addressed via a focus upon the interplay between the roles, and endeavours of, teacher and facilitator (Douglas, 2000; Staddon and Standish, 2012), especially via the inclusion of groupwork within the lecture theatre. The paper argues that to present lectures and seminars via a dichotomous spectrum of activity, a tendency within the literature (see Offer, 2001; Garavan, 1996), where lectures provide a dynamic of lecturer enactment and passive studentship, and seminars as a more inclusive dynamic group activity, is unhelpful given the

predicament described above. To explore this in more detail this paper brings into play the work of Staddon and Standish (2012) in conjunction with the work of Douglas (2000) to question the roles of teacher and facilitator. To do this important dimensions of groupwork practice and the activities of lectures and seminars will be explored. The paper then argues that these activities, roles and practices have the propensity to be blurred and entwined, providing a more beneficial pedagogy. The paper provides insight into the blurring of such boundaries via a pedagogy enacted within a UK level 4, first year of undergraduate degree, social policy module. The module, 'Social Policy for Health and Social Care', uses a seminar and lecture format, one preceding the other with institutional expectations of more 'discussion' in the seminar than lecture, where more didactic methods are anticipated (Garavan, 1996). The authors were able to break this expectation within the lecture theatre via the inclusion of groupwork practices. The paper argues that the encouragement of a facilitative leadership style, whereby the 'Lecturer' establishes environments in which learners feel comfortable (Laird, 1985), and adheres to the principles of self- directed learning (Laird, 1985; Boud et al, 2001; Quitadamo et al, 2009; Fleming and Ward, 2013) can be an effective pedagogic endeavour, particularly when entwined with aspects of 'teaching'. The paper argues that although there were many constraints in place to prevent self-directed groupwork – a prominent influence upon the authors - the authors still took to heart the principles of such an approach to embellish a facilitative leadership style that encouraged an interactive pedagogic experience, in conjunction with important aspects of 'teaching' (Staddon and Standish, 2012) or directive leadership (Douglas, 2000). The paper then considers the additional use of role play, utilised as a means of encouraging groupwork practice, so as to provide a focal point of discussion and debate within the lecture theatre. Such use of role play, which centred on the experiences of an invented character called 'Colin', informed by the author Chris' experiences and knowledge of welfare policy, provided opportunity for students to consider and *apply* social policy theory learnt, via the interplay between micro and macro perspectives as well as the resonances between personal enactment and wider social theory – harmonising with notions of drama and dramaturgy (Goffman, 1959). This paper provides insight into reflections of 'lecturer' and 'student' engaged in such practice. The paper argues that such practice

provides a beneficial form of pedagogy as it encourages better learner engagement, provides opportunity for students to connect and share lived experiences, evoking orbital communication (Law, 1996), where participants discuss and debate amongst themselves, with theory learnt. By engaging in groupwork activities and group debates, in the lecture theatre, students were also provided with opportunity to understand group dynamics due to engaging with groupwork practices so as to be better placed to evaluate their own learning (Brookfield, 2009).

Exploring the parameters of groupwork and how it can contribute to HE learning with large student numbers

This section starts by exploring important parameters of groupwork theory and practice before considering the nature of group leadership within HE settings. The section therefore questions groupwork leadership styles, via the work of Douglas (2000), to explore the relationship between facilitative and directive group leadership and how this may fit with different settings. The notion of facilitative leadership considers the principles of self-directed groupwork and how this can address aspects of social justice (Fleming and Ward, 2013). Once this has occurred the paper brings into play the work of Staddon and Standish (2012) and their considerations of the role of 'teaching' within HE. The paper then considers the relationship between group leadership styles and the activity of teaching so as to consider how such a relationship may aid pedagogic practice.

What exactly is a 'group'? Brown (1999) suggests that the key concepts are: a defined membership; interdependence; boundaries; agreed purpose; and some size limitations for example, no more than 12 members. Forsyth defines a group as 'two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships' (2005, p.2-3). One can offer critique of all definitions for there is no intrinsic reason why any given number of participants should constitute a group, definitions are arbitrary and contestable. It is our view that a large cohort of students can be considered a group, that such configuration does not have to be confined to the notion of 12 members, and that such configurations can still engage in groupwork, especially as there is the potential to split

such a large group into smaller groups. The paper also wishes to assert Forsyth's (2005) notion of a group is one where individuals are connected by social relationships, which is the case for our study, where the participants, in this case level 4 students, are connected via the experience of teaching and learning. With this being the case it becomes useful to acknowledge where there are similarities and differences between group settings. Douglas (2000), a prominent writer in the field of social work, provides a useful typology to distinguish between different types of groups with special consideration being paid to the group's relationship with the group 'leader'. The typology consists of two types – group as context and group as instrument. Group as instrument is likened to adhere to the concept of 'mutual aid' where the leader seeks to establish a situation in which 'all the members come to trust one another to work as a unit' where 'the responsibility for the running of the group lies with the group.' Leadership is viewed as not being dominant 'as the members exercise the power and the influence they have learned to grasp for their mutual benefit' (Douglas, 2000, p.5). Context in comparison is where the leader exerts more authority on the group and where individuals seek to achieve their own objectives with the other participants potentially providing a mere backdrop to activity. What becomes apparent with the confines of the lecture theatre – both in terms of room layout and the large numbers of participants - is that certain kinds of leadership appear to be more suited toward group as 'context'. Douglas (2000) suggests that groups as 'context' tends to involve a certain type of leadership that of being 'directive' – where 'knowledge of the leadership is essential in guiding the group members' (pp. 5-6). The lecture theatre therefore invites for leadership as presentation - an efficient means of transferring knowledge from the 'expert' to the student – what hooks (1994) would describe as a form of banking pedagogy. Within the field of career education and guidance, Offer (2001, p.60) theorises a continuum of groupwork activities that may be delivered, from 'public speaking to interventions very close to individual interviewing.' Offer (2001) proposes that public speaking is likened to a formal presentation which has clear 'rules' and a skill set that is familiar and theoretically comprehensible to both the practitioner and service user. Offer (2001) continues to assert these rules exist regardless of whether it is to 'sell' an idea or product or economically inform a large number of people. The other end of Offer's (2001)

groupwork continuum suggests learning opportunities that encourage the sharing of participant ideas so as to share constructive suggestions on learning. It is an opportunity to learn pre-set material which is to be of use to the group, whilst also providing an opportunity for individuals to identify that which is pertinent to their own situations and experiences, which may also be shared – thus evoking a form of critical pedagogy that hooks (1994) would suggest is more engaging and allows knowledge to be constructed within the room. The ability to simultaneously extract 'group processes' yet focus on 'personal experience' appears to be a useful mechanism to influence pedagogy (Law, 1996). Such activities and contexts requires a different form of leadership which Douglas (2000) would describe as facilitative - where leadership endeavours to make participants aware of their own resources, or what Law (1996) would describe as neutral leadership where the lecturer/facilitator of learning involves the student fully and encourages 'orbital communication', a style of communication that could be said to bypass group leadership. Fleming and Ward (2013, p.50), influenced by Mullender and Ward (1991), suggest that facilitation, as opposed to 'being led', is an important aspect of groupwork and pedagogy. Fleming and Ward (2013)'s assertion is that facilitation benefits from the practice and principles of self-directed groupwork, a means of avoiding oppressive practice. Mullender, Fleming and Ward (2013) develop such notions by advocating social action, which explicitly outlines a value base in the form of six practice principles which emphasise: the evasion of labels, the rights of group members, basing interaction on a power analysis, aiding people to attain collective power through coming together in groups and challenging oppression through practice, and groups adhering to facilitation as opposed to being led (Fleming and Ward 2013, p. 50). Adhering to such principles means that social justice becomes an important contemplation where the experiences of individuals can be heard and taken account of. Such notions are of great appeal to the authors and consideration of their influence needs to take into account the constraints of the lecture theatre - for example, student expectations of enactment, timetable constraints and the Victorian lecture theatre layout of rows of seats – an arena that the authors wished to take advantage of so as to create a more engaging pedagogy. Taking such notions of leadership into consideration, especially within the realms of HE, it is worth noting the role and

benefits of facilitation, influenced by the principles of self-directed groupwork, with its relationship with teaching. Whilst the principles and attraction to facilitative and self-directed groupwork is admirable caution must be considered against its over emphasis. It would be easy, especially within the context of a consumerist ethos within HE (Love, 2013) to enthuse about the idea of a teacher to facilitate the student 'experience' and to imagine that she is less the teacher and more the one who merely takes students to the material and leaves them to manage their own learning. Student centred work pays less attention to 'leading' and more to allowing the student to bring in their own experiences to the text or indeed the group. Staddon and Standish (2012), prominent writers within the field of the philosophy of education, concede that 'student centred learning', which begs for pedagogy as facilitation, seems laudable in a sense, but should that mean leaving the determination of the worth of the material to the student who in this case, is, or can be, the 'novice'. Using the example of the historian, Staddon and Standish (2012) suggest that a student of history needs to learn from the historian, learn how to learn and enquire, to not do this is to abdicate pedagogic responsibility. So whilst we adhere to the principle of facilitation it would be unwise to not suggest that there is an important onus on the teacher to teach, to promote their discipline, as well as facilitate, where 'teaching' becomes a means of enablement, a form of 'facilitation' where facilitation becomes a form of 'teaching'. Indeed Case et al (1994) argue that placing teaching and facilitation at polar ends of a spectrum, or suggesting we adopt one rather than the other, is to present a false dichotomy. Case et al (1994) puts forward the idea that, within the context of children's schooling and education, facilitation is the process of ensuring that the pre-conditions for teaching occur, not only via consideration of physical environment, but also via the means of sharing and engaging with each other. Facilitation from this perspective is akin to motivating, guiding, justifying and inferring- but it is not in itself teaching and it is not enough to bring about learning. Staddon and Standish (2012) argue similarly that students need something of substance to work with before they can engage in the sharing of experiences. There has to be some reference to a core of knowledge (Case et al, 1994) before facilitation can begin and facilitation is the means rather than the end. That said there is of course room for experiential knowledge, sitting alongside

any core knowledge, including the questioning of 'core knowledge', and the teacher/facilitator can work to align the two or bring some light on the relationship between them. For the authors the utilisation of groupwork was seen as a useful endeavour to do this, yet the constraints of the timetable and the lecture theatre needed to be taken into account, where aspects of theory needed to be instilled – which requires the mapping of pre-set material advocating a directive leadership approach – echoing earlier points about the importance of teaching as well as facilitation, guiding as well as facilitating the voicing of student experiences (Case et al, 1994; Staddon and Standish, 2012). The constraints considered – especially within the confines of the academic timetable, the need to teach large numbers within a lecture theatre, as well as constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999), outlining pre-conceived learning outcomes within the curriculum – that the administering of self-directed groupwork, an initial aspiration of the authors, was a difficult endeavour yet one that still bears an importance influence.

Not deterred by such constraints the authors of this article were concerned to allow unpredictable thoughts and ideas to surface in discussions within the lecture theatre, in this case of social policy. This is a place where ideas may question orthodox or rational views of the social world and bring new knowledge and understandings of issues akin to policies explored whilst being relevant to wider policy debates around welfare and entitlement. In doing so one brings into play the interrelationship between micro and macro politics and thus brings pedagogy to an embracement of the principles of self-directed groupwork outlined earlier. This was also seen as an important endeavour especially as Fleming and Ward (2013) highlight that since 1991 the role of facilitation in the field of social practice has faced considerable decline. Our intention was to expose students to facilitative groupwork with the hope that this could become part of their own practice repertoire, with a clear focus on anti-oppressive practice and an aspiration toward social justice. The authors found role play as a useful mechanism to allow aspects of facilitation, embracing the principles of self-directed groupwork, as well as important aspects of teaching, to be connected so as to provide a novel and engaging form of pedagogy within the confines of the lecture theatre.

Role play and groupwork

The authors were aware of how groupwork could be a good method to allow students to explore the complex relationships between theory, research and practice (Johnson and Johnson, 1997; Mills, 1967). Groupwork was envisaged as a means of allowing, via simultaneous teaching and facilitation, an interplay between teacher/facilitator and student/learner, the coming together of different forms of learning and different ways of knowing. The authors, keen to explore the potential for the inclusion of groupwork within the lecture theatre, were intent on using role play to enhance such interactivity, so this section provides insight into the use of role play and how it proved to be a useful catalyst for provoking groupwork within the lecture theatre.

'Role play' is just that, it is play, drama that considers notions of 'role' and the roles that people play within life via a range of different theatres of action. Role play practises and rehearses scenarios where students can learn through observation, but also participate in the drama itself. Issues of role and identity are a common theme in sociological discourses and do in themselves provoke such exploration. Goffman (1959) argues – via his sociological method of dramaturgy, exploring the micro actions of everyday life and their relation to wider social assemblages - that when an individual enters the presence of others they commonly seek to learn information about the person and to project that understanding upon them (p.6). They want to know her general social and economic status, her conception of self, her attitudes, competence and level of trustworthiness. Goffman (1955) takes an interest in how people present themselves and if, or to what extent, they manage to maintain a positive sense of themselves in groups and maintain what he calls 'the positive social value' (p. 338). Groups were for Goffman, critical sites of interaction and places where people are defined and seek to maintain their 'face'. We as authors were not only concerned with the development of ideas or theories through groupwork and role play, but were also interested in the dynamics of groups themselves. We were also interested in how we could maximize the potential for teaching and learning within the confines of time and space, one hour within a lecture theatre with fixed seating. We were additionally interested in how group members may interact with each other in ways that develop in students, not only a growing understanding of welfare

and policy but of, how they themselves may operate within groups and understand how groups may help to shape understandings, but also perceptions of the interplay of self and other. This could occur on two levels, via the engagement of watching the role plays put forth, but of also acknowledging one's reading/s of such role plays, and how such a reading was to compare to other viewers and the actors themselves. We were interested not only in outcomes but in group process and dynamics. We were in the process of showing active interest in the principles outlined earlier of the rights of group members, but also the principle of sharing knowledge and understanding in the interest of promoting social justice (Fleming and Ward, 2013). Roleplay was a sensual catalyst, a focus, a spectacle, to enable such processes to unfold, a drama that provided many perspectives and opinions, a means by which students could learn on many levels, of policy, of group processes and of self, its creation and maintenance and potential decline.

The role plays utilised within the module centred on the experiences of an invented character called 'Colin', played by the author Chris and informed by his personal experiences and knowledge of welfare policy. 'Colin', a middle aged man situated at the cutting edge of welfare provision, an important aspect of the Social Policy module in question, via the role plays experiences unemployment, the claiming of a range of benefits, such as Jobseekers Allowance, as well as mental health challenges. Colin became a means of making apparent the micro politics of the everyday experiences of a person on welfare benefits, a means of investigating the 'sharp end' of welfare provision, where technocratic decisions made in policy circles had implication upon Colin's life. In the case of exploring the claimant and entitlement of different welfare benefits the authors presented role plays of situations where dilemmas were traced across conceptual 'knife edge' scenarios (see Towers and Gee, 2012), such as; if 'Colin', the focal character, played by Chris Towers, should or should not attend the government's 'work programme'? 'Colin' was actively presented, either via live or videoed performances involving lecturers and/or members of the student cohort, engaged in many social situations, interacting with a range of other characters within different theatres of his life, such as interacting with claimant advisors, Colin's partner and friends. Colin therefore could be seen to play various interrelated 'roles' in these different contexts from 'jobseeker' to 'parent'. This related to welfare policy, where students

were required to understand social policies, to learn certain kinds of knowledge to understand the information relevant to decisions about such entitlement, again how the micro action interrelates with the macro perspective of policy, and how welfare policies have the potential to significantly influence all aspects of Colin's life career, the interconnected social strands in his life (Goffman, 1961). Such knowledge of social policy included detailed policy references but also social and economic literature – via various texts such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation web-site, through to data from housing providers on the scale and quality of social housing and from key social policy textbooks to editorials in the broadsheets and popular press - about people's lives so that they can understand the contexts in which choices are presented and actions taken. From this knowledge and discussion students could develop awareness of the potential to challenge oppression through practice and in doing so commit to a consideration of and potential actions toward social justice (Fleming and Ward, 2013). Students are encouraged to 'know' how policies and policy makers both recognise entitlement but also question it. They are in fact encouraged to 'know' the potential knife edges within a topic area and early sessions in the curriculum have focused on key themes and ideas before considering the details of policy. These themes and ideas are introduced in lectures, providing early explorations of their meanings which are discussed at length initially in seminars and then via the use of role play within 'lectures' which became a catalyst for lecture discussions, debates and groupwork. Such practice therefore entwined the roles of teacher and facilitator within the lecture theatre as discussed previously.

Learning– via facilitative groupwork entwined with teaching

Taking into account the discussions above the authors wished to provide a pedagogy that addresses issues of social justice both in terms of its content, an important aspect of the discipline of social policy, but also its pedagogic process. A means of entwining teaching, providing and transferring knowledge, as well as facilitation, a means of providing voice to the student, enabling the ability to construct knowledge in

the room, raises fundamental epistemological questions of whether students are passive receivers of knowledge or co-creators (Hofer and Pintrich, 2002). It is inevitably a mix of 'knowing' through 'experience' or through being 'taught', of revelation and discovery and it is via role play as described above that the authors recognised a mechanism that could allow this to occur. This section provides further insight into how learning was to occur via such expressed pedagogy.

Taking into account the authors' previous experiences of engaging with the module, the authors were aware that some of the hundred plus students involved in the module under reflection, may have 'known' social policy through direct or indirect experiences of welfare, whilst others may 'know' it through less direct means such as via social or mass media or via theory. It can furthermore be suggested that for some students 'knowing' social policy has been an emotive experience as they may have encountered welfare provision themselves, and, or, possibly experienced moral panics in which the media engage in moral indignation concerning a range of social and policy issues (Cohen, 1980). As teachers and facilitators of learning we felt it imperative to inform debates and discussion by utilising literature from a range of sources, potentially to challenge the 'natural attitude', before facilitating wider discussion. The writers had to deliver a body of knowledge, research and data concerning welfare entitlement, knowledge which had the potential to challenge myths and half-truths. Giving voice to prejudiced or poorly informed ideas was important whilst feeling a responsibility to engage the learners with wider knowledge, exposing them to different experiences and perspectives a means of embracing the idea of multiple readings upon a social situation, a space to consider the multiplicity and complexity of society (Caputo, 2000). Groupwork and role play, as previously mentioned, was a method of doing this, a method of engaging in an interplay between academic knowledge, personal and other less direct or mediated experiences.

Learners were asked to explore and reflect on the boundaries of various areas of social policy e.g. claims and claimants, the rights and wrongs as they saw them and the tension between competing ideas and values. Groupwork activity, both in the seminars and also in lectures allowed the authors to play one student idea off against another's, to advocate dialogue, to expose tensions between different ideas and in doing so they were raising awareness of policy dilemmas,

encouraging interests in and commitment to social justice, however they interpret it, in the process. This raised awareness, exposing interest in competing and overlapping concepts such as structure and agency, the debate between whether or to what extent patterned arrangements or provision of welfare or services such as education, housing or health, in other words whether social structures, shape people, or to what extent do people experience choice or agency (Barker, 2015). This furthered understanding of different ideas and the cross-fertilisation of knowledge, linking different forms of knowledge and different ways of 'knowing'

Reflections upon practice

As indicated earlier the focus of the paper is the encouragement of groupwork facilitation, entwined with aspects of teaching, within the HE curriculum, even in the arena of the lecture theatre. Role play has been a pedagogic mechanism to allow this to occur. This section is to highlight the author's reflections of such activity, reflections that are to be informed not only via the author's own experiences and dialogue, but also consideration of feedback gained from the students, both in the very act of pedagogic practice but also via data gained from an evaluation form. Such an evaluation form is a means of gaining feedback, to inform practice, and is not to be viewed at this point as a research project in its own right. The section will provide details of the processes of reflection that have taken place so far and will also consider its limitations and potential development.

One of the main learning points for the authors engaging in such pedagogy described, has been the importance of the authors becoming more flexible with their practice and being prepared to 'let go' of control within the lecture theatre, as advocated by Offer (2001). The writers have been concerned more with providing learning opportunities that encourage sharing of ideas and exploration rather than following any set rules over how the teaching and learning 'should' proceed. The approach has been Socratic whilst accepting the need for elements of the didactic (Garavan, 1996). The authors have been keen to construct knowledge *with* the students rather than always *for* the students, to embrace a constructionist approach to learning (Brooks and Brooks,

1993). There were no set or stringent preconceived learning outcomes for each session, they would develop through the activity and consequences of the interactions rather than stated aims, whilst being framed by the overall module aims and outcomes. Groupwork, within the lecture theatre, provided the platform or means by which students would be co-constructors of knowledge. They were not just constructing subject knowledge but learning how to co-operate and debate, thus enhancing social skills, building confidence and even promoting psychological health, all possible outcomes of groupwork (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Pair work and groupwork can also increase students' sense of control of their learning in ways that teacher fronted classes can sometimes not evoke (Carter and Newnan, 2001). The authors were concerned with issues of control and ownership, allowing students the chance to own the process of learning as much as develop subject knowledge.

The concern with constructing knowledge required different forms of leadership. It can be observed that the writers, in preparing students for the live role play, where the students themselves played specific characters, displayed the mutual aid referred to earlier (Shulman, 1979), whether through working together as learners generally or when working together on the co-production of knowledge. This was group as instrument where the leader seeks to establish trust within the group. At the same time the writers were facilitative of discussion, and whilst they were sometimes required to seek out responses to key questions and issues, they were also concerned to let students engage with and across each other, and in the process the tutors were passive and let the discussion develop by its own accord. If there was leadership it was the kind of leadership that was there to make participants aware of their own resources.

The concern was not necessarily to by-pass or ignore leadership but to have occasions when it mattered less and hearing different student voices. The writers had an important function to initially provide enough discipline knowledge, so that the sharing of ideas could take place, but also to make sure the group worked cohesively and that individual members did not dominate. The students had to trust in the lecturer that they would not let the discussion lose complete control. But whilst the writers were keen to keep some 'control' they were also concerned to not be dominant, wanting to let the group, to some extent,

to take responsibility for itself. This supports Douglas's (2000) notion that leadership is there to allow students as group members to exercise their own power and influence and to do so in the name of mutual benefit. Students were viewed as being important in their own right; that the facilitators of learning were to become the backdrop of activity rather than the student body itself.

It was important that the students had a shared purpose, to engage with the tensions of welfare entitlement explored in many of the role plays. Preston-Shoot (1987) suggests that it is important to work with a group where members consider shared aims, are reliant on each other, have some physical immediacy, retain some acknowledgment of group parameters and exist within a range of time-frames, although not to remain indefinitely. This shared purpose was important and students did have a sense of 'boundaries' in that they were encouraged not to talk over each other and let the other speak. They knew also that there were time boundaries and it was desirable that a number of issues be explored in each session. The lecturer was prepared to interject if any of these boundaries were crossed, keeping a sense of time and a certain level of 'control'. It was important also that students had a sense of the collective, some responsibility towards the group and its wider aims. Schulman's (1979) focus on the importance of mutual aid and the development of trust seems particularly pertinent here.

It must also be said that there was student involvement in the planning of the delivery of the role plays, for example a session on Personal Independent Payments, involved three students who volunteered to take part in the role play. All these students were keen to be involved in the development of the scenes as well as in the actual acting and the students met with the authors for groupwork sessions prior to the actual performances. The mere act of 'rehearsing' had the potential to evoke that sense of 'performance' in social interaction. The student group were recognising this aspect of 'performance' and role referred to by Coutu (1951) and Goffman (1959) and saw 'performance' in the way the character responded to her social situations. They saw how people can project impressions of themselves in social situations. This is not to presume that people lose authenticity (whatever that means) when in role, but to simply recognize that element of performance in human interaction. They were helping to develop the character and the plot and worked with the tutor with such awareness and understanding.

Groupwork was thus taking place but informally, as an adjunct to the formal curriculum and with the tutor as the facilitator as well as the teacher. They were relating to the tutor and discussing core knowledge (Case et al, 1994) but also bringing in experiential knowledge and values of their own, sitting alongside what Shultz (1972) and Bickerstaff et al (2008) called the technocratic realities of policies. Teaching and learning were both being displayed, linked by their inter-dependence (Noddings, 2003)

The writers planned to conduct the role plays in the lecture session and have brief discussions with students as the 'action' unfolded with 'time outs' for such discussion. The seminars were to be the primary location for more in depth discussion of the issues identified. Whilst the literature acknowledges that pioneers of small group research advocate that such 'small' groups are good places for the development of relationships between theories, research and practice (Johnston and Johnston 1997; Lewin, 1943) the writers have found that the lecture hall as well as the seminar has promoted such development. The lecturers were not 'dominant' in the classroom and the students controlled and exercised their own power (Douglas, 2000, p.5). The lectures were important as they provided further framing of knowledge for the role plays that followed, where the lecture became the place for the kind of orbital communication referred to (Law, 1996). The writers were there to facilitate discussion and whilst they did prompt and encourage participation the lecturer input was at times minimal. Students talked to each other rather than simply with the lecturers and were raising new points, departing from the set questions we gave them. This was helping to develop new lines of enquiry and new knowledge, (Brooks and Brooks, 1993) and students were both assimilating and accommodating new knowledge (Blantner, 2009; Towers and Gee, 2012). For example, many discussions in regard to welfare entitlement saw students advocating different positions but also acknowledging the strengths of other ideas and sought degrees of consensus around some ideas with students raising more questions to each other rather than relying on the lecturer to acknowledge different ideas. The students were moving the debate from one theme to another rather than relying on the lecturer to do this, being more autonomous in their learning. This is not to say however that the lecturer was redundant or that it is even desirable that groups move to situations whereby the lecturer is

redundant. There may be some contexts in which she plays a minimal role but others where it is imperative that she leads and instils knowledge that the students can base their further explorations upon. The writers did however find that there was no inherent conflict between the need to 'teach' and the need to facilitate and there was much evidence of 'good' learning where lecturers and students were engaging with each other as equal players. This was groupwork with large cohorts, blurring the distinction between seminars and lectures; facilitation and teaching. Students were learning through the experience of discussion as well as through the consumption of prior knowledge. They were actively not just discussing but there was evidence of reflection, another important feature of experiential learning (Itin, 1999). They were showing initiative in their own learning, analysing material but the learner was not just being involved in their own learning they were forwarding it themselves with active reflection building on each other's contributions in the group based discussion, taking place in a lecture theatre. There was certainly evidence of problem solving, communication and reflexivity, the areas in which students may learn to think on any level of complexity (Blantner, 2009) as they participated, whilst also developing critical thinking skills. The students were able to utilise the knowledge gained via these experiences for their assignments covering similar territory.

Feedback was important for this exercise and the writers prepared questionnaires for students to use within the classroom as they experienced the pedagogy and role plays unfold. Questions were asked to the student group about Colin's welfare entitlement within the role play session in pre-arranged 'time-outs' in which the writers stopped the action and talked to students outside of role. They then returned to their roles and students were left to consider not only their own responses to the actors but also to the comments and questions posed by the authors. Students submitted their written responses to questions at the end of the session and the results were evaluated. Students were asked in their evaluations about matters of content but also process. They were asked to detail their thoughts on the scenes but also on the activity itself, their evaluation of role play as a form of learning.

The authors' reflections suggest that the students engaged with the issues as many were involved, and were animated, in discussion, where engagement was occurring both in lectures and seminars and in some senses there was more of the orbital communication in the post lecture

discussion where students were able to engage 'there and then' with the issues they had just 'seen'. In fact the comments from students, gained via the questionnaire, directly reflected this. The level of enthusiasm for each role play scene is documented in student feedback with 87% of students finding the session 'very interesting' and the same percentage found it 'very useful' or 'useful', where also many students expressed the idea that the learning was less remote and the material more relevant and more accessible, for example one student observed:

> *I find it a more in depth way of understanding certain issues.*

This sentiment was also echoed by another student, but in a sense she took the theme further, acknowledging that the learning became 'deeper' but also saying that:

> *I was able to visualise the scenarios in a working environment and see how professionals reach working decisions.*

It seems that engagement was on the level of 'seeing' the links between theoretical discussion in the classroom and practices in paid employment and that furthermore this learning was through the senses, via the reading of detailed live moving texts rather than just through the reading of the written word. Another student reflected how much their learning was a

> *…tangible experience from which to recall material learnt in the classroom as a way of revising for the end of year examination*

It is worth noting that while such learning could be a means of seeking to gain grades, for many the experience was also an acknowledgement of process for one student said they

> *…liked the way we talked with and learnt from you (the authors) but also from one another.*

Feedback from students suggested that the various groupwork activities, be they in the lecture or seminar room or indeed in the 'rehearsals', showed that whilst the 'teacher' was both facilitator and

leader and through these various roles, operating on Offer's (2001) continuum of learning forms, they also allowed for group participation in their own construction of learning. Many students reflected on how they did feel part of the process of learning with one observing that

> *…for me this was actually learning in action for I was playing a part in the drama and it was fun as well as instructional.*

Students clearly valued not just the actual performance to the cohort, but also dress rehearsals. They were keen to offer their own ideas on the development of the story but also the acting out of the scenes. One student said that she felt 'glad to be part of things, to contribute to my own learning.' Such was the level of enthusiasm for this they observed

> *…would it be a good idea to devote a whole lecture Session to a role play and discussion or is best to have it only as part of a lecture?*

To ask the question shows a level of enthusiasm and involvement. There were elements of tutor as 'expert', banking pedagogy (hooks, 1994), but for the greater part the students were co-producers of the knowledge, consistent with a form of critical pedagogy. The tutor adopted a different form of leadership, more facilitative (Douglas, 2000) and neutral (Law, 1996), bringing forth different kinds of knowledge. Many students felt or implied that this form of learning was 'new' with one student commenting that they thought that this form of pedagogy had

…developed my understanding of both the module and also the things that affect our lives.

The feedback also compared this method of learning with other methods employed, with one student saying that 'other lecturers should use this method of learning'. The way of learning seems imbued with many risks, both for the teacher/facilitator and the student. We were all aware of this as we rehearsed together and then acted out in front of the wider student group. Groupwork took place both within our small group and in the wider 'group' and in all settings, communication was orbital at almost all times, no matter what the setting or group composition. This was evident and so was risk and the authors shared their thoughts on this with the students suggesting that this was perhaps

'new' as a method of learning and that things could go 'wrong'. But they and the authors both understood that to be creative and developmental in teaching and learning one has to embrace risk taking, as one leaves the easy securities of the structured lesson behind (Ireson, 1999).

Conclusions

This paper has explored the extent by which groupwork, in conjunction with teaching practices, can be used in lecture settings and has set out how role play within such contexts enhances learning, promoting active rather than passive learning. The writers' experiences conclude that groupwork is possible in such settings and the use of role play facilitated this trend. It allowed for a certain dynamism in the classroom and allowed the lecturers to draw the students/learners into orbital communication, whereby they talked with each other in the large class and needed little or no prompting to engage in this activity. One can conclude from this that the lecture itself is no more redundant as a form of teaching/facilitation than other forms in its capacity to invite participation.

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