

An abstract painting with vibrant colors and expressive brushstrokes. The top half features shades of blue and green, while the bottom half is dominated by red and orange tones. The brushwork is thick and textured, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# **Arts-based and Embodied Methods of Leadership Development: Report of a Literature Review**

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November 2020

This report is one of the outcomes of the ENABLES (European Arts-Based Development of Distributed Leadership and Innovation in Schools) project which aims to strengthen collaborative leadership of innovation in schools by developing and disseminating innovative methods of arts-based and embodied collaborative leadership development. It runs from November 2019 to October 2022 (24 months). The project is supported by a grant from the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union (Project Reference Number 2019-1-UK01-KA201-061963). The University of Hertfordshire co-ordinates the project.

The project partners comprise:

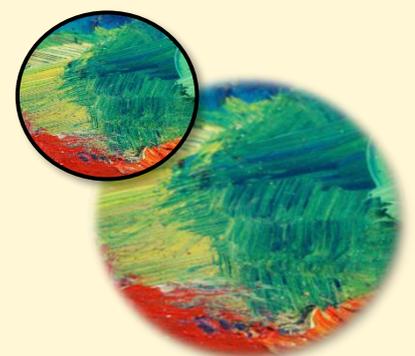
- University of Hertfordshire (UK) (co-ordinating institution)
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- Institute of Lifelong Learning and Culture «VITAE» (Latvia)
- University of Innsbruck (Austria)
- Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iași (Romania).

Further information on the project is available on this web page: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/cel/enables-arts-based-and-embodied-leadership-development>

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### **Suggested citation:**

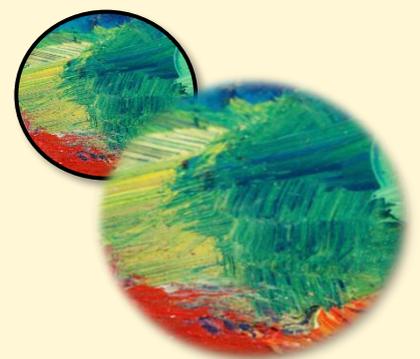
Woods, P.A., Culshaw, S., Jarvis, J., Payne, H., Roberts, A. and Smith, K. 2020. Arts-based and Embodied Methods of Leadership Development: Report of a Literature Review. Hatfield, Hertfordshire, UK: Centre for Educational Leadership, School of Education, University of Hertfordshire.



## Abstract

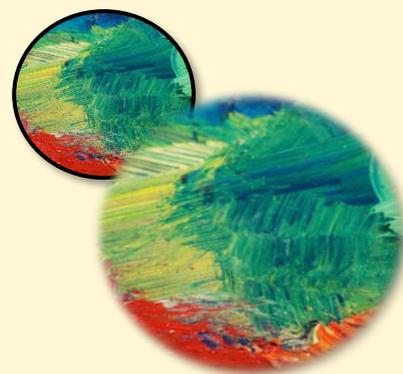


This literature review examined 50 publications which reported research into the use of arts-based and embodied (ABE) methods of leadership development and offered knowledge concerning whether and how such methods contribute to leadership development. It is one of five complementary reviews contributing to the Erasmus+ ENABLES project (European Arts-Based Development of Distributed Leadership and Innovation in Schools) and has been conducted by the University of Hertfordshire (UK) ENABLES team (the report's authors). Our analysis of the reviewed publications suggests that the processes involved in using ABE methods can be understood in terms of three aspects: features of the activity, what is activated by the activity and the constructions of leadership underpinning and reflected in the sessions using ABE methods. A diverse range of leadership constructions were apparent, from notions of the heroic leader through to a more holistic understanding of leadership as a complex, emotional, relational, embodied concept. Data on outcomes are limited, with 10 publications offering evidence that ABE methods had some impact on leadership development. Most apparent is research evidence that ABE methods helped participants by enhancing their relational sensitivity and increasing their ability to cope with unfamiliar circumstances and complexity. Six of these 10 publications offered evidence of consequent changes in practice. For example, there were indications that, following participation in ABE leadership development sessions, some leaders can find increased capacity to cope with stress and to notice and pay attention to factors important in relating to others, such as the value of seeing oneself in a team and avoiding blaming others. A critical perspective is missing from most studies into ABE methods of leadership development – concerning issues of power and inequalities and the effects of social positioning according to factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class. Implications identified through the review include (a) the potential to make more use of ABE methods to increase capabilities (such as relational sensitivity), appreciation of leadership as an emergent, relational process and self-awareness in the context of leadership, and thereby enhance the ability to take an active part in distributed leadership; and (b) the need for more research on the impact of ABE methods, including subsequent changes in leadership practice.



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# 1. Executive Summary

This literature review is one of five complementary reviews contributing to the Erasmus+ ENABLES project (European Arts-Based Development of Distributed Leadership and Innovation in Schools) and has been conducted by the University of Hertfordshire (UK) ENABLES team (the report's authors).

The strategy to identify and select publications for review sought publications published in or after the year 2000. The review examined a total of 50 selected publications which reported research into the use of arts-based and embodied (ABE) methods of leadership development and offered knowledge concerning whether and how such methods contribute to leadership development. Publication dates ranged from 2004 to 2019. Thirty of the publications reported empirical studies. ABE methods studied in the publications comprised embodied activities, music, craft-based activities, art activities (such as drawing and painting), narrative-creative activities (such as storytelling and poem houses), dance and performance, combined arts-based and embodied methods, and general arts-based methods (which included instances of mixed methods or where no specific detail was given).

Publications were allocated for review amongst team members. Reviews were carried out using a template in which information and assessments of each publication were entered, including what was reported about ABE methods' processes and outcomes and what could be concluded about the strength of connection between ABE methods and leadership development. Two members of the team analysed the consequent reviews. This involved a process of generating from the review categories and possible themes, synthesising these into a set of proposed final themes and conclusions and drafting an account of the review. The draft themes, conclusions and account were reviewed by the rest of the team who proposed refinements, amendments and additions that fed into the final version of the report.

Our analysis led us to suggest that the processes involved in using ABE methods can be understood in terms of three aspects: features of the activity, what is activated by the activity and leadership constructions. Features of the activity include facilitation, playfulness, activities of making, the connecting of body, feeling and intellect, learning from bodily experience, and encouraging attention and reflection. These features create the conditions in which certain processes are activated within and by participants. What is activated includes aesthetic awareness, aesthetic reflexivity and experiential learning. Particular constructions of leadership underpin and are reflected in the design of ABE methods for leadership development. These varied amongst studies. Some were informed by the idea that effective leaders require certain attributes such as being non-judgemental, having integrity, seeing oneself as an artist; some seemed to foster a 'heroic' view of leadership; some projected leadership as a collaborative, complex, emergent activity. We note an under-theorisation of leadership development, with studies tending to focus on learning rather than development.

Data on outcomes are more limited. We concluded that 10 publications offered evidence, from their research data, that ABE methods had some impact on leadership development. They each provided some evidence that participants themselves took away from the activities or programmes new learning or changes in attitudes, awareness, feelings and understanding. Two areas of change stand out: enhanced relational sensitivity and increased ability to cope with unfamiliar

circumstances and complexity. Six of the 10 publications offered evidence of consequent changes in practice. Two studies that made a systematic attempt to find out about changes following their ABE programme found some evidence that, as a result, those leaders had less of a laissez-faire approach and increased capacity to cope with stress. Another offered anecdotal feedback from participants and others suggested that they were more likely to notice things in their work, such as the value of seeing oneself in a team and avoiding blaming others.

It is noteworthy that a critical perspective is missing from most studies into ABE methods of leadership development – that is, issues of power and inequalities and the effects of social positioning according to factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class.

With regard to implications for future research, we conclude that the field of ABE methods of leadership development would benefit from more research that:

- i. includes in its design robust methods of assessing the effects on participants, especially effects on subsequent leadership practice
- ii. takes a longitudinal approach to studying impact
- iii. reports its research methods and analysis in sufficient detail to evidence claims about impact
- iv. explores issues of power and inequalities and the effects of social positioning according to factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class
- v. explains and critically explores facilitators' positionality (their relationship to participants for example), expertise and experience, and implications of these factors for the process and outcomes of ABE methods
- vi. explicitly and critically explores constructions of leadership that are promoted through ABE methods and gives more attention to theorising leadership development
- vii. investigates how varying designs of ABE methods might better or further serve developing the capabilities of non-positional as well as positional leaders for practising collaborative and distributed leadership

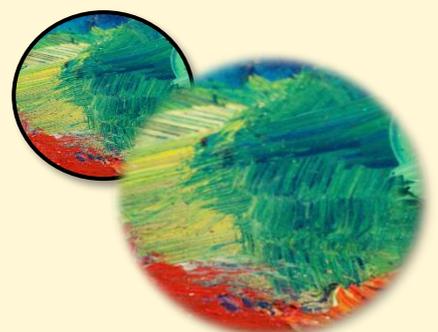
With regard to implications for leadership development practice, we conclude that ABE methods have a capacity to nurture leadership development by:

- i. enhancing capabilities such as
  - a) relational sensitivity – that is, increasing emotional sensitivity, willingness to engage with and be receptive to others and motivation to foster positive relationships
  - b) skills in listening and noticing
  - c) coping with unfamiliarity and complexity, through increased understanding (of their selves, complexity and how to cope, for example) or motivation (to deal with complexity and take responsibility, for example)
- ii. fostering alternative and challenging forms of learning by, for example
  - a) providing an alternative leadership development route in which planned activities of noticing and reflection are used to support analysis and critique, leading to openness to new ideas and to challenging pre-conceived ideas and accepted solutions

- b) being used to develop an alternative language of leadership, teaching, pedagogy and so on, which supports different understandings of success outside traditional, numeric, outcomes-based approaches
  - c) developing ABE methods' potential to allow for the growth of a nuanced understanding of webs of power and their impact, fostering the surfacing of affordances and barriers to leadership development
  - d) supporting the design of self-review activities which support the articulation of authentic values and honour individuals, leading to tailored, individual, leadership development programmes which challenge the notion of leadership types
- iii. enhancing the ability to be pro-active and innovative and take an active part in distributed leadership, by increasing capabilities (such as relational sensitivity), appreciation of leadership as an emergent, relational process, and self-awareness in the context of leadership practice

On processes, ABE methods require:

- i. accomplished and effective facilitation
- ii. clear understanding by participants of the purpose of ABE activity
- iii. ethical approaches which create a sense of secure space for participants to connect and interact with others, experiment and make sense of ABE approaches and their impact
- iv. facilitation of playful participation
- v. activation of self-learning by participants
- vi. experiential learning through being and doing, not just thinking and cognitive learning
- vii. being aware of, and responsive and adaptable to, participants' varied reactions to ABE methods
- viii. being aware of, and responsive and adaptable to, participants' multiple aims and how ABE methods may serve these



## 2. Introduction

This literature review is one of five complementary reviews contributing to the Erasmus+ ENABLES project (European Arts-Based Development of Distributed Leadership and Innovation in Schools) and has been conducted by the University of Hertfordshire (UK) ENABLES team.

The ENABLES project aims to strengthen the collaborative and distributed leadership of innovation in schools by developing and disseminating innovative methods of arts-based and embodied leadership development. Leadership that is collaborative and distributed is practised by positional leaders (those in a formal leadership position) and non-positional leaders (those not occupying a formal leadership position) (Frost, 2019; Woods & Roberts, 2018).

The project partners comprise:

- University of Hertfordshire (UK) (co-ordinating institution)
- University of Jyväskylä (Finland)
- Institute of Lifelong Learning and Culture «VITAE» (Latvia)
- University of Innsbruck (Austria)
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Each of the ENABLES partners is conducting a literature review on complementary aspects of arts-based and embodied (ABE) methods of leadership development. The reviews by Austria, Finland, Latvia and Romania focus on particular types of ABE (Table 1). The review described in this report, conducted by the UK team, took a more general approach. It was not limited to any particular type of ABE, seeking out any studies that researched arts-

based methods of leadership development (which might include one or more of any arts-based activity), and included embodied methods of leadership development. To be included in the review, a publication had to report research into the use of ABE methods for leadership development and offer knowledge on how such methods affect leadership development. Further details of the method of selection are given in section 3.

*Table 1: Literature review focus relating to leadership development*

Partner	Focus
<b>Austria</b>	vignettes, narrative and design thinking
<b>Finland</b>	visual arts
<b>Latvia</b>	performance arts and drama
<b>Romania</b>	creative writing and expression
<b>UK</b>	arts-based activities (unspecified) and embodied methods

The five reviews will be brought together to form a *Knowledge Platform* - a state-of-the-art systematic review of existing research literature on ABE methods of leadership development.

The intention is that this Knowledge Platform will:

- provide a knowledge foundation for the project, giving partners a shared knowledge of ABE methods which can be applied to strengthening collaborative and distributed leadership in schools
- make an innovative contribution to the field of ABE leadership development which can be used by practitioners, policy actors and researchers across Europe and globally
- give further depth and context to other project outputs, such as the action research trials of ABE methods for collaborative and distributed leadership development, which partners are conducting

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Introduction

In this section we outline the approach taken to search for and select publications for review. Details are also provided of the review process. We begin with an overview of the search strategy.

### 3.2 Search strategy

The team established the principles of the search strategy and any publication chosen for inclusion in this review had to meet a set of inclusion criteria which we outline in this section. The initial search for literature to review consisted of five steps, with an additional sixth step added as we proceeded. There was a very tight focus on literature in the field of leadership development AND arts-based and/or embodied learning approaches (ABE), in the fields of education and business.

*Basic inclusion criterion.* The first requirement of any publication to be considered for review was that it reported research into the use of ABE methods of leadership development and offered knowledge concerning whether and how such methods contribute to leadership development. We also established search criteria for the dates of publications, searching only for publications dated 2000 or after.

The six steps are summarised below.

#### Step 1

Following an in-depth discussion amongst two of the authors to determine the specific search criteria, a systematic search of two databases was conducted (*Education Research Complete* and *Business Source Complete*). In total, this strategy resulted in six separate searches, which were completed in early February 2020.

*Inclusion criteria for systematic search.* The inclusion criteria for selection were articulated as the following key search terms,

combinations of which were searched for in the TITLE and ABSTRACT:

- arts-based
- leadership development
- embodied learning

Upon closer inspection (a reading of the abstract, for example), a number of publications were removed. These six searches yielded **28 results**.

#### Step 2

At the same time as step 1, another team member conducted a further search of the two databases mentioned above. The searches focussed in particular on arts-based approaches, embodied learning approaches and leadership development, and were sourced from the fields of education and business. These searches yielded **25 results**. At this stage, it was not yet clear whether these 25 were the same as or different from the 28 publications in step 1.

#### Step 3

One of the UK team conducted a Google Scholar search in late February 2020 to check if including the terms 'leadership' and 'management' would capture additional relevant publications. Key terms comprised:

- arts-based methods
- leadership
- management
- embodied methods.

This search yielded **6 results**. At this stage, it was not clear whether these 6 were the same as or different from the 53 (28+25) from steps 1 and 2.

In addition, a number of book chapters and publications were added, based on team members' expert knowledge of the field, which

we term ‘expert accumulation.’ A further **9 results** were found this way.

These three strategies yielded an initial list of **68 results** (28+25+6+9). At this stage, we did not know if they were all different publications.

#### Step 4

Early in March 2020, the list of 68 publications was interrogated for duplicates; 16 were found. The resulting list of **52 publications** was circulated to the project team for feedback and agreement, against the inclusion criteria.

#### Step 5

In response to a final call to the team for any additional publications, based on their expert knowledge, 11 more publications were suggested for review. These were subsequently interrogated in mid-March 2020 against the basic inclusion criterion and the inclusion criteria for systematic search (*arts based / embodied learning / leadership development, as outlined in step 1*); of the 11, three publications were added to the final list for circulation, making a **total of 55 publications**.

Publications were then allocated amongst the six team members on a random basis, with the exception that some members opted to review publications in their possession (books, book chapters). A proforma template was created and circulated to the team with instructions for completing the review. The headings in the columns indicate what we were looking for in the review process and provided a clear and consistent framework within which team members were to review the publications. Beyond noting items such as authors, titles and type of publication, other headings included:

- aims
- methods
- theory
- key terms
- relevant findings
- validity

- generalisability
- significance
- emerging themes

A copy of the review template can be found in the Appendix.

#### Step 6

In early April 2020, as the process of review was underway and a more detailed reading was undertaken, a number of publications were deemed not to meet the inclusion criteria. Furthermore, some additional publications were suggested for review as a result of the reviewing process itself. Seven publications were added to the list as a result. During the review process, two publications were not accessible, so were removed. One publication turned out to be a duplicate. A further nine publications were deemed not focussed enough on the connection between ABE and leadership development.

The final total for systematic review was **50 publications**, with publication dates ranging from 2004 to 2019.

The following sub-sections outline the types of publications, the review process itself, the ABE approaches and the research methods used.

### 3.3 Types of publications

The table below demonstrates a culmination of the strategic search approach detailed above and outlines the types of publications reviewed; the majority of the papers were empirical studies.

*Table 2: Types of publications*

Type	No.	Detail
Conceptual	14	conceptual and theoretical; non-empirical
Empirical	30	for research methods, see separate table
Other	6	3 literature reviews essay professional association magazine thought-piece
Total	50	



Table 3: Types of ABE methods

Type	No.	Detail
<b>General Arts-Based Methods (ABM)</b>	<b>8</b>	6 - no specific detail provided or a mix of methods 1 – mention of collage 1 – mix of photography, theatre, sculpture
<b>Craft-based</b>	<b>3</b>	1 – clay sculpture 1 – doll-making 1 – mask-making
<b>Art-based</b>	<b>4</b>	1 – drawing 1 – painting 1 – studio-based arts 1 – visual arts
<b>Narrative-creative</b>	<b>2</b>	1 – poem-houses and collage 1 – touchstone and storytelling
<b>Music</b>	<b>9</b>	3 – music type not specified 6 – choral conducting
<b>Embodied</b>	<b>13</b>	10 - no specific detail provided 1 – movement improvisation 1 – bodily movement 1 – martial art (aikido)
<b>Dance and performance methods</b>	<b>8</b>	3 – dance 2 – theatre I improvisation 1 – dance and social presencing theatre 1 – method acting 1 – aesthetic drama
<b>ABM and embodied combined</b>	<b>3</b>	No specific detail provided
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	

### 3.6 Types of Research Methods

We report here a summary of our findings in terms of the methodologies and research instruments used in the empirical publications reviewed. Thirty publications were found to be based on empirical studies, with one acknowledging that it was not part of a systematic, rigorous research programme (37)<sup>1</sup> and another stating that this publication was part of a larger case study (10). Twenty-seven of the studies can be categorised as qualitative in nature; one was explicitly quantitative (excel 46), one had a mixed methodological approach (38) and in one case, the methodological

approach was unclear but the study was described as an experiment (49).

In nine of the publications, case study was mentioned as the underpinning approach, with one publication using the term ‘comparative case study’ (22) and one other using ‘critical case study’ (13). Action research was the approach in two studies (12, 15), with one of those using the term ‘action inquiry’ (15).

Interviews featured explicitly in seven publications, with semi-structured interviews mentioned in four. Skype and/or phone interviews were an additional approach in two publications (26, 35). The use of journals and/or diaries to capture participants’ reflections was found in four publications, with one referring to diaries (24, 7, 16; diaries – 31). The use of observation, for example of workshops or of participants ‘in action’ (e.g. 40), featured as a method in four publications. Only two studies explicitly mentioned an evaluation of participants’ experience over the longer-term (12 months or more: 38, 18).

We noted a lack of methodological detail in some publications, including little information on how data were collected or analysed. For example, in one case we were unable to establish how participants’ comments were collected (9). It was not always clear who the participants were, with 20 publications giving no clear information. However, in 10 studies, it was clear who was taking part in the research – e.g. leadership consultants (14), military advisors (10), MBA students (49) – with five studies explicitly mentioning the number of participants (7, 14, 23, 40, 41).

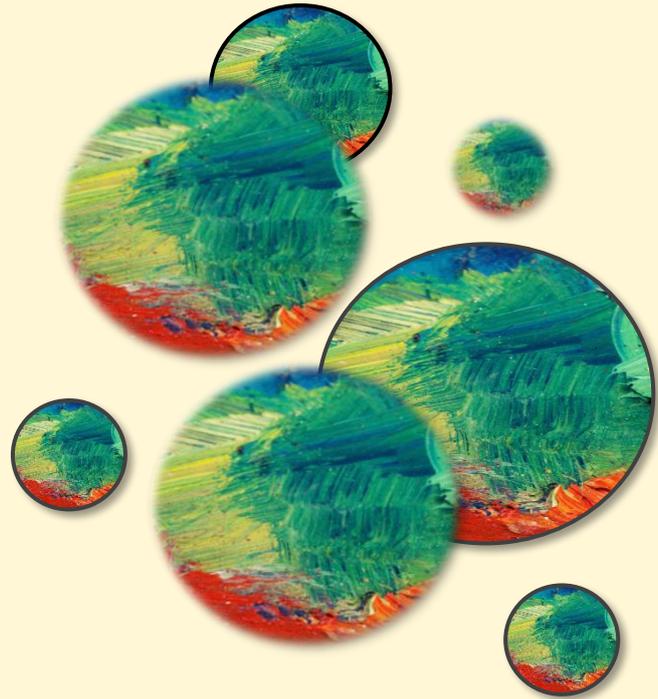
Here we provide illustrative examples from a publication which clearly outlined its methodological approach and acknowledged its limitations (47). This publication acknowledged the small number of participants, described the methods used (observation and interviews) and offered well-

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in brackets refer to the number of the reviewed publication, as listed in the appendix.

theorised yet appropriately tentative findings. This allowed us to assess the validity of the study and assess the evidence and claims of impact on practice. Another publication, indicating that a mixed-methods approach was used (38), also provided a seemingly strong evidential base for change in participants, aided by a coherent and thought-through method. Groups were randomised and there

was long-term follow-up. Equally, drop-out levels and limitations were clearly acknowledged.

In the next section, we describe in detail the findings of the review process.



## 4. Findings



### 4.1 Introduction

In this section we present the findings of the review process.

We noted above that the analytical approach identified four key lenses, through which the findings were filtered. We report here findings in sections which reflect these: processes, outcomes and strength of connection between ABE and leadership development. Processes, discussed in section 4.2, is the term being used to capture what occurred in the studies, how ABE activities were facilitated and run, and how participants reacted. There is also a discussion of the leadership constructions underpinning the activities discussed in the publications.

The discussion of outcomes, in section 4.3, is divided between a focus on outcomes in terms of a change in *people* and outcomes in terms of a change in *practice*. We complete our presentation of findings in section 4.4 with an assessment of the strength of evidence concerning the connection between ABE and leadership development. We then move onto implications for further research and practice in sections 4.5 and 4.6.

Before turning to a discussion of processes, we draw attention to a noticeable absence. We outlined above the nature of the empirical studies and summarised the methodological approaches taken. Where possible, we report on the types and numbers of participants involved. Yet we also note that which we *cannot* see in the literature reviewed, which leads us to recognise an under-representation of certain groups and a lack of diversity of cultural perspectives.

We perceive a lack of attention to social, cultural and power differences such as gender, ethnicity and positional inequalities.

The gender and ethnicity of participants are insufficiently clear in the majority of publications, with the exception of just one publication which takes a particularly critical approach to the 'norms' of leadership, highlighting the bodily performances of two leaders in non-traditional roles (40).

We begin the presentation of our findings with processes.

### 4.2 Processes

The term *processes* captures what occurred in the studies, how ABE activities were facilitated and run, and how participants reacted. This section will address both the *features* of the ABE activity and what is *activated* through the activity. We constructed a framework (Table 4) in the early stages of analysing the reviews which provided an initial scaffolding for completing the analytical process.

The conceptions of aesthetic awareness and aesthetic reflexivity in the initial framework are informed by a range of work (such as Bologh, 2009; Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; Sutherland, 2012). The definitions of aesthetic awareness and aesthetic reflexivity are taken from an internal ENABLES project working paper, 'Rationale and Plan for the UK ENABLES Action Research Trial', May 2020.

Table 4: Initial framework for analysis of reviews

<p><b>Features</b> of activity</p>	<p><b>Facilitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABE-related skill and expertise of the facilitator</li> <li>• how the ABE activity is set up</li> </ul> <p><b>Collaborative learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABE-related skill and expertise of the facilitator</li> <li>• includes disruption of power, hierarchy and surfacing knowledge, making learning visible</li> </ul> <p><b>Play</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• includes creative activity, improvisation, making</li> </ul> <p><b>Leadership construction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the kind of leadership that the activity is <i>designed to develop</i></li> <li>• extent to which aspects conducive to distributed leadership in these constructions are apparent</li> </ul>
<p>What is being <b>activated</b> in the activity</p>	<p><b>Aesthetic awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being appreciative of and sensitive to the aesthetic and capable of learning from this to improve ourselves and our practice</li> </ul> <p><b>Aesthetic reflexivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a process of critical probing reflection that raises and addresses challenging questions concerning our aesthetic experience and awareness, including assumptions we may hold</li> </ul>

#### 4.2.1 Features of the ABE activities

By activities, we mean the event in which arts-based or embodied learning approaches were used for the purpose of leadership development, and the actions, interactions and experiences designed into the event. As well as ‘event’, the literature may also refer to ‘intervention’, ‘workshop’, ‘session(s)’ or ‘programme(s)’. We noted an emphasis on the importance of the facilitation of the activity and the role of playfulness in the creative process. We also address in this section the themes of connecting and learning from bodily experience. Finally, we turn to attention, which includes awareness, and reflection as features of activities.

The framing and facilitation of the activity are deemed in 13 publications to be key determining factors in the relative success of the activity. One study (46) offers the notion of aesthetic workspaces as the context for the activity. A number of the activities were led by ‘experts in the field’ such as professional dancers and artists (e.g. 6, 37). It is difficult to discern whether the leading roles of those experts in the studies meant the studies were more likely to rate their

expertise and facilitation as especially important.

In other studies, it was course leaders (for example on university-based management courses) who designed and led the activities. The method of facilitation also differed between studies, with some models more in line with transmission models of learning (in which the focus appears to be on the acquisition of knowledge, or a particular skill or technique). Others seemed to be driven more by transformative learning theory. Transmission models tend to focus more on ‘doing’ leadership, transformative learning on ‘being’ a leader.

What is clear is that good facilitation (which includes the setting up and running of the activity, consideration of the methods and materials used, the approach to evaluating the impact of the activity, etc.) helps support participants in a process of ‘not knowing’ and through the experience of discomfort created through engaging with ABE approaches.

Unfamiliarity with the methods and/or materials used in the activity may make some

participants reluctant to engage; a 'good' facilitator is able to 'authorise' (31) the process and any resulting learning experience by creating a safe space in which participants can allow themselves to feel exposed and vulnerable. Indeed, reluctance to engage was seen by some participants in some studies as a barrier to participation; receptivity, readiness and responsiveness were all highlighted as factors required when engaging in a process which may be unfamiliar.

In nine publications we found the notion of play – or playfulness – highlighted, where it is associated with the ability to improvise and be spontaneous in a safe space (e.g. 21, 31). Exploring through play and the idea of innovation and playfulness at work is a feature in a number of publications (e.g. 12, 17, 33 and in particular 31). One publication reported the following, first from a participant, then a facilitator:

The activity was fun... doing something silly relieves the atmosphere and frees the mind. (31, p264)

[the activity] opened the students' minds to appreciate personal creativity and to see the potential in allowing for fun and playfulness at work. (31, p267)

Playfulness is not an attribute immediately or traditionally associated with leadership, although occasionally a 'sense of play, laughter and fun at work' (Cherkowski, 2018, p. 64) and 'having a good sense of playfulness and humour' (Day, 2004, p. 427) are highlighted in the literature as positive attributes of leadership. Being playful requires, perhaps, a certain level of disruption – or a willingness to break with established patterns of behaving, thinking and relating – which can be encouraged through ABE approaches. We are taking playfulness to mean the ability to improvise and be playful when faced with a new and unfamiliar

situation. We position it in contrast with resistance or rigidity.

Table 3 in section 3.5 shows the range of ABE methods and approaches used. These activities often allow participants to engage physically and to have agency in the creative process (Roberts & Woods, 2018), in the form of making, doing, exploring, rehearsing, creating, envisioning, evoking, imagining, improvising. The notion of making can be found in 13 of the publications. For example, in one study *mask-making* is part of the process of *sense-making* (19). In other studies, the processes of making allowed the expression of more refined perceptual distinctions (42, 36).

Some of these activities were undertaken alone, others in collaboration with other participants. The act of creative collaborating was a particular feature in some activities and the sense of connecting with others is a theme in 17 publications. For example, one study (31) highlighted how an ABE approach allowed participants to appreciate not only their own personal creativity but to also engage collectively. The study, using a martial art approach (4), introduced the notion of 'leading through connecting' in which participants (in this case, aikido practitioners) engaged in 'open-ended synchronizing' (p73).

A sense of connection with oneself and with others is associated with empathy, compassion and resonance (e.g. 15, 21), and is featured either implicitly or explicitly in 17 articles. In one study (4) connectedness and synchronicity seem to emerge from the experiential learning associated with a particular embodied learning approach (aikido).

In contrast, a different study (49) suggests participants feel disconnected from their thinking, from their self and their body when engaging in a more traditional, formal approach to leadership learning:

Embodied knowledge was enriched and evoked to support emergent coordination amongst the students (involved in the ABE activity) compared to a disconnectedness amongst students in a formal-directive way of coordination. (49, p47; our parentheses)

In the more formal learning setting, a connection could be seen between participants and the choreographer, for example, but not *between* participants themselves. This theme of connection incorporates the sense of connecting with one's body, feelings, emotions and thoughts. In one study, coaching provided the space for connecting and reflecting (18). In another study, first separating and then connecting or 'blending the intellectual and the emotional' (34, p47) in a training context allowed a more holistic understanding of self and others to emerge.

Approximately half of the activities featured in the publications involved some form of physical movement, with 22 emphasising learning from bodily experiences. For example, one paper (45) outlined how participants learn about their body and discover new bodily experiences through using their body. The study suggests:

Dance exercises are fertile occasions in which managers place their own bodies in focal awareness and thus may get more detailed experiences of the body, which they may use to develop their acts of knowing and doing. (45, p108)

However:

... it is not possible to fully predict the consequences of adopting particular bodily experiences to achieve skilful knowing and doing in our management practice. It is important for facilitators to support such discovery. (45, p108)

The second point supports the idea that learning is a discovery and reinforces the

need for skilful and supportive facilitation, which we raised earlier. The study also offers a critical position on the role of post-activity (spoken) reflection:

We have made some critical remarks about the common practice of using reflective conversations as a means to extract learning from the experience of the dance exercises. (45, p108)

The suggestion made in the study is that resorting to *talking* about learning, rather than staying with the bodily experience, may in fact limit the learning potential. The point about staying with the bodily experience is also an alternative to capturing participants' reflection in written form, using as some studies do (section 3.6) journals and/or diaries for example. The notion of learning being identified through physical experiences features in other publications too (e.g. 37). Somatic experiences and embodied knowledge are seen as key elements of the sense-making processes in 10 papers, with the mind and body working together to create sensuous knowledge (e.g. 10, 17, 26, 36). This is referred to in the literature as a 'tapping into sensuous perceptions and emotions' (26, p15) or 'surfacing' or 'turning-on' embodied knowledge' (32, p64). In one publication, the importance of 'simply having bodily experiences' is noted (45, p108).

Awareness of self and others also features in many publications (n=19), with reference to the relational, situational, social, emotional and aesthetic dimensions of awareness. We entitled this theme attention and assigned 19 publications to that theme. The idea of paying attention to oneself and others is associated in the literature with active listening, attention to sensory templates (43), self-awareness and introspection (19) as well as an awareness of what is occurring in a relational space (4). There is a close relationship between this idea of attention or awareness, and reflection, to which we turn.

Reflection was a theme that we identified in almost half (n=24) of the publications. In some publications, reflection was more implied in concepts such as sense-making or contemplation. Reflection and reflexivity were found to be a key aspect of the learning process. In summary, we take reflection, and the associated idea of reflexivity, to be referring to a process that allows participants to view things differently – for example, to recollect lived experience (21), reflect on different perspectives and viewpoints (31), and reflect on ways of seeing (34):

I have a certain way of approaching things that are deeply embedded in my

thinking. I was way out of my element in this course, but it truly opened **new ways of seeing** and learning. (34, p83, our emphasis)

Reflection at its simplest can perhaps be understood as taking the attention noted above a step further by questioning how one attends to what one sees. In this way, reflection is more involved than, but builds upon, attention.

In this section we have looked at a range of features of activities, as one aspect of processes. The table below summarises the findings relating to features.

*Table 5: Features of the activity*

Theme	No. of publications	Illustrative examples
<b>Facilitation</b>	<b>13</b>	reliance on skill of facilitator (24, 48); good facilitation to ensure learning (13); facilitator is key (9, 16, 26, 37); role of facilitator authorising process (31); experience and (arts-based) expertise of course designers and facilitators (6, 36 – implied; 37)  setting-up / framing of the workshop/intervention (11)
<b>Play / playfulness</b>	<b>9</b>	improvisation and spontaneity in a safe space (21); playfulness in aesthetic drama (in safe space) (17)  embodied and emotional aspects of play (9); playfulness, fun, exploring, innovation, playfulness at work (31)
<b>Making</b>	<b>13</b>	sense-making through doing (making) (36); process of making and link to expressing perceptual distinctions (42)  self-created choreographic work (50)  poem houses (15); mask-making (19); doll-making (12); clay sculpture, (reluctance) (18); drawing (developmental readiness, resistance) (11)
<b>Connecting body, feeling, emotion and intellect</b>	<b>17</b>	sense-making through body and mind, empathetic communication (21); making and expressing more refined perceptual distinctions (42); tapping into sensuous awareness (26); considering somatic experience and manipulation of the body (10); felt meaning (37); intellect and emotion, intentional observation, holistic understanding (34)  exploring different perspectives, understanding complexity (of innovation), appreciation of personal creativity (31); interconnected nexus, open-ended synchronizing, leading through connecting (4)  emotions of leadership, coaching as a space for reflection (18)  evocative nature of music (7)
<b>Learning from body experience</b>	<b>22</b>	learning from body experience, body and mind working together to provide a source of leadership (gestural leadership) (3)

Theme	No. of publications	Illustrative examples
		<p>considering the somatic experience and manipulation of the body (10); sense-making through body and mind (21); engaging with somatic cues (30); noticing bodily sensing (17); sense-making through doing, transforming and understanding (36); identifying learning through physical experiences (37); new bodily experiences discovered through use (45); bodily responses, somatic experience, adaptability and responsiveness (49)</p> <p>defamiliarisation and re-framing, embodied performance, tapping into sensuous awareness (26); discomfort and disruption of embodied and emotional aspects of play (9)</p> <p>turning on embodied knowledge (32); embodied experience as the body of knowledge (39); bodily movement, gestures, posture, presence (40)</p>
<b>Attention</b>	<b>19</b>	<p>social presencing, aesthetic awareness (32); self-awareness and introspection (19); awareness of what is occurring, synchronizing (4)</p> <p>making and expressing more refined perceptual distinctions (42); de-familiarisation and re-framing (learning) (26); what we notice, what we see, what patterns we emphasise and which we ignore (1)</p> <p>appreciation of personal creativity (31)</p>
<b>Reflection</b>	<b>24</b>	<p>recollection of lived experience (21); reflecting on learning, over time (37); reflecting on different perspectives and viewpoints (as part of learning collaboratively) (31); reflecting on ways of seeing, holistic understanding (34)</p> <p>aesthetic reflexivity (46); reflexivity and aesthetic agency (45)</p>

We now move on to present findings of what was activated in the ABE activity.

#### 4.2.2. What is activated in the ABE activity

What is activated in the activity refers to what occurs within and between participants as the activity and its features unfold. The interconnections in this process are complex. For example, in the section above, reflection and attention were outlined as *features* of the activity. In other respects, however, they can also be seen as processes which are *activated* as an activity unfolds. There is not a clear delineation in practice as a participant engages with the features of an activity. Activations occur in a process of perpetual motion. We can make a distinction between features and what is activated for the purpose of analysis and better understanding of the complex processes involved. But we should note that there is not

a simple, linear cause and effect relationship between the features of the activity and what is activated within and between the participants.

Attention and reflection are key themes in this literature as they feature in 24 and 19 publications respectively. We say more here about these themes as aspects of what is activated amongst participants as they take part in and engage with activities and their features. Attention and reflection include attention to one's theories-in-use (43), one's use of metaphor (29, 47) and the practice of introspection (19) and contemplation (48). They can also involve critical thinking and disruption. An awareness of self and others can be heightened through the activation of sensitivities to 'somatic cues,' (e.g. 30). This is also referred to in the literature as sensuous awareness (e.g. 26). Attention and reflection include attending to our bodily experiences and reflecting on how we view

these and what we can learn from them. One study (30) suggests that a somatic sense of self can activate a 'felt sense of authenticity' (p64). In relation to leadership capacity, this study posits further that engaging with somatic cues can help leaders perform leadership as an authentic experience. Elsewhere, there is reference to the notion of 'turning-on' (32, p64) - activating - embodied knowledge which in turn may unlock innovation, creativity and intelligence.

Discomfort can also be activated, for example through feeling unsettled about, and unfamiliar with, the type or nature of the activity. The process of challenging norms and assumptions (for example associated with particular constructions of leadership) can cause discomfort. A critical engagement with taken-for-granted knowledge features in five publications (1, 22, 47, 50 and in particular 33). The process of making a leadership touchstone and then sharing the story embodied within the touchstone allowed participants to appreciate aesthetic knowledge and to challenge dominant forms of knowing (33). The danger of neglecting – or not seeing – certain types of knowledge is also highlighted:

Without aesthetics, management education runs the aesthetic risk of neglecting or otherwise taking for granted important aspects of both organizational and classroom experiences. (33, p301)

Discomfort was also activated in relation to the *type* of ABE approach taken in the activities. Some participants noted a disruptive discomfort which manifested through the embodied and emotional aspects of play (9). Reluctance to engage with clay sculpting was noted in one paper (18). The notion of resistance and a lack of readiness to engage in drawing was also noted (11). Elsewhere, drawing has been seen to be challenging for some, with other arts-based

methods being found to free participants from the challenge of drawing. Methods other than drawing may enable participants to express themselves in a way that does not 'rely on perceived artistic ability' (Woods & Roberts, 2013, p. 10).

In nearly half of the studies (n=22), the body was seen as a source of knowledge; the site for the activation of knowledge. In one study, the body and mind were deemed to be working together to provide a source of leadership, termed gestural leadership (3). Learning from bodily experiences can be the result of awareness of self in isolation, but more often participants were in a relational space with others; this was highlighted in section 4.2.1 in relation to creative collaborating, where we noted that connection can be a feature of learning in approaches which adopt arts-based and in particular embodied methods. Bodily experiences – also referred to as somatic experiences (10), somatic cues (30), or embodied knowledge (32) – can be the basis of the development of a sensitivity to aesthetic factors. For example, the process of doing – in the case of one study, embodied interpretation captured in the form of a reflexive sketchbook – allowed sense-making, which in turn activated transformation and understanding (36).

Thirteen publications make reference to aesthetics generally and aesthetic knowing more specifically. We refer to the latter as aesthetic awareness, by which we mean the notion of being appreciative of and sensitive to the aesthetic and capable of learning from this to improve ourselves and our practice (Table 4). If understood in this way, aesthetic awareness featured in 19 publications, for example in the form of attending to, and activating, sensory templates (16, 43). One study referred to the 'turning on' and surfacing of embodied knowledge (32, p164); an openness to the interrelationship of cognitive and bodily experience seemed to allow an activation of aesthetic awareness. In

other studies, aesthetic workspaces (46) – a *feature* of the activity – provide the context for aesthetic agency (45) and a space in which aesthetic sense-making and knowing (47) are activated. Some studies highlighted how a particular use of posture or gesture (e.g. 3), or other features of non-verbal communication, can be part of a deeper process of knowing and sense-making.

Experiential learning is part of what is activated in the activities. This features in eight publications. There is an overlap between experiential learning and learning from body experiences, which was discussed in section 4.2.1 as a *feature* of the activity. Learning is associated with experiential knowledge and knowing (15, 22), and experiential meaning-making or ‘felt meaning’ (37, p135). The importance and power of participants identifying the activation of learning is mentioned in one paper (37); transformational learning is identified in one other paper (19).

Learning is not only a feature of the activity and something that is activated, but also an *outcome* and will therefore be discussed further in section 4.3. We suggest that the discussion in this section can be summarised in terms of three aspects of activation that are set out in Table 6. The first is aesthetic awareness, defined (Table 4) as the quality or process of being appreciative of and sensitive to the aesthetic and being capable of learning from this to improve and enrich ourselves and our practice and to foster ethical sensibilities. This includes themes such as aesthetic knowing and sense-making, as well as themes of attention and reflection. The second is aesthetic reflexivity, defined (Table 4) as critical, probing reflection that raises and addresses challenging questions concerning our aesthetic experience and awareness, including assumptions we may hold, It includes themes of critical thinking, disruption and discomfort. The third is the process of experiential learning, which often involves creative collaboration with other.

*Table 6: What is activated in the activity*

Aspects of activation	No. of publications	Illustrative examples
<b>Aesthetic awareness</b>	<b>19</b>	aesthetic sense-making and knowing (47); aesthetic, sensuous knowing (15, 48); aesthetic awareness (12, 22, 32), aesthetics of ethics (38) and gesture (3); organisational aesthetics, artistic-aesthetic knowing, aesthetic risk (33) surfacing aesthetic knowledge (32); aesthetic agency (45)  aesthetic workspaces (46)
<b>Aesthetic reflexivity</b>	<b>9</b>	aesthetic reflexivity (45, 46)  challenging norms and assumptions (47); challenging dominant forms of knowing, critical engagement (33); critiquing taken-for-granted (22)  critical reflection (5); critical reflexivity (12)  making and expressing more refined perceptual distinctions (42)
<b>Experiential learning</b>	<b>9</b>	experiential learning (22, 47, 50) and experiential knowledge (22); experiential knowing through empathy and resonance (15); felt meaning (37)  leadership development requires learning from past experience and connecting with daily issues (39)  transformational learning, introspection (19)

We now move on to present findings on the constructions of leadership found in the literature.

### 4.2.3 Leadership constructions

The search strategy included the term 'leadership development' as an essential criterion for inclusion for publications in this review. Throughout the review process, we encountered a diverse range of leadership constructions (noted in 28 articles), from notions of the heroic leader through to a more holistic understanding of leadership as a complex, emotional, relational, embodied concept.

These conceptual constructions of leadership seemed to underpin the design of the activities as well as influence the type of learning that the activity was designed to promote or develop. Effective leaders were seen as requiring attributes such as the ability to be non-judgemental (e.g. 36), having integrity, being compassionate (e.g. 25, 38), seeing oneself as an artist (e.g. 22, 35), having an authentic presence (e.g. 27, 50), and viewing leadership as collaborative (e.g. 3). One publication argues for a move away from leader-centricity towards leadership as collective action (39).

The ability to think critically (12), to embrace uncertainty (1, 2, 27) and to engage in reflexivity (1, 27) also feature. Critical thinking – as an aspect of leadership but also an integral feature in the process of reflexivity – was mentioned in 9 articles. This criticality of thought involves a willingness to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, to break existing patterns of behaviour and ultimately to disrupt dominant forms of knowing. What may result are more refined perceptual distinctions (42) with regard to 'everyday management practice, managers' concepts of managerial tasks, or managers' competence in carrying out these tasks' (42, p130). Others

emphasise that learning is required for change to happen; learning that includes negative knowledge and 'dropping off old things' (39, p200).

Being able to appreciate multiple perspectives was mentioned in five publications (1, 2, 15, 22, 24) as well as the ability to lead wisely (28) and creatively, ethically and morally (in 7 publications). Some studies adopted a clearly heroic view of leadership. For example, one adopted the 'leader as conductor' approach (26) and constructs a specific kind of leadership, positioning the leader as the expert and introducing notions of 'good leadership' and 'good leaders.'

Leadership was conceptualised in one publication as dispositional not positional (7) and another contrasted formal and informal leadership (49). One case study adopted a particular method (observation in action) to identify the bodily practices of two leaders and to challenge the 'norms' of leadership practices by highlighting their 'different body performances' (40, p387); this study revealed the body as a powerful site in the construction of subversive leadership.

Given that the focus of the review was on leadership *development*, and not just on leadership, we note that there appears to be a general under-theorising of leadership development across the literature. There is an acknowledgement that leadership development takes time and space (39). Generally, any change in leaders' knowledge, understanding and perhaps practice tends to be conceptualised in the literature as *learning* rather than *development*. However, one publication (39) provides an overview of leadership development research and offers a more critical perspective. There is a call for a reorientation away from content and towards process, from generic to tailor-made processes, from intellectual-rational input to embodied experience. Finally, this publication

argues that a knowing-doing gap can exist and suggests:

to overcome the gap requires taking embodied knowing seriously. As long as knowledge is constructed as a head-subject only, it remains as an abstraction... Learning as an embodied experience touches emotions, experiences, and prejudices, that is, the whole embodied person. To ensure its internal progress, LD [leadership development] knowledge in this respect could include more embodied and experiential elements. (39, p208)

The argument is that traditional forms of knowledge view leadership as a head-subject, to the exclusion of embodied knowledge; whilst embodied learning may be uncomfortable, senses and felt meanings can be valid sources of information. Given that our 'minds are mapped over the whole body, leadership development ... needs to take that human condition into account in a more holistic manner' (39, p210).

Table 7 summarises the findings relating to leadership constructions, which were found in 28 publications.

*Table 7: Leadership constructions*

heroic leader (8); charismatic (50); dispositional (not positional) (7); leadership in situ, processual nature of leadership (10); relational leadership (9); subversive leadership (40); formal/informal leadership (49); authentic leadership (16,50); 'norms' of leadership (40); challenging notion of leader-centricity (39); 'good leadership' and 'good' leaders (26)
creative (38) and artistic (35); leading creatively (1); being and seeing like artists (22); a gestural art that invites co-creativity (3)
wisdom (28); leading wisely (1); deep values (2,28)
collaborative process (3); leadership-in-practice as collective action (39)
contemplation (1); critical reflexivity and learning (12); reflective practice (27); empathy, compassion and tolerance (2, 25, 38); doing good, being inclusive and accepting (29), congruence (morals and ethics) (27); social justice orientation (22)
seeing and appreciating multiple perspectives or interpretations (1, 2, 15, 24)
embracing uncertainty (1, 12, 27)
attention to followers (29); connection to self and others (48); interpersonal and organisational leadership (22, 38)
being non-judgemental, active listening, intuition, authentic presence and intention (27)
physical presence as part of leadership (40); embodied leadership (50)

We move now from processes to present findings on outcomes.

### 4.3 Outcomes

We consider in this section evidence from the publications reviewed concerning the impact

of ABE methods of leadership development. What evidence is there that there were outcomes in terms of participants being changed (in their knowledge, understanding, awareness, attitudes, feelings, sensitivities and so on) and/or in their practice? This discussion of outcomes is based on 30

studies which we classified as empirical (Table 2).

Of these publications, 10 offered evidence, from their research data, that ABE methods had some impact on leadership development. A number of publications in the review presented data where information on the methods of data collection and analysis was too limited or absent. We judged these as insufficiently evidenced to indicate impact, and they are not included in the 10.

All 10 provided some evidence that participants themselves had been affected in some way and that they took away from the activities or programmes new learning or changes in attitudes, awareness, feelings and so on. Fewer offered evidence of consequent changes in practice. Six did so. Table 8 summarises key changes for which there was evidence in these 10 publications

*Table 8: Impact of arts-based and embodied methods of leadership development*

Publication	Learning and changes amongst participants	Changes in practice
23	leaders and teachers developing a new language to explore together the art of teaching, emphasising active listening and paying attention to impact on others' feelings	changes in practice using the new language to explore together the art of teaching, paying attention to the impact of what is done in the classroom on the feelings of all involved, with the leader becoming an active listener to support the teacher's own reflections. One leader changed her whole observation and assessment process to an aesthetic one.
47	awareness and attention to the subjective aspects of leadership and organisational life: that is, insights into leadership as a relational process which is an emotional, embodied and interactive phenomenon involving feelings, energy and connections (summarised as aesthetic knowing) and is more sophisticated than the narrative of top-down leadership, with leadership coming to be seen as emergent and distributed; and learning from the feeling of power as a sensual, felt phenomenon, through the experience of conducting for example.	longer-term data showing positive impact on the professional practice of participants
26	learning about their selves - that is, their leadership style, how to cope in unfamiliar situations and understanding the obligation to tune into employees' needs while maintaining an ability to act decisively	N/A
31	increased understanding of complexity, innovation and organisational renewal; how to cope in unfamiliar situations; increased self-confidence, responsibility and adaptability; and feeling encouraged to be authentic, true to one's self	an example of a participant inspired to apply an arts-based intervention in their business
36	becoming more open-minded, adaptable, inspired; more able to make sense of learning	N/A

Publication	Learning and changes amongst participants	Changes in practice
38	extending participants' resources and motivation to cope with complexity, conflicts, anxieties and other stressors, increasing their resilience to stress and their motivation to take responsibility and to maintain positive interpersonal relations	leaders showed a significant improvement in leadership behaviour evaluated by subordinates – less of a laissez-faire approach and increased capacity to cope with stress
11	greater emotional intelligence and improvement in leader identity, openness to experience and receptivity to feedback	N/A
40	learning to model a way of being in their bodies that transgressed and subverted norms	modelling a way of being was at the same time a bodily practice that was an important dimension in bringing about radical change
37	greater willingness to engage proactively and positively with others and to be guided by felt experiences rather than by preconceived solutions, and increased capacity to notice things in their work and to think more deeply about how they could achieve aims	changed attitudes and behaviours resulting in better project outcomes and improved financial results; outcomes that participants chose to implement as a direct result of the programme: participants noticed things in their work, such as the value of seeing oneself in a team and avoiding blaming others and how this improved work; and not seeing your job done when you had achieved the formal goal but went on to think more deeply about how you could achieve the aim better.
49	being more connected and aware of others, more observing of what is happening and stronger sense of independence and inner calmness	N/A

With regard to impact on participants, two areas of change stand out. One concerns *enhanced relational sensitivity*. In a majority of the studies (11, 23, 26, 37, 38, 47, 49), participation in ABE methods was found to increase emotional sensitivity and willingness to engage with and be receptive to others. The other concerns *increased ability to cope with unfamiliarity and complexity*. Three studies (26, 31, 38) reported evidence of participants feeling better able to cope through increased understanding (of their selves, complexity and how to cope, for example) or motivation (to deal with complexity and take responsibility, for example).

There is less evidence of resulting changes in practice. The data on such changes are not always detailed. One study cited an example of applying an arts-based practice in their

organisation but did not present any further findings on changes in practice (31). Two presented findings based on a systematic attempt to find out about changes following the ABE programme (38, 47). For example, evaluation by subordinates of leaders who had gone through the programme suggested that, as a result, those leaders had less of a laissez-faire approach and increased capacity to cope with stress (38). Another offered anecdotal feedback from participants and others on their responses and experiences of the programme, which included how they were more likely to notice things in their work, such as the value of seeing oneself in a team and avoiding blaming others, and how this improved work (37).

Four examples concerning practice are presented below. They give further insight

into what change can mean and (in the first three examples) how participants can actively reflect upon, apply and develop what they have learnt and be innovative in their practice. They also illustrate how contextualised such change is.

... the learning that emerged for many [in choral conducting workshops] actually impacted their managerial practice and their exercising of power.

In a follow-up interview 6 months after the choral masterclass, Mark admitted,

For example, my bad habit was that I . . . how can I say this . . . too tight with people . . . I used too much power, to control the situation. Now, it is different. Now, I just want a clear understanding of the task . . . and then I just simply leave the people . . . And, if they need anything, I always try to help them. (Mark, EMBA Student)

Back in his work environment, Mark translated the experience into action. He recognized that his approach to power was too “tight,” too controlling. Now he seeks shared understanding of the work at hand, then leaves people to it—but is present to help, to serve. (47, p300).

Tom [a business executive] said the following in a follow-up 12 months after the [choral conducting] workshop:

. . . sometimes, it is imagined that leaders have to lead and have to direct and have to control and control . . . Well, it doesn't work this way . . . and this exercise with the choir really points this out. I mean, the main connection is that this exercise really reminds you how important it is to remind yourself on a daily basis what leadership is really about . . . it is not ordering, screaming, yelling, wanting people to do precisely what you want them to do, but it is really listening, and getting the right mix. (Tom, EMBA Student)  
(47, p300)

A student had facilitated a development workshop in his organisation using ABI [arts-based intervention]. He was working in a medium-sized company in the restaurant business and he got an assignment to facilitate a strategy workshop for the top management as part of a strategy planning day. He used music to create small teams, each with a different kind of innovation culture. Each team had to come up with strategy-related ideas for the company. As a result, the discussion among the top managers had been much more lively than usual and the top management team was able to come up with more innovative ideas for the business development than before. (31, pp267-268)

The fourth example not only illustrates another way of relating embodiment to practice, but highlights a critical perspective that is missing from most studies into ABE methods of leadership development – that is, issues of power and inequalities and the effects of social positioning according to factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class. The example is from an analysis of embodied leadership aimed to make gender and race explicit (40). In one of the cases in the study, Sarra (an Aboriginal school principal in Australia) fashioned his leadership style by trusting to culturally resonant methods of creating connections:

Sarra is someone who trusts his knowledge and instincts about what a group needs and trusts himself to act on those beliefs despite attack from Aboriginal and white critics and the knowledge that these methods contravene conventional educational wisdom. His firm self-identification of himself as Aboriginal first, principal second, as always following Aboriginal ways of doing things, presents itself as an indivisible leadership package – head, heart, body, spirit, family, race and culture. Even if one allows for the tensions that would likely emerge in leadership practice, it is not a leadership that is bifurcated by home–work dichotomies or massaged into multiple identities for different constituencies. (40, p396)

In this study, embodiment is not a focus of an ABE session or programme in leadership development. Rather, the leaders' construction of their leadership is a process in which not internalising 'conventional scripts about their bodies' allows them 'to free a different kind of bodily practice' that disrupts and contests conventional thinking (40, page 392).

#### 4.4 Strength of evidence of ABE methods impacting on leadership development

Out of 50 publications reviewed, 10 were judged in this review to provide reasonably robust evidence of the impact of ABE methods on leadership development. This finding of the review suggests that the evidence base for demonstrating the connection between ABE methods and leadership development is limited.

The research methods used to analyse and assess data varied in their robustness as means to establishing the extent to which there was a relationship between ABE methods and outcomes, and the degree to which outcomes could be attributed to those methods. In some publications the explanation of research methods and analysis was limited and this made it difficult, or impossible, to judge if the research showed outcomes from the use of ABE methods.

The findings of the 10 publications provided some evidence of participants being changed – through increased knowledge, understanding, awareness, attitudes, feelings, sensitivities and so on. The concepts used in describing how participants changed varied according to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the studies. There was little if any commonly conceptualised terms to describe outcomes which could aid comparison and replication of studies' findings.

The research evidence for impact on practice was very limited. Few studies build into their design methods of data collection which will give some indication of the effects or consequences, if any, on practice.

#### 4.5 Implications for future research

Building on and adding to the research that has been done, the field of ABE methods of leadership development would benefit from more research that:

- i. includes in its design robust methods of assessing the effects on participants, especially effects on subsequent leadership practice
- ii. takes a longitudinal approach to studying impact
- iii. reports its research methods and analysis in sufficient detail to evidence claims about impact
- iv. explores issues of power and inequalities and the effects of social positioning according to factors such as gender, ethnicity and social class
- v. explains and critically explores facilitators' positionality (their relationship to participants for example), expertise and experience, and implications of these factors for the process and outcomes of ABE methods
- vi. explicitly and critically explores constructions of leadership that are promoted through ABE methods and gives more attention to theorising leadership development
- vii. investigates how varying designs of ABE methods might better or further serve developing the capabilities of non-positional as well as positional leaders for practising collaborative and distributed leadership.

## 4.6 Implications for leadership development practice

Thinking about the evidence on impact, ABE methods have a capacity to nurture leadership development by:

- i. enhancing capabilities such as
  - a) relational sensitivity – that is, increasing emotional sensitivity, willingness to engage with and be receptive to others and motivation to foster positive relationships
  - b) skills in listening and noticing
  - c) coping with unfamiliarity and complexity, through increased understanding (of their selves, complexity and how to cope, for example) or motivation (to deal with complexity and take responsibility, for example)
- ii. fostering alternative and challenging forms of learning by, for example
  - a) providing an alternative leadership development route in which planned activities of noticing and reflection are used to support analysis and critique, leading to openness to new ideas and to challenging pre-conceived ideas and accepted solutions
  - b) being used to develop an alternative language of leadership, teaching, pedagogy and so on, which supports different understandings of success outside traditional, numeric, outcomes-based approaches
  - c) developing ABE methods' potential to allow for the growth of a nuanced understanding of webs of power and their impact, fostering the surfacing of affordances and barriers to leadership development

- d) supporting the design of self-review activities which support the articulation of authentic values and honour individuals, leading to tailored, individual, leadership development programmes which challenge the notion of leadership types

- iii. enhancing the ability to be pro-active and innovative and take an active part in distributed leadership, by increasing capabilities (such as relational sensitivity), appreciation of leadership as an emergent, relational process, and self-awareness in the context of leadership practice

Thinking about the findings on processes, ABE methods require:

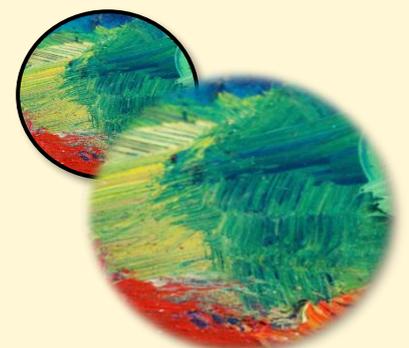
- i. accomplished and effective facilitation
- ii. clear understanding by participants of the purpose of ABE activity
- iii. ethical approaches which create a sense of secure space for participants to connect and interact with others, experiment and make sense of ABE approaches and their impact
- iv. facilitation of playful participation
- v. activation of self-learning by participants
- vi. experiential learning through being and doing, not just thinking and cognitive learning
- vii. being aware of, and responsive and adaptable to, participants' varied reactions to ABE methods
- viii. being aware of, and responsive and adaptable to, participants' multiple aims and how ABE methods may serve these

## 5. Concluding remarks



Despite the limitations of the research evidence, the results of the review indicate that ABE methods have further potential for developing and strengthening capacities for collaborative and distributed leadership. There is evidence that ABE methods can have a positive impact on relational sensitivity and coping with complexity and uncertainties, and in raising self-confidence and appreciation of leadership as a process that involves people connecting and co-operating together. These factors are important to the practice of collaborative and distributed leadership. Key capabilities for such leadership include communicative virtues, such as honesty, transparency, tolerance and active listening, which enable constructive and open exchange, and relational capabilities that include working collaboratively and facilitating collaborative working and conflict handling (Woods & Roberts, 2018).

If this positive potential for distributed leadership is to be maximised and impact on practice enhanced, more needs to be done to ensure that the use of ABE methods is informed by awareness of the dynamics of power and inequalities in ABE processes and the workplaces that participants return to. Participants in ABE sessions and workshops and in their workplaces are differently positioned according to various factors that include organisational hierarchies and status distinctions, and social differences such as gender, ethnicity and social class. These impact upon opportunities, motivations, perceptions and feelings associated with collaborative and distributed leadership (Woods, 2019). ABE methods that might serve senior, mainly white, male leaders may not be empowering for others who are more disadvantaged, are diverse culturally, are given lower status, assume lower expectations and hold positions at the lower levels of a formal organisational hierarchy. More innovation and research are required concerning how a wider range of leaders and would-be leaders, including non-positional leaders, can be supported through ABE methods in developing their capabilities for leading change with others.



# Appendix



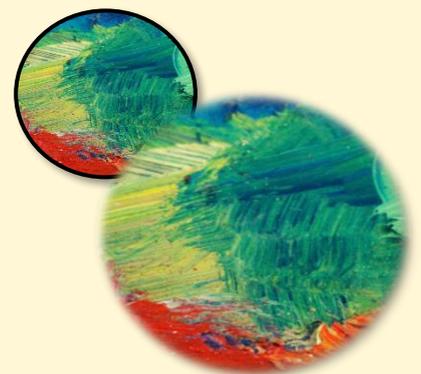
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## Review template

### Full view (Excel spreadsheet)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	
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2	Date	Reviewer	Type	Title	Authors	Outlet	Year	Allocation	Type	Sector	Country	Aim/Aims	Methods	Theory	Key terms	Relevant findings	Validity	Generalisability	Significance			
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Publication summary								
Allocation	Type	Sector	Country	Aim/Aims	Methods	Theory	Key terms	Relevant findings

Q	R	S
Assesment		
Validity	Generalisability	Significance

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EMERGING THEMES	REASON FOR NON INCLUSION

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