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Bollywood on Creativity: an interview with the internationally acclaimed film director Shekhar Kapur

ABSTRACT

This paper explores creativity through the eyes of an individual renowned worldwide for his creativity and intellect: the film director Shekhar Kapur, who is the first film director to successfully span the Hollywood - Bollywood divide. We provide a critical overview of the literature of creativity from a business perspective, with an emphasis on the individual and organisational dimensions, and their impact on enhancing and transforming performance. This review of the literature is a prelude to the insights to creativity furnished by our conversation and interview with Mr Kapur whose films have won numerous awards in his native India and whose biopics of Queen Elizabeth (Elizabeth and its sequel) produced for Hollywood secured no less than 7 Oscar nominations, including that for best picture.

The paper, through the combination of interview and literature, presents new insights to our understanding of creativity and it as a source of superior business performance.

INTRODUCTION

This interview and literature review serve our purpose of providing a deeper understanding of the concept of creativity and extend its literature base through the creative practitioner lens of a film director. Driven by past research we have conducted into Bollywood (Minocha and Stonehouse, 2006), we felt that a natural progression for that work was to interview a leading creative professional from the world's largest film industry. This has been used to develop our understanding of creativity through the perspectives developed through his

experience of one of the most creative of all industries, film-making. This follows the tradition of Essex and Mainemelis in JMI in 2002 when they interviewed David Whyte and presented their views on what lessons could be learnt from art, his work including his poetry. Our objective was to contribute to the understanding of creativity and innovation in business by employing Shekhar Kapur as a representative of that 'different lens' through his experiences in filmmaking, made even more pertinent by Shekhar's ability to transcend the cultural nuances of creativity in both Eastern and Western contexts.

Shekhar Kapur: a background

Shekhar Kapur is a renowned Indian filmmaker who has received both critical acclaim and commercial success in Bollywood (India's Hindi film industry), Hollywood (Director Four Feathers, 2002) and international cinema (Director, Elizabeth I and II) circuits. Wikipedia describes him as:

> *"A critically acclaimed director, he rose to popularity with the movie Bandit Queen. His historical biopics of Queen Elizabeth I (Elizabeth and its sequel Elizabeth: The Golden Age) garnered several Academy Award nominations, including two Best Actress nods for Cate Blanchett".*

The New York Times (2011) describes him as:

> *"One of the few Bollywood directors to make a career in the U.Authors., Shekhar Kapur has proved his filmmaking worth in both countries".*

"Shekhar Kapur is a visionary filmmaker and storyteller who works at the intersection of art, myth and activism" is how TED.com, describes its March 2010 speaker. It goes onto say:

> "Golden Globe-winning director Shekhar Kapur makes lush, international period films -- such as *Elizabeth* and *The Four Feathers* -- and Indian hits like *Mr. India* and *Bandit Queen*. Most recently, Kapur's short film "Passages"" is part of the October 2009 film anthology *New York, I Love You*. Also this October, he sat on the judging panel for 1 Minute to Save the World, a competition for short films about climate change. (And yes, last summer, he was a judge on *India's Got Talent*.)"

Interestingly, Kapur, a doctor's son from Delhi began his working life by training in the not so creative profession of chartered accountancy in London. He quickly recognised that creative book-keeping was not his vocation nor was it his forte and he rebelled against his parents' wishes by seeking his fame and fortune in the Indian film industry. He quickly achieved success in the film industry of his native India and, not content with this he took the daring step of seeking to take on Hollywood at its own game. Roll the clock forward and we find that Kapur's cinema has transcended three continents and, in that, he enjoys a unique status as a filmmaker. It is this uniqueness that prompted us to capture his views on creativity, its determinants and the linkages with superior individual and organisational performance as a source of what can best be described as creative advantage.

The next section provides an overview of the evolution of creativity and our understanding of its importance to the competitive performance of individuals and organisations. This provides the essential backdrop for the interview with Shekhar Kapur and the novel insights it provides to creativity in business. We believe his reflections transcend his context and have the potential to throw interesting insights into our understanding of creativity.

CREATIVITY: A BACKGROUND

Creativity has been the focus of, and stimulated extensive research (Andriopoulos, 2001) and as everyone seemingly has an opinion on creativity, creativity has become 'difficult and

demanding' as both a construct and discipline (Bilton, 2007; p. xiii), with wide ranging application and countless strands of inquiry. The most frequently cited definition of creativity is Amabile's (1988) assertion that creativity is the *'production of novel and useful ideas'* (p126). This definition has been applied in many studies (see for example Prabhu et al, 2008). Akin to Amabile (1988), general definitions of creativity tend to encompass a judgement based upon two distinct elements a) originality which encompasses novelty, unexpectedness and new ideas and b) fit which denotes value, appropriateness, appeal, usefulness, adaptiveness and acceptance (Borghini, 2005; Ford, 1996; Sternberg, 1999; Woodman et al, 1993; Zhou &Shalley, 2003). Such definitions have been criticised for detaching creativity from the context within which it may arise (Bilton, 2007).

There has been dynamic progress in understanding creativity over the past 20 years (George, 2007;). Although its roots are firmly grounded in psychology, creativity has come to be of interest in diverse fields of enquiry including social psychology; cognitive psychology; education; organizational and management studies; economic development and urban planning (Amabile, 1996;Florida, 2002; Runco, 2004; Sternberg, 2003). Borghini, (2005) has suggested each of these strands brings with it their own interpretation of the concept, which has resulted in a lack of shared interest, consequently '*the construct of creativity, especially slippery when it comes to definition, has a tendency to slide into the tautological trap; creativity is what a creative person does'* (Watson, 2007; p424). This paper builds on Watson's definition by attempting to understand better what a creative person (S Kapur) does.

The evolution of creativity as a multi-disciplinary concept is evidenced in part by its entrance into the management domain (Bissola & Imperatori, 2011). In the management domain, '*authors, academics, and consultants have described the benefits of creativity with almost evangelical zeal*' (Pech, 2001; p562), consequently embracing the 'rhetoric of creativity' with

increased vigour (Bilton, 2007). This focus on creativity has been the latest phase in management's on-going evolution (Pech, 2001; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010) founded upon the assumption that creativity is a core competence of the modern-day organisation (Choi et al, 2009) and as such ought to be managed to enable its optimal worth to be yielded (Bilton, 2007). This underlines the value of creativity in an organizational setting but also the idea there are conditions or strategies which are favourable to harvesting creativity (Taggar, 2002). However, according to Styhre and Sundgren (2005) '*creativity still stands outside the orthodoxy of management studies*' (p1) and has '*yet to be accorded a proper role in management thinking*' (p3). As such Defellipi et al, (2007) suggest that '*the management of creativity is rife with paradoxes and tensions*' (p512).

The main approaches to creativity in a management sphere have been; (1) an individual perspective which deems creativity as a personal attribute, the organization seeks out and recruits such creative beings as a means by which they can increase the creativity of their product or service (George, 2007; Taggar, 2002): (2) An organisational approach which is concerned with the contextual factors which may influence creativity at the organisational level including the social influences and also collective and team based creativity (Haragdon & Bechky, 2006) and (3) A multi-level perspective which sees creativity as an interaction between the individual-collective-organisational levels of creativity (Bilton, 2007).

Andriopoulos (2001) proposes there to be five interdependent and interlinked organisational factors which enhance creativity in the organization at individual and team level: organisational climate; leadership style; organisational culture; resources and skills and the structure and systems of an organisation. All of these factors can determine creativity but conversely in some organisations if implemented or managed wrongly these have also been shown to be inhibitory contextual factors and can 'kill' or undermine creativity (Amabile, 1996; 1998; Choi et al, 2009). It is important to bear in mind that organisations are

inherently complex social, political and technical systems therefore there can be no formula devised for what will enhance creativity. It is likely that in each organisation varying combinations and balance of these factors will work in differing ways (Choi et al, 2009). Taking these factors into account, organisational creativity becomes an uncertain balancing act of choice, compromise and complexity (Borghini, 2005).

CREATIVE ADVANTAGE – CREATIVITY AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

From our perspective the importance of creativity derives from its contribution to gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (superior performance) over time through continuous innovation. To put this another way:

"competitive advantage arises from the ability of a business to create new knowledge and protect its knowledge assets from competitors." (Stonehouse et al., 2001: 119)

In order to gain and sustain competitive edge it is necessary for organisations to continuously create new knowledge and then to ensure that it is embodied within the organisation's core competences and key value adding activities.

Whilst it is individuals who instigate creativity it is teams and organisations (Hargadon and Bechky, 2006) which turn this new knowledge into creative advantage by deploying the knowledge throughout the organisation's culture, activities, products and services so as to add value in the eyes of customers. This collective embodiment of newly created knowledge throughout the organisation is "undoubtedly accelerated and enhanced by the sharing of information and ideas, accompanied by an openness that encourages questioning, debate and discussion of existing and future practices" (Appelbaum and Gallagher, 2000: 50). Quinn (1992) emphasises this, stating "knowledge is ... one of the few assets that grows most -

usually exponentially - when shared." Quinn goes on to state that: "By concentrating on key elements of the learning process companies can leverage intellect enormously."

We have previously argued that "strategic learning symbolises knowledge creation and transfer as a core philosophy within which to gain creative advantage" (Minocha and Stonehouse, 2006: 1350). It is therefore hugely valuable from the perspective of gaining understanding of superior organisational performance to gain the insights of an individual for whom creativity is second nature, as evidenced by his own performance in one of the most creative and competitive of all industries, film-making.

In the conversation that follows Kapur reflects on his understanding and definitions of creativity, the determinants of creativity including his own intrinsic sources of creativity and how this has shaped his creativity. He argues that individuals can use intrinsic values such as passion, emotion, panic, rebelliousness and use them as pre-requisites and continuing conditions for their creativity. He shares how he draws this from his actors and the broader production team to deliver a creative and competitive edge to his films/projects. We go onto draw new insights this throws on our understanding of creativity and its impact on individual and organisational performance as a source of competitive advantage.

IN CONVERSATION WITH SHEKHAR KAPUR

On defining creativity

Authors - How did your early years training as an accountant and business consultancy practice in the UK shape your becoming as a filmmaker in later years?

Kapur - Well it's now when I've come back (from the UK) and in my 40s and 50s that I suddenly realised that actually the rejection of my culture was a fundamental issue with me ..... I didn't realise there was a latent seed sitting in me - the guilt after the rejection of your culture (by me) because you had become a newer soul. I went to St Stevens College, and Morton School and experienced the 'best' education. I was told that the best thing to do was to go and work for an American company and, I was told that, you know, that the best people went to Harvard to study or they went to Oxford or Cambridge. Indian educational institutions had absolutely no value (in those times) so if I were to be a Chartered Accountant I needed to be a Chartered Accountant qualified in Britain ... All of this history/context was sitting in me and I think I was sitting near the ball of tension because rejection recognises a ball of tension that leads to creativity, and I think it was that ball of tension that exploded when I made Elizabeth. You can see it, I can see it fully now, and I realised that part of the success of the film was the explosion of my latent Easterness/Indianness that suddenly came forward..., So I think, and I think it wasn't so much what happened then, it was how what happened then without me recognising it has exploded now and made it a passion. Made the expression of my Easterness a passion, and finding ways to express hope is an anti-colonial context. It's not just about war. I try to make, the very reason of my conflict with the studios, and I took on 2 major studios in a personal battle, who didn't like the film, should not have done it. I remember being in a hotel and thinking, are you mad, why are you doing this? And I said it can happen, it was the desire to make an anti-colonial film out of one what was possibly one of the most colonial books ever written. Making, eh putting this whole Eastern concept of destiny and divinity into a golden age and my whole movement into new media, my involvement with Singapore is.., comes basically through all the writings that I did about it's Asia's time, now. People, I believe make it that time. I mean without Ghandhi and his compatriots there wasn't an independence movement. But suddenly you get 10 people that

become the provokers of things and I'm sure that there's 10 people in India, I'm one of them, and there's 10 people in China, that actually have provoked a small movement and then when you provoke a movement you make it real and it becomes your ultimate passion, and that's fantastic for creativity.

Authors- So what does creativity mean to Shekhar Kapur, how would he define creativity?

Kapur- The great thing about creativity is that creativity, when defined by a passion beyond yourself, becomes much more relevant. That is why some of the great poets have been completely rebellious and that passion has a sense of rebelliousness to it. ... I've often said this that you cannot hold an artist down. For centuries the church, the Indian movement has been trying to imprison artists, to pin them down, because it's the essential nature to challenge, because it's a fundamental provocation for creativity. All creativity relies on its own destruction and recreation and if you're not out to destroy and challenge then, there is no creativity. The very end, coming back to spirituality, that's how the universe is built, the universe is built at the very concept of Shiva, as the great god is a god of destruction and creation. The whole idea in Hindu mysticism is this, is that everything is constantly created and destroyed. So the very ideas of creativity apply from destruction and creation, and therefore the process of destruction is a process of construction and that's why it's so many artists actually get into destruction because they don't know any more how to destroy themselves and if you forget how to destroy yourself you don't know how to create yourself. So without one the other doesn't happen, and that process of destruction is a rebellious process..... So whether you're recognising it or not creation can only happen on the foundation of destruction.

Authors–Your narrative is interesting, because if you look at a lot of successful business people they've essentially destroyed the business models that have existed before them.We agree that destruction comes before creation but there are perhaps many people who can destroy and can't create afterwards.

Kapur – I'm saying that the desire to create doesn't start with the desire to destroy. I'm not saying that people who fundamentally are just angry to destroy could create, I see people with the desire to create, and this desire to create something new comes from the desire to be rebellious. Language is a big problem in creativity, that's why points are better, because they don't rely on the exactness of words, they rely on the play of the meaning of contradictions of words. So, that's the wonderful thing about points. But our world gets addicted to key words and ..... today the biggest key word is destructive. Destructive technologies, disruptive ideas, is a key word... is it destructive, no? Because it's become a key word you've lost the meaning of it. That's the problem with key words and that's a large part of the problem with organisations ..... in holding themselves together they give meaning to key words that are finite, which were never meant to be finite. So they lose real meaning, and that's the problem, that's why sometimes organisations cease to be creative. That doesn't mean they cease to grow but they cease to be creative and that's why Steve Jobs was probably a better leader of technology than, let's say, the Apple business, for the simple reason that he's never stopped being an artist and because he's never stopped being an artist all this, this desire to constantly destruct and constantly destruct, and constantly destruct until he failed for many years, but ultimately he came back with something that is destructive, completely destructive.

On the determinants of creativity –the role played by education

Authors – Just a question about your view on creative people, if there is such a thing, People can be creative in their own field in different ways. But do you think creative people are

born, are they made, or can they be nurtured?Have you anybody that you identify as a mentor that's helped you develop your creativity?

Kapur – I think we are all born creative. I think creativity is dulled through education. Our education systems dull creativity because our education systems were not designed for creativity, they were designed to create workers, they were designed to create a workforce, We need to create 50 million jobs, we need nurses, we need doctors, we need to do this, we need to teach the workforce. Our education systems, except for some few, like special cases in Oxford and Cambridge ..... are designed to create workforces. I've seen this happen to my daughter. My daughter, when she was 5, was doing art that completely blew my mind, sex, expressionism, looking at faces and interpreting faces in a way.., and then she went to school instead of getting on with drawing. Guess what she went back to? This is a house, this is a window, this is a door and this is a chimney and this is the smoke.

Authors -There's been some research done which says that there are measures for creativity and if you measure creativity in children it's far greater than creativity in adults who have been through the education system. So something's taking it away from them ..... I hate to say that as an educationist but...

Kapur – But I think as an educationist you understand that. It's great because then you nurture people, allowing them to nurture their own creativity. You don't teach creativity, you allow, you teach the tools that people can use, to encourage them. That's what I do with actors, not because my job with actors is telling them what to do, it's to make them trust themselves. That's my job as a director on the set, to put them in an environment where they feel confident enough to express themselves in various ways. Unfortunately in this world we believe that creativity only expresses itself when it is marketed, that's the point that you were

making earlier, children are creative and they're creative because they're playful and they are not dominated by a future event. The future event is the ability to market not to create, they're not dominated by that, and so that defines a spiritual thing which is that creativity is the playfulness of that moment. .

Developing creative advantage - the conditions for individual and organisational creativity

Authors-So creativity cannot be taught but can it be learnt/acquired-what facilitates and inhibits it in individuals?

Kapur – One of the most fascinating books that I've read is the Gita. It says exactly that and then of course when you look at quantum physics it says exactly that, one particle arrives where you want it to arrive before it left, now what do you do? How do you, you know, how do you do that? So, in the idea of the playfulness of that moment, not defined by a future event, so, and therefore if you're not looking at marketing then you are less confined to that moment. So I write my poems and some people love my poems and some people don't, but I never market them, therefore I am free to write them. I write my blog and then one day Times of India came to me and said you write your blogs, why don't you write for us, and I just have to deliver once every week. The idea of having to deliver once every week completely destroyed the joy of the moment because it was of a future time. Now, people who actually manage, like I do in my films, manage to make a marketable idea..... So that is creativity plus skill. What is the skill? So, talking about spirituality, back there, the ability to access the moment and transcend the ticking clock, and transcend the linearity of time, into a universally accessible points when you transcend that, which are the same points that every child has access to, and any one point a billion children, and a billion moments, and a trillion

infinite moments in the universe are existing in that consciousness of creativity, then you come out of it. There are people with skills that come out of it, that can interpret it within that skill..... I think that it is the receptacle, that you have to hold that skill as a receptacle, it's the catchment area and so when you've accessed you must know you've accessed, okay, so while a child accesses and expresses, and has no further value for it, you are looking for value because you want to express it in your skill. Your skill is how highly tuned is your access point, how highly tuned is your catchment area? So Kate Blanchett is a true, beautiful actress, for two reasons, her ability to let herself completely go into disciplined playful moment to access, but her hard work, all these years, to have honed her mind and body and a voice to a point where that can be interpreted, right? So, that interpretation is what you need if you want to turn your creativity into skill and that skill becomes what you can market. ..... it's the same thing that Einstein accessed but his catchment area and his ability was honed into perfection in a different field. So we all go into different fields. It's the same for Steve Jobs. That's why, I think that we all access the same point, some of us use the skill to communicate with others, some of us use it to make money .....,

Authors - So as a director when you have some of these people who are not able to access this creativity, how would you create that child's environment for them so that you multiply yourself and your vision via them even though they're finding it difficult to access their own.

Kapur – Most people have emotional blocks to it (their creativity) that are developed over time and the way I do it, certainly with actors, is revealing myself. I would reveal myself and reveal intimate things about myself .....nowing that the two things that lead you to access, vulnerability, humility. What stops you from accessing is a great sense of individuality and when you have a great sense of individuality it's a protective sense. If you let the protective

sense go by suddenly allowing yourself to be completely vulnerable and then a great sense of humility that allows you to be part of that mass. These are two very, very important things and if you can make an act of vulnerable and humble in that moment, of course you are hiring the actor because they have the skill to come back, you know, or you wouldn't, then you will allow them to access more than they can. That's it, vulnerability, humility. The idea of playfulness comes from being vulnerable to the moment and I work a lot on that, even on myself. It's only when I'm vulnerable and humble; here's the problem though, if you're in a stress situation you become protective, you know, you shut yourself down. You become a brick wall around yourself. How do you learn in a stress situation not to do that, knowing that actually the ability to find the answers in that stress situation are by doing exactly the opposite, by becoming even more vulnerable. You know, I go into the theories of chaos a lot but that's a different thing because I think that chaos is not an anarchy, chaos is the destructuring of your mind, is a destructuring of your ego, is to, to let go of divisions because we tend to live divided minds. When we look at our mind we divide our mind by our fears and prejudices.

Authors – and silos within that.

Kapur – Silos, right, and playfulness is a letting off silos.

Authors – Can we just sort of take you back because one of the things you've emphasised is this playfulness and not being motivated by an end product or a time bound end product…

Kapur – For that moment.

Authors- The problem is though that we all live in a world where you as a film maker are expected to have a time bound output or the accountants will be on your back for exceeding budget and time. So how does that marry up with what you've described ..... with reality?Whatever we do we have to make a living, right, there has to be some time bound

marketable product otherwise we starve, I guess, which is why Somalia starves I suppose, but, but how do you marry those two concepts together?

Kapur – That's a skill, yea, all time in that, because you are only time bound if you are working in it, a child playing is not time bound, right? So you are assuming that this time bound idea is that you are performing in return for money or you have a responsibility, right, so let's take the word responsibility.

Authors-So where do you draw your source of inspiration for generating creativity and a creative advantage?

Kapur –I think it's different for everybody, but me personally I find I use **panic** as a source of creativity. I use it. I know that in a panic the blocks and structures and prejudices in my mind, my mind will get so confused and it will tend to melt away and say shake or take over, I can't help it, literally that's the conversation I have in my mind. My mind says, I don't know what to do, so you do what you have to do and so panic in itself often is throwing up the answers that you have to quickly catch, quickly catch, and I did that at 10. Um, it was silly, it was schizophrenia in my mind when I got to 10 and they said, they gave me a book of how to tell, and you must tell a story and you must, how to relate to, and it was a big debate thing, I'd actually come not knowing what I was going to say and then I had to do a speech and then I had to, the next Tuesday I had to do a video and it was, I was weighed down by what I had to do and so in the moment I got up I actually tore up my speech and said I don't have the video, on stage I tore my speech up and said "I'm so sorry" and I just went off evidently in this idea of panic and said "I wish my mouth were dry", literally like that, now watch me panic, and now I don't know what words will come out, let's see what words come

out, and then off I went until I delivered an 18 minute piece. If people asked me what did I say, my question is, yea what did I say?

Authors- When I teach that's pretty much my approach, you know, I give my students a set of notes that they can read but I literally walk in and I'm much better when I don't know what I'm going to say, of course I have that skill, I have the knowledge behind it I guess, but when I go in there and talk it's, if you do it you do capture the spontaneity of the moment. I don't give lectures, I talk, I engage in it, and I think what you're describing is very much like that, that spontaneity that is also part of creativity.

Kapur – Yes and I would get bored. So, can I make it an adventure for myself so that the words that I'm coming from I'm learning from at the same time. Then it's an adventure and I'm accessing that which I don't know and that's when I know I'm then becoming the conduit, can I become the conduit rather than the teacher?

Authors – How do you, given the context of a movie, a project, a production team (loosely an organisation) describe bounded creativity? I don't mean time bound, I mean in the sense of the project, the movie, that you're working on, how is it that you get others to share, obviously they've got to have their own expressiveness within it, but they've got to channel that towards what you as the director, wants to see as the end product. How do you get them to share your vision? I hate that word vision!

Kapur – Vision is important.

Authors – Yea, but it's misused all the time, isn't it.

Kapur – you have applicable, malleable vision that you see. You're asking people to come and join that vision. I often call it the banks of the river, and I call it creative banks of the

river and your own ability to let go will define how deep that river is. You've not created the depths, you've only created the banks. Now within these banks, how fast the river goes, how deep the river goes, does it rage with passion, does it run with a certain calmness of port beneath which you've just dipped your feet down and sensed the raging passion? All of that is undefinable until you do it, and within all of that I actually prefer people who disagree. But agree with the larger vision, but disagree with the interpretation of it in a particular way, and they should because if they all come with their own sense of depth, all of that will mix together. And different people in the hall will take back different things from it.

Authors – Yea, because that's one of the problems, I think, in modern business, in that it becomes so high brand with procedures and rules and policies.

Kapur – and buzzwords. Resulting in robotic corporations. The key here is emotion. If you are creating people that are emotionally attached to what they do it's a skill as emotional as it is with handicrafts, you know, when people create handicrafts they are also doing pretty mundane work but in every little stitch they do they are emotionally, artistically involved in everything that they do. What's happening in Africa is large tracts of land are being bought up by the Chinese. You're not taking away a fundamental ownership, of emotional ownership of land from these people, you're taking away a concept of an emotional connection between land and grading economies. For example, India, that's what's happening in India, crime rates are going up. If you go to Gurgaon which is the outskirts of Delhi, what happened was, it's all been developed, it used to be farm land. As real estate prices went up, and that's a consequence, real estate prices is a huge problem all over the world, huge problem and this is one example of what happens. Real estate prices artificially shoot up because there's no reason for real estate prices except that people buy because they think in the future they'll be able to sell it higher. The only reason, it's completely false, alright, and they are because they are somebody else's. So it's the big reason that our economy, that the

world economies fell because of real estate prices. As real estate prices went up the farmers had never thought they could ever get some money so they sold their farms. They had money that they could never dream of, what did they do? They spent it, they bought cars, motorcycles, they drank it away. The moment they ran out of it there was no emotional connection in their lives any more. What's happening? They all turned to crime.

Authors – How would you connect this back to creativity?

Kapur – I think that comfort, extreme comfort is not very creative, that does not mean that you have to be uncomfortable, you can be comfortable within yourself. I think creative people surround themselves with a lot of wealth, like designers, you know, very creative people, Alexander McQueen, committed suicide, right? He had surrounded himself with a huge amount of wealth and yet his addiction to his mother. I used to admire what he did. I admired his sense of drama, and in his sense.., you can see creative designers expressing their anguish, you know where, in their fashion, it's anguish, the drama is their anguish. And some of the anguish that these people feel could drive them to be creative but, but not all creative people suffer that anguish. Emotional contradiction!

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

An interview of this type with Kapur provokes both emotion and new insight into the nature, meaning, relevance and impact of creativity. It is our challenge as researchers to draw from the specific artistic context of Kapur's practice and interpret the learning and insight we gain from this interview into our core themes on creativity in a business and management practice context. Below we revisit our original purpose in designing this interview and reflect on the insights it has provided around three core themes:

The Nature of Creativity and its complexivity

We have been overt in moving into the context of the film industry/film making to examine the nature of creativity and the insights this can provide for organisations. Why have we done this and what difference has it made to the insights this article has been able to make? At the heart of this research is the study and reflection on practice. It is important to understand the context of that practice since by examining a rich and different context (in this case the Bollywood film industry) we hope to offer new insights into the nature of creativity in the management practice context. It raises an interesting question as to how valuable these insights are for application in a different context.

We argued earlier that the management literature lacks clarity and consistency in defining creativity – it is slippery when it comes to definition (Watson, 2007). Moreover, the literature is limited in defining the conditions that are conducive to successfully harvesting creativity in organisations. In particular, management literature struggles to get to grips with the notion that creativity can be seen as a personal attribute and, at the same time, a set of organisational dynamics capable of being managed to achieve greater success in terms of making creativity happen.

It is relatively easy from this interview to make sense of the personal and organisational dynamic around creativity in the context of film making. Arguably the raison d'etre of a Bollywood film director like Kapur is to be creative. This is a key performance outcome for Kapur as it clearly would be for the actors and actresses who aspire to be creative in their roles in his films. The early part of the interview with Kapur provides considerable reflective evidence of the conditions and circumstances that drove particular creative outcomes. For example, the 'ball of tension' that exploded when Kapur made the film Elizabeth. The personal passion that had driven his creative ambition was clear and in the

industry in which Kapur operates it seems clear that his passion ('beyond yourself') 'was allowed' to drive the shaping and final performance outcome of a film like Elizabeth-his creativity transcended Bollywood to make a film on an international platform.

Organisations in a business setting rarely provide the circumstances for Kapur's 'rebelliousness'. Successful business performance in general does not require 'rebelliousness' – more often than not it requires order and control and the effective operation of systems. However, as we discuss below the nature of what we mean by superior business performance and how organisations may achieve it through creating conditions where 'rebelliousness' thrives to support the creation of new ideas is not well understood.

A key idea at the heart of Kapur's definition of creativity is that the potency of creativity is dependent on the ability to bring about destruction. It is not clear in the context of business organisations if the creativity-destruction dynamic can mirror that in the context of a creative artist in the film industry/Bollywood. Perhaps Kapur is not referring to the destruction of his own ideas and creative work as a driver of his own creativity. He is referring to notions of destruction in relation to worldly ideas and events that perhaps have their equivalence in the business world of competitor business models and products. In practice businesses are challenged to be creative by destroying competitor business models and also potentially recreating their own practice in relation to competitors and limiting opportunities for new industry entrants.

The point of meaning which Kapur's interview throws into focus is that being creative involves being destructive but it does not necessarily follow that being destructive also involves being creative. There are lessons here for business organisations as the discussion in the interview alludes to in relation to Apple and Steve Jobs. Destruction of a business model or a management practice may not be driven by the direct actions of individuals in an

organisation but could be by the actions of competitors and also through external events and changing context. As the authors comment in the discussion with Kapur it does not follow that individuals and organisations can respond to such destruction by themselves being creative (perhaps because they have not driven the destruction).

The insights into Kapur's definition and meaning of creativity make sense in the context of the film industry and the success that he has secured in his film making. The rebelliousness to be destructive to be creative is perhaps a personal trait of a creative artist like Kapur. In business organisations the rebelliousness trigger for destruction is often external to the organisation by competitors and new entrants in an industry. This may well be a source and driver of creativity in competitors and new entrants but what of incumbents? Perhaps we are left with pondering over a different creativity-destruction dynamic in the business world by comparison to the context of the creative artist in Bollywood?

Creativity and its Impact on Individual and Organisational Performance

So what insight does the interview with Kapur provide on the relationship and connection between an individual, their creativity and its impact on organisational performance? In this paper it is the importance of creativity to driving a sustainable competitive advantage through continuous innovation that we seek to understand. Kapur's work is an example of this dynamic in the Bollywood context. His creative ideas and thinking have been on many occasions embedded in new artistic outputs, notably films and his writing for which he has won much acclaim and many awards and also brought much financial success. It goes almost without saying these creative outputs are difficult to copy and imitate.

At the start of the paper we argued that this process of gaining creative advantage is essentially built around strategic learning. In business, by contrast to the film making industry, often creativity is regarded as an episodic event that is driven from time to time by changing context and increasing competitive pressures. Arguably, the film industry operates around a continuous model of artistic creativity – it is the very essence of the products the industry develops. It is an interesting question to ponder whether an industry model that is founded on creativity is a comparable context for many organisations where competitively destruction driven creativity is generally more an episodic event?

The Kapur interview is firmly rooted in the filmmaking context where creative advantage can be largely driven by the ideas and creativity of an individual film director. That said it is undoubtedly also true that the development and delivery of the product or service (ie film) is the result of a major team and organisational effort. Without the successful transfer of the ideas and 'new knowledge' relating to the creative artefact i.e. the film, then the end outcome – the performance – simply would not happen. It begs the question that many members of the organisations involved in the film industry are likely to be creative and artistic and arguably the transfer of new ideas and thinking in that context is quite different from major strategy upheaval in a business organisation. The project driven nature of an artistic industry context is undoubtedly a factor here whereas major creativity and innovations in business do not always fit the project model.

So in the interview with Kapur we have focused in particular on his comments relating to ideas generation and transfer and also the role for learning. Here we see the significance of the individual context and the values and beliefs of Kapur. It is perhaps difficult to generalise from this. The story on translation from the individual passion and vision is messy and individualistic though it clearly happened – Kapur himself could not have delivered the performance output without the response of an effective team.

It is of course worth noting that the interview context of an internationally renowned film director may generate its 'Hawthorne' effects where it becomes difficult to untangle individual and team impact. However Kapur's reflections though personal are impactful in reminding us of the 'messiness' inherent in creativity (De Bono, 1992).

The Paradox of Learning from Context – Where Next for Creativity?

The interview with Kapur examines the role of education in enabling creativity. In particular, Kapur emphasises the 'playfulness of the moment' and the significance of this for the creativity of children relative to that of adults. Kapur asks the question of the impact of the education system on the ability of adults to be creative, linking this to the notion of linearity. This hints at a possible paradox of learning from context. Interpreting Kapur's idea about creativity in children is that children are not constrained by detailed and rich knowledge of context. This underlies Kapur's notion of playfulness in children.

In this paper we are suggesting that notions of linearity have been at play in the management literature on developing our understanding of creativity in organisations. Our interview with Kapur set against his practice and success in the Bollywood film industry is in part an attempt to create a playful opportunity for exploring the nature of creativity and its role in creating superior organisational performance. It is interesting that a current trend in management education is to focus upon relevance and the context of practice for developing new insight into how to improve the practice of management (Minocha and Reynolds, 2013). This exposes a debate about the meaning and nature of relevance in management education. So how relevant does context need to be to be relevant? In this paper we are suggesting judging the relevance of context is perhaps a subjective notion and possibly one that might be creatively defined by those examining the novel context.

The point this paper makes, drawing upon our interview is that all contexts are relevant even if it is a matter of degree for the study of creativity and how it can be nurtured in organisations. Perhaps in developing new and non-linear insights into creativity and how to stimulate it in organisations we need to look at creativity in contexts that are less directly relevant to many business organisations? Driving learning by studying context is a complex and challenging approach to management education and it is perhaps easy to understand the dominant 'non-context' based model of management education in many business schools.

Learning about creativity from experiences and reflections in non-business contexts presents us with some exciting new insights that make sense in the context of the film making and we have been able to re-interpret in this paper:

- Kapur has articulated a personal story of creativity and how he uses panic, vision, emotion and such to draw creativity. It has been acknowledged elsewhere (Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Mumford et al, 2002) that stimulating creativity is now a key goal of many organisations as a source of sustainable competitive advantage and increased organisational performance.
- However DeFillipi et al (2007; p511) propose that '*the current managerial infatuation with creativity as a strategic asset for gaining competitive advantage must be squared with empirical research and extant theory*' . This is a view shared by Thompson et al (2007) who suggest that empirical research that examines the employee relations, work processes and management practices which are needed to yield the benefits of creativity as a source of competitive advantage should be undertaken. The interview with Kapur does that.
- The creative process is complex and chaotic (DeBono, 1992) therefore ascertaining how to effectively manage for this whilst taking into account increasing efficiency

and productivity whilst also improving quality is uncertain (Florida & Goodnight, 2005), the premium for those who do however is perceived high, as such companies 'will have a crucial advantage in the ever-increasing competition for global talent' (Florida & Goodnight, 2005; p7).

Kapur: *"people who are really creative find a solution that they love and then they need to look for a problem. I exist because you imagine I do"*.

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