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Insight: Leadership training, organisational context, and transfer of learning – a case study

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Abstract

The transfer of learning remains a topic of interest with appeal for both researchers and practitioners. This research explores the transfer of learning from a leadership development training course from multiple perspectives and challenges traditional views on the relationship between formal training and work-based forms of learning.

The research adopted a qualitative case-study approach and took a holistic, longitudinal, view of a leadership development training course offered by a large financial services organisation in New Zealand. Forty four course participants, their managers, peers and subordinates, course trainers and the organisation's senior executives were involved over three time periods. Social processes were found to have limited influence on enhancing the transfer of learning but had significant influence on inhibiting transfer. Managerial and organisational support were particularly influential barriers to transfer, whereas peer and subordinate support were found to have much less influence on transfer. The role of formal training was viewed in a new light with the finding that formal training complemented other forms of workplace learning and acted as a vehicle for socialisation and the transfer of tacit knowledge.

In contrast to the traditional view that formal training is irrelevant to the community of practice concept, this research found that formal training could facilitate participation, identity development and practice in established communities of practice as well as providing a basis for the formation of new communities of practice.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Background

An idealistic view of research is that it is undertaken to contribute to knowledge (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). A desire to contribute to knowledge, however, is not always the primary motivation to embark on a research project. Each research undertaking is driven by motives which may be personal, academic or social in nature (Blaikie, 2010) and while this present research reflects all three, it is motivated primarily by a personal aim to satisfy a curiosity about the social processes involved in leadership development learning. This interest in leadership development arose as a result of involvement in the development and presentation of a leadership development training course for Finco, a financial services organisation located in New Zealand. Involvement with the course enabled the social interaction among course participants to be observed and stimulated a desire to understand the social dynamics of training and learning better.

The research was situated in Finco, and the support given by the senior executives and training managers of Finco provided the motivation to contribute to practice. From the outset the executives of Finco showed a strong interest in this research and, although under no obligation to do so, this research was shaped with a view to providing the organisation, and other practitioners, with research outcomes that might guide leadership development training. In particular, this motivation helped to focus the research on investigating the transfer of learning from leadership development training courses.

The strategic imperative for investigating leadership development training and the transfer of learning

Organisations have continually sought ways to achieve competitive advantage and organisational success. Leadership is considered by some researchers to be one of the many factors essential for organisational success (Fulmer, Gibbs, & Goldsmith, 2000; Ready & Conger, 2003) and the development of leaders is, therefore, of vital importance for many organisations (Conger & Toegel, 2003; Spreitzer, 2006). Considerable resources are invested in leadership development and many methods

of development have been adopted (Conger & Benjamin, 1999; Ladyshevsky, 2007). Some methods use external training organisations, however, many organisations develop their leaders internally to take advantage of tailoring development efforts to organisational culture and strategic direction (Pernick, 2001). Formal training courses are a method of internal development that has proven to be popular and are the dominant method of leadership development (Conger & Benjamin, 1999; Day, 2000; Yukl, 2010). Notwithstanding the attraction to formal training courses, some researchers have questioned their role in leadership development and clarification of the role of formal training has been called for (Conger, 1992; Doh, 2003; Hurd, 2009).

Leadership development training courses that are offered by organisations for their employees fall within the definition of workplace learning. The traditional and common conception of the workplace is that its purpose is the production of goods and services (Matthews, 1999). However, the workplace is also an important setting for adult learning, and workplace learning is important for the continued survival and prosperity of organisations in a rapidly changing world characterised by frequent and diverse educational, social, economic, technological and organisational change (Darrah, 1995; Matthews, 1999; Rainbird, 2000). In particular, organisations that learn faster than their competitors are considered to be more able to adapt to change, survive and prosper (Schein, 1993; Senge, 1990) and the ability to learn faster or better than competitors is considered to be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (De Geus, 1988; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). With the recognition that work is a rich source of learning and that workplace learning is important to competitiveness, interest in the area has grown strongly in recent years (Ellinger, 2005; Fenwick, 2008b)

Workplace learning and work-based learning are terms that are, at times, used interchangeably. Although the terms are related, they are not synonymous. Workplace learning is defined as learning in the workplace, through the workplace, and for the workplace (Evans, Hodkinson, Rainbird, & Unwin, 2006), while work-based learning is learning that takes place during, or as the result of, real work activities that are part of an individual's job (Cunningham, Dawes, & Bennett, 2004). Cunningham et al.'s (2004) definition of work-based learning placed emphasis on learning on the job and excluded formal training, whereas workplace learning embraces all forms of learning that take place at, and through, the workplace. A formal leadership development training course, delivered using teaching methods, is

therefore defined as workplace learning. In making the distinction between workplace learning and work-based learning, the dichotomy between formal training and work-based learning pedagogies is highlighted. This dichotomy is apparent where some researchers have focused on work-based approaches to leadership development and placed little emphasis on formal training as a method of leadership development (Allio, 2005; McCall, 2004; Raelin, 2004). The dichotomous views apparent in workplace learning research have been critiqued as oversimplifying relationships, and less polarised approaches have been suggested to help develop alternative views on the complexities of workplace learning (Lee & Roth, 2007).

For leadership development training to be effective, transfer of learning must take place (Conger & Benjamin, 1999; Kozlowski & Salas, 1997). The transfer of learning is a topic that has been extensively researched, albeit with a preoccupation on the transfer process and the determinants of transfer (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). Early transfer of learning research focused on evaluating training effectiveness and identifying factors associated with the individual learner in the transfer of learning. Influential early research included that of Kirkpatrick (1967) who introduced the four-level taxonomy for evaluating training effectiveness, Noe (1986) who examined the trainability of individual learners and Baldwin and Ford (1988) who developed a framework for the transfer of learning that emphasised the importance of training design and the work environment, in addition to trainee characteristics, for the transfer of learning (Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Cheng & Ho, 2001). Noe's research introduced the key concept of motivation to transfer, defined as the learner's desire to apply learning on the job. Motivation to transfer, which is essential to the transfer of learning (Gegenfurtner, Veermans, Festner, & Gruber, 2009), subsequently featured in models of transfer of learning, including that of Baldwin and Ford, and continues to be relevant for recent research such as that of zu Knyphausen-Aufseß, Smukalla and Abt (2009) and Gegenfurtner et al. (2009).

Subsequent to the early transfer of learning research, research during and since the 1990s increased substantially. Much of this research focused on specific factors identified by Noe (1986) and Baldwin and Ford (1988) including individual characteristics, situational variables, job or career variables and training outcomes (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). During this period, some researchers began to reconceptualise transfer of learning as preparation for future learning. Implications from adopting a preparation for future learning perspective on the transfer of learning include the value of integrating a variety of learning activities, allowing learners to

actively interact with their environments, and maximising the opportunity for varied experiences (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999). Notwithstanding the growth in research, the social mechanisms through which the work environment is thought to influence transfer remains under-researched (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). In addition, despite the importance of leadership development training to organisational success, less attention has been paid to the transfer of learning from leadership development training and the related area of transfer of ‘soft’ skills learning (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010; Cheng & Ho, 2001). Cheng and Ho (2001), for instance, critiqued the lack of research on the transfer of ‘soft’ skills learning nearly 10 years ago, yet little progress has been made to address what they describe as a significant gap. Research methodology underpinning transfer of learning research has also not varied and, to date, has been characterised by a focus on quantitative methodologies and a reliance on self-reports from course participants, usually gathered at the end of training courses (Blume et al., 2010; Cheng & Ho, 2001).

Leadership development, workplace learning and the transfer of learning from leadership development training are individually considered to be important factors for the achievement of organisational success. Despite the importance of these factors, gaps in extant knowledge remain (Blume et al., 2010; L. A. Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Saks & Belcourt, 2006). While leadership development, workplace learning and the transfer of learning are all research fields in their own right, research that bridges all three fields will contribute to a better understanding of workplace learning and its transfer for researchers and practitioners alike. Accordingly, this current research seeks to explore workplace learning with regard to the social processes involved in the transfer of learning from formal training courses, and in particular, those training courses aimed at leadership development.

Overview of the thesis

This current research argues that the understanding of the transfer of learning in the workplace will be enhanced by departing from traditional positivist research designs and instead adopting a holistic, qualitative approach in anticipation of acquiring fresh perspectives on the topic. Much prior transfer of learning research has been dominated by quantitative methods that relied on self-reported data collected from course participants at the conclusion of training courses (Blume et al., 2010). In contrast, this research takes a holistic case study approach to qualitatively investigate the transfer of learning from the perspective of multiple actors over time.

Drawing on the phenomenological tradition, this research explores the meaning of a leadership development training course for the range of role players influential in the transfer of learning (Creswell, 2007). In particular, this research seeks to explore the social processes associated with the transfer of learning, such as those highlighted in Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer model and Broad and Newstrom's (1992) transfer matrix, as the social aspect of transfer is an area that has received less attention than other factors. The Baldwin and Ford and Broad and Newstrom frameworks identified course participants, their managers, peers and subordinates, trainers and senior executives of the organisation as the key role players in the social processes involved in the transfer of learning, with emphasis on managerial support as being especially influential in transfer. By drawing on semi-structured interview data from a more comprehensive grouping of role players, this present research seeks to capture new and wider perspectives on the social processes involved in the transfer of learning to enhance researcher and practitioner understanding of this crucial aspect of training (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Leberman, McDonald, & Doyle, 2006). In developing those new perspectives, this present research also aims to address the absence of research on the transfer of 'soft' skills learning, which has long been a concern of researchers (Cheng & Ho, 2001). By developing new insights on the transfer of learning from the leadership development training course that forms the basis for the case study underpinning this research, the transfer of 'soft' skills learning can begin to be understood.

Social processes are also inherent in collective learning (Teece & Pisano, 1998). The relationship between individual learning and collective learning has recently emerged as a topic of research interest (Fenwick, 2008b). Similar to other relationships in workplace learning, individual and collective learning have often been juxtaposed and characterised as dichotomous by researchers, and some researchers have suggested that describing learning relationships in dichotomous terms does not adequately convey the complexities of those relationships (Darrah, 1995; Jacobs & Park, 2009; Jusoh & Lim, 2007; Matthews, 1999). This present research takes a less polarised view to explore workplace learning relationships to enhance the understanding of how the relationship between formal training and other forms of workplace learning, and between individual and collective learning, might facilitate learning and its transfer. One conception of collective learning is the community of practice (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). The community of practice concept does not acknowledge formal training as a way of learning and, consequently, does not recognise the transfer of learning as an issue (Lave &

Wenger, 1991). Formal training, however, remains an accepted and popular means of learning (P. J. Smith & Sadler-Smith, 2006). This current research challenges the traditional view of the relationship between formal training and the community of practice concept and seeks to investigate potential linkages between formal training and communities of practice.

The following chapter, Chapter 2, examines the status of research into workplace learning, leadership development training and the transfer of learning and highlights some theoretical issues and methodological gaps inherent in such research. In particular, attention is drawn to three areas of promise where additional research might contribute to extant research. The chapter highlights that dichotomies, which are characteristic of workplace learning research, do not adequately convey the complexity of relationships in workplace learning and that the nature of those relationships merited further investigation. The chapter also highlights the influence of social mechanisms in the transfer of learning, especially managerial support, and indicates that comparatively less attention has been given to exploring other social factors. In addition to these theoretical gaps, the chapter also highlights that much prior research was quantitative and reliant on self-reported data collected immediately after completion of training courses. The limited variation in research methodologies suggested scope to undertake qualitative research involving a wider range of participants and data collection over periods of time.

The limited amount of qualitative research and the narrow range of methodologies evident in extant research were addressed by the adoption of a qualitative, holistic approach for this present research. The rationale for adopting this approach and the research methods underpinning this research are described in the third chapter. The chapter outlines the research strategy of using a single case study so that the meaning of leadership development training and the transfer of learning for the various role players involved are captured and described. Context is given to the case study by describing the research site and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of insider research for data collection and analysis. Ethical issues associated with insider research are also discussed. The methods used in collecting data from semi-structured interviews and documents, and inductively analysing the resulting transcripts using NVivo8 qualitative research data analysis software, are described. The process of reducing the large amount of data through coding, in line with the grounded theory approach, into three key themes is described in this

chapter. The chapter concludes by detailing the strategies adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of this research.

The results of this research are discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 discusses the investigation of the social supports involved in the transfer of learning, and highlights the autonomy that managers afford learners to transfer their learning. The interpretation of this as a lack of managerial support by course participants is discussed. The chapter also implicates organisational policies and actions as factors that affect course participants' opportunity to use learning and, consequently, inhibit the transfer of learning.

Chapter 5 views formal training as a complement to other forms of workplace learning. Formal training is discussed in this chapter as a bridge to work-based learning activities and as a facilitator of implicit learning and socialisation. The chapter highlights training course design, particularly where there is the opportunity to socialise, as a factor in learning and the transfer of learning.

Chapter 6 extends the discussion of socialisation and formal training by challenging the traditionally held view that formal training has no relevance in communities of practice. The contributions that formal training can make to a community of practice, in the context of participation, identity and practice, are highlighted in this chapter. The chapter also extends the discussion on socialisation by identifying social factors within formal training courses that might facilitate the formation and maintenance of communities of practice.

The implications of this research for research and practice are summarised in Chapter 7 by highlighting the importance of designing training to enable course participants to socialise inside and outside the classroom, and formal training to complement other workplace learning activities. Social barriers to the transfer of learning are also highlighted, and suggestions are made to reduce the effect of those barriers. Suggestions are also made to use formal training as a means to foster the development or maintenance of a community of practice. The chapter concludes with the observation that a holistic, multiple perspective approach is a useful method with which to gain new insights into workplace learning and the transfer of learning.

Chapter 2:

The status of extant research

Introduction

Much early discussion on workplace learning was centred on definitional issues of what constituted learning at work and the relevance of the workplace as a site for learning (Malone, 2005). The focus of discussion, however, has since shifted to furthering the understanding of the processes and outcomes of learning in the workplace (Fenwick, 2006). Despite the extensive knowledge that has been accumulated on workplace learning, many areas of concern remain where further research can contribute to our understanding.

One such area is the transfer of learning, which has an established history of research but where gaps continue to remain in our knowledge (Blume et al., 2010; Cheng & Hampson, 2008). For instance, an area which continues to attract calls for more research is that of the influence of work environment factors, such as social supports, on the transfer of learning (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). A second area of research interest is the emerging area of social relationships associated with workplace learning (Fenwick, 2008b). Social relationships are, accordingly, an area of interest that is significant to both transfer of learning and workplace learning researchers.

Much of the recent interest in workplace learning has been associated with on-the-job, work-based methods of learning where learning results from doing work (Cunningham et al., 2004). Formal training, which usually occurs away from the workplace, however, remains a common form of workplace learning (Cunningham et al., 2004) and the transfer of learning from formal training remains a concern for workplace learning researchers (Fenwick, 2008a). One area where further research has been called for is the transfer of ‘soft’ skills learning. Although extensive literature exists in the area of transfer of learning, researchers have identified that research into the transfer of learning of ‘soft’ skills, such as leadership skills, is rare and remains a significant gap in our knowledge (Cheng & Ho, 2001). A further area of interest to workplace learning researchers is the social dimension of workplace learning (Bryans & Smith, 2000; Vaughan, 2008). Whereas early research focused on the pedagogy of workplace learning and individual acquisition of knowledge, a

more recent focus by some researchers has been on the social relationships associated with learning (Darrah, 1995; Fenwick, 2008b) as they contribute to individual development and organisational competitiveness (Fenwick, 2008b).

For workplace learning to be effective, the social processes that underpin formal workplace training and its transfer must be better understood. This chapter, therefore, reviews the literature on workplace learning, with specific focus on the transfer of learning and the social conditions that support the transfer of learning, to highlight the status of extant research and a focus for future research.

Learning and the transfer of learning

Training is a significant and costly organisational activity and the provision of training requires a substantial commitment of financial, human and time resources. Learning is sometimes equated to training (Cunningham et al., 2004), and the two are closely associated (Rothwell, 2002): training is seen as the means to effect learning (Clifford & Thorpe, 2007) and learning as the outcome of training (Leberman et al., 2006). Despite the considerable investment of resources, the learning from training may never be applied in the workplace, and training has little value without the transfer of learning (Donovan, Hannigan, & Crowe, 2001; Kozlowski & Salas, 1997). If training is to enhance the competitiveness of organisations, the transfer of learning must be effective and how transfer of learning is supported in organisations needs to be better understood (Yamnill & McLean, 2001).

Early approaches to researching the transfer of learning dealt with transfer in an isolated manner as a detached stage in training, rather than as a complex process involving the individual and the work environment (Analoui, 1993). Subsequent research has recognised the social processes inherent in the transfer of learning. In keeping with the view among some workplace learning researchers that the creation of knowledge is a social process, and that social relationships are important for learning (Gubbins & MacCurtain, 2008), social and organisational factors in the transfer of learning have been highlighted in workplace learning research.

Social factors are inherent in models of transfer of learning, such as those of Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Broad and Newstrom (1992). Both Baldwin and Ford's transfer model and Broad and Newstrom's concepts have been influential in the theoretical understanding of influences on the transfer of learning and have provided other

researchers with frameworks for subsequent research. The seminal transfer model developed by Baldwin and Ford, illustrated in Figure 1, for example, highlighted that the work environment, in addition to the other training inputs of trainee characteristics and training design, directly and indirectly affected training outcomes and the conditions for transfer of learning. These work environment characteristics included social factors such as manager and peer support and influenced many of the transfer of learning support strategies advocated by Broad and Newstrom.

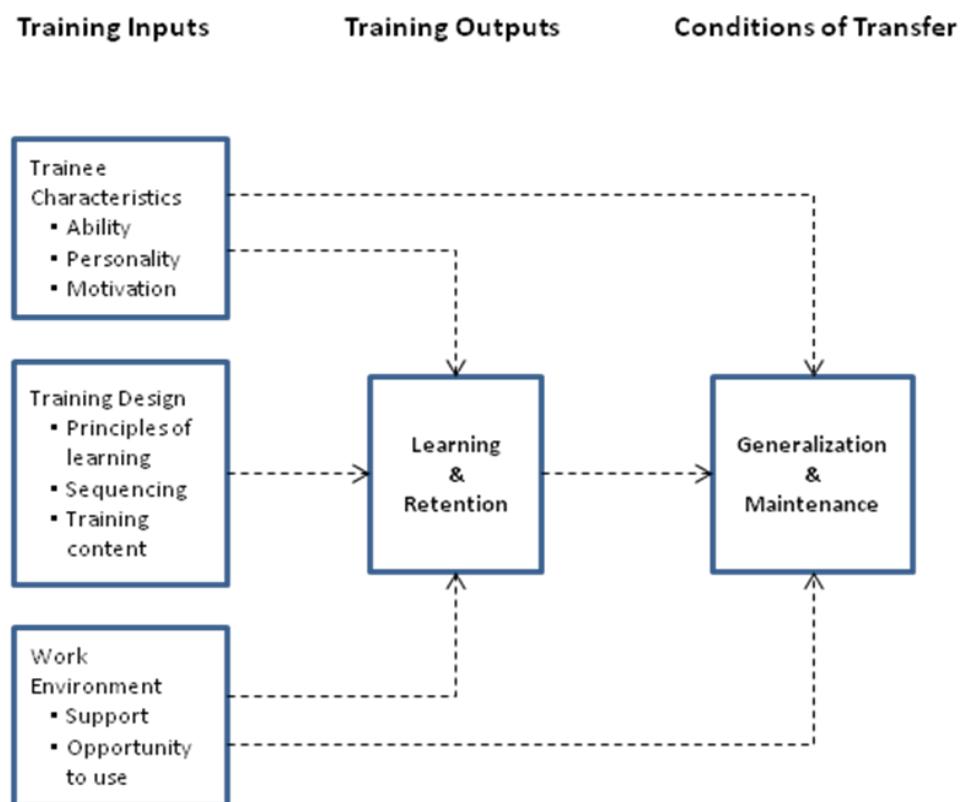


Figure 1. A model of the transfer process (adapted from Baldwin and Ford, 1988, p.65)

The Transfer Matrix

Broad and Newstrom's (1992) research highlighted the potentially important contribution of a range of role players when considering the transfer of learning and suggested that researchers need to view transfer as a process that takes place over time. Their concept of transfer partnership acknowledged the social processes inherent in the transfer of learning by identifying trainees, trainers and managers as the main role players influential in the transfer of learning. Through the development

of the transfer matrix they highlighted that role players could influence the transfer of learning before, during and after training. The transfer matrix is shown in Figure 2.

		TIME PERIODS		
		Before	During	After
ROLE-PLAYERS	Manager			
	Trainer			
	Trainee			

Figure 2. The transfer matrix: nine possible role/time combinations (Broad and Newstrom, 1992, p.52)

Although not included in the transfer matrix, organisational factors such as top management, organisational culture and the influence of peers were acknowledged by Broad and Newstrom (1992) to be other social factors that might affect transfer. Broad and Newstrom did not extend their discussion on these factors, and only limited research has been undertaken on the organisational factors influencing the transfer of learning (Chiaburu, Dam, & Hutchins, 2010). A focus of such research has been on the broad and encompassing concepts of transfer climate and organisational culture (L. A. Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Cromwell & Kolb, 2004; Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995). These concepts emphasised multidimensionality and viewed transfer factors on an aggregate basis (Chiaburu et al., 2010; Tracey et al., 1995), as illustrated by Rouiller and Goldstein's (1993) research, which identified eight dimensions to transfer climate.

With the emphasis on aggregation, specific organisational factors influential in the transfer of learning, such as policies and reward systems (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999; Tracey et al., 1995), are less well understood. The theoretical concepts and methodological frameworks developed by Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Broad and Newstrom (1992) continue to remain relevant and useful for researchers, especially when broadened to reflect a wider view of role players and organisational factors. Further, the predominantly quantitative methods used in the research on organisational culture reflect the relative absence of qualitative and longitudinal research in transfer of learning research. An exception to this norm is the research

by Leberman et al. (2006), which encompassed qualitative, longitudinal case studies in New Zealand and the Cook Islands, and highlighted the transfer of learning in three separate contexts. Despite being separate pieces of research, the researchers all found that social support and culture were important factors for facilitating the transfer of learning and highlighted the need to extend the understanding of these factors. Indeed, with the growth of multinational organisations and the deployment of transnational training programmes, the understanding of national cultural characteristics on the transfer of learning is becoming increasingly relevant for organisations. However, the implications of diverse cultural characteristics have received limited research attention (Sarkar-Barney, 2004).

Recent trends in research involving transfer facilitating activities

Recent research has highlighted organisational factors that influence the transfer of learning. Much of the prior research on the facilitation of transfer has been at the individual level of analysis rather than at the organisational level and that there has been little research on what organisations, rather than individuals, do to improve transfer (Saks & Belcourt, 2006). Saks and Belcourt's (2006) research evaluated the strategies and practices being used by organisations to facilitate the transfer of learning.

Their research employed a large-scale quantitative survey of 150 members of a large Canadian training and development society and used meta-analytical techniques for analysis. The survey required participants to indicate the extent to which their organisations used each of the activities on a five-point scale and, following the transfer matrix framework (Broad & Newstrom, 1992), the percentage of employees who apply learning from training programmes immediately, six months and one year after attending a training programme. Their research reaffirmed the value of considering transfer at multiple points in time as the results indicated that social factors such as organisational and supervisor support were among those activities that enhanced transfer in the periods before and after training. Of the 36 activities that were identified as facilitating transfer, 13 were used before training and 16 after training with only seven used during training.

Social factors, as influencers of the transfer of learning, were also evident from the research by Blume et al. (2010). Like Saks and Belcourt (2006), Blume et al. sought to determine the ability of individual predictors, such as those inherent in Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of the transfer process, to influence the transfer of learning.

To clarify mixed findings in the literature and provide a quantitative assessment of the ability of the factors inherent in Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer model to influence transfer, Blume et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analytic study of the transfer literature for reports that indicated a correlation between transfer and variables that predicted transfer. Their results indicated that the social factors of supervisor support and, to a lesser extent, peer support, provided meaningful correlations with the transfer of learning and quantitatively reaffirmed that social factors were influential in the transfer of learning.

Notwithstanding the results, issues with the research underlying the meta-analysis suggest that alternative methodological approaches are required to extend Blume et al.'s (2010) research. In particular, much prior research has been reliant on self-reported data from a single source, the course participants, and the factors influencing transfer have been assessed in the same period as transfer (Blume et al., 2010). These methodological concerns may be addressed by broadening the range of perspectives to include those of supervisors and peers, and allowing time for transfer to take place.

Blume et al.'s (2010) results also highlighted that several relationships between predictors and transfer were contingent on the 'open' or 'closed' nature of the skills being learnt. 'Open' skills were defined as skills that were more concerned with principles, less prescriptive and less rigid in their practice compared to 'closed' skills (Blume et al., 2010). An example of 'open' skills is leadership skills (Blume et al., 2010). Learners of 'open' skills therefore had flexibility in how and when learned skills were applied. Research on the transfer of learning has focused mainly on the transfer of 'closed' skills. Research on the transfer of 'open' skills, by comparison, is lacking. By drawing attention to the absence of research on the transfer of 'open' skills learning, Blume et al. highlight the dearth of research in the area of transfer of leadership skills or, more generally, the transfer of 'soft' skills learning.

Soft skills transfer

Leadership skills are often described as 'soft' skills (Cacioppe, 1998; Cheng & Ho, 2001; Dexter & Prince, 2007; Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007; Kotterman, 2006) and 'soft' skills training is a major focus of leadership development (Crosbie, 2005). Leadership skills have been described as personal and interpersonal skills (V. Burke & Collins, 2005; Crosbie, 2005; Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007) and people skills

(Dexter & Prince, 2007). To illustrate the nature of ‘soft’ skills, Crosbie (2005) used the example of medical students who depicted subjects such as biochemistry, physics, pharmacology, anatomy, and pathology as ‘hard’, while subjects like medical ethics, philosophy, history, and patient-physician relationships were labelled ‘soft’. A similar differentiation was made in business where Konopka and Dupré (2001) differentiated ‘soft’ skills from ‘hard’ skills, by describing ‘hard’ skills as skills such as technical competence, time management, goal setting, management and marketing compared to ‘soft’, interpersonal, skills like leadership, communication, self-confidence, and self-awareness.

Research has focused on the transfer of ‘hard’ skills, while ‘soft’ skills transfer is an area where a significant gap in our knowledge of transfer of learning remains (Cheng & Ho, 2001). Conceptions of ‘soft’ skills implicate social interaction as a potential influence on the transfer of learning, and further research is required on their influence, if any, and the nature of that influence. Blume et al.’s (2010) research highlights the urgent need for clarification of what transfer of ‘soft’ skills means and how it is influenced.

Transfer of learning from leadership development training

Many researchers, including Allio (2005), McCall (2004) and Raelin (2004), have questioned whether leadership skills can be taught and argue that leadership skills are best learnt through experience. Other researchers, such as Richardson (1994), believe that everything to do with leadership skills, from interpersonal skills to strategic thinking, can be taught. Regardless of the differences in perspective, researchers generally support the concept of leadership development training courses. McCall, for instance, acknowledged that training can be a supplement to experience, especially if the training is strategically relevant, powerful and well-timed. Other views in support of leadership development training courses are that they raise awareness of leadership behaviours and skills (Conger, 1992; Hurd, 2009), provide familiarity with leadership attributes and characteristics, teach or enhance concepts, practices and skills, and impart perspectives on leadership theory, new paradigms, leadership virtues, self-esteem and self awareness (Doh, 2003). Formal classroom programmes, accordingly, remain a common method of leadership development (Conger & Benjamin, 1999; Day, 2000; Yukl, 2010). Their continued popularity gives practical and scholarly reason for this current research to pursue further enhancement of our understanding of the transfer of learning from formal leadership development training courses (V. Burke & Collins, 2005; Day, 2000).

Sogunro's (1997) research, using mixed methods (consisting of qualitative methods involving interviews, document analyses and direct observations and quantitative questionnaires), is an early example of empirical research on the transfer of leadership learning from formal training. Drawing on data collected from the four stakeholder groups (trainees, instructors, sponsoring organisations, and programme administrators) of a leadership development programme in Alberta, Canada, at pre-workshop, end of session and post-workshop stages through the training process, the research provided empirical evidence that individual leadership capability could be improved and developed through leadership training programmes. Sogunro found an increase in the number of identified skills, which were attributed to the influence of the leadership training programme and corroborated by statistically significant changes in leadership competencies. Overall, the study concluded that training can improve leadership competency in the workplace and the results supported the use of formal training courses for leadership development.

A limitation of Sogunro's (1997) research was that it addressed the question of whether leadership training courses work. Research has since moved on to the more important question of why training works (Tracey et al., 1995), which Sogunro's research did not address. His research did not discuss the transfer factors that facilitated the increase in leadership skills and is indicative of Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe's (2007) recent summation that 'there is little empirical research specifically about transfer of leadership training' (p.981).

Recent research trends in transfer of leadership development training

Although research into the transfer of leadership development training remains scarce (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007), a small amount of research is emerging. Recent research indicated that some researchers, such as Harris and Cole (2007) and Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007), are beginning to link leadership development training with transfer of training literatures. Whilst the trend is encouraging, research has tended to be diffuse. Some associations are narrow in scope, like that of Burke and Collins (2005), which explored course design as a factor in the transfer of a leadership skill, and Harris and Cole, who tested motivation to learn as a factor for the transfer of leadership development training. Other research, such as that of Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe, was much broader, exploring a range of factors influencing transfer.

The methodology underpinning the research work of Burke and Collins (2005), Harris and Cole (2007), and Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007) also varied considerably. Burke and Collins' research adopted a content analysis of brochures of UK leadership development providers, followed by semi-structured interviews with 18 managers in leadership roles and semi-structured interviews with 10 leadership development providers. Harris and Cole adopted a quantitative methodology in studying over 70 participants of a US multinational corporation's classroom-based leadership development training programme over a nine month period, while Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe's research consisted of a literature review that informed a qualitative exploratory study involving interviews with 18 participants of a Canadian leadership development programme and the peer observers of the participants.

As well as methodological differences, their research also investigated a diverse range of transfer factors, with Burke and Collins (2005), Harris and Cole (2007) and Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007) focusing on course design, motivation to learn and transfer climate, respectively. The research approach of examining a limited range of transfer factors has, however, lagged behind newer developments in the transfer of learning research. Recent studies have emphasised the need for a holistic perspective and greater consideration of those combinations of influences that synergistically enhance transfer (Blume et al., 2010).

Summary of issues in transfer of learning research

Research on the transfer of learning has been well traversed, but gaps in theoretical knowledge and methodologies remain (Blume et al., 2010; L. A. Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Cheng & Ho, 2001; Saks & Belcourt, 2006). In particular, research on the transfer of 'soft' skills learning remains rare, and researchers continue to call for research into this aspect of transfer (Blume et al., 2010; Cheng & Ho, 2001). Research has been predominantly in the quantitative tradition, reliant on self-reporting for data and focused on the individual as the unit of analysis (Blume et al., 2010). This review highlights the absence of research that takes a holistic approach to understanding the transfer of learning and the contribution that this present research can make through a qualitative, multi-perspective and longitudinal methodology as the means to explore in depth the social and organisational influences that, to date, have largely been overlooked by researchers.

Social processes in learning and its transfer

Workplace learning

Workplace learning is learning that takes place through the workplace, and for the workplace (Evans et al., 2006). A focus of workplace learning processes has been work-based methods of learning (Cunningham et al., 2004). Those methods are essentially experiential and practice-oriented, where learning results from doing work. In contrast to work-based learning activities, formal training typically occurs away from the workplace.

Some researchers have highlighted the individualistic nature of training and suggest that training overlooks collective learning (Raelin, 1998) and the organisational and social dimensions of workplace learning (Bryans & Smith, 2000; Vaughan, 2008). Other researchers consider work-based learning approaches better able to merge theory with practice and are more accommodating of tacit as well as explicit learning (Raelin, 1998). Such views suggest that formal training is independent from other forms of workplace learning. Acquiring the competence necessary for existing and future work, however, requires a range of training, development, educational or experiential activities and the view that formal training is independent from work-based learning does not adequately capture the inter-relationship between these approaches (Jacobs & Park, 2009). Workplace learning is complex (Matthews, 1999), however, research has been characterised by reductionist, dichotomous approaches that are not suited to capturing the complexities of relationships within workplace learning. A less polarised view of workplace learning will be required if a better understanding of the role of formal training and its relationship with experiential, work-based learning activities is to be developed (Darrah, 1995; Jacobs & Park, 2009).

The dichotomies of workplace learning

Descriptions of workplace learning have been characterised by a number of dichotomies such as formal or informal, planned or unplanned, in-the-workplace or away-from-the-workplace learning (Jacobs & Park, 2009). One such dichotomy places formal training as independent from experiential, work-based learning (Tennant, 1999). Recent research by Jusoh and Lim (2007) recognised that describing the two different learning approaches in a dichotomous way oversimplifies the relationship between the two. Their research quantitatively compared learning outcomes from formal training programmes and on-the-job learning experiences by

surveying 350 employees from 35 Malaysian organisations. Analysis of the 175 responses received indicated that both formal training and on-the-job experiences provided favourable learning outcomes, and both means of workplace learning were pertinent and beneficial to organisations. The results gave support to the view that workplace learning is more complex than reductionist simplifications imply. Employees learnt from the training programmes and from performing their jobs, suggesting that formal training and on-the-job learning were not dichotomous, but complementary. Their research highlighted the need for further research into how the two approaches might complement each other.

The dichotomy of individual and collective learning

Jusoh and Lim's (2007) research highlighted the interdependence of learning approaches in workplace learning. Interdependence also occurs in the relationships that underpin the learning approaches. For example, learning processes, particularly work-based learning, are based on a teacher-learner relationship and are reliant on social and collective processes for knowledge transfer and learning (Teece & Pisano, 1998). Another interdependence, that of the individual learner and the collective, has emerged as a theme of recent workplace learning research (Fenwick, 2008a). Notwithstanding the level of interest in the individual-collective relationship, gaps remain in the literature. The relative newness of the concept of collective learning, in the context of human resource development, and the breadth of understanding of collective learning in the literature have been cited as reasons for gaps in our knowledge (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). As with workplace learning, the literature on the individual-collective learning relationship is characterised by multiple strands of literature across a number of disciplines and fragmentation of thinking rather than an integrated accumulation of knowledge about collective learning (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). The various concepts of collective learning, the ways in which collective learning is described and the varying processes involved in collective learning illustrate the diversity of understanding about collective learning.

Indeed, the breadth that collective learning encompasses is illustrated by the definition of a collective. In the context of collective learning, collectives span a range of groupings from dyads to societies, including groupings such as teams, communities, networks, and organisations (Sadler-Smith, 2006). Breadth is also illustrated by the range of functions that the collective performs. The collective functions as either a set of conditions, disciplines, practices and objects that the learner interacts with, a teacher or coach, a causal entity that acts on a learner

through ideologies, intentional programmes or organisation structures, or as an outcome of learning constructed by individuals' meanings or actions (Fenwick, 2008a).

Breadth is evident, too, in the range of concepts that are described as collective learning (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). Although the concepts vary in focus and perspective, they share a common view that learning occurs through collectives or among collectives by a process involving knowledge transfer from individuals to the collective. In viewing the individual and the collective as distinct and separate, researchers have overlooked the interdependence of the individual and the collective in which learning occurs. As with other relationships in workplace learning, researchers have largely viewed the individual and collective as polar opposites that exist dichotomously, although this traditional view has recently been challenged. Research by Lee and Roth (2007) indicated that the individual and the collective co-exist in a mutually supportive dialectical relationship. Their research, using a longitudinal case study approach, found that it was difficult to separate individual learning from collective learning and that individual learning and collective learning coincided when theorised as a dialectic.

Lee and Roth's (2007) research highlighted that new perspectives on the relationship between individual and collective learning are feasible. An area where this relationship might be explored further is the community of practice conception of collective learning. In particular, how the learning of individuals within their community of practice can be facilitated has been highlighted as requiring further investigation (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008) and is a focus of this present research.

The socio-technical model in individual-collective workplace learning

Social factors within an organisation that affected learning, transferability and the application of learning to the workplace were first recognised by Analoui (1993) and theorised as the socio-technical model. The model identified the relationship between acquiring technical knowledge and skills from training and the social skills necessary for both learning during training and subsequent transfer on return to the workplace. The social learning processes, referred to as socialisation by Analoui, are the processes of understanding the formal and informal social structure of the workplace such as expectations, norms, beliefs, and how to perform within established patterns of rules and regulations (Analoui, 1993). Socialisation takes place between the individual learner and trainers, managers, and the immediate

work group. These groups are the most crucial workplace social groupings that influence learning and the transfer of learning and it is the socialisation process between these collectives and the individual learner that describe one aspect of the individual-collective relationship in workplace learning and its transfer (Analoui, 1993). The transfer of learning literature had previously focused on individual learning characteristics such as ability and motivation (Noe, 1986; Noe & Schmitt, 1986). However, the socio-technical perspective placed emphasis on the inter-relationship between the individual and other learners, managers and workgroups. The learner was not only influenced by, and a recipient of, social influences but also an influence on others through their interactions during both learning and the transfer of learning (Analoui, 1993). Having introduced the relationship between the individual and others, Analoui did not, however, go on to discuss the nature of the relationship in greater depth.

Key aspects of the socio-technical model pertinent to the transfer of workplace learning were the importance of socialisation to the transfer of learning, the timing of socialisation and the parties to the process. Analoui (1993) identified two periods of socialisation: socialisation was viewed as a necessary process for learning whilst training was in progress, with a second period of socialisation required for transfer when the learner returned to the workplace after a period of training. Socialisation, regardless of whether it takes place during or after training, is important for the acquisition of both explicit and tacit knowledge (Analoui, 1993). Training has been regarded as the transfer of explicit knowledge. However, some researchers have recognised that implicit learning also occurs during training, regardless of whether explicit learning takes place (Chao, 1997). Implicit learning is the acquisition of tacit knowledge and takes place without the learner being aware of, or able to describe, the knowledge acquired at the time (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). Chao (1997) theorised that socialisation and implicit learning were related, while Analoui's research suggested that the acquisition of tacit knowledge occurred through the process of socialisation during and following training. The transfer of implicit learning and associated social processes influencing it, however, has not been a focus of research (Analoui, 1993) and is a gap that is addressed in this present research.

Another aspect of the socio-technical model addressed in this present research is the life-cycle of the social grouping formed during training. Analoui's (1993) research suggested that socialisation between learners attending the same training course ceased at the end of the course and that the learner social group was different from

the workplace social group. Much of the focus of the research on the transfer of learning has been on the social processes in the workplace post-course and, as a consequence, the social groupings formed during training courses and their influence on transfer of learning post-training have not been explored (Analoui, 1993).

Issues in the social processes of workplace learning summarised

Workplace learning includes formal training for the workplace and on-the-job learning through work (Cunningham et al., 2004). The complexities of workplace learning, such as the inter-relationship between formal training and work-based learning (Jacobs & Park, 2009; Tennant, 1999) and between individual learners and the collective with whom they are associated at work (Fenwick, 2008a), have not been adequately captured by research to date. Researchers have called for more empirical research to aid in developing a deeper understanding of workplace learning and the social relationships influencing workplace learning and its transfer (Jacobs & Park, 2009).

In workplace learning, the individual learner and the collective are viewed as distinct and separate. This view treats the relationship between the individual learner and the collective in which learning occurs as independent rather than interdependent. Recent empirical research has challenged the traditional view and asserted that forms of relationship other than dichotomy exist (Lee & Roth, 2007). One conception of collective learning identified in the research is the community of practice (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). Aspects of this concept suggest that the community of practice approach is relevant as a means of bridging the learning divide between the individual and the collective.

The community of practice approach to learning

The increased capabilities that an organisation can derive from a communities of practice approach may be a source of competitive advantage over organisations pursuing more traditional approaches to learning (Liedtka, 1999). A central tenet of the communities of practice concept is that they exist for the sharing of expertise (Pemberton, Mavin, & Stalker, 2007). They can also be an approach for facilitating transfer (Leberman et al., 2006). The concept is pertinent to an exploration of the individual-collective relationship in workplace learning as a community of practice is work-based and emphasises social and cultural influences on the transfer of learning

(Leberman et al., 2006) and the notion of a community of practice has become a powerful way to associate the individual and the collective (Koliba & Gajda, 2009). Since its inception by Lave and Wenger in 1991, the community of practice approach has become increasingly influential in the management literature and practice, including in the field of workplace learning (Blåka & Filstad, 2007; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, & Unwin, 2005; Roberts, 2006). A community of practice provides the context within which an individual develops the practices and identities appropriate to the community (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006) and is influenced by a community of experts who guide and shape individual learning (Stein, 2001). It is through communities and networks, where processes such as role modelling, experimentation and identity construction are used, that identities and practices are developed (Handley et al., 2006).

In the context of workplace learning, the community of practice is one approach to learning (Cunningham et al., 2004; Fuller & Unwin, 2004; Malone, 2005; P. J. Smith & Sadler-Smith, 2006). Wenger (1998) described the communities of practice approach as a method to promote organisational learning through the sharing of information by people with similar interests. The communities of practice concept shares similarities with Analoui's (1993) concept of socialisation with the focus on social interaction within a group. The focus of the communities of practice approach is on participation, social practice and social relations (Cox, 2005) as learning occurs through participation in the social world and through social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). By participating, individuals gain knowledge and ability and, as with Analoui's concept of socialisation, also develop their understanding of the social and cultural values of the community (Campbell, Verenikina, & Herrington, 2009).

The community of practice concept has been influential in the management literature (Fuller et al., 2005) and the volume of literature has grown strongly. Despite the growth in research about communities of practice, aspects of the concept require further research. In particular, whether, and how, formal learning has a role in the formation and ongoing maintenance of a community of practice has been overlooked and is a focus of this present research,

Formal training and communities of practice

Conventional theories assumed that learning was the acquisition of objective knowledge and that it was best achieved through education or training that occurred away from where the learning would be applied (Handley, Clark, Fincham, & Sturdy,

2007). In contrast, the community of practice approach was that learning occurred through practice, with understanding constructed by the individual and not dependent on, or filtered through, a trainer (Brown & Duguid, 1991). These views are consistent with the dichotomy evident in the workplace learning literature that formal training and work-based learning are distinct and separate activities suiting different purposes (Raelin, 1998; Tennant, 1999).

The practice-based approach of the community of practice concept challenged cognitivist theories of learning (Handley et al., 2006) and shifted the attention from learning abstractions that were detached from practice and located learning in the practices and communities where the knowledge had significance (Brown & Duguid, 1991). However, the community of practice view that learning was situated and contextual did not recognise the role of learning outside the community or the community's role in facilitating formal learning and its transfer to the workplace.

The role of formal training in communities of practice

Lave and Wenger's (1991) conception of learning was founded on the proposition that learning was achieved through informal and situated social interaction. The learning model that Lave and Wenger advocated challenged the traditional views of learning such as the need for formal training courses. Community of practice theory focused on community and the flow of practice within communities and not individualistic approaches to knowledge (Duguid, 2005). The key components of their proposition were that learning was achieved *in situ*, by a social process of informal observation and participation in a community of practice, in contrast to formal learning which was viewed as occurring away from the workplace in specific contexts intended for learning (Jacobs & Park, 2009). Lave and Wenger viewed formal learning as the mechanistic transfer of cognitive knowledge (Cox, 2005), and their situated and contextual view of learning directly opposed the concept of classroom teaching and individualised learning of cognitive ideas (Handley et al., 2007). Formal training, therefore, was anathema to the concept and overlooked in community of practice research. As the community of practice concept does not acknowledge formal training (Fuller et al., 2005), the concept of transfer of learning has no meaning to community of practice researchers (Evans et al., 2006). With the emergence of situated workplace learning, some researchers have questioned the validity of transfer of learning as a field of study (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). The emphasis on situated learning, however, ignored three important considerations: formal training remains a prevalent form of workplace learning (P. J. Smith & Sadler-

Smith, 2006), teaching and individual learning remain valid educational paradigms (Cox, 2005) and knowledge, such as theoretical concepts that are not context-specific, is not always accessible on the job, (Mulholland, Zdrahal, Domingue, & Hatala, 2000). While situation and context are important factors in learning, there is insufficient justification to dismiss abstract or de-contextualised learning as having no value in communities of practice (Tennant, 1999).

Formal training and participation in communities of practice

One way to bridge formal training and community of practice theory is through exploring formal training in the context of participation, practice and identity, which are at the core of Lave and Wenger's (1991) conception of a community of practice. These three concepts also formed the basis for Handley et al.'s (2007) conceptual framework for investigating communities of practice. Using a qualitative research methodology that involved semi-structured and unstructured interviews and observation, Handley et al. found that opportunities to participate mediated in the development of identity and practice. Opportunity to participate was also identified as influential in identity construction by Blåka and Filstad (2007). They explored identity construction and workplace learning among the members of two separate groups: midwives and real estate agents. Through an ethnographic, interpretive approach and using a range of qualitative methods, including interviews, conversations, observations, participation and diary notes, their research suggested that an active and reciprocal process of engagement in community practices was found to be a necessary complement to participation. They suggested that by taking an active approach to participation, learners were able to acquire the language, culture and tacit knowledge required in the community of practice. This approach to participation draws similarities with the process of socialisation described by Analoui (1993) in the transfer of learning literature. Both Handley et al. and Blåka and Filstad's research were oriented toward learning through on-the-job practice and not learning from formal training. Questions such as determining a role for formal training in a community of practice, the scope of that role, and how formal training might facilitate participation in that community remain unanswered.

Participation is also relevant to exploring the concept of power relations in formal training and communities of practice. Some researchers believe that Lave and Wenger's (1991) research overlooks power relations in communities of practice (Cox, 2005). Participation is essential for learning to take place (Handley et al., 2006) and Pemberton et al.'s (2007) research, based on a case study and empirical

examples, drew attention to situations where practitioners in powerful positions denied newcomers participation in a community of practice. Their research suggested that power relations also affect other aspects of communities of practice, such as in the formation and development of communities of practice, when power relations exist between emergent communities of practice and the formal organisation (Pemberton et al., 2007). The limitations of the assumptions and analysis from Pemberton et al.'s methodology were acknowledged by the authors who called for more empirical research on the subject. The form of such research might be to examine the role of power relations in emergent communities of practice in another context and question the role of power relations in the formal training-community of practice relationship.

Formation and maintenance of communities of practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) envisaged communities of practice as emerging organically from informal social interaction. This process viewed the community of practice as a free floating, 'natural' set of relationships (Cox, 2005). Communities of practice are also spontaneous, fluid, self-organising (Probst & Borzillo, 2008) and self-perpetuating (Akkerman, Petter, & de Laat, 2008). Notwithstanding these views, how communities of practice develop is an area of interest among researchers seeking to purposefully establish and organise communities of practice to facilitate learning in organisations (Akkerman et al., 2008). In the absence of a pedagogy for organising communities of practice (Akkerman et al., 2008), research has focused on identifying factors that facilitate the development of both self-emergent and intentionally constructed communities of practice (Akkerman et al., 2008; Breu & Hemingway, 2002; Pemberton et al., 2007; Probst & Borzillo, 2008; H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003).

Although communities of practice have been conceptualised as being informally formed (Cox, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991), some researchers have challenged that view by suggesting that communities of practice can be intentionally initiated, albeit under certain conditions (Akkerman et al., 2008; Breu & Hemingway, 2002). Those conditions include the sharing of a common purpose and a clear view of the intended organisational benefits by the potential community of practice's members (Breu & Hemingway, 2002). Communities of practice are also considered to be self-regulating, having no responsibility except to themselves, and resistant to external supervision (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). Some researchers have, however, suggested that external intervention is necessary if a community of practice is to be

intentionally established. External intervention in the form of direction setting, ongoing coordination of activities, enabling potential members of a community of practice to identify each other and funding to support the growth of community membership and activities have been suggested (Akkerman et al., 2008; Breu & Hemingway, 2002). Notwithstanding adherence to the traditional view of informal community of practice formation by some researchers, and issues relating to the generalisability of Akkerman et al.'s (2008) and Breu and Hemingway's (2002) research, indications are that further research will contribute to our understanding of community of practice formation.

An alternative view to the intentional formation of communities of practice was that communities of practice could not be created but could, however, be cultivated (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Indeed, Smith and McKeen (2003) advocated that organisations take an active role in identifying and facilitating communities of practice to make them effective. Their qualitative research involved a focus group of knowledge managers from a variety of industries. The results indicated that communities of practice complemented traditional organisational structures and that development of a community of practice could be enhanced by organisational supports such as the provision of resources, development of a collaborative and supportive culture, and the implementation of an enabling technological infrastructure. Meeting the conditions identified by Breu and Hemingway (2002) for the ongoing viability of a community of practice is also essential.

Smith and McKeen's (2003) research also suggested that networks, although more loosely coupled, have the potential to evolve into communities of practice. Networks are similar to communities of practice: both involve a social interaction between members of an informal group with an underlying purpose of sharing. Communities of practice do, however, have characteristics that differentiate them from networks (Probst & Borzillo, 2008). The key distinguishing characteristic is the tightness of connections within the group. A community of practice has been described as a tightly knit group who 'have been practising together long enough to develop into a cohesive community with relationships of mutuality and shared understandings' (Lindkvist, 2005, p. 1189, cited in Handley et al., 2006). A community of practice, therefore, has closer connections, which are possibly longer term and more binding, than a network (Cunningham et al., 2004). In addition to the temporal factor, other factors that distinguish communities of practice from networks are that communities

of practice have a purpose and that learning is a key component of that purpose (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). Smith and McKeen's research indicates that this current research's exploration of how networks can be transformed into communities of practice will extend our knowledge of community of practice formation.

Issues of formal training and the community of practice concept summarised

The concept of communities of practice is influential in the management literature and, although research about communities of practice has grown, aspects of the concept require further research. Knowledge is not always available from doing on-the-job work (Mulholland et al., 2000) and formal training (P. J. Smith & Sadler-Smith, 2006), teaching and individual learning continue to be valid paradigms for learning (Cox, 2005). These practical realities cannot continue to be ignored and further research to foster an understanding of the relationship between formal learning and communities of practice is necessary. Consequently, researchers have called for additional research that accommodates formal, off-the-job learning in community of practice theory (Fuller et al., 2005).

Interest in whether organisations can actively form and support communities of practice has grown (Probst & Borzillo, 2008). Some researchers, however, are equivocal on the ability of organisations to encourage the growth of communities of practice (Thompson, 2005). Whilst communities of practice are informal and 'natural', they are structured by their purpose and the controls of the community (Cox, 2005), as well as power relations external to, and within, the community of practice (Pemberton et al., 2007). Research has suggested that communities of practice can be intentionally formed and cultivated, yet many efforts to build and sustain communities of practice have failed (Chua, 2006). The tension between self-regulation and the prescriptive management of communities of practice also remains unresolved. Further research will shed light on these two outstanding issues.

Summary of chapter

This research is concerned with formal training in the workplace and its transfer. It is situated mainly in the workplace learning literature, although the research objective and issues emerging from this review point to the involvement of transfer of learning, leadership development and community of practice research as well. A review of the

extant research in those areas indicated that some methodological and theoretical gaps remain. A significant methodological gap in the transfer of learning research is the dominance of quantitative methods in prior research that relied on self-reporting by training course participants and single point post-facto data gathering. Qualitative research has recently emerged but, by comparison, remains rare. In particular, there is a lack of research that is holistic, multi-perspective and longitudinal.

A focus of transfer of learning research has been the social and organisational factors influencing the transfer of learning. Models and frameworks that reflect those factors, in particular Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer model and Broad and Newstrom's (1992) transfer matrix, have influenced researchers and contributed to underpinning this research. Nevertheless, further exploration of some factors, such as peer, subordinate and organisational support is required and persistent calls for more research on the transfer of 'soft' skills learning need to be answered.

The relationships within workplace learning have been simplified and some researchers have recently suggested that, as a result, the complexities of the relationships are not well understood. Relationships have been characterised by dichotomies, such as between formal training and work-based learning and between individual learners and the collective. These relationships are not adequately represented and more research into understanding workplace learning relationships in other than dichotomous terms is required. In particular, recent focus on the individual and collective relationship has drawn attention to the social processes involved in workplace learning, and researchers have called for more empirical research on these relationships in workplace learning and its transfer.

One conception of collective learning that has become influential in the literature is the community of practice. The concept has traditionally refuted the concept of formal training and does not view the associated transfer of learning as an issue. Some researchers, however, have challenged this view as the concept overlooks the continued use of formal training for workplace learning and the unsuitability of the workplace for some forms of knowledge acquisition. The divergence of views highlights the need for the formal training-community of practice divide to be explored more fully.

This current research, therefore, seeks to contribute to extant research by exploring the transfer of learning from a leadership development training course using a

qualitative holistic, multi-perspective, longitudinal research methodology. The details of the research aim and methodology are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Fulfilling the research aim

Introduction

The methods adopted for this research reflect the research objectives (Crotty, 1998) and methodological gaps evident in extant literature (Blaikie, 2010). This chapter explains why a qualitative research strategy employing a single case study methodology was adopted and details the research methods used to fulfil the research aim, embracing participant selection and recruitment, data collection and data analysis. The use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software is described in the discussion of data analysis. Ethical considerations and the implications of insider research are also discussed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the strategies used to enhance the trustworthiness of the research.

Research strategy

The adoption of a qualitative research strategy involving the phenomenological tradition best suited fulfilling the research aim as it enabled rich, deep data to be gathered (Bryman, 2008) so that ‘the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon’ (Creswell, 2007, p.57) could be described. The approach, therefore, enabled a broad range of views regarding *Insight*, the leadership development training course of a New Zealand financial services organisation, to be captured and described. The approach was underpinned by a social constructivist worldview that accorded with my interest in the social processes involved in training and transfer of learning and the seeking of the multiple meanings of leadership development training and transfer of learning (Creswell, 2007).

The phenomenological tradition has advantages in capturing the varied and multiple meanings that form the complex views of research participants, interpreting the differing realities of the research participants, providing a fresh look at a phenomenon and enabling new meaning or affirmation and enhancement of existing meaning to be derived (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). However, there are also inherent difficulties in adopting a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology requires a temporary suspension of ‘existing biases, beliefs, preconceptions, or

assumptions' (Sanders, 1982, p.355) in order to capture the essence of a phenomenon. This process of epoché, or bracketing (Sanders, 1982), requires the researcher to be detached from the research and is difficult to achieve in reality (Creswell, 2007). My prior, limited, understanding of leadership development training and transfer of learning facilitated bracketing for this present research. My professional and academic background has been in strategy development and strategic management, and my only prior involvement in leadership development training was as a presenter at leadership development training courses. Leadership development and the transfer of learning were, thus, viewed through a managerial lens, with a focus on organisational effectiveness and the realisation of corporate strategy.

The phenomenological approach has also been critiqued for being subjective and not necessarily generalisable. The introspective processes of intuition and reflection associated with phenomenology have led some researchers to critique phenomenology as characterised by subjectivism (Sanders, 1982). However, the subjective dimension is essential to phenomenology as it provides the richness and depth to progress beyond objective knowledge and give meaning to such knowledge (Lewis & Staehler, 2010). Also, intuition and introspection have been highlighted by some researchers as not always leading to generalisable results. However, the objective of phenomenology researchers is the description of phenomena and not generalisability. Notwithstanding these limitations, a phenomenological approach is appropriate for capturing and describing the meaning of leadership development training and provides the philosophical underpinning for this present research.

Case study method

The aim to better understand the *Insight* leadership development training course as a phenomenon evolved into a case study of the course. A case study is characterised by clearly defined boundaries within which the study occurs (Creswell, 2007; Rausch, 2005). The ability to constrain this research to a leadership development training course, which was bounded by time, activity and research participants, was one reason to suggest that the case study method was appropriate for this study.

The main consideration for adoption of the case study method, however, was the richness and detail that case studies are better able to capture (Berg, 2007) and the method offered 'the greatest potential for revealing the richness, holism, and complexity of naturally occurring events' (Torraco, 1997, p130).

Case selection

A single case was chosen as the basis for this research as the value of a case study is its ability to illuminate, regardless of whether it consists of a single case or multiple cases (Barbour, 2008). The selection of the *Insight* leadership development training course as the single case for this research was governed by the opportunity that it offered to learn from it (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Rausch, 2005; Yin, 2009), not because it was considered representative of a population or seen as typical of most leadership development training courses (Yin, 2009). The ability to learn from this single case study reflected the level of access gained to the research site, the availability of people within it and the ability to conduct the data collection effectively (Berg, 2007). It is often difficult to gain access to the people required for data collection (Velada, Caetano, Michel, Lyons, & Kavanagh, 2007). However, the level of access afforded for this case study allowed data to be collected from a wide range of people, such as trainers, managers and co-workers, as well as course participants. This single case was able to provide the richness of data (Siggelkow, 2007) to support a phenomenological approach.

While multiple cases may add weight to a study (Blaikie, 2010; Yin, 2009), multiple case studies are expensive to conduct, time consuming, yield large amounts of data (Blaikie, 2010) and are typically beyond the resources of a single student (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2009). As a researcher working alone, the potential number of interviews necessary for a holistic study over three time periods within the time available to complete the research was a major consideration. That consideration limited the scope of this research to a single case study.

The research site and the Insight leadership development training course

Finco (name disguised for confidentiality), is a major Australian-owned New Zealand financial services organisation. *Insight* was the leadership development training course to develop ‘middle to senior managers’ (General Manager - HR, personal communication, April 18, 2008) of Finco to be the future leaders of the organisation. The course was developed in 2005 by Finco training managers, in conjunction with teaching staff from an Australian university. Details of the course are attached as Appendices 1 and 2. From a hierarchical perspective the level that candidates for the course were drawn from is illustrated in Figure 3:

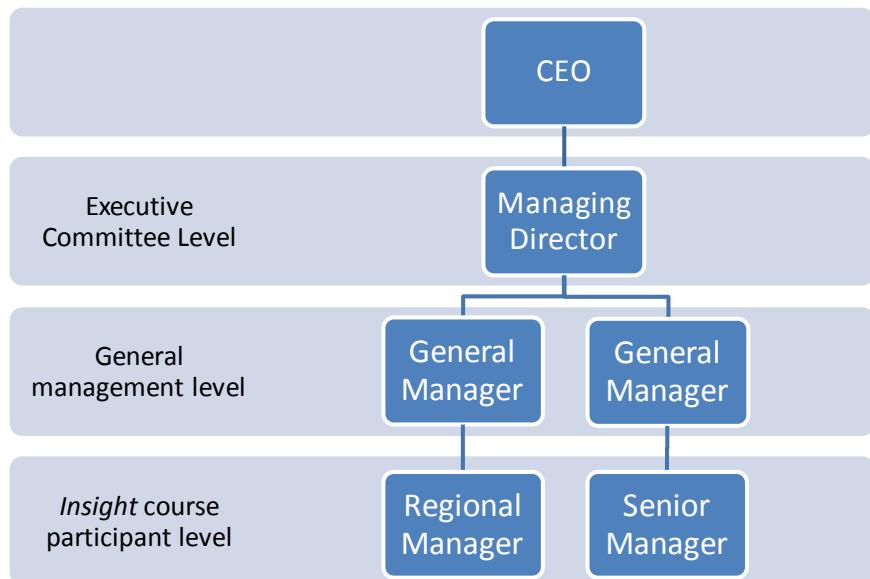


Figure 3: Summarised organisation chart (adapted from General Manager – HR, personal communication, April 18, 2008)

Courses were limited in size and selection for attendance on *Insight* was exclusive, with selection done through a consultative process between the Human Resources division and senior executives of Finco. The 2007 course, which formed the case study for this research consisted of sixteen participants and took place between October 2007 and June 2008. Although the course spanned a number of months, the formal parts of the course consisted of two 3-day residential modules and a presentation of group course projects on the final day. The intervening periods consisted of course project preparation in the workplace.

The pedagogical approach to the course was a combination of classroom teaching during the two 3-day residential modules where course participants were taught strategic management and leadership skills, and work-based learning through a work-related group course project. The group projects were integral to the course with project topics selected by senior Finco executives. The topics were designed to stretch the thinking of course participants, while reflecting current real-life issues being faced by the organisation. The intent of the group project was to help transfer learning from *Insight* to the work environment and foster the establishment of a network among participants.

Data collection

In keeping with the phenomenological tradition, data collection involved seeking the meaning of *Insight* from a range of participants associated with the course. By involving the course participants of *Insight*, their managers, peers and subordinates, the training managers, the course facilitators and senior executives of Finco, multiple perspectives at various levels in the organisation were able to be captured (Chua, 2006). The involvement of a wide range of participants in the research not only conformed to the phenomenological tradition, but addressed a methodological gap in extant research. Data in transfer of learning research is typically collected from a single source at the conclusion of a training course. However, the collection of data several times during research enables the detection of changes in behaviour and longitudinal research has been advocated as a way to gauge the transfer of learning (Blume et al., 2010). The holistic, multiple perspective, longitudinal approach adopted for this research was novel to transfer of learning research and gave scope to provide fresh perspectives to an established research field.

Case studies draw on multiple sources of data such as interviews and documentation (Yin, 2009). The primary source of data for this research was participant interviews, supplemented by field notes made immediately after each interview (Eisenhardt, 1989), as well as documentation (Yin, 2009) that was made available by Finco. These documents provided background material on the purpose, scope and content of *Insight*, as well as a source for triangulation of interview data. Documents took the form of communications about *Insight* course eligibility criteria, content and timing, course material and e-mail correspondence between training managers and course participants, participants' managers, senior executives of Finco, and course facilitators. Correspondence was mainly administrative in nature and neither documents nor correspondence contained confidential information about individuals or referred to individuals in any way.

Research participants

Purposive sampling is the selection of research participants who are relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Broad and Newstrom (1992) identified trainees, their managers and the trainers as influential in the transfer of learning. Baldwin and Ford (1988) also identified peers and subordinates as work environment factors influencing the transfer of learning. Accordingly, *Insight* course participants, their

managers, the training managers who developed and administered *Insight*, the facilitators who presented the course material, senior executives of Finco and course participants' peers and subordinates were selected for their relevance to this research.

Participant numbers

The selection of participants for this research project was not intended to produce a representative sample, as in quantitative research, but to reflect diversity and provide scope for comparison (Barbour, 2008). The number of research participants was also contingent on the number of course participants selected to attend *Insight*, and their willingness to be involved in my research. In 2007, eighteen managers were jointly selected by senior managers and the Human Resources division for *Insight*.

Participant recruitment

In early September 2007, once Finco's consent to participate in the research project was confirmed, the *Insight* training manager at the time e-mailed all 18 confirmed nominees for the October *Insight* course. The purpose of the e-mail was to introduce me and my research project to course nominees. In keeping with recruiting on the basis of informed consent, an Information Sheet, attached as Appendix 3, was attached to the e-mail (Warren, 2002). Although the Information Sheet pointed out that the research was being conducted independent of the organisation and that participation was entirely voluntary, I suggested that the course administrator further reinforce these points in the e-mail. The course training manager subsequently took no further part in the recruitment process, mainly to avoid any suggestion of coercion on *Insight* participants to take part in this research.

Initially, only three course nominees responded to the e-mail and accepted the invitation to participate in the research. During September the initial invitation to participate was followed up using e-mail as the means of communicating. By the end of September two nominees had withdrawn from the course. Of the remaining sixteen course participants, eleven acceptances (69%) were received. Of the other five course participants, one (6%) declined to participate and four (25%) failed to respond. With the imminent start of the *Insight* course in October, recruitment of course participants stopped at the end of September.

The recruitment of other participants (managers, peers, and subordinates of course participants) also followed a criterion-based, purposive sampling strategy. The sole criterion for selecting managers was that managers had to be the manager of a course participant who had consented to participate in the research. The selection of managers was therefore predetermined by which course participants had agreed to participate in the research. As some of the 11 course participants who had consented to participate shared the same manager, seven managers were eligible for selection. All seven managers consented to participate in the research.

Similarly, peers and subordinates were selected on a criterion-based, purposive basis. Peers and subordinates had to be a hierarchical peer or subordinate of a course participant who had agreed to participate in the research. Unlike managers, who were easily selected by virtue of their position, peers and subordinates were not so readily selected. Course participants were asked to nominate up to three peers and up to three subordinates from whom to select participants. One peer and one subordinate for every course participant taking part in the research was selected at random and invited, by e-mail, to participate. Every peer and subordinate contacted agreed to take part. For confidentiality, course participants were not made aware of which nominees participated in the research.

Broad and Newstrom (1992) highlighted that top management was among the organisational factors influential in the transfer of learning. To provide a top management perspective on the training course, Finco's Chief Executive and General Manager – HR were recruited as participants. Both agreed to participate in the research. A further group of role players identified by Broad and Newstrom were the trainers. The two training managers mainly responsible for the design and administration of *Insight* and the course facilitators were accordingly recruited. Both of the training managers and both course facilitators agreed to participate.

The number of participants taking part in my research is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of research participants by category

	<i>Number eligible</i>	<i>Number participating</i>
Course participants	16	11
Managers	7	7
Trainers	2	2
Facilitators	2	2
Peers	10	10
Subordinates	10	10
Executives	2	2
Total	49	44

Insider status

The overall recruitment process was aided by being a former co-worker and being personally known to many of the participants. These factors hinted at a status of ‘insider’ researcher. Insider research refers to research where the researcher ‘had a place in the social group being studied prior to the investigation commencing’ (Ritchie, Zwi, Blignault, Bunde-Birouste and Silove, 2009, p.107). An insider, accordingly, shares an identity, language and experiences with the research participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Advantages of being an insider were that I had easy access to the organisation, legitimacy with the research participants, was accepted readily by them and had common ground for establishing rapport to provide a platform for the collection of rich, in-depth information (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This made introductions easier and allowed me to approach the majority of potential participants with some familiarity and credibility.

While being an insider researcher has its advantages, being an insider researcher also gave rise to potential concerns. These included the risk of unequal power relationships between researcher and research participant (Gibbs & Costley, 2006) and researcher influence on the research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The issue of power relationships was reduced by my resignation from Finco and, in line with the phenomenological tradition, the risk of influencing the research was reduced by ‘bracketing out’, or setting aside, prior understandings before interpreting the data and capturing the essence of participants’ meanings (Crotty, 1998).

Semi-structured interview method

Qualitative research interviews are a purposeful form of conversation through which researchers are able to learn about the world of research participants (Kvale, 1996). One such form of conversation is the semi-structured life world interview which Kvale (1996) defined as ‘an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to the meaning of the described phenomena’ (Kvale, 1996, p.5). A semi-structured interview method was adopted as the primary form of data collection method as it suited the drawing out of rich, contextual details that would not be available through closed-ended surveys (Chua, 2006).

The semi-structured interviews were approached as a guided conversation (Kvale, 1996; Warren, 2002) with their scope and direction broadly dictated by the interview guides (Kvale, 1996). The interview guides, (an example of which is attached as Appendix 4) served as an *aide memoire* (Platt, 1981) and allowed the interviews to be managed (Gillham, 2000) to ensure a richness to the data. They followed the convention of a small number of main themes (Kvale, 1996) to start and guide the conversations and some probes to expand or clarify the themes (Warren, 2002). The main focus of the interviews was participants’ perspectives on leadership, leadership development training and the transfer of learning. Other areas of focus included factors that influence transfer of learning, such as course design and motivation to attend training, as well as the relationship of leadership development training to other workplace learning methods.

Participant interviews

Pilot interviews

A small group of participants from the 2006 *Insight* course were selected for pilot interviews. Three participants were chosen on the basis of convenience, access and

geographic proximity. The pilot interviews helped me to develop the interview guides for subsequent interviews (Yin, 2009) by indicating some areas for improving the structure of the guides and highlighting areas for further exploration. Some of these areas included the extent and timing of transfer of learning, confidence building as a potential outcome of training courses, and the importance of the course project as a social and learning mechanism.

Timing of interviews

Most researchers have taken a static approach to researching transfer of learning by collecting data once, generally at the end of a training course (Blume et al., 2010). One fundamental aspect of workplace learning that has concerned researchers has been the change, in knowledge and practices at work, that results from workplace learning (Fenwick, 2008b). Change can be observed over time through longitudinal research (Zikmund, 2003) and following Yin (2009), I adopted a longitudinal approach to observe not only change, but also continuity of responses by participants over time (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995; Zikmund, 2003).

Past research offers only limited guidance for the specific timing of interviews as researchers have adopted varying intervals during and after training for longitudinal studies of transfer of learning. For example, Chiaburu et al.'s (2010) research was undertaken at three points in time: during training, one month after training and two to three months after training. The phasing of Saks and Belcourt's (2006) research was immediately after training, six months after training and one year after training, while Axtell, Maitlis and Yearta's (1997) research took place immediately after, one month after and one year after training. Broad and Newstrom's (1992) transfer matrix framework suggested that before, during and after training were influential periods for the transfer of learning. My longitudinal approach followed this phasing. Pre-course interviews were conducted immediately prior to the 2007 *Insight* course, during course interviews were undertaken shortly before the course finished and, in the absence of firm guidance from prior research, post-course interviews were undertaken approximately nine months after completion of the *Insight* course.

Interviews with trainers and executives took place when opportunity and circumstance allowed. The training manager who designed and developed *Insight* was transferred to Australia and it was necessary to interview her before her departure. The facilitators of the two *Insight* modules were Australian-domiciled and

the opportunity to interview them without international travel and associated expense was limited to their availability during their time in New Zealand, generally when they were en-route to or from the training venue. The Chief Executive was involved in restructuring the organisation during the data-gathering period, which together with the global financial crisis, limited his availability until late in the data collection process. The General Manager - HR, who had oversight of the development and delivery of *Insight*, resigned whilst the 2007 *Insight* course was in progress and it was necessary to interview him before his departure.

The timing of interviews in relation to key events during the course is illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Timeline of key events and timing of interviews

Interview process

Interviews were arranged by e-mail and took place mainly during office hours on Finco premises. The majority of interviews (69%) were completed in Wellington as most participants were located in Wellington or had necessity to be in Wellington

during data-collecting periods. A small number of post-course interviews (24%) were completed in Auckland to suit the participants.

Most interviews took place at individual meetings with each participant. In keeping with suggested research practice (Kvale, 1996; Minichiello et al., 1995), time was set aside at the beginning of interviews to provide research participants with the context of the research and to reinforce the confidentiality of the interviews and anonymity of the participant. A fluid approach was adopted during interviews, with occasional departure from the interview guides, to ensure receptiveness to new and emerging meanings (Barbour, 2008; Warren, 2002).

In keeping with the qualitative tradition (Patton, 1990), some flexibility was occasionally required. Some research participants could not be interviewed in person before the course started and rather than lose potentially valuable participants, these otherwise willing research participants (two course participants and three managers) were interviewed by telephone. Although telephone interviews prevent the use of visual cues and rapport is harder to develop (Berg, 2007), the telephone interviews were comparable in quality to personal interviews (Zikmund, 2003).

Johnson (2002) recommended that all in-depth interviewing be audio recorded as a verbatim record of research participants' words and perceptions and an aid to subsequent analysis. All interviews undertaken for my research were therefore recorded by digital voice recorder after consent was obtained from research participants at the beginning of the interview (Gillham, 2000; Rapley, 2004) and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Transcription was undertaken by two experienced and reliable transcribers who together transcribed 70 interviews. The transcripts were largely verbatim, and, in keeping with Kvale's (1996) advice, a limited amount of editing took place so that the transcripts translated participants' 'oral style into a written form in harmony with the specific subjects' general modes of expression' (Kvale, 1996, p.170).

Data analysis

Qualitative research typically yields large volumes of rich data that potentially obscure important relationships and meaning (Eisenhardt, 1989). The interviews conducted for my research, for instance, generated over 850 pages of typed

transcript (containing over 400,000 words). The strategy for managing the analysis of such a large volume of data was to break the data into more manageable units by coding the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Minichiello et al., 1995). When large amounts of data are involved, the use of qualitative research software is essential for the coding and retrieval of text (Minichiello et al., 1995). Creswell (2007) recommends computer assistance when a database exceeds 500 pages of text. Accordingly, NVivo 8 qualitative research data analysis software was used to facilitate coding and analysis.

Coding followed the recommendation to, firstly, immerse myself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts (Berg, 2007; Patton, 1990) to look for meaning from the words of the transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process was aided by the earlier review of transcripts for transcription error as a degree of familiarity with the transcripts had already been achieved through this activity. My coding approach borrowed from the ‘grounded’ approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967), which grounds the codes in the data. The grounded theory approach to coding enabled me to, firstly, ‘open’ code the transcripts as a way to tentatively break down the data into broad categories without restriction (Berg, 2007) before applying ‘axial’ coding to systematically sort the codes around themes (Blaikie, 2010; Creswell, 2007; Dey, 2004).

Content analysis of the interviews (Gillham, 2000) isolated 2,189 quotes from the interviews which were collated, by similarities in meaning conveyed by the quote, into nodes. The 2,189 references, which ranged from part sentences to paragraphs, were spread across 108 nodes. The initial open codes were refined (Barbour, 2008) so that the 2,189 references were reduced to 1,850 and the number of nodes was reduced to 30. The nodes reflected research participants’ perspectives on not only the transfer of learning but also emergent perspectives on learning outcomes and collective learning. Figure 5 illustrates the breadth of open coding and the data that supported this graph is detailed in Appendix 5. The 30 nodes were clustered into three themes by relating each node to a theme (Blaikie, 2010) through a process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where patterns of similarities and differences among the nodes were noted and sorted accordingly (Barbour, 2008; Dey, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Figure 6 illustrates the reduction of the nodes into the three themes.

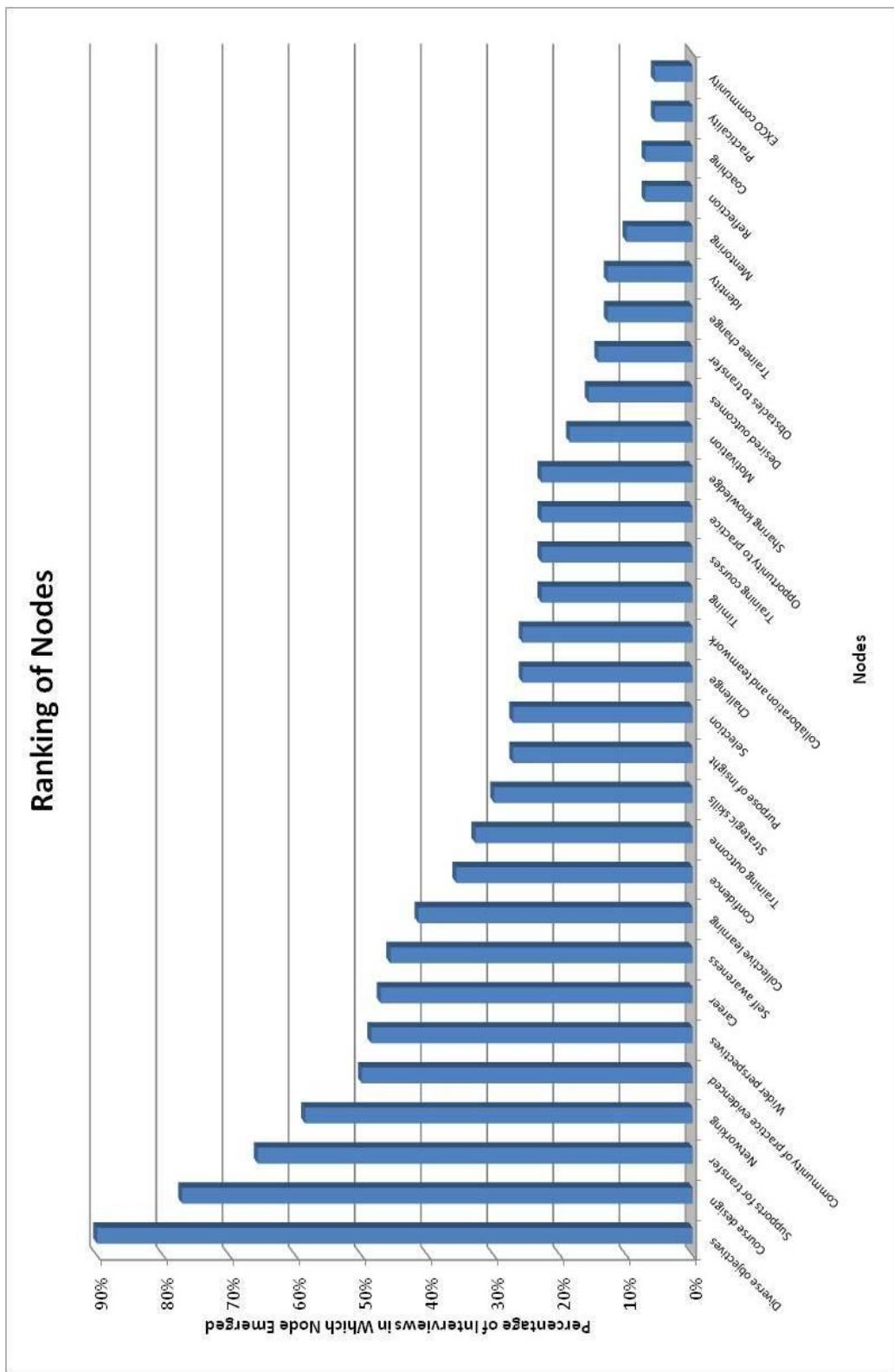


Figure 5. Nodes emerging from interviews

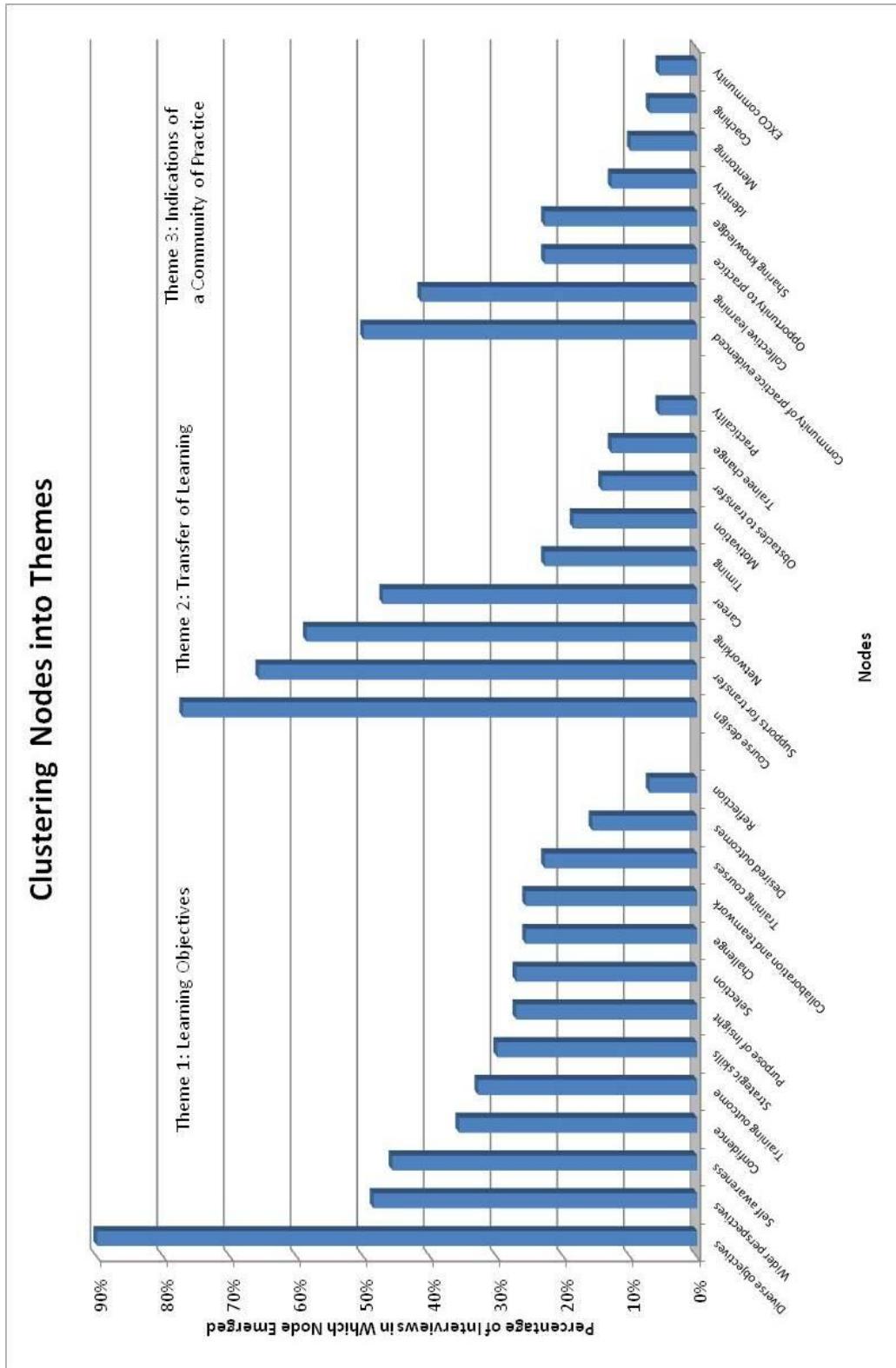


Figure 6. Nodes clustered into themes

Strategies for trustworthiness

Attempting to establish trust in a qualitative research study is an elusive activity (Seale, 1999). Although there are divisions among qualitative researchers as to the need to substantiate the quality of their work (Blaikie, 2010; Hammersley, 2008), the quality of qualitative research remains of concern to some researchers (Hammersley, 2008). Qualitative researchers can be guided by past methodological practice (Seale, 1999), but there is no standard way to ensure or assess quality (Hammersley, 2008), because qualitative research is variable and, in many instances, novel (Gray, 2004). Nevertheless, the ability to assure and assess the quality of qualitative research is a necessary one (Gray, 2004) and the background and methods presented in this chapter, together with the findings discussed in the following chapters, provide a basis on which to assess the trustworthiness of this research.

The ability to make judgements about the rigour and trustworthiness of this current research is facilitated by richness in the research and sufficiency of detail to inform the judgement (Seale, 1999). Richness was achieved through a number of strategies. The research design, based on multi-participant semi-structured interviews, enabled a large volume and wide range of data from the diverse participant groups to be gathered, while the 18-month period of engagement with the research participants, when data collection took place, enabled a depth of understanding to be achieved from immersion in the research over a prolonged period (Creswell, 2007; Gray, 2004; Stiles, 1993). My insider researcher status throughout the interview and analysis process aided in achieving richness in the data as the research site was familiar, and trust and rapport was readily achieved (Creswell, 2007; Gray, 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seale, 1999). The triangulation of data, between different groups of research participants and between interviews and documents, was also a strategy used to enhance the trustworthiness of the research (Gray, 2004). These data sources, and the field notes made after the interviews, provided a context-rich and meaningful basis for the analysis and drawing out of meaning for the participants. A key strategy for trustworthiness was that all interviews, coding and analysis were undertaken by myself (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The resulting ‘thick descriptions’, supported by quotes, are provided in the following chapters to help readers to gauge the trustworthiness of the findings.

Strategies that emphasise the detail of the research methodology and provide an audit trail were also adopted. These consisted of declaring my relationship to the

research site and participants, obtaining ethical approval, documenting the research methodology and seeking peer review of the process and findings. My status as a former employee of the organisation being studied was made clear to enable readers of the research to be better able to make informed judgements about the trustworthiness of my research (Ritchie et al., 2009).

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from Massey University and the research was conducted in accordance with the University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (2004). This code stipulates guidelines for ethical conduct that include respect for persons, informed and voluntary consent, privacy and confidentiality, and acknowledgment of potential conflicts of interest. In gaining ethics approval, strategies for minimising the risk of harm to participants were established. Participants were apprised of the purpose of the research and informed consent was obtained. When obtaining informed consent, participants were provided with an information sheet that emphasised voluntariness, confidentiality and anonymity. The name of the organisation was disguised and pseudonyms were used in place of actual participant names (Ryen, 2004) to protect participants' identity, places and the location of the research. Nevertheless, the research setting of a workplace formal training course, the range of research participants, the process for their selection and details of the *Insight* training course were fully described to provide readers with the ability to recognise similarities with other settings (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The research methods, procedures and sequencing that have been used were detailed in this chapter to enable the appropriateness of the methods, and the rigour to which they have been applied to meet the research aim, to be assessed (Blaikie, 2010; Seale, 1999). As a further check on trustworthiness, throughout the research my supervisors, with their greater experience in research and transfer of learning, have peer reviewed the research process and provided an external check on the rigour of my research (Lincoln, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The results of this research method and their implications for research and practice are discussed in the following four chapters.

Chapter 4:

Social supports in the transfer of learning

Introduction

Regardless of its source, learning must be transferred to be of value (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Leberman et al., 2006). The predominantly quantitative methods used to research the transfer of learning in the past have identified a number of factors that influence such transfer, with the work environment long recognised as playing an influential part (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton III, Bates, & Ruona, 2000; Tracey, Hinkin, Tannenbaum, & Mathieu, 2001; Velada et al., 2007). One of the most critical environmental factors is a supportive transfer climate, such as that provided by supervisors and peers (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993; Velada et al., 2007). Indeed, Broad and Newstrom's (1992) widely cited transfer matrix identifies managers as having a crucial role in the effective transfer of learning to the workplace. Managerial support is the transfer of learning variable that has attracted the most research attention in the last decade (zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al., 2009) and, by comparison, less is known about the influence of other social supports, such as top management, peers, subordinates and the organisation's systems and processes, on transfer (Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudisch, 1995; Tracey et al., 2001). This chapter extends the research on social supports by investigating autonomy as a factor in managerial support and highlighting factors that influence peer, subordinate and organisational support in the transfer of learning.

Transfer of learning from *Insight*

Any discussion of the influence of managerial, peer, subordinate and organisational support needs to be set in the context of the transfer of learning that took place. While course participants, like Josh and Alan, gave specific examples of transferring learning, the general impression given by course participants was that the transfer of learning from *Insight* was limited. Josh gave the example of using a technique learnt from *Insight* to encourage innovative thinking among fellow managers and subordinates, while Alan used an analytical framework for strategy development as 'a very tangible example of something that was in *Insight* that I sort of pulled out'. Other course participants, however, commented that they did not transfer their learning. Joe, for instance, stated that 'I learnt stuff from that [*Insight*] but I haven't

applied any of that' and Wayne highlighted that in his day-to-day work 'I tended to react from my own knowledge base rather than take on board that learning'. These indications of limited transfer of learning from *Insight* provide the backdrop against which the transfer support factors evident from this present research must be viewed.

Managerial support for transfer

A significant factor that contributes to an organisation's transfer climate, and a key influencer of transfer, is the support provided by course participants' managers (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Velada et al., 2007). Perspectives on managerial support featured strongly in this present research with course participants and managers, in particular, commenting on this factor throughout the research. Managerial support was widely seen by *Insight* course participants, their managers, trainers and senior executives to be critical to the transfer of learning. Wayne's comment that 'the only thing that would hold you back [from transferring learning] is if you had a direct manager who was not aligned to what the programme is doing' illustrates the view held by most course participants. Managers had a similar view, with managers such as Barbara, commenting that 'what might hinder their transfer is that they go back into a unit where the line manager doesn't allow them the space to change or practise or do some things differently'. Despite the universal acceptance of the criticality of managerial support, a generally held view among course participants and their managers was that little managerial support was received.

Autonomy and open skills learning

One way for managers to show their support is to show that the learning achieved is valued and important (Tracey et al., 2001). This can be done through actions such as allowing learning to be applied on the job (Holton III et al., 2000), reinforcing its application and tolerating mistakes made during transfer (Facteau et al., 1995). The findings from this research suggested that manager support can be viewed in a new light. Andrea succinctly summarised the view among course participants that they lacked managerial support:

I suppose what I'm trying to tell you in a nutshell is that my line manager hasn't been too engaged in the whole piece.

An alternative construction to the absence of managerial support is that managers allowed course participants the autonomy to transfer their learning and did not perceive a need to actively encourage transfer. This was the perspective conveyed by Andrea's manager, Mike, who viewed course participants as 'self-sufficient, capable people'. The degree of autonomy in course participants' jobs is an important factor influencing the transfer of learning (Axtell et al., 1997). Autonomy gives course participants the opportunity to control their work so that opportunities to transfer learning are created or obstacles to transfer are avoided. Mike's comment, which was similar to comments made by other managers, indicated that course participants were free to choose when and how they applied their learning to the workplace.

Autonomy is especially relevant when the skills that are to be transferred have a high interpersonal content (Axtell et al., 1997). Leadership skills are skills that have a high interpersonal content (V. Burke & Collins, 2005; Crosbie, 2005; Dexter & Prince, 2007; Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007). Leadership skills have also been described as 'open' skills and are, in contrast to 'closed' skills which are rigid and lacking latitude for deviation, more conceptual and variable in their use (Blume et al., 2010). Course participants, accordingly, had the discretion to choose the nature, extent and timing of the transfer of open skills. Marty's comment is illustrative of that understanding:

I guess it's the flexibility in terms of how you apply things, rather than being prescriptive about how it is done, there are a variety of different ways of applying the different skills you've learnt.

Nevertheless, contrary to prior research, autonomy and the open nature of skills learnt did not enhance the transfer of learning. The investigation of other factors in this present research, discussed below, highlighted that the absence of managerial feedback, failure to enlist peer and subordinate support and organisational barriers were factors that inhibited the transfer of learning.

Managerial feedback

Managers may give feedback to course participants about the application of their learning in the workplace. Feedback that is positive helps to foster a climate that

enhances the transfer of learning, whereas negative or no feedback inhibits course participants from transferring their learning (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). Course participants were unanimous in their view that little, if any, feedback was received from managers about their participation on the course, and the subsequent transfer of learning. Wayne's comment is typical of the comments made by course participants about the lack of feedback:

Very little input from immediate management—your immediate manager or leader. They seemed to be almost disconnected from the course, which I think was a failing. In my view, they would need to be part of that development programme in some way—either how they lead into it, how they follow it afterwards . . . how they reinforce it.

Wayne's view was corroborated by his manager, who described the feedback that he gave to Wayne as 'token'. Other managers also acknowledged that they gave limited or no feedback to course participants. The absence of feedback had the effect of reducing the motivation to transfer as the importance of the *Insight* course was diminished and an external stimulus to transfer was removed.

A key factor influencing the transfer of learning is course participants' motivation to transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton III et al., 2000; Seyler, Holton III, Bates, Burnett, & Carvalho, 1998). Motivation to transfer is defined as 'the intended effort towards utilising the skills and knowledge learned in a training atmosphere to the real world work situation' (Seyler et al., 1998, p.4). Course participants are motivated to transfer learning by perceptions of the value or usefulness of the learning (Baumgartel, Reynolds, & Pathan, 1984; Seyler et al., 1998). Managers can influence course participants' perceptions by showing that learning is valued and important (Tracey et al., 2001). While leadership development training is important to Finco, as indicated by the Chief Executive's comment that its purpose is to 'make our organisation even more effective', the absence of feedback from managers diminished the importance of *Insight* to course participants to the extent that Marty felt managers perceived *Insight* to be 'just another Finco course'. Marty emphasised the need for the course to be seen as valuable by commenting that:

I think they need to somehow communicate or emphasise or show that they actually see this as important for the organisation and for you as individuals within the organisation.

The other factor that reduced the motivation to transfer was the reduction in external stimuli. Feedback provides an external stimulus for course participants to transfer learning by providing cues to remind course participants to transfer learning (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). When no feedback is given, the need to transfer learning is not reinforced, as illustrated by Joe's comment:

I think it probably has had an impact on the level of application of some of the takeouts. If there had been more interest, you would have kept it to the forefront of mind a little bit more but also applying it a little bit more.

An explanation for the absence of feedback was a general reluctance within the organisation to discuss personal development. Discussion of career and personal development, whether by course participants or their managers, was described by Trisha, a course participant, as 'not the done thing'. Trisha highlighted this reluctance when describing her manager:

Callum is sort of good HR-wise and he is sort of not great HR-wise. When you actually have a discussion with him he is really good, but you very rarely have a discussion with him about HR stuff. . . . Callum is not the type of boss who sits down and talks to you about your development and how you are going, even on a monthly basis.

Managers have been held up as inhibiting transfer by controlling learners' opportunity to use learning on the job and failing to provide a positive transfer climate (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). This research suggests that underlying factors, such as failure by course participants to recognise the autonomy given by managers to transfer their learning, helps to explain managers' apparent failure to support transfer of learning. Nevertheless, managers' failure to provide feedback meant that course participants were not motivated to transfer learning. The lack of feedback may be due to a reticence within the organisation to discuss personnel matters.

Peer and subordinate support for transfer

The reluctance to discuss career and personal development may also be a reason for course participants failing to find support from peers and subordinates for the transfer of learning. Training course participants' peers and subordinates are among the environmental factors influencing the transfer of learning, especially when the transfer involves open skills (Blume et al., 2010). Support by peers and subordinates includes tolerating new skills being tried, the encouraging and reinforcing of transfer, sharing ideas about course content and participating in transfer activities (L. A. Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Donovan et al., 2001; Facteau et al., 1995; Holton III et al., 2000; Seyler et al., 1998). However, none of these support factors were evident from *Insight* course participants' peers and subordinates. Ron, a peer of a course participant, highlighted that the absence of peer support reflected a lack of awareness of course content and the learning that needed to be transferred:

. . . with Marty, not actually knowing what the Insight course was about, what he was trying to achieve from it . . . Without knowing that we're not there to provide that support structure.

A similar comment by George, a course participant's subordinate, highlighted the lack of discussion about *Insight* between course participants and their subordinates:

. . . 'this is what I've learnt' or 'this is the thing I'm trying to personally develop'. . . He didn't share any of those sorts of things with us.

Although course participants did not expect, nor enlist, support from peers and subordinates, there was an expectation that other forms of support would be received. Course participants acknowledged that they were ultimately responsible for the transfer of learning, as exemplified by Kevin's comment:

Pretty much the buck will stop with me to make sure I take whatever I learn out of the programme and implement it in the day-to-day role that I do and take that forward to future roles as well.

Nevertheless, some course participants also highlighted an expectation of ongoing organisational support for transfer, although they were unsure as to the form that

such support should take. The expectation was conveyed in a question posed by Kevin:

I'm not sure how it will be done . . . Is there a way that there can be some, not necessarily refreshers, but follow up as a bit of a prompt to make sure that whatever we got out of the programme is actually being implemented?

Regardless of the expectation, course participants, such as Trisha, did not recall receiving support from the organisation:

. . . the organisation has effectively paid the bill and that is all the support they've done.

The comments by course participants highlighted the perceived importance of organisational support for the transfer of learning. Organisational support for transfer of learning, however, has not been widely researched (Chiaburu et al., 2010). The following discussion contributes to the understanding of organisational support as a barrier to the transfer of learning.

Organisational support for transfer

Organisational support is defined as 'those factors associated with the organisational environment which either contribute to or impede the use of trained behaviours (or skills) once trainees leave the training environment and return to the workplace' (Clarke, 2002, p.147). Huczynski and Lewis (1980) elaborated on organisational support factors by describing them as organisational structures, processes and goals. An example of an organisational support factor that might influence transfer of learning is an organisation's reward system, as the system can be used to reward the application of new learning (Elangovan & Karakowsky, 1999).

Influence of workload, unplanned work and the lack of time on transfer

Organisational support emerged strongly as an influence on learning and transfer during *Insight*. Workload, unplanned work and lack of time have been highlighted by researchers as constraints on the transfer of learning (Chiaburu et al., 2010; Clarke, 2002; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980). During the period of the *Insight* course, course

participants indicated that workloads had increased substantially. Shelley's situation described below is not unique.

It's a mystery to me that I can't understand, but during this process I've never had less than two jobs to do—two roles to fill—while [Insight's] been on. . . . I've been working very long hours. Every one you speak to says exactly the same thing. Everybody you speak to is running around in circles. You daren't say that I'm busy, because it says like crying wolf—who wants to hear. It is just bizarre, really.

During *Insight*, organisational barriers to transfer arose out of unexpected and unplanned job assignments that reflect the nature of Finco's HR processes which required vacancies to be covered by other managers without recourse to appeal or assistance. Chiaburu et al. (2010) suggest that perceived organisational support may lead to feelings of being valued by the organisation which is reciprocated by obligation to the organisation and increased commitment to apply new learning on the job. In contrast, *Insight* course participants experienced increased workloads, unplanned work and a lack of time, without support from the organisation. Although course participants reported limited transfer of learning, it was not clear from the interviews whether transfer was constrained by the absence of organisational support or lack of commitment to transfer. The interviews did, however, indicate that course participants accepted the lack of support and developed strategies to cope, such as making better use of teamwork, allocating work more and adjusting priorities, as illustrated by Shelley's response to her situation:

You see, if we didn't have Insight there would be something else. It's a challenge, there is no doubt about that. It seems as though you are never going to achieve everything that you need to achieve, so you just have to manage the priorities the best you can.

Ongoing social support

Insight was designed to finish after a debriefing session between course participants and training managers. Ongoing organisational support was not incorporated into the design of *Insight*. Researchers have highlighted the need for relapse prevention training to equip individual learners with strategies to cope with overcoming barriers

to transfer of learning on the job (L. A. Burke & Baldwin, 1999). However, these strategies are individualistic in nature. Burke and Baldwin's (1999) relapse prevention research indicated that, notwithstanding relapse prevention training, work environment factors remained important for the transfer of learning. Social support from peers is one such work environment factor (L. A. Burke & Hutchins, 2008). Course participants and managers suggested that the networks formed during *Insight* needed to be maintained for continued learning as indicated by Marty, a course participant:

I think it is really important, if you've shared something like that, that maybe once every 6 months you get together—people move on and move into different roles—to keep a little bit of formality around that network, and to continue to learn off each other. It's easier to do that as an alumni, as a wider group.

Networks are characterised by informality and voluntariness (Bottrup, 2005). Marty's suggestion indicated a need for organisational support, in the way of systems and processes, to maintain networks (Huczynski & Lewis, 1980). While organisational support could enable the need for ongoing social support to be met, alternative approaches, such as the community of practice approach, are available. Communities of practice and transfer of learning are explored in Chapter 6.

Summary of chapter

Social factors in the work environment are key influences on the transfer of learning (Velada et al., 2007). Chief among those factors are manager, peer and subordinate support (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Donovan et al., 2001; Facteau et al., 1995; Holton III et al., 2000; Holton III, Bates, Seyler, & Carvalho, 1997; Velada et al., 2007). This investigation of managerial support has highlighted autonomy as an explanation for the apparent lack of manager support. Other social support, such as that offered by peers and subordinates (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Donovan et al., 2001; Facteau et al., 1995; Holton III et al., 2000; Holton III et al., 1997; Velada et al., 2007) were explored and the absence of peer and subordinate support is explained by a failure by course participants to enlist their support. In addition, organisational support factors have become a recent focus for researchers (Chiaburu et al., 2010) and systems and process factors are

highlighted to further our understanding of organisational support. Organisational processes resulted in a lack of time, increased workload and unplanned work, which influenced the transfer of learning (Chiaburu et al., 2010; Clarke, 2002; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980). Course participants adopted coping strategies to attenuate the effect of those factors. One possible form of organisational support identified by this present research was for the organisation to provide ongoing system and processes to facilitate networking and learning among course participants.

This chapter has focused on the transfer of learning from formal training. Leadership development is not limited to formal training and other methods of development are commonly used (Allio, 2005; McCall, 2004; Raelin, 2004). The complexities of the relationship between formal training and other forms of learning in the workplace are, however, obscured by the dichotomous views that have been adopted by researchers (Lee & Roth, 2007). The following chapter investigates the dichotomies of workplace learning and provides perspectives on formal training in workplace learning.

Chapter 5:

Exploring dichotomies of learning

Introduction

A traditional view of formal training courses is that they are a conduit for the transfer of skills and knowledge (Darrah, 1995). Formal training courses, however, hold greater meaning than simply as a mechanism for the acquisition of explicit, objective knowledge. They can also provide course participants with the opportunity to socialise (Analoui, 1993) and to use their learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Role players in *Insight* viewed the training course as a means of accessing, not only, formal off-the-job training, but also, work-based learning, socialisation and the acquisition of tacit knowledge. This chapter investigates dichotomy as a way of characterising different learning methods and highlights the role of formal training within the wider concept of workplace learning.

Coupling formal training and work-based learning

Training design features in models of transfer such as that of Baldwin and Ford (1988) and is a major factor influencing the transfer of learning (Velada et al., 2007). The focus of research on training design has been the pedagogy of learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton III et al., 2000), with emphasis on learning principles and instructional methods (Chiaburu et al., 2010). A key element of the design of *Insight* was that the course included a project as a complement to classroom learning. The course project, which featured prominently during interviews with research participants, highlighted the pedagogical benefits of linking theory and practice (Raelin, 1998) and its inclusion hinted at a range of roles for formal training.

A course project has the potential to facilitate the transfer of learning by providing course participants with an opportunity to use their learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Noe, 2002; Tennant, 1999). The intent to use the *Insight* course project to facilitate transfer was evident from comments made by training managers, course facilitators and senior executives of Finco. The General Manager – HR of Finco, for example, emphasised that providing an opportunity to use the learning from *Insight* was a factor in the inclusion of a course project as part of the course:

I think the main one [purpose of including a course project] is to give them a real issue that is facing Finco and to be able to work through those issues as if it was a real issue and apply their learnings and their methodologies and models to that.

Course participants, on the other hand, highlighted the social learning enabled by the course project (Bryans & Smith, 2000; Vaughan, 2008). Wayne exemplified this when he emphasised that the course project was a rare and valuable opportunity to participate in social learning across the organisation:

I think the highlight for me in the project has been working with different, senior individuals across an organisation, from all different parts of the organisation, and being aware of the dynamic and how we pull that together. You don't normally get that opportunity to work across different business units and different brands. We've actually worked quite cohesively as a team. It's been a useful experience.

Despite the focus given by some course participants to the course project, some course participants, such as Trisha, found the classroom sessions to be also valuable:

I did find the modules were relevant to me and my thinking. Some other courses I've been on I've sort of sat there thinking 'you're sort of talking about stuff I already know, I've done before'. This was a step up from that sort of stuff. It was relevant, they talked about real companies and the course moved at a fast pace. It wasn't laborious, it moved at a fast pace which I liked, and it was relevant.

The differing perspectives evident from the comments by training managers and course participants suggested that the integration of a work-based learning method in a formal training course could fulfil a number of purposes. Formal training has been described, metaphorically, as a conduit to knowledge and skills (Darrah, 1995). Aspects of the conduit metaphor are further discussed below by conceptualising formal training as a conduit to work-based learning, tacit learning and socialisation.

Formal training as a conduit to work-based learning

Some researchers view formal training and work-based learning as distinct and independent activities (Raelin, 1998; Tennant, 1999). This dichotomy of learning is challenged by the present research. Project work is a form of work-based learning (Clifford & Thorpe, 2007; Cunningham et al., 2004) and its inclusion in the *Insight* training course suggested that formal training and work-based learning are not independent. Rather, the comments made by *Insight* training managers and course participants highlighted an interdependent relationship between the two.

Josuh and Lim's (2007) research suggested that formal training and work-based learning can be complementary when post-course on-the-job work activity is designed to support formal training. This present research suggests that formal training and work-based learning can also be complementary when work-based project work is included within formal training courses. The course project was incorporated in *Insight* to act as a bridge between classroom learning and the transfer of learning, as shown by the comment from a training manager that:

The project topics are designed, in part, to help people take the stuff they've learnt and apply them.

Course participants, such as Scott, affirmed that the course project complemented classroom learning with the comment that the course project was 'a useful exercise to reinforce some of the learning'. The strongest support for challenging the dichotomous view of formal training and work-based learning as distinct and independent activities comes from another course participant, Marty, who commented that:

... you can't just see the project as an aside; it is actually a big part of the course.

Formal training as a conduit to tacit knowledge

The stated purposes of *Insight* were listed in an e-mail sent to senior managers of the bank when *Insight* was launched, and subsequently to prospective course participants. In essence, the stated intent of *Insight* was for course participants to

acquire cognitive strategic management and leadership skills. This aim was reaffirmed by the course facilitators who both saw their roles in those terms. One course facilitator commented that:

My view would be to give them the skills and challenge them to want to do these things on the job.

A similar view was expressed by the other course facilitator:

I saw my basic goal as giving the participants a set of tools, a way of thinking, a way of questioning what's going on in Finco and then in their part of the world with regard to the people and in particular with regard to leadership.

The intent of *Insight*, however, was wider when the role of *Insight* as a conduit to tacit knowledge is considered. In the context of this discussion, tacit knowledge is the knowledge gained through implicit learning (Chao, 1997). Explicit and implicit learning are two ways of learning that have been dichotomised in the workplace learning literature. Further, the dichotomy is associated with formal training and work-based learning approaches where formal training is thought to be suited to explicit learning and work-based approaches are considered better suited to implicit learning (Chao, 1997; Raelin, 1998). The divide is bridged to some extent by recognition among researchers that implicit learning can also arise from formal training, regardless of whether explicit learning occurs (Chao, 1997). Indications from this research support that view and highlight that the divide can be further bridged by the integration of work-based learning within a formal training course. In particular, the inclusion of the course project gave *Insight* scope to facilitate the learning of networking, collaboration and teamwork skills. The learning of those skills was not conveyed in the explicit learning objectives and the course content of *Insight* did not include the teaching of those skills. Implicitly, however, training managers, course participants and managers and senior executives all regarded *Insight* as a way for course participants to acquire networking, collaboration and teamwork skills.

Networking

Networking was a prominent and recurring theme throughout the interviews. Although not a formally documented objective of *Insight*, training managers and course participants, in particular, implicitly expected network development to occur. This expectation was highlighted in the comment by the General Manager – HR:

... we would expect to see individuals coming out of the course with a wider network than they had when they went into [it] ...

Marty highlighted course participants' tacit understanding regarding the learning of networking skills and development of networks with the comment that:

... from a personal perspective and also from an organisational perspective, it's really important to understand what's going on in the wider organisation. It's those networks that do it, because the organisation as a whole doesn't really facilitate, doesn't—encourage isn't the right word—really create the environment where you naturally share ideas across business units.

The comment by Marty also highlighted that a benefit of networking is the facilitation of the breakdown of organisational boundaries and the increased sharing of ideas, which is a key feature of networking. Consistent with definitions of networking that emphasise the grouping of people and the sharing of knowledge, skills and ideas (Clifford & Thorpe, 2007; Cunningham et al., 2004), course participants saw networking as the opportunity to learn about other business units within the organisation and to share experiences and ideas in order to solve immediate business problems. This view aligned with that of senior executives like the General Manager – HR who saw networking as facilitating organisational effectiveness across large business units that normally worked independently of each other:

If you have those relationships and networks then it is going to make it a lot easier to get things done, a lot easier to make sure we are doing the right thing for the organisation as a whole. We are naturally silo-ed as an organisation. We have large silo-ed business units. The more interaction across those silos we believe will get better outcomes for

the organisation as a whole. So this is quite important that managers at quite senior levels are well linked in and have an understanding of what each business is trying to do and an understanding of who the people are.

Course participants viewed the networking facilitated by *Insight* as offering multiple benefits. In addition to the increased organisational and personal effectiveness already highlighted, a small number of course participants saw networking as a means to further career aspirations. The comment by Phil illustrates the view that networking facilitates the identification of career opportunities:

I can certainly see the network and the contacts and the knowledge that you pick up out of [Insight] could potentially help me both inside the division, or if I chose to go outside the division, or outside the organisation.

Networking was also seen to facilitate careers by aiding selection, as highlighted by Kevin's comment:

I think it does help from a career point of view—the more you get to know someone the less things probably hinge on an interview or an expression of interest.

Regardless of motive for networking and the organisational or individual benefit expected to accrue from networking, course participants highlighted that the most important factor facilitating the development of networking was the opportunity for a diverse group, which would not otherwise meet, to come together. Kevin noted that the size of the organisation was a barrier to networking, and commented that:

*I think it is a hell of a lot easier if you do have some sort of forum such as *Insight* or some sort of programme to get people together from different parts of the business.*

Kevin's view was reinforced by Marty, whose comment highlighted that *Insight* created both an opportunity for a diverse group to meet and a reason to form a network:

. . . being on something like Insight you connect with a lot of people within the organisation whom you wouldn't normally be aware of. You've got something in common; you've got a connection.

That opportunity was further facilitated by working together on the course project because, as Andrea noted:

You've got this camaraderie because you've been on the project team together.

The opportunity afforded by *Insight* to facilitate networking was also acknowledged by managers, such as Callum, who observed that:

There are real benefits from creating the networks to collaborate, but it is through things like these courses or other things that actually create the connections.

Some researchers view networking and collaboration as inter-related concepts (Dexter & Prince, 2007). As well as highlighting the network facilitation role of training courses, Callum's comment suggested that networking fostered collaboration. Collaboration, and its relationship to formal training, is discussed below.

Collaboration and teamwork

Like networking, collaboration was also an implicit aim of *Insight*. Collaboration and teamwork are identified in the leadership development literature as leadership skills (Crosbie, 2005; Konopka & Dupre, 2001; Martin, 2007; McCallum & O'Connell, 2009) and the importance of this skill was emphasised by Finco's Chief Executive when describing collaboration and teamwork as 'particularly important' objectives of *Insight*.

The findings of this present research suggest that course design was an element in learning collaboration and teamwork. The integration of the course project into *Insight* provided one means for course participants to learn collaboration. Wayne's comment illustrated that the intent of the course project to foster collaboration and teamwork was understood by course participants:

The only value coming out of the project was a group of individuals working together, a group of people who didn't know each other very well working together on a common project and overcoming individual views to get a collective view, a kind of collective outcome.

Wayne's view was corroborated by Trisha, a member of Wayne's project group, who confirmed that, despite her expectations to the contrary, her project group had worked collaboratively:

I always thought we worked quite good as a team. To be honest, I was really pleased with that. So often in these things, we actually don't.

The finding that the course project fostered collaboration and teamwork paralleled research conducted by Leigh, Shapiro and Penney (2010). Their quasi-experimental evaluation of a leadership development program suggested that training design facilitated learning. A further parallel finding in our respective research was that conflict was evident during project work. Course participant Andrea's group exemplified the relatively harmonious and efficient project groups in *Insight*:

. . . you had five people in the room who were all sharing ideas and had different perspectives and things like that. You learn to be flexible and to get to a solution quickly.

However, during project work another group encountered conflict among two of its members as evident from the views of the two antagonists. Scott and Alan had opposing views on how to approach the course project. Scott's comment highlighted that he was frustrated by the pace of project work:

We had a little work group that just went on and on and on, invested enormous time without, maybe, too much productive output.

The differences between Scott and Alan led to the deterioration in their coursework relationship, as evident from Alan's comment that:

After a few months or weeks, it wasn't a very collaborative style that I was adopting, but I don't think he was, either.

Conflict, however, can be a means of learning (Lehesvirta, 2004) and conflict management is an essential and necessary leadership skill (V. Burke & Collins, 2005; Leigh et al., 2010). Learning to manage conflict is as important as learning to collaborate (Analoui, 1993). A formal training course which has work-based learning incorporated within it has important advantages when it comes to learning skills and gaining experience in conflict resolution. Courses that consist of a broad range of participants, like *Insight*, have an in-built diversity so that a platform for conflict is established, as well as providing a safe off-the-job setting for learning to resolve conflict (Leigh et al., 2010).

Diversity among course participants also provides for a range of different perspectives to be developed (Leigh et al., 2010). *Insight* participants were selected from a cross-section of the organisation, albeit from a small pool of potential candidates. Despite this limitation to its diversity, *Insight* was seen as a 'fantastic' opportunity for course participants to learn from others. This view was shared by course designers, course participants and their managers, and illustrated by the comment from Joe, a course participant:

Whenever you do something, whenever you are removed from your daily job and you have the opportunity to think and spend time with like-minded or challenging people, in any environment, your light bulbs go on. Your ability to share and challenge and absorb information and listen to someone who is not from your world—an academic or a person who has done lots of other different things; fantastic opportunities.

Joe's comment highlighted that learning might come from tutors, but equally, from other course participants. Key factors in ensuring diversity and learning are, respectively, course participant selection and opportunity for socialisation (Leigh et al., 2010). These factors were present in *Insight* as well as the 'Emerging Leaders Program' in Leigh et al.'s (2010) research. This present research, however, found the factors in a formal classroom-based training course in contrast to Leigh et al.'s action learning project. While similarities between *Insight* and the 'Emerging Leaders Program' are evident, the contrasting learning approaches underpinning the respective research enable this present research to complement Leigh et al.'s research. The findings from this research parallel those of Leigh et al.'s research and affirm the importance of training courses in fostering collaboration.

Transfer of implicit learning

Transfer of learning is concerned with the application of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in a training context back in the workplace (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). However, researchers make no distinction on how the learning is acquired, whether explicitly, formally or otherwise. Although learning to develop a network was not an explicit aim of *Insight*, the transfer of that learning was still a consideration for the organisation. The General Manager – HR was sufficiently concerned to ask:

Did their networks and contacts help them to achieve something that they couldn't do before?

While the course participants demonstrated transfer of networking to the workplace during the *Insight* course, post-course interviews indicated that networking was not sustained consistently once course participants returned to the workplace. The General Manager – HR's concern, therefore, is a real one as learning is not transferred unless the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained through training are maintained over time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer model highlighted opportunity to use learning as a factor in the transfer of learning. Course participants, such as Alan, indicated that post-course opportunities to use the networks and networking skills acquired during *Insight* were limited. Use was constrained by course participants' workloads which confined the use of networking to meeting immediate business needs:

I think it is almost kind of you do get a little bit back into your job, if I am honest, and your network is the people you are always touching more regularly around your role. It is nice to go and chat to some of the people outside of that but I would be honest and say very limited. . . . So I say not huge amounts of that networking since then.

The workload pressures influencing the transfer of learning were similar to those described in other research and the views expressed by Alan, and other course participants, provided qualitative support for the quantitative research by Chiaburu et al. (2010) and Huczynski and Lewis (1980) which implicated workload as an inhibitor of transfer.

In summary, *Insight* course participants implicitly learnt networking skills and transfer of learning was demonstrated, albeit restricted by workload which limited networking to immediate business needs. The transfer of collaboration, however, was harder to identify. Kevin, a course participant, indicated that he and other course participants from his division were collaborating, but could not attribute the learning to *Insight*:

*. . . we work together very well in supporting each other around ‘this is a problem, this is an issue, this is a challenge for us, let’s get involved’. And we all roll up our sleeves and take particular ownership, so Joe might do something, I might do another part of it, Alan might do something else. whether it’s part of *Insight* or just team working together, I’m not sure.*

In contrast, Scott, another course participant, demonstrated transfer of his learning, citing examples of collaborating with parties external to the organisation, as well as other divisions within Finco. Scott viewed collaboration as an ongoing activity, giving confidence that transfer, being a sustained application of learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Kozlowski & Salas, 1997), had taken place:

It’s pretty continuous in my role, anyway, so it is a matter of actually kind of finding a compartmentalised example rather than trying to find the one that proves that something did happen. It’s pretty ongoing really.

Scott's peer, Terry, also observed an increase in Scott's collaboration since *Insight*:

With Scott, I have seen some subtle changes, I suppose, in how he goes about things, with it being more collaborative and seeking input, as opposed to "hey, this is what we need to do, and this is how you do it."

As with the course project, there was insufficient evidence to attribute the transfer of learning to collaboration.

Some researchers view collaboration as a facilitator of the transfer of learning. Nielsen's (2009) multi-method research explored the collaborative activities adopted by apprentices for the transfer of learning from a vocational college to the workplace. His research found that social interaction and collaboration influenced the transfer of learning from a formal classroom setting to the workplace. Although apprenticeship training is different from leadership development training, the social interactions evident among *Insight* course participants hint at the potential to use collaboration to facilitate the transfer of learning.

Formal training as conduit to socialisation

Other elements of training courses that Leigh et al. (2010) found to foster the learning of leadership skills were opportunity to socialise and to exchange perspectives. Socialisation is the process of participating in social groups and learning informally how to be a member of the group (Analoui, 1993; Eraut, 2004). The concept of socialisation emphasises informal learning and its association with training courses, which imply formal learning, appears anomalous.

Training is categorised as formal and instructor led learning (Sloman, 2005), while learning that is not classroom based or highly structured is categorised as informal (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). The learning of networking, for example, by *Insight* course participants was neither highly structured nor instructor led and, in terms of the formal-informal dichotomy, would be considered informal learning. The dominant pedagogy of *Insight* was classroom-based teaching, which is categorised as formal in the formal-informal dichotomy, yet learning to network and use those networks was achieved within a formal training course. The apparent inconsistency supported

Malcolm, Hodkinson and Colley's (2003) view that formal and informal learning are not separate. However, in contrast to Malcolm et al.'s counsel that formal and informal learning approaches not be combined, evidence from *Insight* suggested that integration can not only be achieved in practice, but also highlights differing approaches to integrating formal and informal learning. Malcolm et al.'s research was undertaken against a backdrop of making informal learning approaches more formal. In contrast, *Insight* used a formal learning approach to facilitate informal learning. The contrasting views support Malcolm et al.'s caution that the formal-informal learning relationship be viewed in context.

Malcolm et al. (2003) concluded that almost all learning situations have a combination of formal and informal learning attributes. Formal and informal learning interact in important ways and the need is to understand that interaction (Marsick, 2009). Indications from *Insight* are that one strand of the interaction is socialisation within formal training courses.

Socialisation and formal training

The informal processes involved in socialisation, sometimes described as the 'invisible hand' of training, occur through social interaction or observation (Chao, 1997; Gibson, 2004; Luthans & Davis, 1981). In Leigh et al.'s (2010) research, opportunity to socialise and exchange perspectives was formally incorporated into the training course. In a similar way, *Insight*'s design also provided opportunity to socialise and exchange perspectives. Two facets of socialisation, the residential nature of the course and the inclusion of the course project, were apparent in *Insight*. Both factors related to training design and suggested that training design was important for socialisation.

Research on training design has focused on the principles of learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton III et al., 2000; Velada et al., 2007), however, the adoption of a practice lens for this present research highlighted some training design features that may aid learning and transfer. Residency during training is one of those practical features. Some course participants considered the residential nature of *Insight* to be an imposition as they were required to travel to the training venue on Sunday. Despite this, as illustrated by Marty's comment, course participants particularly valued the residential nature of the course because it gave them an opportunity to socialise and learn informally outside the classroom:

All quite different individuals, all from different parts of the business, but we all got on and more than happy to share our experiences. Interestingly, a sign of that—you had your dinner, everyone sort of mixed and sat around the tables and sat just talking. I think that was a real highlight, the willingness to share information and just realised that we all face different challenges, but we can learn off each other.

The residential nature of training courses is influential in facilitating socialisation (Analoui, 1993) and this was the case with *Insight*. Moreover, the learning that results from socialisation is considered to be more ‘natural’ and more extensive than from formal training (Luthans & Davis, 1981). Luthans and Davis’ (1981) view was supported by this research as course participants, such as Shelley stressed that learning from social interaction was more meaningful than classroom learning:

I think being residential helps. I think actually staying together in an environment helps. It's quite a big ask for some people to do that—and for me too, for that matter—but it's what makes it. You really get to know people on a range of different levels, and so you grow. If you didn't do that and you just went into a classroom situation, you wouldn't get a quarter of it. The value isn't just in the material; the value is in the whole interaction and the whole experience.

The sharing of information and learning from each other, as indicated by Marty and Shelley’s comments above, supported Analoui’s (1993) research that indicated that implicit learning and the acquisition of tacit knowledge occurred through the process of socialisation. They gave precedence to socialisation as a facilitator of learning, emphasising the learning that took place in social settings.

Although not expressed as a formal, documented objective of *Insight*, Finco’s Chief Executive and managers had an objective that course participants develop new perspectives from exposure to other course participants and senior executives. The following comment by the Chief Executive emphasised the importance that he attached to *Insight* course participants developing new perspectives on leadership and career:

I would hope that if the programme is successful, that they would just get a different level of awareness about what goes into how things happen, and what's important in terms of decision making, strategic direction, what makes senior people tick, and what is the standard or benchmark that people are looking for in terms of the effort, the analysis, the thinking, the commitment and all those sorts of things. It is knowledge around all of that. It helps frame people's reference. I think that's always helpful. It doesn't matter where you are. At my level, looking at that in different jobs, or at their level, looking at my job—I think getting those different perspectives always gives you a richness in terms of thinking about where I am going, what do I want to do, what are the things I need to do to work on, do I want to do a job like that—all that sort of stuff.

One outcome of leadership development training that Dexter and Prince's (2007) research identified was the development of a heightened awareness and broader perspectives by course participants. The Chief Executive's aim was to provide course participants with a wider perspective of leadership and this was achieved, in part, through his interaction with course participants at a course dinner. A training manager who attended the dinner highlighted how meaningful social interaction can be when she observed the subsequent outcome of the Chief Executive's interaction with course participants:

I heard a number of people commenting on insights like just how tough his job can be, how lonely it can be, and the sorts of demands and the sorts of hours he works. It depends on the seniority of the participants. Some of them have some inkling of that already, but others of them, perhaps not quite so senior, perhaps were not as aware of that and the fact that you are working considerably more than a 5-day week.

The benefits of having a heightened awareness and broader perspectives are that leadership development training course participants are able to take a more holistic view, make sense of the 'bigger picture' and have greater empathy (Dexter & Prince,

2007). This was evident in a comment by Richard, a manager of a course participant:

Most of my guys deal mostly with branch network people, with customers and stuff on the ground. That's great. But to deal with different people with different perspectives around the organisation, you get so much out of that. The network versus the centre are very different cultures, basically. Talk in different languages, think differently. Neither is right or wrong; they are just different. And having a perspective of the other person, understanding the other side is really important.

This present research highlighted that managers and course participants gave another meaning to the development of a heightened awareness and broader perspectives; the receptiveness to new ideas. Managers, such as Callum, suggested that developing different viewpoints would facilitate developing new approaches to business issues:

Realising there is more than one way to solve a problem. . . . I think it's just people being aware that what they've been used to in their day job is just one approach to a situation, and therefore if it is really a challenging issue, applying a totally different framework or looking at it through a different lens. From a leadership point of view just realising, actually there are different approaches, and it's OK in a particularly challenging situation or unusual situation, applying these different approaches or even picking up the phone and asking someone else's opinion that you might never have thought of before. In that situation, how would you think about it, just to get a typical insight. By doing that, in theory, you improve the quality of the decision, take the risk out or see an opportunity.

The ability to develop new perspectives was graphically illustrated by Trisha, a course participant:

I think one thing that I think I do differently as a result of the course is that I think I am more open to other ideas and ways of doing things, and I think that came about through [the leadership] session where [the course facilitator] talked about different organisations, well-known organisations, who have run what I thought at the time quite bizarre operating models, but they seem to kind of work. It made me think, well . . . maybe the way we do things isn't the only way. I think it has made me a bit more open, more thinking about different things like that. Just because I may think they are bizarre doesn't mean they don't work. That is probably the main thing that I have actually probably taken out of the course.

In addition to social interaction during *Insight*, the other main means of learning through socialisation were participation in the course project and observation (Eraut, 2004). In addition to learning how to collaborate and resolve conflict, the course project also helped course participants to acquire different perspectives. Trisha had indicated in her comment above that she had developed more openness to new ideas from classroom teaching. However, Joe highlighted that his openness to new ideas came through social interaction on the course project:

I got a lot of learning from the people on the course in that they are quite a different group from different parts of the organisation. As you work through the project you can see different perspectives coming in around things, and I think that's where possibly the biggest development for me is with these sorts of things—actually being open to different perspectives and different opinions, and actually using or leveraging those things. . . .

Joe and Trisha's differing approaches to learning receptiveness to different perspectives and new ideas further highlighted the pedagogical advantage of combining formal training and work-based learning approaches (Raelin, 1998).

In addition to developing a heightened awareness of the demands of leadership through social interaction with the Chief Executive, some course participants added to this awareness by observing EXCO (Finco's senior executive committee) at a

meeting. Observation is a dominant method of socialisation (Chao, 1997) and enables learners to 'learn some new practices and new perspectives, to become aware of different kinds of knowledge and expertise, and to gain some sense of other people's tacit knowledge' (Eraut, 2004, p.266). However, observation does have inherent disadvantages, both of which were apparent in *Insight*. Learners cannot control what they can or cannot observe (Chao, 1997) and only two course participants were able to attend an EXCO meeting and learn from observing EXCO members. The knowledge acquired by observation is tacit (Chao, 1997) and it can be difficult for learners to subsequently articulate what they have learnt (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). This was the case for the course participants who attended an EXCO meeting to discuss their group's course project in more detail. The course participants described the meeting as 'an experience' and expressed feelings of importance, being valued and confidence in engaging at a conversational level with senior executives, but were unable to articulate what they learnt from the meeting.

The longitudinal dimension, implicit learning and socialisation

It is tempting to attribute the learning of implicit objectives to socialisation. Longitudinal research can observe changes over time (Blume et al., 2010; Minichiello et al., 1995; Zikmund, 2003). Conversely, longitudinal research can also highlight the absence of change. Table 2 illustrates the timing of interviews in this present research and the purpose of the interviews at each interval.

Notwithstanding course participants' anticipation of an early transfer of learning, expressed pre-course, little transfer was observed during the course and after completion of the course. Similarly, course participants' expectation of manager support for transfer and an expressed intent, by both course participants and managers, for managers to be involved in supporting transfer was, in actuality, very limited. The absence of observed changes, does not suggest that changes will not take place. The development of leaders is a dynamic process and time is an important factor in leadership development (Avey, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2008; Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). The challenge for longitudinal researchers is the selection of the appropriate intervals and frequency for observing change during leadership development (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). As leadership development takes place over a long-term timeframe, measured in years and decades (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010), a longer interval for assessing the transfer of learning from leadership development courses might yield more observable transfer of learning.

Table 2. Timing and purpose of longitudinal approach

	Pre-Course	During Course	Post-Course
Course participants	Preparation for transfer of learning	Observed transfer of learning	Observed transfer of learning
Managers	Preparation for support of transfer of learning	n/a	Observed support for transfer of learning Triangulation of course participants' transfer of learning
Peers	n/a	n/a	Observed support for transfer of learning Triangulation of course participants' transfer of learning
Subordinates	n/a	n/a	Observed support for transfer of learning Triangulation of course participants' transfer of learning
Trainers	Preparation for support of transfer of learning	n/a	n/a
Executives	n/a	Preparation for support of transfer of learning	n/a

Whilst little change was observed during the research period, the longitudinal aspect of this research did highlight consistency and continuity of responses over time (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). Views on networking and collaboration were consistently held by course participants across the entire time span of the research. Because course participants viewed learning or practising networking and collaboration as an important component of *Insight* before the course, socialisation alone during the course cannot have fostered those views. Learners learn in relation to their prior experiences and knowledge (Lehesvirta, 2004), shown by course participants relating their emphasis on networking and collaboration to their experiences on previous courses. Josh, Shelley and Scott, for example, referred to *Insight*'s predecessor, *Shaping our Future*, when talking about *Insight* and their expectations. Despite being told by training managers that *Insight* was different from *Shaping our Future*, one course participant highlighted the continued shaping of expectations in terms of their prior experience on *Shaping our Future*:

I probably got most of my expectations because of my previous knowledge from Shaping our Future . . .

While socialisation cannot be credited with the focus on networking and collaboration, the continued, or heightened, emphasis on networking and collaboration during and after the course suggested that socialisation may have reinforced previously held views on the need to learn to network and collaborate.

Summary of chapter

The dichotomies that have characterised learning in extant research have begun to be challenged by some researchers. This chapter has explored dichotomies relating to learning and bridges the divide between formal training and workplace learning. In particular, this research sees an erosion of the polarity that has characterised formal training and work-based learning approaches and suggests that the two approaches can be coupled to exploit the synergies of combining the pedagogical advantages of both. The metaphor of formal training as a conduit is extended and formal training is proposed as a conduit to tacit knowledge and socialisation, while training design is implicated as a means to bridge learning dichotomies. Accordingly, the design of formal training courses is reaffirmed as a major influence on learning and its transfer.

This chapter has argued that learning be viewed in a less dichotomous way. It has explored the relationship between formal training and work-based learning and concluded that the two approaches can be complementary. The community of practice is one approach to work-based learning which, nevertheless, remains resistant to acknowledging a role for formal training. There are indications from this present research that formal training has relevance to the community of practice concept and these are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: **Toward a community of practice**

Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the community of practice is one conception of collective learning (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). The term ‘community of practice’ has been used by researchers in many ways, each with its own meaning and focus (Cox, 2005). This research adopts Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conception of the community of practice as the basis for discussion as their conception not only focused on social interaction and identity in learning, in line with other community of practice researchers, but also placed emphasis on participation. In Lave and Wenger’s conception of community of practice, participation is the basis for becoming a member of a community of practice and sharing understanding and meaning.

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) view of the community of practice concept also placed emphasis on situated learning, where learning takes place *in situ*, in contrast to the cognitive model of classroom teaching and individual learning away from the workplace. The focus on situated learning provided further reason to explore Lave and Wenger’s conception of community of practice, as this focus has been critiqued for its failure to accommodate formal training in the concept (Handley et al., 2007). This chapter explores participation in a formal training course and its relevance to a community of practice. It does so through an investigation of collective learning, and the community of practice concept as a form of collective learning, before adopting Handley et al.’s (2007) framework of participation, identity and practice to discuss formal training in the context of a community of practice. The chapter concludes with an exploration of a role for formal training courses in communities of practice.

Parallels between *Insight* and a community of practice

The interviews suggested that collective learning occurred among *Insight* participants. Although some concepts of collective learning may vary in focus and perspective, they share a common view that learning occurs through a process involving knowledge transfer from individuals to the collective (Garavan & McCarthy,

2008). The focus of prior research has been on the learning characteristics of the collective and, in particular, how the collective learns from individuals. An example of this from *Insight* was when Andrea shared her experience and expertise with other course participants during classroom discussion. Andrea highlighted a role play she was part of during a classroom session as one instance where she contributed to the learning of the collective:

[The facilitator] said, “Right, I’m going to be the person. I’ve got bad body odour and you need to give me this feedback”, and she started singling people out. And people were really struggling with it. . . . I said I would give it a go, and got her to sit down in front of me. . . . The reaction I got from people around the room, around “Oh, you seem so confident and comfortable” and things like that, I think that’s where my feeling of validation and confidence came. . . . They taught so much, I think, from the first residential workshop in terms of the strategy piece that it was nice, it felt good for me, to be able to give something back.

While the research focus has been predominantly on collectives learning from individuals, Andrea highlighted that individual learning can also be gained from the collective:

In the strategy modules I got a huge amount from my colleagues in terms of what they gave to me.

Andrea’s contribution to, and learning from, the collective occurred during classroom sessions. Course participants, such as Marty, highlighted that learning by sharing with the collective also occurred outside the classroom:

The highlight has been the two offsite sessions where a group of us sat around the table basically and shared our experiences—when we have been debating things and particular topics within either of the two modules. The fact that we’ve all been sitting there prepared to throw in our ideas, whether it is from other organisations we’ve worked at or from Finco and just what’s been happening.

While *Insight* is not a community of practice, it nevertheless shared many of the concept's characteristics. In particular, the collective and social learning evident in *Insight* are characteristic of a community of practice. The social learning that is essential to a community of practice (Blåka & Filstad, 2007; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991) includes the sharing of information, practices, experiences and stories so that members of a community are able to learn from each other's successes and failures in a common area of interest (Malone, 2005). Such sharing and learning was apparent from Andrea and Marty's comments above. Sharing and learning was evident not only between course participants, but also occurred between course participants and their subordinates as highlighted by James, who related how his manager, Joe, shared his learning from *Insight*:

. . . when he was doing it [Insight] he shared the work that they were doing, and circulated some of that around the team, certainly talked about the different people he was working with and different parts of the organisation that they were coming from and definitely some of the insights and learning that he was getting from it, so he did share some of that.

While there were similarities between *Insight* and the community of practice concept, other elements of the concept were absent from *Insight*. A key aspect of communities of practice is the sense of belonging and community among members (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). 'Community' is characterised as a, mainly, informal grouping and defined by researchers to be a craft group (Lave & Wenger, 1991), an informal group of workers (Brown & Duguid, 1991), a set of social relations around a work process (Wenger, 1998) or a special interest group in an organisation (Wenger et al., 2002). None of those definitions applied to the *Insight* course. Further, a community is enduring (Wenger et al., 2002). Durability, however, was not apparent in *Insight* as course participants indicated that after the course finished, limited interaction on an ongoing basis took place. As highlighted by Kevin, a course participant, interaction after the course was accidental, rather than intentional, and not ongoing:

It's good if you bump into them in the lift or if you are staying in a hotel or whatever, and you see them at breakfast, you have an

opportunity to talk. That happens from time to time. But from a business sense, and the need to pick up the phone and talk to someone—not so far.

Researchers have also highlighted the meaning of ‘practice’ as critical to the understanding of the concept of community of practice (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). Although differences in meaning among researchers are evident, with the meaning of practice ranging from a localised and particular work activity to a notion of a more general occupational or professional activity, conceptions of practice emphasise the sharing of a common interest (Cox, 2005). While participation in *Insight* might suggest a common interest in leadership development, the interviews with course participants did not reflect an ongoing shared interest in the topic. Instead, course participants indicated a more general interest in sharing information to facilitate day-to-day work. Kevin illustrated this focus when he stated that his conversations were around:

... some of the challenges that we are facing in the business unit. This is the sort of stuff that we are working on at the moment; what's happening in your world—that sort of stuff.

Despite evidence of collective, as well as individual, learning occurring through *Insight*, the lack of an informal grouping around a common interest preclude *Insight* being described as a community of practice. Sufficient aspects of the community of practice approach were evident, however, to challenge Lave and Wenger’s (1991) view that formal training has no relevance in the concept of community practice.

A role for formal training in a community of practice

In Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conception of community of practice, participation, identity, and practice were identified as the core constructs of situated learning. A sense of Lave and Wenger’s conception of learning was evident from course participant, Josh, who hinted at participation, identity and practice through his reference to an ‘ability to interact’ and ‘work through programmes and projects’ with other ‘senior, very competent people’ to ‘share ideas, share techniques’. These constructs were represented diagrammatically by Handley et al. (2007) and reproduced as Figure 7 to provide a framework for exploring formal training in

relation to the community of practice concept. Handley et al. (2006) argued that individuals gain understanding of what constitutes the practices of a community of practice through participation. Their framework therefore places participation at the centre of situated learning and as the starting point for discussing the development of identity and practice in communities of practice.

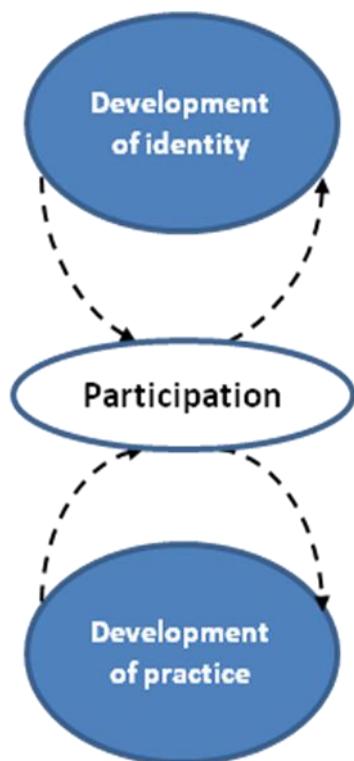


Figure 7. Core constructs of the community of practice concept (adapted from Handley et al., 2007, p.175)

Participation

The terms 'participation' and 'practice' are ambiguous and are occasionally used interchangeably by researchers (Handley et al., 2007). Handley et al. (2007) conceptualised participation as 'meaningful activity' where 'meaning is developed through relationships and shared identities' (Handley et al., 2007, p.181) and practice is defined as 'observable activity' (Handley et al., 2007, p.181). Handley et al.'s conception of participation is about 'taking part', in a way that allows meaning to be developed, and is the view adopted for this discussion. In this context, the current research highlighted how a formal training course can facilitate participation.

Participation in *Insight* provided course participants, like Andrea, with the opportunity to derive meaning from the course:

Leadership is something I've always been very passionate about. . . I found in that particular residential workshop I was able to share a lot of my insights and experience with my colleagues who were also participating on the course.

The way Andrea took part in *Insight* supported the learning-by-sharing characteristic of communities of practice (Malone, 2005). However, Andrea was sharing her insights and experiences with peers. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice views participation as progressing from the periphery as a novice or newcomer to full membership as a master or 'old timer' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Some researchers have highlighted that newcomers to a community of practice are not necessarily novices and that communities of practice may be joined by experienced participants (Fuller et al., 2005). Fuller et al.'s (2005) research described a case study where experienced school-teachers who were peers and not on the periphery learnt from each other. A similar situation was apparent in *Insight* where the course participants were, like the school-teachers in Fuller et al.'s case study, not at the periphery and had sufficient knowledge, information and experience to share with other course participants. A manager, Callum, commented that this was an important requirement of the course as 'one of the key attributes was that the participants self-learnt off each other'.

Andrea's comment about sharing and learning with other course participants highlighted participation in the manner of a community of practice during *Insight*. A formal training course can also facilitate participation in a community of practice by enabling access to interaction with not only other course participants, but also a wider grouping. Participation in a wider grouping is consistent with the sense of community (Garavan & McCarthy, 2008). It enables participants to gain an understanding of the social norms, behaviours and values of the community of practice (Handley et al., 2007) and learn how to behave, as well as knowing what to do (Cox, 2005). These normative aspects were emphasised by the General Manager - HR as important elements of learning from *Insight*.

. . . if we are not expecting our direct reports to live up to a certain standard of leadership, they won't, unless they are innately motivated to do it themselves, and some are. But if we are not role-modelling it, it is too easy for others to say "Well, if they're not doing it, we don't have to do it." And if we are not managing it, then the standards I don't think will be met. By manage, I mean both set expectations but also help develop people where they need, to give feedback, and insist on a level of leadership, below which things aren't acceptable.

Participation, however, is dependent on having the opportunity to participate in activities and interact with colleagues (Billett, 1994, 2001). A requirement of the community of practice concept is that participants are able to have regular contact with, and be able to observe, others in the community (Malone, 2005). An example of how *Insight* provided course participants with such opportunities was the contact that course participants had with Finco's Chief Executive as a direct result of attending *Insight*. Scott recalled how his project group was able to hear the Chief Executive's views on their course project:

. . . we were given the opportunity to spend 20 minutes with the CEO, which turned into 45 minutes. He talked about some things that were probably quite inspiring, actually. Just in terms of how he saw the world and what he was doing himself and so on. He was speaking from the heart, and his experiences around the particular subject [of the course project].

Insight, therefore, was instrumental in enabling course participants to interact socially and learn from other course participants and leaders in the organisation.

Identity

Identity is a significant component of the communities of practice concept as it is central to learning within communities of practice (Cox, 2005). Researchers have highlighted, however, that despite its significance, the process of identity development in the community of practice concept has not been well elaborated (Handley et al., 2007). Handley et al.'s (2007) research provided a basis for exploring identity development by relating identity development to participation in a

community of practice and the framing of the processes of identity development as identity regulation and identity work. Identity development through identity regulation occurs when identity is regulated by the organisation while identity work refers to individual efforts to form or revise their perceptions of self (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Both of these forms of identity development were apparent from interviews with course participants and other role players in the *Insight* course.

Identity regulation occurs through the actions of the organisation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). The process and criteria for selection suggested that *Insight* participants were a select group with potential to become future leaders in the organisation. By the act of selecting the course participants, Finco conferred an identity on the course participants implying that course participants were important to the organisation and, in the words of Finco's Chief Executive, worth investing in:

I would say if 20 percent of the Insight candidates were at the senior end of the organisation in somewhere around 5 to 7 years after they've been on this programme, the investment was worthwhile.

A similar sentiment was expressed by a training manager who also viewed *Insight* as 'an expensive investment' in future potential. The views of training managers were significant as they were key role players in the identity regulation process. They were instrumental in defining the identity of participants as talented people of high potential, as illustrated by a training manager when commenting on course participant selection:

. . . we were looking for were those in their business units who were perceived to be talented—i.e., to have a lot of promise in terms of their ability to go further in their roles and an expressed desire to go further, because it is not enough just to have the ability, you have to want to do something with it and move into more senior positions.

The above comments suggested that the organisation, through the Chief Executive and training managers, framed the identity of course participants. As a consequence of their selection for *Insight*, course participants, such as Trisha and Joe, identified themselves as being part of a select group of 'good' people as illustrated by their respective comments:

*. . . what I think is quite good about the *Insight* programme is that it is only run once a year or something like that. If you are one of the 15 or 18 people to go on it, you actually are picked—you are good; you are good stock.*

*. . . because you've been on *Insight* . . . it's like having a little sticker on your shoulder that says that someone says this guy is good at what he does or whatever.*

Selection for *Insight*, therefore, became a tangible and formal expression of identity for course participants. Identities continually evolve and, in a community of practice, are bounded by a range of possibilities and a broader social context (Handley et al., 2007). Handley et al.'s (2007) research highlighted how the identity of peripheral members of a community of practice was regulated through the type of work assignments an organisation allocated to its junior management consultants. In a similar way, selection for *Insight* became the mechanism that Finco used to regulate the identity of course participants. A formal training course can, accordingly, contribute to the community of practice concept by its ability to regulate identity development.

In comparison to identity regulation, identity work is the ongoing work of forming, repairing, maintaining or revising perceptions of self (Handley et al., 2006). Trisha, a course participant, exemplified identity work occurring through *Insight*. Callum, Trisha's manager, observed Trisha's identity work when she was able to compare herself with other participants on *Insight*:

. . . I would guess that by being part of a peer group of executives Trisha was able to benchmark herself and was probably happily surprised that she was well suited to being in that group.

Identity entails a sense of belonging (Mittendorff, Geijsel, Hoeve, de Laat, & Nieuwenhuis, 2006) and evidence of the identity work undertaken by Trisha was that, after the course, Trisha felt that she had developed a sense of belonging:

I think I feel I deserve my place where I am now. I'm not so sure—that's probably due to a whole pile of things—that's going on Insight, that's going to a lot of the meetings at my level. When Insight started I was sort of like I am at these people's level and I can do the same job, but I am not at the same role level. I felt a bit like I'm here but I'm not here. I sort of feel like I fit in my place now, which I think gives me a lot more confidence, and I think that will be visible to people.

Further evidence of identity work exhibited was found in comments made by course participants about their increase in self confidence. The comment made by Trisha highlighted the development of self-confidence when she was able to compare herself with peers (Hollenbeck & Hall, 2004). Alan was another example of a course participant who became more self-confident as the course progressed:

The confidence in me and my ability—I feel I am up a notch, definitely, from where I was before, in terms of the way I approach things. It is being on some courses and understanding the bigger picture and how people tick and how to collaborate a bit more—that has been put into the pot as well. It is a whole range of things that give you that confidence. Confidence is almost like being at an equivalent level as everyone else but probably knowing a little bit more.

After the course the self confidence that Alan had gained continued to be exhibited and this was observed by work colleagues, such as Joe:

I think he is a better leader. I think he is exhibiting more confidence in himself as a leader. Either that he knows consciously or that it is just coming out now, so it could be Insight solely or it could be a component to it.

Findings from the *Insight* course highlighted that participation in formal training courses facilitated identity development in similar ways to identity development in communities of practice. These similarities suggest that formal training courses can contribute to communities of practice and, in contrast to the traditional view of formal training, have relevance for the communities of practice concept.

Handley et al.'s (2007) framework also viewed participation as the means to develop the practices of the community of practice. Indications that participation in *Insight* enabled course participants to learn some of the leadership practices of Finco are discussed next.

Practice

A fundamental element of a community of practice is the shared practices of the community (Mittendorff et al., 2006). The practices of a community of practice can be both explicit, such as in the community's use of language or role-definitions, as well as implicit (Handley et al., 2006). Implicit practices include the community's underpinning values, assumptions and understandings. In this context, learning the practices of a community of practice is reminiscent of socialisation, which is the process of learning to become a member of a group by learning the norms and values of the group (Analoui, 1993). Ibarra (1999) suggested that socialisation was developed through observation and *Insight* afforded course participants some opportunity to do so. The opportunity to observe was emphasised by Finco's Chief Executive as a particularly valuable feature of *Insight*.

Some of the programme you are working with peers, and you are actually interacting with some more senior people in the organisation. I think those opportunities where you can actually see—it's about being observant and understanding how the teams are interacting, who is bringing what skills to the table. You're building contacts and you are getting the chance to meet senior people around the place as well. It is about making the most of those opportunities around that too.

Course participants also met with the Chief Executive and other senior executives while researching the course project. Two course participants had the opportunity to attend an EXCO meeting and the experience helped one of the course participants to learn some of the practices for interacting in an EXCO meeting:

. . . sitting around the table with them helped me to learn what it takes to influence people and that I can influence them. . . . I learnt

something through the experience because I now feel better and more confident in the way I approach those sorts of things in the future.

The limited number of course participants invited by EXCO to attend a meeting highlighted the dependency of the opportunity to observe on the opportunity to participate (Handley et al., 2007). Attendance by other course participants at EXCO meetings were intended, but were cancelled by EXCO because of the lack of time available at meetings. Course participants, such as Kevin, highlighted the importance of socially interacting with Finco's leaders as 'you are probably going to get more information face-to-face as to the way they are thinking'. The cancellation of meetings was also indicative of the influence of power relations on the ability to participate (Pemberton et al., 2007). Lave and Wenger's (1991) conception of a community of practice acknowledges, but does not fully explore the significance of unequal power relations. Power within a community of practice may be seen through the amount of participation that is afforded (Roberts, 2006). Powerful members of a community of practice can influence the ability of peripheral participants to become and remain members of a community by facilitating, impeding or denying access to participation (Handley et al., 2006). EXCO members' availability to meet course participants during the course, the limited number of EXCO members attending the course project presentations and the cancellation of course participant attendance at EXCO meetings were examples of power relations influencing course participants' access to leaders in the organisation (Contu & Willmott, 2003).

Power is also related to membership of communities of practice. Trisha emphasised that some practices that she observed would not necessarily be adopted:

I believe that you can't copy other leaders, just because they do something. You have to look at what they've done and what outcome they've achieved and then does that fit with you. Two leaders might go about things completely different and get the same outcomes. One may not be better than the other, but they have gone about it differently. That is about one's self. I sort of think that a lot of the leadership stuff is actually being true to yourself whilst using lots of techniques from lots of other places.

Trisha's comment highlighted that practices observed may be adapted, transformed or rejected in line with the course participant's identity and 'being true to yourself' (Handley et al., 2007). The community of practice concept, however, implies a consensus of the community's practices and Trisha's comment highlighted the tension inherent in the concept between the continuity of existing practices and innovation (Contu & Willmott, 2003). Brown and Duguid (1991) suggest that training should be congruent with existing practices to reduce the tension. In the case of leadership development, this is facilitated by internal development within the organisation as internal programmes can be tailored to the organisation's culture (Pernick, 2001). A comment by Finco's Chief Executive suggested that the intent of *Insight* was consistent with that view:

I don't believe you can build an organisation that just tries to get the best people from somewhere else, but you don't, in the end, have a culture that is sustainable. The sustainability is about growing your own talent, finding and growing your own talent and nurturing it and so bringing them on.

The Chief Executive's view was reinforced by one of the training managers:

. . . growing our own has some significant cost savings, let alone the benefits of having someone who actually knows your culture and the way the organisation runs.

Insight afforded opportunities for course participants to observe the leadership practices of the Chief Executive and Executive Committee of Finco. Their perspectives support Handley et al.'s (2007) view that the practices of a community of practice can be learned through participation and suggest that participation in a formal training course is a means of understanding the shared practices of a community of practice.

Overall, *Insight* provided an opportunity for course participants to participate in a training course that had characteristics of a community of practice. The course enabled social interaction and a sharing of understanding about leadership among course participants, as well as enabling participation with a wider group of senior executives, peers and subordinates in the manner of a community of practice.

During the course, participants were able to reaffirm their identity and observe the explicit and implicit leadership practices of the organisation. The findings of this research suggest that formal training does have a role in a community of practice, and that role is as a means and facilitator of legitimate peripheral participation.

In view of *Insight* exhibiting some characteristics of a community of practice, the question arises as to how an ongoing community of practice might be established. This possibility is explored in the remainder of this chapter.

Community of practice development

Lave and Wenger's (1991) conception of communities of practice viewed the formation of a community of practice as an organic process where formation was spontaneous and arose out of informal social interaction. Finco's Chief Executive highlighted two examples that Finco instituted of informal social interaction that had a focus on leadership:

. . . a couple of things we have done here is where we've actually had those sessions, where we get the senior guys in and they just sit and reflect on what's made them successful and what have they done well and what have they not done well. I think a lot of it is about—there is always someone else who has been through that journey and trying to tap into, not the exact journey but a similar journey, trying to tap into their experiences.

The top 100—we always seem to have 120 in the top 100—get together at least twice a year to talk about strategy, what's happening in the bank, and generally those sorts of things.

Despite the organisation creating opportunities for informal social interaction on the topic of leadership, these are frequently not accessible to potential leaders. Wayne highlighted his occasional attendance at the leadership conferences:

We only get limited opportunities at those conferences. Because of the size of our team we take it in turns to go, so this is only the second one I've been on.

The inconsistent focus on leadership development and the limited opportunities for social interactions may have been significant constraints on a leadership community of practice spontaneously forming. Three additional factors emerged from the interviews as plausible explanations for difficulties establishing a ‘full-blown’ community of practice centred on leadership development. These were the need for ongoing informal face-to-face interaction, a common history or shared background and available time to be involved in community of practice activities.

The most effective forms of communication among members of a community of practice are face-to-face interaction and informal discussion. Researchers have highlighted other forms of communication, but agree that face-to-face communication is essential, particularly during the initial establishment of communities of practice because of its effectiveness (Akkerman et al., 2008; Breu & Hemingway, 2002). Opportunities for face-to-face interaction and informal discussion to occur were constrained in Finco by the geographic dispersion of potential members and the fragmented nature of the organisation. Many potential members of a leadership community of practice were in positions that were removed from other leaders. More than half of the course participants, for example, were located in cities away from their managers. Manager Tony highlighted the disadvantage of Marty being in another city:

... being in Auckland I don't get the chance to observe day to day like I do some of the other people here.

A similar perspective was shared by Alan about his manager:

What opportunity does he get to see me in action? Very limited.

The comments by Tony and Marty not only highlight a barrier to community of practice formation, but also its ongoing operation as the physical remoteness reduces the opportunity for legitimate peripheral participation. The comments highlighted the isolation of many course participants from their managers within a

unit. Potential members of a community of practice may also be isolated from potential members in other parts of the organisation. Communities of practice do not necessarily align to an organisation's formal structure and often cross departmental or divisional boundaries (Breu & Hemingway, 2002; Gilley & Kerno, 2010). The meetings referred to by Finco's Chief Executive, such as the Top 100 meeting, are an example of a cross-boundary opportunity for social interaction; however, these cross boundary gatherings are infrequent. In Finco, boundary crossing was inhibited by the size and structure of the organisation (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). A common view among research participants was that Finco was large and compartmentalised. As a result, members of the organisation were internally focused within divisions and did not interact much across divisional boundaries, as indicated in the comments by a senior executive and training manager respectively:

We are a relatively large organisation with 9,500 people. Most of our people spend most of their time within their own business unit.

. . . because of the way we structure our business in New Zealand, we have quite a strong silo-ed element.

Whilst geographic proximity is important for social interaction and facilitating the development of a community of practice, organisational or relational proximity are just as important (Amin, 2002). The organisation recognised the importance of cross-boundary interaction as Finco's General Manager – HR emphasised that the breaking down of silos was an objective of the organisation:

. . . this is quite important that managers at quite senior levels are well linked in and have an understanding of what each business is trying to do and an understanding of who the people are.

Crossing boundaries is an important factor in community of practice formation (Breu & Hemingway, 2002), and applies also to the less visible boundaries that exist in an organisation. Shared activity in a community of practice is enhanced by potential members of a community of practice sharing a common history or having similar backgrounds (Akkerman et al., 2008). Akkerman et al.'s (2008) research indicated that having a shared history was positively related to a willingness to work together. At the time of the research, Finco had recently undergone a merger and, at that time,

lacked a common history among its staff members. An objective of *Insight* was, indeed, to foster a new sense of shared history, as highlighted by a senior executive of Finco:

There was an objective to not only extend the individuals but help build - being a new merged company - some experience of what it meant to work for Finco, as a secondary purpose.

During this present research, Finco experienced a restructuring of the organisation following the merger and the 2007 global financial crisis. Transformation of this sort is considered to be facilitative of the development of a community of practice. Breu and Hemingway's (2002) research indicated that the fragmentation of knowledge and people, together with the feeling of disconnection, fostered a need for mutual assistance among members of a community of practice, however, this was not evident from *Insight*. The findings did not indicate a greater willingness to form a community of practice or to be more mutually supportive. Rather, research participants, such as Joe, suggested that the greater effect of the demands of transformation was an increase in workload, and by implication, a reduction in time available to participate in community of practice activities:

In our team we had five people in the senior central team. Now we have got the GM and two of us. Those jobs that were made up by the three or four people who have left still need to be done, and they have just fallen to the remaining people. . . . I think once you get to the situation perhaps that I've experienced—and I'm sure I'm not the only one on the course who has experienced it—you are just fighting fires the whole time; you are totally reactive. There's that great analogy which I love, which is being on the balcony, not on the dance floor. You are on the dance floor the whole time. You are not lifting yourself above it . . . because of the volume of things, the tactical nature of what you are being asked to do, the time pressures around what you're being asked to do.

Hemmasi and Csanda's (2009) research indicated that finding time to be involved in community activities was the greatest challenge to community of practice

membership. Leaders, or aspiring leaders, have high demands placed on their time, as highlighted by a training manager:

. . . the amount of work that individuals have in their day job can make a big difference. The kinds of people we target for Insight are always going to have very demanding jobs.

The capacity to participate in community of practice activities is, therefore, limited. Rather than supporting the development of a community of practice, as Breu and Hemingway (2002) suggested, Joe's comment suggested that transformation activities were a barrier to community of practice development. The second factor evident in the organisation that reduced the time available for community of practice activities was the global financial crisis that occurred during the research period. Kerno (2008) highlighted the work effort required to comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, its demands on work time and impact on communities of practice. A parallel situation occurred when Finco was affected by the 2007 global financial crisis and the resulting tightening of credit by financial institutions. Scott highlighted the effect of the tightening on workload:

We have been hit by the credit crunch to a greater extent than a number of the other businesses. For example, we have had to introduce a funding gap management tool, . . . and rationing credit to try to control the growth of that funding gap. So putting something in place like that is pretty extreme.

Time spent on responding to organisational demands, as in Joe and Scott's cases, accordingly reduced the time available for other organisational activities, and may have been influential in the failure of a community of practice to emerge (Kerno, 2008; Probst & Borzillo, 2008).

The social interaction indicated by the community of practice-like activities hinted at the establishment of a leadership community of practice in Finco. Further examination highlighted that the face-to-face interaction necessary for a community of practice was lacking because of infrequent opportunity to interact, the geographic dispersal of potential community members across locations and the silo effect of divisional boundaries constraining cross-boundary interaction. These factors

reflected the size and structure of Finco and supported the view that size was a factor in community of practice effectiveness (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). Social interaction was further constrained by the recent merger, which reduced the common ground shared by potential members, and the subsequent re-organisation which, together with the effects of the global financial crisis, reduced the time available for potential members to participate in community of practice activities.

Although a community of practice had not been spontaneously and organically formed, the community of practice-like features of Finco's *Insight* leadership development training course hinted at *Insight* being a community of practice in-waiting. These features, and their potential influence on transforming the *Insight* course participant network into a community of practice, are therefore the basis for further discussion as follows.

Evolution from training course to community of practice

In the absence of the spontaneous formation of a leadership community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and accepting that a community of practice approach is a key means of sharing expertise through informal learning (Kerno, 2008; Pemberton et al., 2007), a more managed approach to community of practice formation is required. Researchers have highlighted that the managed formation of communities of practice is viable, with some researchers taking the view that communities of practice can be formed from new (Akkerman et al., 2008; Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). Alternatively, a community of practice can be an offshoot of an existing formal or informal grouping (Pemberton et al., 2007). Some researchers take an evolutionary view and advocate a fostering of nascent communities of practice by approaches such as the evolution of existing networks into a community of practice (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). At first glance, forming a community of practice from a network is incongruous. In comparison to communities of practice, networks are less tightly knit, lack a purpose, do not have a focus on learning and are less enduring (Cunningham et al., 2004; H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). However, informal networks share the characteristic of informality with communities of practice and have the potential to evolve into communities of practice (Probst & Borzillo, 2008; H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003).

Networking as a basis for developing a community of practice

Networking was a core learning objective of *Insight*, and findings gave some indications that the networks established on *Insight* could be used to foster the development of a leadership community of practice in Finco. Course participant Marty captured some elements of networking inherent in a community of practice with his comment:

Maintaining those networks are around sharing the ideas. People on the Insight course, you've got EXCO at a high level and maybe a few people on the Insight course at this level, but we are still important, not only to share ideas vertically but also horizontally. So the networks, I think, are a way of doing that.

Two key factors highlighted by Marty supported the notion of developing a community of practice from a network. Marty highlighted that the network's purpose was the sharing of ideas, which is a central tenet of the community of practice concept (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As well, he highlighted that the sharing of ideas was both vertical and horizontal across the organisation. Marty's view of a network is consistent with the communities of practice approach of operating outside formal organisational structures (Gilley & Kerno, 2010; H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003), lending support to Smith and McKeen's (2003) research that communities of practice are a bridging mechanism across organisational and geographic boundaries. Marty's comments gave some indications that the *Insight* network might provide a basis for the formation of a leadership community of practice in Finco. Networking was only one aspect of *Insight*, however. Three other aspects pertinent to the development of a community of practice were clearly evident in *Insight*: trust, connectedness and collaboration.

Trust, connectedness and collaboration in communities of practice

Trust among community members is an essential component to the effective operation of a community of practice as more interaction and information sharing is likely to occur with trust (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). As highlighted by Josh, trust among course participants was developed on *Insight* in a relatively short time:

It was good from the point of view of the level of trust and camaraderie that had been built within the group, after those relatively two, short 3-day programmes.

The development of trust is not only essential for the effective ongoing operation of a community of practice, but is also crucial early in the development of a community of practice to ensure its success (Pemberton et al., 2007). Indications from *Insight* course participants are that participation in a formal training course facilitated the development of trust. A course participant, Andrea, indicated that the course project was instrumental in developing trust because:

You've got this camaraderie because you've been on the project team together. I feel like I tend to make more allowances . . . and I think that comes from a trust factor that has built up by working with someone closely on something else and understanding how they operate.

Josh highlighted two factors that facilitated the development of trust among course participants. Like Andrea, he attributed the familiarity developed by working together on the course project as a factor. As well, he suggested that the residential nature of the course created opportunities for informal social interaction. The nature of those interactions required a level of trust among participants, as highlighted by Josh's comment:

. . . the sort of discussions that you can have if you have a level of trust with people as a wider group. . . . They were just discussions around personal circumstances, and what have you. Some people were clearly uncomfortable but still joined the discussions.

Josh's comment indicated that information was freely shared among course participants. As communities of practice are reliant on knowledge to be freely shared for learning to accrue (Pemberton et al., 2007), the findings from *Insight* suggest that formal training courses can contribute to communities of practice by facilitating the development of trust. The early achievement of trust within *Insight* suggests that it is feasible for trust to be established quickly and provides support for the notion of a community of practice evolving from *Insight*.

Human touches are essential if a community of practice is to be successful (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). In addition to trust, the connectedness of members to the community is important to the success of a community of practice. The connectedness of *Insight* course participants was highlighted by Kevin's observation of a 'closer bond through sharing some of the stuff we have been through'. Connectedness among members of a community of practice has connotations of identity work and leads to feelings of satisfaction in being associated with the community (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). Like trust, connectedness fosters greater interaction and information sharing and is a determinant of a community of practice's effectiveness.

A third factor, collaboration, is a key element of the community of practice concept. After the *Insight* course, an increase in collaboration was observed among course participants during day-to-day work. Shelley, for instance, noted that a fellow course participant had become more collaborative and contributed to the cohesiveness of their group:

I've really seen her . . . become more collaborative and I think more constructive in our ELT [Executive Leadership Team] meetings and when she first joined the leadership group it felt a little bit them and us and now I feel it's much more cohesive.

The collaboration skills learnt on *Insight* not only contributed to leadership development, but were also essential for learning as learning in the community of practice concept relies on sharing and collaborating (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). Sharing and collaboration was evident between course participants, such as Joe and Marty, who worked in different divisions of Finco. Joe highlighted such behaviour by his comment:

Marty and I work closely . . . He provides a sanity check and a check against how I'm going and what he's dealing with. That is very much on a partnership basis.

A community of practice exists for sharing knowledge about an area of common interest or expertise (Brown & Duguid, 1991). This type of sharing was evident from

Joe's above comment, however, the general interest about business problems did not accord with a specific purpose of sharing and learning about leadership. A sharper focus on purpose is, therefore, required if a network is to evolve successfully into a community of practice (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003). A sense of purpose is not the only requirement for forming a community of practice from a network. Different perspectives on time, discussed below, are also important factors.

Timeframes and continuity in networks and communities of practice

Communities of practice are tighter groupings than networks and are, typically, longer lasting (Cunningham et al., 2004). Despite the closeness of course participants during the course, which Shelley likened to 'almost like we have been on this journey together', the network that course participants formed during *Insight* was not maintained after the course. The *Insight* network, as highlighted by the above comments, failed to evolve into a community of practice as the network lacked continuity (Lindkvist, 2005, p. 1189, cited in Handley et al., 2006). As Kevin highlighted, 'what we tended to find is that we have all drifted apart'. Trisha's comment, although not common among course participants, highlighted the short life of the network:

It probably wasn't ever my aim to meet them again and again and again, to be proactive about meeting them again and again and again.

The lack of network continuity was influenced by work demands. Trisha commented that:

I've been trying to keep my head above water . . . and there's a whole lot of urgent stuff that needs to be done .

Lack of time is a common reason for failure of communities of practice (Probst & Borzillo, 2008). Finco lacked a core group of members because course participants had insufficient time to meet regularly. Associated with the absence of a core membership group is the absence of community leadership. Strong community leadership is pivotal for motivating members and creating a supportive and collaborative climate for the community (Hemmasi & Csanda, 2009). Comments by some *Insight* participants suggested that some individuals in the organisation could easily become leaders of a community of practice because of their existing behaviour

as informal leaders. Andrea illustrated how Aimee, a peer, influenced her participation on *Insight*:

That is how I got into Insight. I was having a conversation with Aimee, who had been on it the year before. . . . Aimee ended up sponsoring me. . . . But it was through that network that I heard about it.

In addition, when asked to give examples of leaders to emulate, Trisha said that she would ‘look at somebody like Aimee’.

The examples of a lack of a core group and leadership highlighted the tension between self management that is characteristic of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and a more formal structure. Some researchers have proposed that communities of practice be formally managed instead of being reliant on informal organisation (Akkerman et al., 2008; Breu & Hemingway, 2002; Probst & Borzillo, 2008). There is consensus among researchers that management can play a role in supporting communities of practice, but the form of that involvement has not been agreed. Course participant Trisha’s view of ongoing interaction emphasised informality and sharing, which is consistent with community of practice principles:

Maybe getting back together with some of the participants on the course and actually sharing some stories would be good.

Indications from other interviews supported the need for formal external involvement by the organisation. A manager, Richard, predicted interaction among course participants ‘diminishing over time unless it was encouraged or to some degree formalised’. That view was supported by course participant Marty who proposed that the organisation formally support the continuation of the *Insight* network after the course:

. . . you always leave the course with all the best intentions—‘of course we will catch up’. The reality of the day job kicks in and it doesn’t happen to the extent that it should do. It does need that catalyst to help facilitate that.

Marty saw the nature of the organisation's involvement as 'creating . . . the framework to get together and share ideas'. This view limited the scope of the organisation's support to nurturing the community of practice. However, by allowing the community of practice to set its own objectives, an essential condition for success is met (Probst & Borzillo, 2008).

Some researchers have focused on the informal nature of communities of practice and highlighted the similarity of that characteristic with the informality characteristic of networks. The perspectives of *Insight* course participants suggested that the network formed by course participants during the *Insight* course had potential to evolve into a community of practice. Issues of purpose, cohesiveness and continuity would need to be addressed for the concept to work. However, factors supporting evolution were: the willingness to interact socially and share ideas, an objective to increase the amount of cross-boundary interaction and the development of the essential characteristics of trust, connectedness among members and collaboration. These factors, collectively, point to a culture that would be supportive of a community of practice. As a supportive culture is the most critical success factor in forming and maintaining a community of practice (H. A. Smith & McKeen, 2003), the indications from the interviews are that a community of practice would be successful in Finco, particularly if established from the networks formed during leadership development training courses and supported by the organisation on an ongoing basis.

Summary of chapter

This research suggests that formal training courses cannot continue to be disregarded by community of practice researchers. Formal training courses and communities of practice share many similarities that make it difficult to maintain the traditional view that formal training has no relevance in the community of practice concept. In particular, the collective and social learning that characterise a community of practice may also be evident in formal training. Furthermore, when considered against the core constructs of the community of practice concept, the findings of this present research indicate that formal training courses can facilitate participation, identity development and practice. Formal training can provide participants with an opportunity for off-the-job participation in a community of practice and, through participation, undertake identity work and learn the practices of the community. Formal training courses also facilitate the formation of networks which, in turn, can be used as the basis for establishing a community of practice, especially

if the essential skills for developing and operating a community of practice are also developed on the training course.

This chapter, and the two preceding chapters, have discussed some social influences on learning and the transfer of learning and highlighted some roles for formal training in communities of practice. The following chapter considers the implication of these discussions on research and practice.

Chapter 7: Implications for research and practice

Introduction

Workplace learning and leadership are two factors considered to be critical to organisational success (Fulmer et al., 2000; Ready & Conger, 2003; Schein, 1993; Senge, 1990). Formal training is a widely used form of workplace learning (Cunningham et al., 2004) and is also a popular means of leadership development (Conger & Benjamin, 1999; Day, 2000; Yukl, 2010). For formal workplace training and leadership development to be effective and able to contribute to organisational success, learning must be transferred to the workplace (Donovan et al., 2001; Fenwick, 2008a; Kozlowski & Salas, 1997). Despite the importance of the transfer of learning, especially transfer from leadership development training, some gaps in our understanding of this field of research remain (Blume et al., 2010; Cheng & Ho, 2001). The aim of this current research, therefore, is to enhance the understanding of learning and the transfer of learning by investigating social factors influencing the transfer of learning and challenging traditionally held dichotomous views on learning and the community of practice concept.

The findings from this present research have highlighted a number of implications for research and practice. They have suggested that the social supports for the transfer of learning can be viewed in a new light. In particular, a more sympathetic view of managerial, peer, subordinate and organisational support was proposed when some of the underlying influences on support were revealed. The findings also highlighted a broader role for formal training than the transfer of cognitive knowledge. Formal training was found to facilitate implicit learning, provide a bridge to other forms of workplace learning and to enable socialisation. These factors hinted at an emphasis on collective learning, in particular the community of practice conception of collective learning. Similarities between formal training courses and communities of practice were found, which suggested that formal training courses can contribute to communities of practice. From a research methodology perspective, this research has explored workplace learning and the transfer of learning using a qualitative multi-perspective, longitudinal case study method. This approach contributed to the limited qualitative research on the transfer of learning (Cheng & Ho, 2001) and also

addresses the absence of research on the transfer of ‘soft’ skills learning (Blume et al., 2010; Cheng & Ho, 2001).

Social supports for the transfer of learning

The work environment is a significant influence on the transfer of learning and social support for transfer has been a strong focus among researchers (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton III et al., 2000; Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey et al., 2001; Velada et al., 2007). The most influential of the social factors is managerial support. Lack of managerial support, such as not reinforcing the value and importance of learning and denying opportunities to use learning in the workplace, are often given as reasons for course participants failing to transfer learning to the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Broad & Newstrom, 1992; Velada et al., 2007).

The findings from this present research emphasise a different aspect of managerial support, suggesting that the autonomy afforded by managers to learners can be mistaken for indifference, with course participants failing to take advantage of the resulting freedom and flexibility to transfer learning. The finding advances our understanding of managerial support and opportunity to use as factors in the transfer of learning as autonomy and ‘open’ skills learning were found to be less influential than suggested by previous researchers (Axtell et al., 1997; Blume et al., 2010).

This present research also found that workload, unplanned work and lack of time were factors that pose significant challenges for the effective transfer of learning (Chiaburu et al., 2010; Clarke, 2002; Huczynski & Lewis, 1980). Organisational systems and practices, such as an HR practice that relied on managers to perform multiple jobs simultaneously, can reduce the time available to course participants to transfer learning. Consequently, organisations need to be more aware of the impacts of organisational systems and practices on the transfer of learning and ensure that organisational activities are aligned with the training and transfer of learning needs of course participants to reduce the barriers to transfer.

Managerial support is demonstrated by managers providing feedback to course participants about the transfer of learning (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). The current findings indicate that a reluctance to discuss career development was prevalent in the organisation and provide some explanation for the absence of feedback. The same reluctance to discuss career and development was found to affect the support

from peers and subordinates. Course participants did not discuss their attendance on *Insight* widely among peers and subordinates and in the absence of information about the course, peers and subordinates did not know how to support transfer. More openness in discussing training and a greater willingness to enlist managers, peers and subordinates is necessary if the transfer of learning is to be better supported.

Social processes were also apparent in the transfer of 'soft' skills. The findings of this research indicated that the 'soft' leadership skills of networking and collaboration could be learnt implicitly through social interaction on a formal training course. In the context of the *Insight* course, the course project provided a catalyst for interaction, especially in the learning of collaboration and teamwork. With 'soft' skills learning and transfer being founded on social interaction, this present research highlighted that opportunity to socialise was a key factor for learning and transfer and that the practicalities of course design was crucial to the creation of such opportunities. Traditional transfer of learning models do not envisage a link between course design and social processes, being more concerned with learning pedagogies than the logistics of course design (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Holton III et al., 2000; Tracey et al., 2001). This research found that course design that ensured opportunities to socialise on the course, during classroom sessions and informally outside the classroom, was a key factor in developing leadership skills. One means to provide opportunity, through residential training courses, was highlighted in this present research and suggested that course designers should incorporate opportunity to interact informally outside the classroom into formal training courses. Another facet of the opportunity to socialise was the incorporation of socially-based learning activities into formal training courses. The example highlighted by this present research was the incorporation of a group course project into the training course, which facilitated socialisation among course participants. Course design should therefore extend beyond the pedagogy of learning and facilitate opportunities to socialise in a practical way that will foster 'soft' skills learning and transfer.

The holistic approach and the multiple perspectives underpinning this research have been instrumental in explaining some underlying factors influencing the social supports for the transfer of learning. The main advantage of the holistic approach was that social processes were considered from the perspectives of all role players in the transfer of learning, enabling perspectives to be triangulated and differing perspectives to be revealed. The value of the approach was demonstrated when

manager and course participant perspectives on managerial support were compared. The contrasting views offered a plausible explanation for the apparent lack of managerial support and placed managerial support in a new light. The ability of the approach to expose new perspectives and explanations suggests that its use for other research can also be productive.

Workplace learning

Workplace learning has traditionally been viewed in a dichotomous way (Darrah, 1995; Jacobs & Park, 2009). Some researchers have begun to take a less dichotomous view of workplace learning, and in doing so have begun to uncover some of the complexities inherent in workplace learning (Jusoh & Lim, 2007; Lee & Roth, 2007). This research has found that by adopting a less polarised view of workplace learning, one where formal training is coupled with and complements work-based learning, it is possible to realise the pedagogical advantages of both approaches. This present research suggests that course design bridges the divide between formal training and work-based learning by the incorporation of work-based projects into formal training courses. The nuanced approach to formal training and work-based learning also provided a bridge to transfer of learning research. Opportunity-to-use has been identified as a factor in the transfer of learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The integration of a work-based project with formal training can provide an immediate, practical and real opportunity to apply the concepts learnt in the classroom to a work-based project. The opportunity to use learning provides further reason for course designers to incorporate work-based learning into formal training courses.

Course design was also found to facilitate implicit learning from a training course and this finding supports research that indicated that implicit learning occurs during formal training (Chao, 1997). During *Insight*, the learning of tacit leadership skills was facilitated by learning elements such as the course project and the residential nature of the course. Both factors provided opportunities for socialisation and facilitated implicit learning. In this way formal training became a conduit for socialisation. This finding challenges research that maintains formal and informal learning should not be integrated (Malcolm et al., 2003) and reaffirms the importance of socialisation to learning and leadership development. Course design, and in particular activities such as projects and informal, out-of-classroom discussions, can be instrumental in socialisation and implicit learning, and training course designers can take advantage

of the implicit learning opportunity by ensuring course design includes opportunities for socialisation.

Researchers have started to highlight the complementarity of formal training and work-based learning (Jusoh & Lim, 2007). Findings from this present research support this view and contribute to extant research by linking the two approaches through socialisation and identifying two ways for socialisation to occur: through a work-based project and residency during the course.

Communities of practice

This present research challenged the traditional view that formal off-the-job training has no place in the community of practice concept (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and suggests that formal training be reconceptualised as having a contributory relationship to communities of practice. The findings of this present research suggested that the traditional view of formal training is limiting as it fails to recognise that formal training can play a part in establishing a new community of practice or contributing to an existing one.

Whilst not communities of practice, formal training courses exhibit some of the characteristics of the community of practice concept, which has the constructs of participation, identity and practice at its core (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Formal training courses afford an opportunity to participate in a social grouping that consists of not only other course participants, but also others who have knowledge and expertise bearing on the course topic. Through participation in a formal training course, participants may gain entry to a community of practice (Billett, 1994, 2001). Participation in a formal training course can also contribute to the formation and development of identity as nomination for a formal training course can be a way of recognising an individual's identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). In addition, formal training courses provide participants with an opportunity to compare themselves with peers and other members of the community of practice. The outcomes of such a comparison can be a sense of belonging (Mittendorff et al., 2006) and a growth in self confidence (Hollenbeck & Hall, 2004). Participation not only helps to foster identity, it also affords opportunity to observe and interact in order to understand a community's practices. Opportunity to observe and interact, however, is dependent on the opportunity to participate. Researchers have suggested that opportunity to

participate is influenced by the power relations inherent in communities of practice and this view is supported by the current research.

While a formal training course can contribute to an existing community of practice, a formal training course also has the potential to be the genesis for the establishment of a new community of practice. The basis for this may be the networks formed during a formal training course. Networks share many of the characteristics of a community of practice, enough to suggest that a community of practice could evolve from a network. Moreover, one of the essential attributes of a community of practice, a willingness to share knowledge and information, is typically an important characteristic of a formal training course. Key features of a formal training course that support the transformation of a training course network into a community of practice include a connectedness among the course participants, collaboration, a willingness to interact across organisational boundaries and the development of trust among course participants. These factors, however, need to be qualified by a commitment to a narrower focus and purpose than networks offer. A practical implication of using a formal training course network to establish a community of practice is to ensure continuity of the community of practice through practical support by the organisation, such as providing logistical and administrative support and enabling participation in community of practice activities.

The community of practice concept is an effective means of collective learning and a potential source of competitive advantage (Liedtka, 1999). This present research suggested that, in contrast to existing views (Lave & Wenger, 1991), formal training courses can contribute to the communities of practice concept. Organisations with communities of practice can use formal training courses to facilitate participation in communities of practice or use the network formed during formal training courses to foster a community of practice, albeit with some practical organisational support to ensure ongoing interaction among community members and continuity of the community.

Integration of concepts

This present research has traversed a range of concepts associated with workplace learning and the transfer of learning and highlighted inter-relationships among those concepts. The apparently disparate concepts can be drawn together into a model of workplace learning, illustrated in Figure 8, that highlights the complementary nature of formal training and work-based learning, individual learning and collective

learning, and the integration of these concepts in communities of practice, with the transfer of learning as an outcome of integrating the concepts.

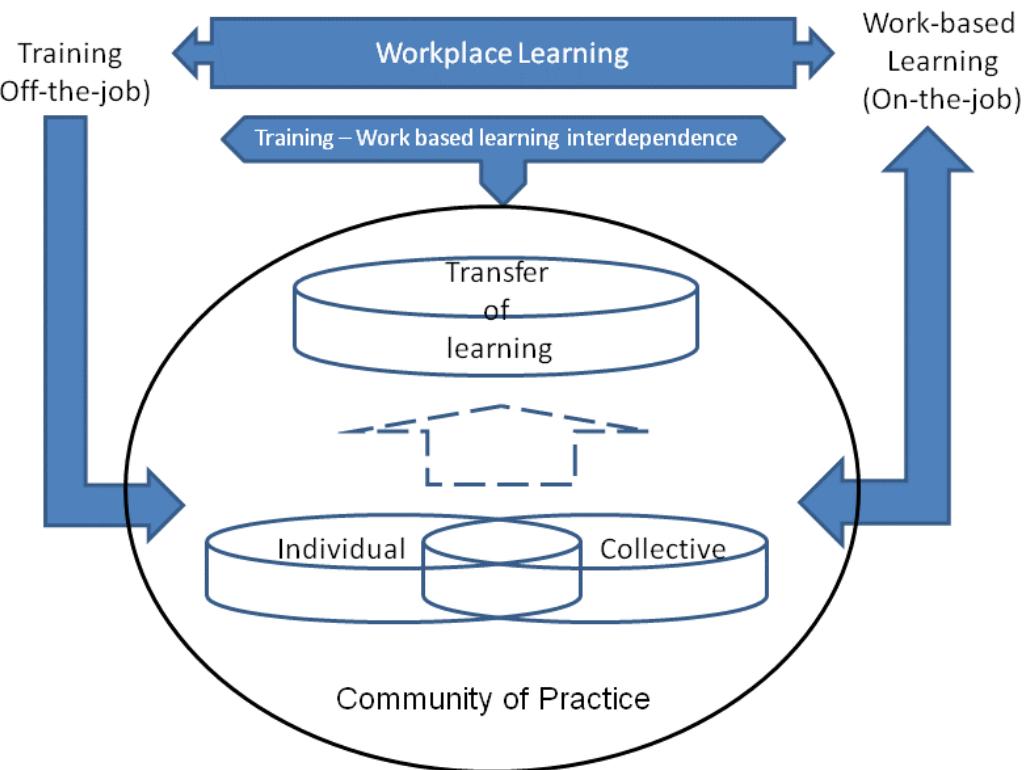


Figure 8: An integrative model of workplace learning

Limitations of the research

This present research has highlighted the social processes affecting the transfer of learning, and through the investigation of dichotomies prevalent in learning research, the social processes involved in collective learning. In particular, the community of practice form of collective learning has been a point of focus. The research, however, is not without some limitations that require clarification.

This current research was based on a single case study which has a number of limitations. Firstly, like other findings based on a case study approach, the findings of this present research cannot be generalised to a wider population or universe (Yin, 2009). Secondly, generalisability is further limited by the specificity and narrowness of the data associated with this particular case study, reflecting the idiosyncrasies of the case (Eisenhardt, 1989). Finally, researchers have become more aware of the

cultural differences that may emerge in the transfer process (Sarkar-Barney, 2004). The data used in this present research reflected only one culture, limiting generalisability to other national cultures. Further research to explore the implications of other national cultures will extend the research on the role of national culture on the transfer of learning.

The findings on the social processes of the transfer of learning were limited by the breadth and depth of data from peers and subordinates. One grouping of role players not included as research participants were the peers of course participants who were not selected for training. Interviews with this group would help to broaden the range of perspectives of social support for the transfer of learning, as well as their pathway into emergent communities of practice. The depth of the peer and subordinate interviews was limited by their, insufficient, knowledge of the training course. Further research involving a group of peers and subordinates who were better informed will provide greater depth to the understanding of peer and subordinate support. Additionally, research that clarifies why peers and subordinates were not enlisted or better informed may help to explain the absence of their support.

The adoption of a single case study for this present research limited the range of organisational supports and barriers to the transfer of learning that could be identified. Further research that identifies other examples will extend the understanding of organisational support and enhance organisations' ability to transfer learning. The longitudinal approach to this research proved useful in establishing the continuity of participants' views over time. However, changes over time, especially changes to the transfer of learning, were less obvious and continued research on a longitudinal basis, particularly longitudinal research over a more extended time frame, continues to be necessary to aid the understanding of the evolution of transfer.

The investigation of collective learning highlighted a potential role for formal training in the community of practice concept. Given the importance of the community of practice concept to learning and organisational success (Liedtka, 1999), further research is required to verify the relationship between formal training and communities of practice and the viability of transforming a formal training course into a community of practice.

Conclusion

This research set out to explore the transfer of learning from a leadership development training course. In the course of the exploration the research traversed the associated fields of workplace learning, the transfer of learning and leadership development training and, in doing so, provided a bridge across all three fields. The resulting research makes important contributions to all three fields in understanding social processes in the transfer of learning and the role of formal training courses in collective learning.

The findings of this research reaffirm the influence of social processes as a factor in the transfer of learning. Moreover, the holistic, multiple perspective methodology adopted for this research provided insights into manager, peer, subordinate and organisational supports for the transfer of learning and offered explanations for why support seemed to be withheld. In particular, the new insights place managerial support in a more sympathetic light and confirm the value of using a holistic, multiple perspective approach to understand a phenomenon better.

The adoption of less traditional approaches to understanding the social aspects of collective learning were also revelatory. The traditional dichotomous view of learning was challenged to provide new insights into the relationship of formal training in collective learning. The findings suggested that a less polarised view of learning was more constructive and allowed formal training to be viewed as a conduit and a complement to other forms of learning. Challenging the traditional view of formal training as irrelevant to the community of practice concept was also revelatory as this research found that formal training did have a part to play in established communities of practice as a facilitator of participation, identity development and practice. In addition, the inherent characteristics of the networks associated with formal training courses have some similarity to the characteristics of a community of practice and provided a basis for the novel suggestion that new communities of practice be formed from formal training courses. With the view that community of practice is a facilitator of the transfer of learning (Leberman et al., 2006), the linking of formal training with the community of practice is an appropriate way to bridge formal training and the transfer of learning and bring this discussion of the social processes of the transfer of learning to a close.

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Appendix 1: Insight Programme Overview

Insight Programme Overview

Purpose:

To develop and enhance the attitudes, knowledge and skills of Senior Finco leaders to deliver sustainable high performance.

Key objectives:

- To develop and enhance Finco's leadership capabilities in complex, changing environments
- To provide concepts and tools for implementing both transactional and change leadership
- To understand how to practise leadership within a dynamic systemic framework
- To gain appreciation for the requirements placed on Finco and its managers to perform
- To develop the skills to position business units for growth
- Develop innovative skills within a risk management culture.

Module One Leadership (8-10 October, Brackenridge, Martinborough)

Day one:

Setting the scene for leadership

- Leadership context
- Complexity, challenges, key issues for leadership
- Leadership challenges at Finco

Leadership Paradigms

- Classical
- Transactional
- Visionary
- Organic
- Leadership vs Management

Transactional Leadership

- Constructive transactions
- Using rewards
- Feedback
- Situational leadership

Developing talent

- Developing staff
- Role of managers, organisational systems and culture in the development process

- Implications for retaining talent
- Applications of learning to case

Project topics

- Introduction by CEO and group discussion

Day Two:

Visionary Leadership

- Engaging and empowering staff
- Higher order purposes
- How working with vision and values can add value
- High performance cultures
- Common purpose across cultures
- Visionary leadership with the best employers
- Importance of trust



Creating sustainable cultures

- Contrasting extremes of leadership philosophy
- Short-term shareholder value
- Long term stakeholder focus
- Implications for leadership
- 19 Criteria for sustainable leadership
- Destroying sustainable enterprises

Creating sustainable cultures

- Fragility of sustainable enterprises
- Forces driving sustainability
- Implications for Finco
- Growing cultures together vs managing multiple cultures

Day Three:

Framing & tools for managing change:

- Analysing organisational events using frames
- Political terrain mapping
- Applying framing to the Bank
- Kotter's 8 steps

Module Two – Strategy - February 2008 (date TBC)

Day One

Change & Strategy

- Review of Project Development
- Life & Death of Major Companies
- Hitting the White Space of Opportunity: Challenges for Finco
- Concept and drivers of Shareholder Value
- Goals of Finco and Finco Group
- Concept of Strategy to marshal resources and to win without all the "big guns"
- Where to Play: Determining Industry Attractiveness
- Determining Relative Competitive Position
- Quantifying as much as possible
- Developing generic choices
- More complex and sophisticated choices
- Does the Strategy fit our business?
- Do we have the capabilities?
- McKinsey 7S / 11S

- Product Life Cycle
- Levels of Strategy
- Games Theory
- Competitor Reaction
- Co-operation
- Profit Improvement Framework:
- Du Pont
- Growth Options
- Risks

Understanding Creativity and Innovation

- Creative Techniques
- Creative Organisation
- Payoffs from Innovation
- Managing Risks
- The dichotomy and tension between risk aversion (especially in banking) and innovation



Day Two

Revolution

- Adjusting to a changed Environment

Day Three

Reality

- Understanding Customers
- Market trends e.g. aging population
- Our Offer
- Segmentation: Product; Process; Customer
- Business Unit Management
- Strategic Business Units
- Management By Objectives
- Time Frames and Time Management Techniques
- Capital Allocation and Projects
- Time value of Money
- Cost of Capital
- Return to Shareholder Value
- Status of Project Progress

Project Presentations – May 2008

Each project team will have 30 minutes to present their project findings and recommendation to a panel of executives. After each presentation, executives will have 15 minutes to ask questions of the project team.

Presentations will be followed by a light lunch with the Executive.

Note:

The Ulysses room will be booked for the day before Insight for teams who wish to practice prior to presenting to ExCo.

Appendix 2: Detail of Insight Modules

Insight Module One

Module One of *Insight* was a three day residential module held at, a private conference centre, located in a rural part of New Zealand. The content of the strategy module was presented as a series of lectures complemented by exercises and case studies. Course participants were expected to undertake pre-reading before the module and in the evenings during the module.

The module consisted of a series of short lectures to introduce course participants to strategic management concepts and tools, interspersed with practical exercises and discussion of case studies. The content of the module consisted of:

1. Shareholder value

This session provided a brief coverage of the definition, measurement, and determinants of shareholder value as well as means to increase shareholder value.

2. Strategy

This session defined strategy and introduced strategy formulation.

3. Strategic analysis

A series of lectures and exercises introduced and gave practice in strategic analysis tools such as Porter's Five Forces, SWOT, value chain, competitor mapping, Porter's generic strategies, the product life cycle, portfolio of businesses, games theory, Du Pont analysis, and contribution analysis.

4. Creativity

This session discussed the importance of creativity and introduced techniques such as random input, directed input/random connections, problem reversal, de Bono's six thinking hats, the discontinuity principle, 5W/1H, brainstorming, forced relationships, attribute listing, method acting role, imitation, mind mapping, storyboarding, synectics, applied imagination, assumption smashing, free form assumption dropping, do it, and unconscious problem solving for enhancing creative thinking and increasing corporate creativity.

5. Project and Risk Management, Marketing, Business Unit Management, and Investment Evaluation

A brief overview on a wide range of subjects bearing on strategic management including project management; managing risks; marketing (including principles such as pricing, segmentation, attributes and benefits); business unit management models such as strategic business units, management by objectives, and profit and cost centres (including cost allocations and transfer pricing); and investment evaluation techniques such as accounting rate of return, return on investment, payback, price-earnings multiples and discounted cash flow analysis.

Insight Module Two

Module Two was also a three day residential module. The module was presented as a series of lectures complemented by exercises and case studies. Again, course participants were expected to undertake pre-reading before the module and in the evenings during the module. The module consisted of six sessions around the topic of leadership with course material presented in a Finco context. Specifically, the module consisted of:

1. Setting the scene for leadership

This session placed leadership in context, discussed the complexity of leadership, challenges and key issues for leadership and leadership challenges for Finco, introduced the language of leadership and four paradigms of leadership, and differentiated between leadership and management and leaders and followers.

2. Transactional leadership

This session covered constructive transactions, rewards and feedback, situational leadership, and decision making.

3. Emotion-based leadership

This session discussed visionary leadership, leading through engagement and values, high performance cultures, and the importance of trust.

4. Sustainable cultures

This session contrasted extremes of leadership philosophy and discussed the implications for The Bank.

5. Framing Change

This session introduced framing tools and discussed the application of the tools to Finco.

6. Managing change

This session discussed dealing with and planning for change, introduced Kotter's 8 essential steps to managing change, and linked change to frames in the context of Finco.

Appendix 3: Information Sheet



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Insight: a case study of leadership training, organisational context, and transfer of learning

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher(s) Introduction

My name is Arnold Young. I am a student at Massey University where I am studying for the degree of Doctor of Business and Administration (DBA). I am interested in finding out more about the organisational influences on how and why the learning from leadership development courses is transferred into the workplace and have permission to study *Insight* programme. I will receive a copy of my thesis and research findings; otherwise my research is totally independent of *Insight*. If you have any questions about consent and involvement please contact *Insight*. My research is being supervised by Drs Sarah Leberman and Karl Pajo of Massey University. Please contact them at Massey University if you have any questions or concerns regarding my research.

Participant Recruitment

I have asked to distribute this to you as you are involved in *Insight*, (as a participant of the programme, as a manager of a participant, as a person working with or as a direct report of a participant, as a senior executive influential in the programme, or as someone who is directly involved in the design or delivery of the programme) and could help me in my research. I estimate that up to a maximum of, but no more than, 150 people will participate in my study.

Project Procedures

I will pilot my research by interviewing participants on the 2006 *Insight* course. Following the pilot I propose to interview people who are involved in the 2007 *Insight* course (including senior executives, people involved in the design and delivery of the course, participants in the 2007 *Insight* course, their managers, and a sample of their co-workers and direct reports). I will conduct the interviews once just before and once after the completion of the course. I also propose to interview participants of the 2007 *Insight* course once during the course. Each interview is expected to take no more than an hour. Interviews will be tape recorded and then transcribed word for word. Once this has been done the typed transcript will be returned to you for checking and to allow you to delete any material you do not wish to have included in the research. I will also look at documents relevant to the design and implementation of the course to complement the interviews however none of this information will be about specific individuals or of a personal nature. All the information that I obtain will be securely locked away, either at Massey University or at my home, and will be destroyed by Massey University after five years.

The research will be written up as a thesis dissertation and I am hoping that I will also be able to publish the findings from this research in academic and practice journals. I will provide you with a summary of the research findings and if requested, a copy of the thesis. In most cases I will be able to keep the identity of research participants confidential by describing participants in general terms or by using pseudonyms. The exceptions are senior executives and the people involved in the design and delivery of the course. If you fall into this group you should be aware that even though you will not be referred to by name you may be easily identified because your position or involvement in *Insight* will be difficult to disguise without losing context.

Information Sheet

Revised 07/11/06

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Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate in my study. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication of the thesis;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

During interviews you may ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts

My research is being supervised by Drs Sarah Leberman (06 350 5799 ext.2765; S.I.Lieberman@massey.ac.nz) and Karl Pajo (04 801 5799 ext. 6929; K.B.Pajo@massey.ac.nz) of Massey University. Please contact them at Massey University if you have any questions regarding my research.

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southem B, Application 06/63. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Assoc/Prof Huia Jahnke, Deputy Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southem B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8744, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Information Sheet

Revised 07/11/06

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Appendix 4: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Interview with:

Time:

Date:

Pre-Interview Checklist

Introduction	Tick
I would like to know more about what the participants on Finco's <i>Insight</i> leadership training course think about leadership training and its application back at work.	

Reminders	Tick
Confidentiality	
Interview Time	
Information Sheet	
Consent Signed	
Tape Recording Consent	
Note taking	

Key Themes

Theme	Comments
1. Ask participants to provide their views on leadership and leadership development before, during and after leadership training?	
2. Ask participants to provide their views on the role of leadership training courses (in the context of leadership development) and what are the expectations of such courses?	
3. Ask participants to provide their views on the organisational and personal factors that influence selection and participation in leadership training courses?	
4. Ask participants to provide their views on the organisational factors that influence the transfer of leadership learning in the workplace?	
5. Ask participants to provide reflections on leadership training in light of participation on a course and opportunity to apply learning?	

Probes

- The background of each participant
- Why participants think they are on the *Insight*
- How participants think they were selected for *Insight*
- What participants think leadership is
- How participants think leadership is developed
- What participants think the purpose of *Insight* and other leadership training courses is
- What participants expect from the *Insight* course
- How participants see leadership training fitting with other leadership development activities that participants have been or may be engaged in
- [In light of their understanding of the course content] how and when participants think learning from leadership training will be applied
- What peers and direct reports think of participant's selection for *Insight*
- What participant's personal expectations are as a result of being on the course

Questions for Follow-up

Debrief	Tick
Follow-up (if required)	
Transcription Checking	
Thanks	

Appendix 5: Coding Summary

Name	Percentage of Interviews	Sources	References
Diverse objectives	90%	63	324
Course design	77%	54	313
Supports for transfer	66%	46	172
Networking	59%	41	121
Community of practice evidenced	50%	35	102
Wider perspectives	49%	34	96
Career	47%	33	71
Self awareness	46%	32	79
Collective learning	41%	29	63
Confidence	36%	25	63
Training outcome	33%	23	43
Strategic skills	30%	21	26
Purpose of Insight	27%	19	34
Selection	27%	19	41
Challenge	26%	18	25
Collaboration and teamwork	26%	18	30
Timing	23%	16	22
Training courses	23%	16	38
Opportunity to practice	23%	16	26
Sharing knowledge	23%	16	28
Motivation	19%	13	30
Desired outcomes	16%	11	16
Obstacles to transfer	14%	10	13
Trainee change	13%	9	15
Identity	13%	9	14
Mentoring	10%	7	12
Reflection	7%	5	8
Coaching	7%	5	8
Practicality	6%	4	9
EXCO community	6%	4	8
Total			1850