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Transfer Of Learning To The Workplace -

A Study Of Middle Management Training In

One Large Organisation In

New Zealand

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of Masters of Education

with an endorsement in Guidance Studies

at Massey University.

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2000

ABSTRACT

This study, of “*transfer of learning*”, examined the experiences of thirty-four Middle Managers/Team Leaders in one organisation. The Team Leaders, all enrolled in the Open Polytechnic, were studying five “*Management Unit Standards*”.

The study was conducted in two phases; **Phase 1** (quantitative) questionnaires and **Phase 2**, (qualitative) interviews. Questionnaires sent to thirty-four Team Leaders asked the Team Leaders ninety-one questions which related to: *communication within their organisation, senior management practices, their work area and their feelings about the job in general*. The qualitative phase comprised two interviews separated by five months. In **Interview 1**, consenting participants were asked to select three competencies, to implement on the job, out of the thirty they were studying. They hypothesised the strategies they would use to implement them on them on the job and the perceived outcomes. Five months later participants were asked if they believed they did or did not achieve their hypothesised objectives, and what helped and could have helped them. Thirteen themes emerged from analysis of the qualitative data and these were triangulated with the results from the quantitative data. These thirteen themes reflected the five main issues which were discussed in the *Literature Review*: **(1) The emotional climate** within the organisation and students’ psychological attitudes towards **(a) management (b) the respondents working colleagues, (c) external customers and (d) the learning itself; (2) The concept that mistakes are part of the learning process** as an accepted organisational philosophy; **(3) Organisational attitudes on action learning procedures and practices; (4) Respondents’ attitudes and feelings of being valued and rewarded by their managers and higher management; (5) Change and restructuring** within an organisation and the effect that this can have on transfer of learning. The issues affected the participants’ ability to “transfer” their newly

acquired management competencies in as much as only two of the sixteen participants undertaking **Phase 2** of the study, believed they were able to implement on the job (*transfer*), all three competencies they selected. All participants believed that there were influencing factors, affecting their ability to achieve their hypothesised outcomes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my husband Jack and my daughters Imelda and Nicole for encouraging me over many years in my passion for education. My mother, Margaret MacDougall, sister Annie MacDougall, mother-in-law Bea Lyons for being so patient and listen to my constant barrage of ideas, hunches and feelings which I voiced through my extroverted thinking personality. I would like to thank Massey Library for their energy and dedication in obtaining and supplying me with more reading material than at times I knew what to do with, also John O'Neill, my supervisor, for his guidance, assistance, tolerance and invaluable input. A big thank you to a very dear and close friend Helen Chipper for her unfailing support, and ability to endure such in-depth discussions late into the night. Finally I would like to acknowledge the participants and the organisation that they belong to, as without them, this study would not have been possible.

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