

# **Leadership Development, Identity, Culture and Context: A Qualitative Case Study**

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the impact and effects of a leadership development programme in-depth and over time. There has been a lack of attention given to understanding the impact of such interventions in the academic literature. Where studies do investigate the impact (s) of leadership development they tend to focus almost exclusively on positive outcomes or the achievement of pre-determined targets and tend to be short-term in focus. This research finds that there is also a shadow side of leadership development, defined as the unintended effects of leadership development programmes which can be counter-productive and dysfunctional.

A longitudinal case study approach was adopted comprising documentary analysis, observation and interviews, the latter of which were conducted with multiple stakeholders at three different junctures in time during and beyond the length of the leadership development programme. Three conceptual dimensions of identity, organisational culture and organisational context were identified which together facilitated a multi-faceted understanding of the changing impact and effects of the leadership development programme over time.

In conclusion this thesis makes both a theoretical and methodological contribution by adding a longitudinal, multi-level analysis and evaluation of leadership development, evidencing both positive and shadow impacts and effects.

**Key Words:** leadership development, evaluation, identity, organisational culture, context, longitudinal

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Setting the Scene

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Organisations invest significant resources in leadership development. In 2012 it was estimated that approximately \$170 billion is spent annually on leadership development activities on a global level (Myatt, 2012). Surprisingly however, given the scale of this multibillion dollar industry, little attention has been paid to understanding the impact of these interventions in either the academic literature (Avolio et al., 2010, Burgoyne et al., 2004, Collins and Holton, 2004, Hannum and Craig, 2010) or in practice, where leadership development evaluation is often treated as an afterthought (Anderson, 2010a, Burgoyne et al., 2004).

In effect, leadership development investment appears to continue to be seen as “an act of faith” (Constable and McCormick, 1987) as it is considered difficult to evaluate. However, as Hannum and Craig (2010) argue, careful evaluation of leadership development is essential to enable us to better understand the manner in which leadership development interventions contribute towards individual, group and/or organisational performance.

Due to the demands that organisations are facing in the current economic environment and increased competition, it could be argued that they are under increasing pressure to justify any initiatives in terms of the value that they provide to the organisation (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008). Furthermore a better understanding could lead to better or more effective interventions, which in turn carries with it benefits for organisations and those responsible for delivering initiatives. However the issue of how to define and consider the value of leadership development is complex.

This thesis provides a qualitative analysis of the impact and effects of a corporate leadership development programme (LDP) for participants and their organisations over time and in-depth, and shows the important interactive effects of participants’ identity, organisational culture and organisational context.

It concludes that whilst most evaluative studies of leadership development focus almost exclusively on short-term improvements in individual, group and / or organisational performance, there may well be important unintended and potentially negative consequences that may have long-term implications for participants and their organisations. This 'shadow side' of leadership development highlights the value of a broader, more holistic approach to evaluation that extends beyond narrowly defined measures of performance and cause-effect relationships. This thesis provides a critical account of the ways in which corporate leadership development programmes may facilitate or inhibit effective organisational change.

Justifying the value of the leadership development programme was considered to be particularly important for those commissioning it within the case study organisation. This was because the programme was being offered as a pilot to selected managers in TELCORP, with the intention of offering it to further cohorts in the future. TELCORP had been formed as a result of a merger between two organisations and this programme was the first of its kind for this level of management since its formation. Unlike other programmes running in the organisation it was not positioned as a programme aimed at 'high flyers' (defined by the organisation as those in the top 3% of 'talent'). Instead it was targeted at 'the rest of them' (as described by the organisational representative in her first interview).

This study takes an inductive approach to research. Its aim is to explore participants' understandings and experiences of the leadership development process, rather than to test pre-existing theory. In particular, the study was designed to trace participants' responses over time, rather than through the more commonplace use of evaluation forms or 'happy-sheet' snapshots at the end of a programme. Developing a nuanced understanding of the consequences of a leadership development programme over an extended period of time enables organisations to understand the extent to which their investment has beneficial effects for both individuals involved and the organisation in the longer term. It can also, as this study will demonstrate, help senior managers to understand key organisational factors, such as organisational context and organisational culture, which may affect the success

of a programme over a longer time period. This could provide a valuable lesson for future programme design, and for enhancing the impact of current interventions.

This chapter will outline the aim of this study as well as highlighting its theoretical, methodological and practical contributions. It will conclude by presenting an outline of the thesis structure. The next section describes the research context.

## 1.2 Research Context

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The case study is a leadership development programme which I refer to under the pseudonym 'LDP', for 26 middle managers and senior executives at a large multinational organisation (TELCORP) situated in the telecommunications sector. TELCORP is particularly interesting because it formed as the result of a merger between two companies of different national origin several years prior to the programme and has undergone frequent and significant organisational changes ever since. It was commissioned by the organisation's corporate university and delivered by a group of external consultants. One of the main aims of the programme was to enhance collaboration and networking by bringing individuals together from disparate parts of the business, including different regional units and recently acquired organisations and sub-divisions. It sought to develop their leadership skills and develop 'entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours'. By this the 'organisational representative' of TELCORP aimed to help them to develop confidence in challenging both their own thinking and that of their peers with the ultimate ambition of increasing organisational success, enhancing shareholder value and regaining market share. In order to do so the programme set out to deliver some of the current thinking in the leadership development field. Initially, it also aimed to encourage participants to align their leadership approaches with a 'one TELCORP' approach, although in practice this was barely mentioned during the course of the programme.

This research uses a qualitative case study methodology comprising observation, interviews and documentary analysis. Interviews were carried out

with participants at three different points in time throughout and beyond the programme. Furthermore they were conducted with line managers, the consulting team and the organisational representative. Given the depth and detail and sheer volume of data collected across a 15 month period, data analysis was a complex, multi-stage coding process. Ultimately, this generated a set of principal themes. The first relates to individual level impact and is entitled 'self as a leader'. It incorporates the themes 'view of leadership and 'perception of leadership role'. The second set of themes is entitled 'relationship with others'. It includes 'peer / participant relationships', 'relationship with line managers and senior managers in the organisation' and 'relationship with the team' that participants manage. The final set of themes focusses on the manner in which both the participants' 'view of the organisation' and 'relationship with the organisation' changed as a result of attending the programme.

From these themes and an exploration of the extant leadership development literature, three conceptual dimensions were identified, which together capture the progressive effect on the impact and experience of LDP for the participants. These conceptual dimensions are identity, organisational context and organisational culture. This thesis will demonstrate the way that each of these dimensions interacted with the programme and how it changed over time. It will also highlight the dynamic interplay between them which heightened the consequences for participants in LDP. The study shows that organisational context and organisational culture both had a significant bearing on the leadership development programme and its participants. Furthermore the leadership development programme had identity implications for the participants and influenced the way they viewed themselves in relation to others.

Through an analysis of identity, organisational culture and context I found that leadership discourses can impact upon the effectiveness of leadership development programmes for the participants. Discourse refers to 'an institutionalised way of thinking, a taken-for-granted way of being that is determined by language, communication and texts' (Western, 2013, p150). I argue that LDP introduced an alternative way of talking about and viewing

leadership to the already dominant leadership discourses within the organisation.

The next section provides further detail on the research aim and the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions which this thesis makes.

## 1.3 Research Aim and Contribution

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The purpose of this study is to adopt a fine-grained approach to explore the impact and effects of a leadership development programme in-depth and over time. In doing so it considers different dimensions such as the viewpoints of the participants, their line managers, the consulting team and a member of the organisation's corporate university responsible for commissioning and developing the programme.

There is a relative dearth of literature in the field which examines the impact and effects of leadership development programmes over an extended time period. Therefore, by adopting a longitudinal approach to research this thesis makes a methodological contribution to the leadership development field. This responds to calls for more longitudinal research in leadership development (Day, 2011) and more specifically in the evaluation of leadership development (Burgoyne et al., 2004, Ely et al., 2010).

There are numerous studies that highlight the benefits which leadership development programmes can impart (Avolio et al., 2010, Campbell et al., 2003, Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 2002, McCauley et al., 2004, McGurk, 2010, Yeung and Ready, 1995). Hence an important contribution of this thesis to the literature is through shedding light on what I refer to as the shadow side of leadership development. Although there is research on the 'shadow side of leadership' (Conger, 1990, Kets de Vries and Balazs, 2011) this notion does not appear to have translated across to analyses of leadership development interventions. This study found that LDP contributed to fragmentation between different organisational units or 'out-groups' whilst strengthening relationships

within these factions or 'in-groups'. This is an important evaluative observation because as mentioned above, one of the aims of the programme was to enhance collaboration and break down so called 'organisational silos'.

Furthermore the programme also contributed to the disengagement of participants from the organisation. A small number of individuals expressed their surprise and appreciation of the organisation's decision to invest in them through putting them through LDP. However as a result of both redundancies shortly after LDP and the lack of follow-on initiatives in support of their leadership development experience, and recognition for their completion of the programme, the majority of participants expressed frustration and disappointment. In a number of cases this resulted in their developing more negative views of the organisation.

The redundancies were a result of widespread organisational restructuring and did not just impact upon those who lost their jobs, but also on their fellow programme attendees, who viewed these actions in an unfavourable light. This, together with no follow-on support after the programme meant that participants went from feeling that the organisation cared about them to feeling unrecognised for the time and work that they had themselves invested. The lack of engagement of their line managers during the course of and beyond the programme was also significant.

Another important reason why this negative view of the organisation developed was because the programme had been designed to bring together individuals from disparate parts of the organisation such that they could learn about and from each other, as a basis for developing a network of individuals integrating leadership across different organisational units. Ironically in effect LDP created a space for them to share their views from where they worked in the organisation and openly discuss issues such as culture and change, which subsequently alerted individuals to deficiencies elsewhere in the organisation. This had an impact on the manner in which the individuals from smaller sub units or post-acquisition organisations viewed themselves in relation to the 'one organisation': that is, as being separate from their counterparts in the wider organisation. As a consequence many came to see the organisational culture

in their own units as being more desirable than that of the wider TELCORP organisation, further separating rather than integrating organisational leadership networking.

This thesis makes another contribution to theory through its exploration of the impact and effects of a leadership development programme over time using the dimensions of identity, organisational culture and organisational context.

Understanding a leadership development programme in this way makes a contribution to the extant evaluation literature. Identity is defined as the ways in which 'a person makes sense of themselves in relation to others and how others conceive of that person' (Kenny et al., 2011, p3). It is used in this study as a means of gauging impact at a personal level of the participants.

The debate on the distinction and relationship between organisational context and culture is prevalent in the academic literature. Culture is often seen as being an aspect of context (Porter and McLaughlin, 2006), with other aspects including people, processes, goals and structure. However in this thesis, through the analysis of the interview data, the meaning afforded to these terms is distinct. This research gives a clearer positioning on how important it is to differentiate between culture and context. Organisational culture is the embedded norms, behaviours and values that are enacted in the way that people do things and how they think about and frame what they do. Rather than organisational structures, culture is about 'mental phenomena' and the ways in which the individuals within a group consider and 'value reality' in related ways (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008). Also included within this cultural dimension is the approach to leadership discourses and the language that participants use. In this thesis, context refers to those organisational aspects which participants consider that they have little or no control over such as organisational structure and change. It is seen as an 'organisational given', but different individuals view it in different ways. For the purposes of this study 'context' consists of both a structural and temporal aspect.

I argue that using these three conceptual dimensions facilitates an understanding of the impact of leadership development programmes at the

individual, group and organisational levels over time and the role that context plays in both inhibiting and facilitating developmental outcomes.

This thesis makes a further theoretical contribution through elucidating the importance of a discursive perspective on leadership development. It will demonstrate how leadership development programmes can enable a shift in discourse, and through doing so offer opportunities for different ways of engaging and for culture change. This research will further illustrate how leadership discourses enable and / or inhibit change at the individual and by implication, at organisational level.

The findings generated from this study have a number of implications which make a contribution to the practice of leadership development and in particular, understanding the qualitative impact and effects of a leadership development programme, which are often overlooked in programme evaluations. These include the impact on the relationships between fellow participants, the way that participants view their organisation, and the effect on the relationships between those that they manage and those that manage them.

It highlights the practical advantages to understanding the impact and effects over an extended time period. This distinguishes it from the majority of other extant studies which tend to be more short-term in focus. One of the key advantages of carrying out evaluation in this manner is that it offers the opportunity for leadership development practitioners to adapt their content during the course of the programme to suit the needs of participants and taking into account any learning which they may obtain about ongoing changes in the organisational setting. They can in this way determine which elements of the programme are or are not working and identify any barriers to learning. This has the potential to benefit leadership development practitioners, individual participants and the organisation.

In the case of LDP, through evaluation early on in the process it was determined that participants appeared eager to discuss organisational culture in all small group and large group discussions even though it was not an explicit part of programme content. As a result of this finding organisational culture as a topic was made a key part of the subsequent programme module.

Participants were given the space to analyse and explore their organisational culture and compare their understanding of it. Evidently continuous evaluation only provides the potential for real benefit for leadership development practitioners if the programme is adapted as a result.

This thesis illustrates the complexities of both leadership development programmes and in particular, of evaluating and understanding impact and effects. It demonstrates that programmes need to be followed up in order to derive maximum benefit for the participants and the organisation. This study shows that a lack of follow-on not only has an impact on the application of learning but it can also lead to the disengagement of participants within the organisation.

## 1.4 Thesis Structure

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This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis, outlines the research aim and explains its significance. It summarises the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions which the thesis makes.

The literature review chapter explores the extant literature in leadership, leadership development and the evaluation of leadership development. It also considers the relevant literature to this study in relation to identity, context and organisational culture.

The methodology chapter outlines the approach, methodology and methods adopted for both data collection and data analysis. It also presents an account of how ethical concerns were addressed.

The findings chapter presents the research findings and the key themes identified from the data set. It predominantly focuses on a thematic analysis of the participant interviews. The findings are triangulated with findings from the other interviews and observational data.

The discussion chapter explores the key research findings using three conceptual dimensions and the way in which they interact over time.

Additionally it reflects on the implications that this study has for the evaluation of leadership development.

The conclusion chapter summarises the key research findings and outlines the theoretical, methodological and practical contribution which this study makes. It concludes by acknowledging the main limitations and suggesting future research directions which build upon this thesis.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

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This chapter presents the key theoretical basis for my research and identifies the gaps in the literature that will be addressed through this work. The chapter starts by exploring the way that leadership has been defined in the extant literature and the way that these definitions have shifted over time. In doing so it highlights the key issues and questions in leadership deemed relevant to this thesis and the research aim of exploring the impact and effects of a leadership development programme over time.

I then move on to explore what leadership development is and how it relates to concepts such as management development. The subsequent section examines the approaches adopted in the literature to how management and most importantly leadership development are evaluated. I then move to discuss the relationship between leadership development and identity. This thesis argues that context is fundamental to researching leadership development and particularly the evaluation of leadership development, this is therefore examined in the final section of this chapter.

Only the literature which is deemed particularly pertinent and important to the research aim of this thesis will be explored in each section of the chapter.

## 2.2 Leadership Theories and Assumptions

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In order to conduct any research in the leadership domain it is necessary to discuss the highly contested issue of what leadership is and how it has historically been defined. Grint (2005a) said that the longer we spend looking at leadership the more complex the picture becomes. This is certainly evident when examining the variety of research that exists in the leadership field. Given

the amount of attention that leadership research has received it is perhaps of little surprise that no consensus has been reached as to definitions of leaders and leadership. Stogdill's often cited quote 'there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept' (Stogdill, 1974, p7), resonates just as much today as it did forty years ago. Leadership is still a heavily contested issue (Bolden et al., 2011, Jackson and Parry, 2008, Western, 2013). This section aims to capture the development of thought in the field and highlight some of the key issues that are being discussed.

Grint (2005a) examines key leadership texts and from these suggests four ways that leadership is traditionally viewed; as person, result, position and process. In a similar manner Western (2013, 2007) outlines one of the key issues in attempting to define and understand leadership as to whether leadership is about individuals, collectives or process. Bolden et al (2011) also provide a useful outline of the key leadership theories and progression of thought in the field through the use of three categories: leadership as a property of leaders, leadership as a relationship between leaders and followers and leadership as a social process.

When the leadership studies field first started to develop at the beginning of the twentieth century, leadership was viewed as residing in the properties of an individual leader (Yukl, 2012). However this approach became problematic as more and more studies identified different sets of traits that were seen to be key for effective leadership. Like the definition of the term leadership, no consensus could be reached on the most important traits to possess (Bolden et al., 2011). This view of leadership also neglected to consider situations in the enactment of leadership. In addition what is of particular concern with this approach is the way that that it is 'homogenising' rather than inclusive or encouraging of diversity in leaders (Western, 2013). Importantly for this study viewing leadership as residing in a key set of traits which leaders are born with renders leadership development rather pointless if these traits cannot be developed.

Developing on from the trait theory of leadership, but still maintaining their focus on the individual leader, the behavioural and style theories became popular.

These approaches concentrated on how individuals behaved rather than their personal characteristics (Bolden et al., 2011). One example of a theorist adopting this approach is McGregor (1960) who separated managers into either Theory X or Theory Y based on the assumptions held on how employees behave. He argued that this categorisation in turn affected the leadership style that each type of manager would adopt. Whilst these theories did go beyond looking at individual leader characteristics they still were very leader centric and did not take into account situations or context. Often they would be dualistic; you were either a Theory X or Theory Y manager. Furthermore the research on the connection between different leadership styles and outcomes has been largely inconclusive (Grint, 2005a).

Contingency and situational theories developed as a way of taking into account the context in which leaders act. Contingency theory was developed by Fiedler (1964) and attempts to pair up leaders to the right situations. It argues that a leader's effectiveness is reliant on how successfully the leader's style fits the context (Northouse, 2013). Situational theory was originally developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) and concentrates on leadership situations (Northouse, 2013). In the view of this theory different situations require different types of leadership and in order for leadership to be effective leaders must adapt their style to the given situation (ibid). These theories did mark a progression in thought from believing that a leader's effectiveness is detached from context. They also had important implications for the field of leadership development through acknowledging that leaders could be trained on these issues rather than only possessing a series of characteristics that they are born with (Bolden et al., 2011). However they did not fully explore what organisations can do when a leader's style does not match the situation (Northouse, 2013).

Maintaining that leadership resides in a person raises a number of concerns. It ignores both the role of followers and the role of informal leaders in the enactment of leadership (Grint, 2005a). Furthermore this view of leadership does not distinguish between leadership as means and ends (ibid).

Another set of approaches focus on the relationship between leader and follower (Bolden et al., 2011). Examples include Leadership Member Exchange theory (Graen, 1976, Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), Transformational Leadership (Bass, 1985, Burns, 1978), Charismatic Leadership (Bryman, 1992, Conger and Kanungo, 1998, Hunt and Conger, 1999, Shamir, 1992) and Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1970, 1972). Although this set of theories does represent a development in thought away from leadership being the sole property of one individual or 'leader' to recognising the role that a 'follower' plays in the enactment of leadership, it still appears to assume that it is easy to distinguish between leaders and followers. The final set of approaches view leadership as residing in social process rather than as a separation between leader and follower (Bolden et al., 2011). Distributed or dispersed leadership (Gronn, 1999, Spillane, 2004) advocates a systemic view of leadership in which all members of a group or organisation hold responsibility for influencing its direction and functioning (Bolden et al., 2011). In this way it provides a non-individualist perspective. Although there are different views held on distributed leadership such as normative or descriptive (ibid), Bennett et al (2003, p7) recognise three premises which are shared by the majority of researchers in the field; 'leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals'; 'there is openness to the boundaries of leadership'; 'varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few'.

The debate on whether or not leadership resides in an individual leader, a relationship or social process or in the words of Grint (2005a), person, task, results or process is just one of the key points of contention within the leadership field. This has a number of important implications for the research aim of this thesis: to understand the impacts and effects of a leadership development programme. With so many views on what leadership is, what it represents and where or with whom it resides there is the strong possibility that those both participating in and delivering leadership development programmes come with their own assumptions of leadership. When seeking to understand the impact and effects of a programme, as a researcher I will need to be open to these different perspectives and what it means for those involved. Although I adopt a social process perspective of leadership (Bolden et al., 2011, Grint,

2005a), I do not provide a definition of leadership to participants as I want to inductively investigate what they understand by leadership and how these understandings develop through the programme. Another issue is the lack of consensus on how to distinguish between leaders and managers or indeed whether we should be making a distinction between the two.

### 2.2.1 Definitions of Leaders versus Managers

The distinction between leaders and managers has received a large amount of attention in the academic literature. This distinction is also looked at from an identity perspective later in the chapter. There has been a trend for distinguishing between leadership and management and in a related manner a wide array of literature that seeks to distinguish between leaders and managers (Kotter, 1990, Zaleznik, 1977). However as Bolden (2004) argues the clear cut distinction between leadership and management is not only deceptive but has potentially detrimental consequences. This is because it could lead to the belief that some managers cannot become leaders (ibid). This has worrying implications for leadership development if there is the belief that managers cannot develop into leaders. It also does not seem to account for people transitioning from specialist technical functions to generalist management roles where a clear-cut divide between Zaleznik's notions of the 'creative' leader and the 'problem solver' manager seem less likely (Zaleznik, 1977).

Whether or not we should be distinguishing between leaders and managers or leadership and management and if so how, is still a source of great contention and debate in the literature. Western (2007) argues that leaders and leadership have become widely sought after. The author further contends that management has taken on the 'derogatory 'other' to leadership' and has 'been pushed into the subservient position and become the 'other' which helps define the new 'popular asset of desire leadership' (ibid, p37). Yukl (2012) further supports the view that management and leadership have come to represent different things but most of the time you cannot have one without the other. He warns against the traditional notion that leaders and managers are two different and distinct types of individuals and claims that connecting leading and

managing with different types of individuals is not supported by empirical research. He makes an important point that we need to steer away from using harmful stereotypes which imply that managers are ineffective or 'dull'. He states that 'the term manager is an occupational title for a large number of people, and it is insensitive to denigrate them with a negative stereotype' (Yukl, 2012, p22)

An interesting and important perspective on the highly disputed question of 'what is leadership?' comes from Alvesson (2011) who argues that we should be stepping away from our obsession with trying to define leaders and leadership and then applying or forcing these definitions on to those being researched. He suggests that 'a cultural understanding' of leadership requires a recognition of local meaning. He argues that we need to be careful not to heavily impose our own definition of leadership on individuals or organisations, but instead to be open to how those we are actually studying view leadership or leaders. In this way we can try to understand what meanings others attach to these terms and how they talk about them. This is calling for a more nuanced view of leadership; one that is heavily informed by context. It will be explored in more depth in the section on 'context' towards the end of this chapter.

However this perspective also raises interesting and important questions for leadership development and the evaluation of leadership development. Those designing and delivering leadership development programmes are likely to enter into them with their own perspectives of what leadership is and what leaders are. As a result of this, and based on Alvesson's (2011) arguments there could be tensions between the way that those delivering these programmes view leadership and the preconceived ideas that participants may have on what leadership means for them in their organisation.

In this section I have explored the extant leadership literature. This analysis impacted upon my own understanding of leadership in the field, particularly through acknowledging that the existence of such a wide array of definitions and theory about what leadership is and what leaders are, or whether we should even be using the term 'leader' makes the process of leadership development very complex. Participants, line managers, consultants and

organisational representatives are likely to each hold and display their own deeply held beliefs and assumptions, which in turn have been influenced by a range of factors. Following the arguments made by Alvesson (2011) I have been careful throughout this study to adopt a situated 'cultural understanding' approach, and rather than define leadership per se, allow the participants in this research to attribute their own understanding and definitions. Taking this approach enables me to inductively investigate what the participants understand by leadership and how those understandings develop through the programme. The next section focusses on leadership development.

## 2.3 Leadership Development

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Having outlined some of the main perspectives on leadership and the assumptions on which they are based, this section looks at what leadership development is and where the gaps in this literature lie.

Leadership development remains popular within organisations today, as it also does in higher and executive education. The need for leadership development it can be argued is driven by the external context and the internal organisational climate (Dalakoura, 2010). There are some important differences between management development, leadership development and leader development which I will now highlight.

### 2.3.1 Management Development, Leadership Development and Leader Development

Several authors have attempted to explore the differences between management development, leadership development and leader development. Bolden (2010) maintains that currently the distinction between leader and management development lacks clarity and as a consequence there is the danger that leadership development could be seen as anything that develops individuals and thus that all development related interventions could be treated as being equally effective.

Campbell et al (2003) set out the different conceptual approaches to leadership development. The first of these is the development of intra-personal qualities, which emphasises the personal development of the individual. This includes setting out specific values that they should ascribe to and enhancing personal awareness. The authors argue that this approach to leadership development, which also performs a role in some management development programmes, views leadership to be a social influence process (ibid).

The development of cognitive skill centres on such capabilities as problem solving, problem detection, problem analysis and creativity. Campbell et al (2003) state that a leadership development model seeking to make the distinction between leaders and managers should ideally also provide recommendations on how the cognitive skills of leaders are different to those demanded of individuals holding managerial positions.

The subsequent type of leadership development approach is entitled 'communication skills', which Campbell et al (2003) relate to charismatic, visionary and transformational views of leadership. Although these views of leadership I would argue make a clear distinction between leaders and followers and come with their own set of assumptions on the enactment of leadership. In the case of charismatic leadership leaders for example are deemed to be dominant, self-confident, and hold strong moral values (House, 1976). The first two of these personality traits it could be argued are not appropriate in every situation. Nevertheless the authors do also relate communication skills to the wider social influence processes of leadership and make a valid point in arguing that it problematic to attempt to separate those communication skills which are deemed to be the property of leadership as opposed to management. The final approach is termed the development of task specific skills (Campbell et al., 2003), which relates to the type of technically specific and professional skills that some roles require. Perhaps this is quite a traditional conceptualisation of developmental efforts and would have to be adapted to different groups of people within any given organisation.

In concluding the authors make a valid point that the numerous ways of defining leadership have different implications for leadership development and so the

way that leadership is viewed is of vital importance. This I would argue implies that when researching any leadership development programme it is important that the researcher attempts to understand the assumptions held around leadership and leadership development by those participating in it, those delivering it and other relevant stakeholders within the organisation. I would also contend that the same could be said of evaluating leadership development.

Whereas Campbell et al. (2003) consider all five approaches to fall under the term 'leadership development', Day (2000) sets out the differences as he sees them between leadership development and management development.

Management development, he suggests focusses on 'the application of proven solutions to known problems' (p582). In a similar vein management development is about the acquisition of management and skills that aid in completing tasks relating to the management role. Leadership development in comparison is about development for leadership roles, which are in turn defined as both roles that have and do not have formally assigned authority. Under this line of thought Campbell et al.'s (2003) task specific skills would be classed as management development rather than leadership development.

Day (2000) also distinguishes between leader development and leadership development. The former is based on traditional conceptions of leadership as an individual level skill that resides in a 'leader' with a strong separation between 'leader' and 'follower'. Leader development is therefore viewed as the development of human capital, focussing primarily on intrapersonal skills and abilities. Such skills include self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation (ibid). Leadership development on the other hand corresponds to more recent definitions of leadership as a social influence process and therefore is defined by Day (2000) as the development of social capital, such as networks. The author argues that leadership development should be an ongoing process and integrated with leader development. However in Day's work there is little consideration given to time and what happens to this 'social capital' after a given intervention.

In the same way that distinctions have been made between management and leadership in the literature, there has also been a debate on the difference between management and leadership development.

Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) choose to adopt the overarching term 'management development' but state that this also includes the development of leaders in organisations (interestingly their book is entitled 'management and leadership development'). They argue that it is unnecessary to make a clear distinction between the two terms as the concepts of 'management' and 'leadership' present what they call a 'dubious dichotomy.'

Taking an opposing view to Kotter's (1990) explanation of the differences between leadership and management which was described in the previous section, Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) list four reasons why this dichotomy should be challenged. Their first basis for questioning the need for a distinction between these concepts is that organisations are not as hierarchical, bureaucratic or predictable as they used to be. They argue that this has relocated the manager's power base from positional to personal and everyone in a team has to lead at some point. This it seems fits with a social process view of leadership. It states that it is just not leaders that need to plan strategic direction and it is not just those that are in senior positions that inspire members of the team to follow.

The authors' second critique is based on the notion that leadership studies have changed direction in their focus and assumptions over time from prescriptive trait theories to more relational, emergent theories. This, they maintain, makes the distinction between a leader and a manager of limited relevance.

Furthermore Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) contend that careful attention needs to be paid to the culturally biased nature of a lot of leadership and management research, which has implications for the ways in which leadership and management as terms are viewed in different cultures. For example the majority of research in this area has been done from a Western, and historically predominantly masculine perspective. Certain theories may not resonate with other cultures, and may also be enacted in different ways (ibid). This seems to be a valid point, not just in terms of culture itself but also the language that is

used to denote the difference (or similarity) between the two terms. Recent research has considered the implications of leadership in different languages (Jepson, 2009b, 2010) and evidently this could translate into the way that management and leadership is differentiated in different cultures. Leadership is a particularly Anglo-centric concept that may not have direct parallels in other languages and cultures (Edwards and Turnbull, 2013a, Schedlitzki, 2012, Turnbull et al., 2012).

However I would also suggest that this argument could be extended to not only acknowledge cultural representations of management and leadership development in terms of national culture but also corporate culture. The terms may imbue different meanings within different organisational contexts or in fact be used interchangeably as terms or not be used at all. For example the terms 'leader' or 'manager' may be embedded in job titles or used in company documentation. This is in line with Alvesson's (2011) argument that leadership is represented and perceived in different ways in different contexts. To illustrate this Alvesson compares organisational cultures that see leadership as important and a driving force in organisations to those that are indifferent or negative towards leadership, possibly as a result of professional cultures that do not see the importance of leadership. This could have implications for the terms used in management or leadership development interventions because they may carry different meanings depending on the organisation and part of the organisation in which the intervention is being carried out.

Their final means of questioning the 'dubious dichotomy' between leadership and management is what they term 'corporate convenience' (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008). What they mean by this is that distinguishing between leaders and managers heightens the importance that corporate leaders attribute to themselves and some misuse their power. All of these points come together to form their view that distinguishing between leadership and management development is unnecessary and that it is preferential to use the term 'management development' to also include leadership development activities. However although Mabey and Finch-Lees do illustrate some concerns between differentiating leadership from management, these forms of development have come to mean different things both in theory and practice.

Throughout this thesis I will use the terms 'management development' or 'leadership development' to capture the primary purpose of an intervention or programme as articulated by those delivering or implementing it. I argue that when focussing on a particular organisation we should be adopting what Alvesson (2011, p161) refers to as a 'cultural understanding of leadership' which, in turn, influences the terminology that is used. The next section considers leadership development in relation to organisational development.

### **2.3.2 Leadership Development and Organisational Development**

Bolden (2010) argues that leadership, management and organisational development all need to be integrated or at least aligned to be most effective and to improve the capability of an organisation and its members to better attain their goals. He goes on to explain further that simply developing leaders on their own and ignoring existing organisational structures is not adequate in enhancing leadership throughout the organisation in its entirety (Bolden, 2010). Therefore these different forms of development; organisational, management and leadership should be integrated in order to be most effective (McCauley et al., 2004).

In a similar way Burgoyne puts forward the idea that leadership development forms part of a leadership development 'bundle' (Burgoyne, 2010, Thorpe et al., 2008). This 'bundle' is comprised of acquisition, development and utilisation. Burgoyne argues that in its most narrow sense leadership development is the middle 'development' part of this bundle (Burgoyne, 2010). However it should be viewed in a wider sense to also encompass acquisition and utilisation. Acquisition relates to the recruitment and selection of people into both roles seen to be leadership roles and other roles that have the potential for career progression into these leadership roles (Ibid). This could also be applied to leadership development programmes themselves through examining exactly how individuals are selected or recruited to participate in such programmes.

The utilisation element of the bundle includes performance management systems, reward systems and what Burgoyne terms 'hard' organisation

development, which includes organisational restructuring. Burgoyne contends that organisations may possess what he describes as 'leadership capability' but do not fully use it. This is something that the utilisation strand seeks to address. The middle 'development' element is where formal leadership development programmes sit as well as other interventions such as coaching, mentoring, action learning and team building (Burgoyne, 2010). The author argues that organisations need to respond to all three of these strands in a balanced and integrated way.

Furthermore Burgoyne (2010) describes a six stage ladder model, which outlines the means of assessing the degree of integration between leadership development, career development and organisational strategy. It ranges from no systematic management development to strategic development of the management of corporate strategy.

At the first level of this ladder there is no intentional leadership development or career management. At the second level entitled 'isolated tactical management development', there is either leadership development or career management, or if there are both they are not integrated with each other. Burgoyne refers to the third level as 'integrated and coordinated structural and development.' At this level leadership development and career development are integrated with each other, but nothing else. The fourth level places a heavier emphasis on strategy implementation. New strategies are inputted into the leadership development and career planning process. The fifth level still recognises the importance of strategy but instead of implementation acknowledges strategy improvement. Leadership development interventions are used among other things as a way of reviewing and improving strategies. At the next level emphasis is put on developing the senior leadership team with regards to both strategy and their ability in forming and implementing it.

One of the difficulties with implementing leadership and management development is that some of the ideal behaviours of leaders or managers as espoused by research and leadership development professionals might not equate to that which the organisation rewards (Burgoyne et al., 2004). Burgoyne et al (2004) drawing on the work of Keep and Westwood (2003)

present a 'rhetoric-reality gap' which proves problematic for the implementation of leadership development programmes. This rhetoric-reality gap means that what research or best practice models say organisations or managers ought to be doing is different to what managers do or are instructed to do by organisations. Further internal factors that may impact on the leadership development process are explored in the following sub-section.

### **2.3.3 Factors that Impact upon Leadership Development**

It is worth bringing to light several factors that have been listed in the literature as having the potential to impact upon leadership development. As this thesis seeks to evaluate the impact of a leadership development programme at multiple levels, it is important to explore these factors.

Dalakoura (2010), based on a review of extant literature, puts forward a collective framework for leadership development. This framework consists of six elements that are considered to be important for leadership development efforts within organisations. These elements are: leadership development practices, a leadership development culture, CEO involvement, HRM systems, self-leadership and line managers' involvement (Ibid).

Yukl (2010) outlines several conditions, which he considers to either facilitate or inhibit the development of leadership skills in organisations. The first of these factors is the level of support supplied by line managers. He argues that if these managers do not recognise the importance of certain leadership development interventions they are unlikely to support the introduction of them to their teams. He also maintains that managers who lack confidence in their own leadership abilities and position in the organisation are not likely to aid the development of any employees who pose a potential threat to them or who might become competitors in the future. A further way in which the behaviour of line managers could prove detrimental to leadership development is if they consider mistakes to be personal failures rather than potential learning experiences. Finally Yukl (2010) argues that the motivation to both learn and

apply leadership skills in the workplace is affected by the degree to which an individual's manager advocates and supports training activities.

In a similar way Burgoyne et al (2004) emphasise the importance of line managers being involved in the leadership development process in order for it to be effective. It can also be the organisational setting that surrounds line managers that proves a barrier to development. Hirsh and Carter (2002) through their study of management development practices reached the conclusion that line managers have been afforded responsibility in terms of the development of their employees but may be neither equipped to undertake them nor encouraged to develop other individuals.

Yukl (2010) also states that 'the learning environment' has a strong impact on the implementation of leadership development and the application of learning from it. The author claims that the level of training and development that takes place in an organisation is partially dependent on the attitudes and values that the organisation holds around development. If emphasis is placed on individual learning in the organisation and if it is viewed as paramount to organisational performance then it is likely that the level of investment in leadership development will be higher (ibid). Furthermore there will be more attempts by the organisation or those within it to measure and reward learning such as that which results from leadership development initiatives (ibid).

Finally Yukl maintains that a supportive organisational climate and culture can also help managers and motivate them in applying the learning from leadership development programmes. Burgoyne et al (2004) reach a similar conclusion that learning from management and leadership development initiatives is significantly affected by the organisational context in which they occur. Examples of impacting factors include organisational structure, objectives, people and culture (ibid). They state 'almost as important as the content of management and leadership development is the quality of the management development processes which precede, support and reinforce the development activities' (Burgoyne et al., 2004, p161)

As well as the factors outlined above, the assumptions held about the purpose and value of leadership development will also affect the manner in which it is

designed, delivered and received in the organisation. Holman (2000) used Barnett's (1990, 1994) analysis of the value and purpose of higher education to list four sets of views or axioms within management education (epistemological, pedagogical, organisational and social). The epistemological axiom relates to assumptions about the nature of knowledge. The pedagogical is concerned with the nature of the learning process, the teaching methods and what the ideal outcomes would look like. The organisational relates to the organisation and management of management education. Finally the social is concerned with the perceived role of management education in society. He adds a fifth axiom to this specifically for management development activities; the management axiom which relates to the nature of management practice.

From these five axioms or sets of assumptions he formulates four models of management education which incorporate the main perspectives adopted in discussions about the nature, value and purpose of management education. Although he does make the point that these models are neither definitive nor mutually exclusive. These are outlined in table 2.1 below.

Academic Liberalism	Experiential Liberalism	Experiential Vocationalism	Experiential / Critical
Management education concerned with the objective pursuit of knowledge	Focusses on the pursuit of predominantly subjective and experiential knowledge but also theoretical knowledge	Draws on experiential learning by doing	Concentrates on the pursuit of subjective knowledge with a particular focus on power
Focusses on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge	Draws on experiential processes of learning	Uses competence based approaches	Uses critical reflection and action learning.
Uses scientific methods of learning.	Aims to develop a 'practical scientist'	Aims to develop intrapersonal skills and technical skills and ultimately to develop a 'competent manager'	Aims to develop a 'critical practitioner' who is able to challenge existing approaches in the organisation.
Aims to develop a 'management scientist'			

*Table 2.1: Four Models of Management Education, adapted from Holman (2000) p204.*

The four models of management education proposed by Holman (2000) are also useful when considering approaches to leadership development and the impact of their underlying assumptions on learning outcomes. Holman suggests that academic liberalism or experiential vocationalism alone are flawed approaches for developing leaders and managers within contemporary

organisations due to an over-reliance on either theory or action – calling instead for approaches that engage critically and reflectively with *both* theory *and* practice.

Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) provide an alternative perspective on the assumptions embedded within management and leadership development and the need for reflexivity. They propose what they term the four 'Grand Discourses of management development' which are in essence four different readings of management development founded upon different sets of epistemological and ontological assumptions. These four discourses are: functionalist, constructivist, dialogic and critical. In a later paper Mabey (2013) relates these four discourses to the assumptions regarding leadership and leadership development, but this time using the term 'interpretive' rather than 'constructivist'.

From the perspective of the functionalist discourse leadership is seen as being 'self-evident and essentialist' (Mabey, 2013, p361). In essence a leader is regarded as an individual who demonstrates what are seen as the relevant skills, qualities and status of a 'leader'. Therefore leadership development is aimed at building leadership competencies, with the ambition of enhancing individual and organisational performance (similar to Holman's Experiential Vocationalist or Academic Liberalism approaches). From an interpretive perspective there is no pre-determined definition of what a leader or leadership is, instead these meanings are socially and culturally constructed. Based on these assumptions leadership development is strongly influenced by an individual's sensemaking processes and accounts before and after the intervention. There is an emphasis on the symbolic aspects of leadership development. From a dialogic discourse perspective a leader is an 'ongoing and negotiated' identity which is distinguished from management (ibid. p361). Leadership development therefore encompasses 'activities and discourses (language and artefact) which constitute certain actors and give them access to supposed self-meaning status and value' (ibid, p361). Finally viewing leadership through a critical discourse focusses on issues of power and control. Leadership is seen as a concept that is historically situated and something that heightens the importance of those labelled as 'leaders', legitimising their

exercise of power and influence. Leadership development programmes from this perspective may be seen as a means of controlling 'dissident voices' and promoting compliance amongst 'followers'.

From this analysis we can identify how assumptions about management and leadership impact upon the ways in which management and leadership development is designed, delivered and assessed by organisations and individuals. This presents particular challenges for evaluation - the focus of the next section of this chapter.

## 2.4 The Evaluation of Management and Leadership Development

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### 2.4.1 Perspectives on Evaluation

Despite the level of investment that goes into leadership development by organisations many programmes or interventions still go unevaluated. The same can be said of the academic literature where there is a lack of research around the evaluation of leadership development programmes (Avolio et al., 2010, Hannum and Craig, 2010). Evaluation is often said to be an afterthought of leadership development initiatives (Burgoyne et al., 2004) rather than integrated into interventions from the beginning. Hannum and Craig (2010) argue that the dearth of scholarly literature in this area appears to suggest that evaluating leadership development is either impossible or of no importance. However they maintain that neither is actually the case and that careful of evaluation of leadership development methods is essential. Nevertheless they do highlight some of the challenges associated with the evaluation of leadership development. They take the view that because leadership is by its nature a largely contextualised construct, leadership development is difficult to evaluate and sometimes the context surrounding leadership development comes with its own challenges such as the unavailability of comparison groups, environmental instability and performance criteria which become 'increasingly contaminated'

as the time between interventions and the measurement of outcomes increases (ibid, 581). However these limitations associated with context seem to imply a certain view of context taken by Hannum and Craig; one in which context is a variable rather than socially constructed. It also indicates a view of evaluation as a measurement of pre-defined performance outcomes. This point as well as the notion that evaluation of leadership development is a valuable and a worthwhile activity indicates some underlying assumptions about the evaluation process.

Easterby-Smith (1994) suggests that there are four main purposes to the evaluation of management development: proving, improving, learning and controlling. Burgoyne (2010) states, however, that there are some important differences when it comes to the evaluation of leadership development. One reason for this is that development for roles can usually be evaluated with regards to whether it ameliorates the development of strategy, but leadership is partly about the forming of strategy.

I would argue that underlying assumptions about the purpose(s) of leadership development, and how this can be evaluated, determine the approach taken. The previous section of the chapter drew attention to Mabey and Finch-Lees' (2008) four 'Grand Discourses' of management (or leadership) development; functionalist, constructivist (later called interpretivist by Mabey, 2013), dialogic and critical. Not only do they impact on the design of leadership development interventions, but also on what is evaluated, how, when and why. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) argue that the relative absence of an extensive body of literature on leadership development evaluation can be interpreted differently through the use of each of these discourses.

Firstly a functional discourse, which focusses on measurable outcomes, would highlight the practical and technical challenges of translating the goals of development interventions into measures of success, which are in turn linked to organisational outcomes in a financial sense. This also relates to Hannum and Craig's (2010) point above that there may not be a suitable control group. A constructivist explanation would be related to the multiple criteria by which a programme can be evaluated, and the multitude of stakeholders each with their

own interests. As the authors argue, a constructivist discourse would claim that only formal evaluation is rare, but evaluation itself is an ongoing process and part of sensemaking. Similarly from the view of the dialogic discourse evaluation is seen as 'just another exercise in the social construction of knowledge and truth' (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008, p223). Finally from the perspective of the critical discourse, evaluation is seen as a form of power. Those who call for and / or implement evaluation hold the power as to who decides what does or does not get evaluated. From this discussion it is evident that each of these discourses and their underlying assumptions has the potential to shape the way that the process of evaluation is seen by the organisation or by researchers and why there is a dearth of literature on this topic.

Another way of examining these assumptions is the approach taken by Kennedy et al (2013) who adopt Chelimsky's (1997, p100) definition of evaluation as 'knowledge seeking that may also serve to build capacity and / or establish worth.' The authors set out three 'logics' of evaluation and the associated underlying assumptions with each. The first of these is what they refer to as the accountability logic, which responds to the calls from organisations and researchers to demonstrate the value of a programme in a rigorous way. An evaluation would focus on results and cause and effects. Kennedy et al (2013) argue that this view of evaluation speaks to what Day (2000) would term leader development, in that it views leadership as the attainment of specific individual skills and behaviour sets which can be measured.

A development logic, on the other hand, represents 'a shift from attribution to contribution' (Kennedy et al., 2013, p17). The role of the evaluator is not seen simply as to attribute value or demonstrate return on investment from a programme. Instead it is also about contributing to the development process, and the evaluator is seen as a 'partner' in this. It therefore has not only a technical dimension but also a social one.

Finally the 'evaluation for knowledge' logic also speaks to a research trajectory (Kennedy et al., 2013, p21). Evaluation serves a purpose for the researcher

involved in that it follows his / her research agenda whilst at the same time providing depth of analysis and demonstrating methodological rigour. Evaluation therefore provides a series of ongoing 'conversations' about the impact of leadership development for the participants involved and / or provides the organisation with helpful information to help them plan for future developmental efforts.

Kennedy et al (2013) make an important point that each of these 'logics' plays an important role in leadership development and its evaluation and suggest that an 'evaluative mindset' should be brought to any developmental efforts. Evaluation is therefore seen as an ongoing process that engages participants, the organisation and researchers. The next section discusses the processes and practices of evaluating leadership development, drawing on specific examples.

## **2.4.2 Processes and Practices of Evaluation**

Much of the extant research on the evaluation of leadership development stems from traditional methods of evaluating training interventions. The one that is often cited is Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Although his work was first published over fifty years ago it is still used heavily by organisations (Anderson, 2010a) and found as a reference point in much of the literature. Figure 2.1 on the next page illustrates his approach to evaluation.



*Figure 2.1: Kirkpatrick's (1994) Four Levels of Evaluation*

His first level of evaluation is termed 'reaction'. This focusses on accumulating information about the participants' perceived thoughts on the training programme. According to Kirkpatrick this then leads to learning which forms the second level of his model. The learning stage assesses the degree to which the participants have been able to learn and improve their skills. It in essence seeks to measure the level of learning that has taken place. This leads to Kirkpatrick's third stage of training evaluation; transfer. 'Transfer' attempts to ascertain the extent to which the participants have been able to apply their newly developed skills and knowledge to the jobs in the workplace. The fourth and final level is results, which evaluates the training programme by measuring any improvements in organisational results and productivity that have occurred as a result of participating in the programme.

Despite its popularity, this approach to evaluation has a number of limitations, including the difficulty in measuring learning transfer (Anderson, 2010a) and establishing the degree to which the programme has impacted on results at the organisational level. I would argue that the framework is best suited to individual skills based programmes and therefore not well suited to other kinds of initiatives that seek wider or more emergent outcomes (Kennedy et al., 2013). Anderson (2010b, p297) contends that there is a great difficulty in trying

to link the learning of individual participants and organisational performance in a 'sterile cause and effect way'.

However many extant studies on the evaluation of leadership development still attempt to link leadership development initiatives in a return on investment (ROI) type manner. This is perhaps unsurprising seeing as leadership development practitioners are under pressure to demonstrate the organisational impact of interventions, due to the significant level of time and financial investment put into leadership development programmes (Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004).

The work of Phillips and Phillips (2007) at the Center for Creative Leadership Studies is one example of a return on investment approach to leadership development evaluation. The authors advocate this method as a useful means of gauging the impact of an intervention and a direct way of demonstrating accountability. One advantage that they list of this approach is the trend for accountability within organisations, particularly with regards to the high level of costs associated with leadership development. Another advantage is what Phillips and Phillips term a 'soft skills concern' meaning that senior management executives find it hard to directly correlate leadership development with productivity and therefore seek ways to gauge return on investment. Interestingly one of the advantages listed is that Return on Investment (ROI) is a familiar term, recognised by managers who appreciate its value. ROI is on the whole used to refer to financial considerations but has been extended to describe the broader impact of interventions on organisations. This type of evaluation speaks very much to the accountability logic (Kennedy et al., 2013) discussed earlier. Whilst this approach can be very valuable for organisations and works particularly well for individual skill focussed learning, it does have its limitations (Hannum, 2004). It tends to focus on financial benefits and pre-determined outcomes rather than more emergent qualitative outcomes (ibid).

In a special issue in the Leadership Quarterly on leadership development evaluation, Avolio et al (2010) build on return on investment for their approach entitled return on development investment (RODI). The authors suggest that it is essential for leaders within organisations to determine the degree to which

they are investing in what they term 'the most optimal training process' in the way in which they offer a return on leadership development investment (p633).

Their RODI approach professes to estimate and forecast the financial return from investment expected for any given leadership development intervention within an organisation. In order to do so they draw on methods developed by Cascio and Bourdreau (2008) that seek to understand the financial impact of human resource initiatives. The authors are very much focussed on monetary value and maintain that leadership development should be analysed in the same way as any other investment decision. They examined interventions that differed in length, cost, managerial level and whether they took place on or off site. The knowledge that is needed in order to use this formula and these calculations are the number of participants in a development intervention, predicted time of the duration of change in behaviours and the effect size of the intervention. They do however acknowledge that the effect on behaviours and performance within the organisation is dynamic and likely to be influenced by a range of factors.

From an organisational perspective this approach is likely to be valuable in terms of identifying tangible outcomes. However it only provides a limited view on more qualitative emergent outcomes. There is also like most return on investment approaches, only a limited appreciation of context and the impact it might have on participants. However Avolio et al (2010) do recognise that organisational climate can have an impact on the transference of learning as can managerial support. Avolio et al's (2010) paper is indicative of the movement towards ROI analysis. Although these approaches can be very appealing in trying to justify or calculate the benefits of leadership development programmes for organisations, it can be very difficult to connect individual level learning to organisational outcomes (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008). Even if these evaluations do provide an accurate picture of financial benefit they are unlikely to capture all the wider benefits of a particular intervention or programme (ibid). The evaluation literature has recently been criticised for its emphasis on structural evaluation models that do not take into account wider programme outcomes and interpretations of leadership development (Edwards and Turnbull, 2013a).

Abrell et al (2011) took a different approach to evaluation through conducting an evaluation of a long-term transformational leadership development programme in Germany. In doing so they move away from an ROI approach. The authors argue that the necessity for empirical based evidence has grown substantially over the last few years. They contend that there has been a 'narrow exploration' of leadership development in the literature and that there are very few in-depth studies in existence. They highlight a few other gaps in the extant literature. The first of these is that there are few empirical investigations around leadership development programmes that go beyond a two week period. They also claim that some specific elements of leadership development have gone largely understudied; namely the impact of peer coaching and feedback interventions.

Abrell et al's (2011) study specifically looks at a programme focussed on transformational leadership and seeks to evaluate its long-term effectiveness over a period of twelve months. The programme that forms the basis of their study advocates the principles of transformational leadership as something that all organisations should aspire to. As we have seen, transformational leadership has undergone critique in the leadership field. I also argue throughout this thesis that leadership development evaluation needs to explore the assumptions underlying leadership development interventions. Therefore evaluating a transformational leadership development programme will influence the approach to evaluation taken. It would imply a focus on leader development rather than leadership development.

The programme which Abrell et al (2011) evaluated consisted of five two-day interventions. They collected their data through the use of surveys that used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and evaluated the programme three, six, nine and twelve months after training had occurred. They found that transformational leadership and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour improved over time. This approach and the use of MLQ to measure the 'improvement' in transformational leadership gives a strong indication of the embedded assumptions about the nature and purpose of leadership and leadership development, and in particular a focus on developing transformational leaders

rather than viewing leadership as a social process or as Day (2000) terms the building of social capital.

One important conclusion to draw from this study that has implications for this thesis is that evaluation that considers long-term impact is still scarce. Abrell et al (2011) claim that there are few empirical investigations around leadership development programmes that go beyond a two week period. The authors clearly state that 'leadership development literature is limited by its short time frame' (ibid, p208). This supports the case for more longitudinal research in leadership development and particularly in the evaluation of leadership development (a point echoed by Day (2011)).

Anderson (2010b) moves away from carrying out the evaluation of development interventions in a quantitative manner, adopting a discursive approach instead. She suggests that management (and leadership) development is generally evaluated by sequential, cause-effect models, such as the one devised by Kirkpatrick (1994), and argues that this creates distance between the leader/manager and the effects of the learning. Furthermore she asserts that the majority of the evaluation models in use are formulated for training interventions rather than management development situations and that they appear to represent evaluation as a clear and simple process that consists of a series of separate stages and measures. Anderson clarifies her approach to evaluation by drawing on Easterby-Smith's (1994) purposes of training evaluation. Whilst Anderson herself views the purpose of evaluation as learning I would argue, based on the earlier discussion of the assumptions of leadership development evaluation, that evaluation should go beyond learning to the implementation of that learning.

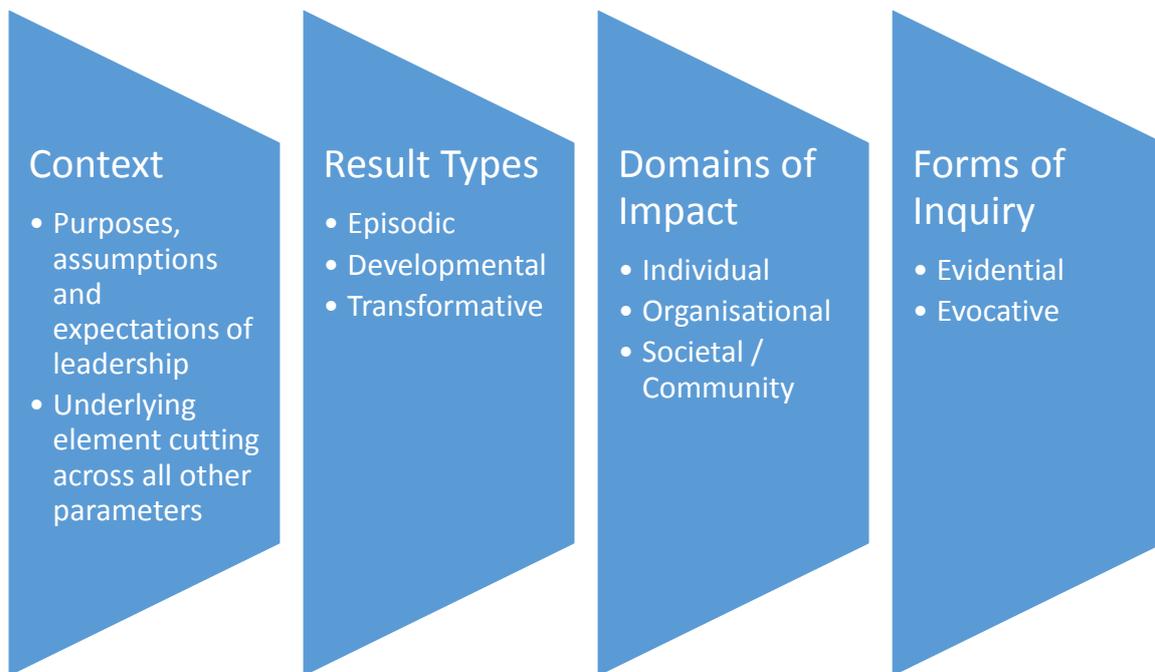
Anderson (2010b) critiques existing frameworks that are based on the work of Kirkpatrick, suggesting that they fail to capture the relational nature of managerial practice. The approach that she takes towards evaluation is instead based on discourse analysis and grounded theory. In line with recent developments in evaluation literature, she advocates a social constructionist view towards evaluation, arguing that 'the way in which prevailing evaluation models encourage us to view worth and value is influenced by positivist

research traditions which lead to a focus on quantifiable outcomes and which disregard the complex, relational and dialogical activity in which most managers engage' (Anderson, 2010b, p286). Anderson's predominant assumption is that action and learning are mediated by language and that management should be viewed as practice.

Through viewing management as practice she argues that development should not concentrate solely on what managers need to know but also on how they need to be. These arguments, whilst highlighting the constitutive function of language and emotions and the need for a more holistic, embodied perspective on evaluation, may under-estimate the importance of leadership development as developing collective capacity.

The ultimate aim of leadership development as framed by Day (2000) is the development of social capital, which can be achieved in part through the development of networks. Burgoyne et al (2004) argue that the relationship between management and leadership development and individual and organisational performance has tended to overlook the significance of networks that managers participate in. The authors contend that the social relationships that managers form have an impact on their ability to apply their leadership learning and then translate it into performance. The authors clearly state 'the organisational benefit may also lie to some extent in this social capital as well as the simple addition of individual capability' (ibid, p42). This has interesting implications for those management and leadership development programmes that aim to develop social capital or foster collaboration between individuals in different parts of the organisation.

One useful framework for integrating both individual and collective perspectives on leadership development, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods, is the EvaluLead framework devised by Grove et al (2005) and depicted in figure 2.2 on the next page.



*Figure 2.2: EvaluLead Framework, adapted from Grove et al, (2005).*

Grove et al (2005) take an open systems approach to evaluation, working from the assumption that the process is complex with many factors impacting upon it. They posit that there are four main parameters that need to be considered in relation to programme evaluation. The first of these is context, which is focussed on the way that leadership is defined within the leadership development intervention. The authors maintain that it is important to acknowledge both the way that participants view their own leadership and the assumptions around leadership that the given programme is based on. This is an important point and connected to other discussions in the chapter that have highlighted the complexity in attempting to define leadership and how the assumptions of leadership development and evaluation influence the process of evaluation. Context itself is not measured or evaluated but is something that needs to be considered throughout the evaluation process.

The second parameter is termed 'result types' and comprises three categories; episodic, developmental and transformative. Episodic results are those that are measured through cause and effect. They are viewed to be predictable, well defined and time bound. Developmental results on the other hand occur over a longer period of time and vary by participant. They are not so well defined and are more open to impact from both internal and external factors. This type of

result, it is argued is likely to occur at different points in time for different participants. The last type of results as explained by Grove et al (2005) is entitled transformative which involves a paradigm shift in values and perspective that leads to non-incremental change.

The next parameter for analysis as outlined by Grove et al (2005) looks at the potential domains of impact of leadership development programmes; dividing this is into individual, organisation and societal levels. The authors make an important point that learning occurs at all levels and there are 'feedback loops' between them. For example a change at the organisational level might trigger a change at the individual level. This might again be reinforced by follow on activities after the intervention.

Forms of inquiry is the fourth and final parameter of the EvaluLead framework (Grove et al., 2005). There are two forms of inquiry; evocative and evidential. The latter encompasses largely descriptive and numeric data around programme impact. They in essence look for 'hard evidence' around what is happening to participants and the way that can be traced back directly to the programme itself (Ibid). Many existing studies of management or leadership development evaluation fall into this category. At the other end of the spectrum, evocative inquiries examine the views and feelings of all those influenced by a programme. Data is generally collected through open ended methods such as stories or qualitative surveys/interviews (Ibid).

In effect, EvaluLead espouses a mixed methods approach to evaluation, incorporating insights from a range of perspectives. The framework provides a helpful way of understanding and approaching the evaluation process, outlining the types of impact, the levels at which these occur and the types of information or means of data collection that might prove helpful. I would argue that it is a practical way of integrating the views of evaluation as seen through Mabey and Finch-Lees' (2008) four discourses and Kennedy et al's (2013) three logics of evaluation, through providing a framework that can be adapted as needed. I further argue that it offers the basis for a conversation between the evaluator and the organisation about the assumptions behind a given leadership development programme and the appropriate approach(es) to evaluate it.

Critically it acknowledges the importance of context and assumptions of leadership for the programme, the participants and evaluation process itself.

The importance of acknowledging and understanding context in evaluation is echoed in more recent leadership development evaluation literature. In 2013 the journal *Advances in Developing Human Resources* published a special issue on the evaluation of leadership development. The editors, Edwards and Turnbull (2013b) argue that through relying on competency frameworks evaluation has tended to focus on individual leader development rather than leadership development. They further argue that more attention needs to be paid to context and culture. The articles in the special issue seek to respond to this gap.

One such approach is Jarvis et al (2013) who evaluate a programme for managers working in adult social care through a complexity lens, using the theory of complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2001). This approach, the authors argue recognises the inherent tensions and contradictions involved in leadership development with regards to programme requirements. In order to demonstrate impact they used qualitative techniques such as observation and interviews to investigate how participants were applying the learning in their day-to-day work.

Following this, recent analyses suggest that many evaluation models do not fit well with contemporary theories of leadership that stress the relational, discursive and shared nature of leadership practice (Edwards and Turnbull, 2013). In particular there has been too little attention given to cultural context in understanding the wider impact of leadership development interventions. Furthermore Edwards and Turnbull (2013a, p47) argue that the 'deeply embedded nuances of learning to lead' and unintentional outcomes of leadership development have not been explored in sufficient depth. The authors make a particularly valid point in stating that 'any criteria for evaluating leadership development should include an appreciation of differing facets of culture and differing cultural interpretations of leadership behaviour' (ibid, p48).

Edwards and Turnbull outline what they term a 'culturally based approach to evaluation'. There are seven main factors, which they consider to be critical for

this approach. Firstly evaluation needs to look at different levels of change and different functions in an organisation to order to be able to obtain a wide view of the impact of a given programme. Secondly they maintain that, if at all possible, evaluation would benefit from adopting an ethnographic methodology and 'getting inside' the relevant organisation to obtain an understanding of management and leadership practices as well as culture and subcultures. In this way it would enable an understanding of cultural and contextual impact. I would add to this and argue that if it is not possible to carry out ethnography, smaller-scale observation and interviews would help in developing this understanding. As a third factor Edwards and Turnbull recommend gathering as much information as possible around the programme and particularly highlight the advantage of biographical timelines. The fourth suggestion is to use both formal and informal data gathering. This can be said to complement Grove et al's (2005) framework that recommends using differing forms of data gathering; evidential and evocative. In terms of interview questions Edwards and Turnbull highlight the importance of 'Socratic investigation' in terms of supporting a culturally based approach to evaluation, which involves using open questions. Another important factor is that a culturally based approach needs to reflect upon different aspects of culture for example language and power dynamics before and after the programme. Finally evaluation should commence right at the design of the programme. Evaluation from the beginning, Edwards and Turnbull argue offers the potential to gain a better understanding of what has (or perhaps has not) occurred as the result of the programme. This corresponds to points made by other researchers such as Burgoyne et al (2004) that evaluation should not just be an afterthought. One particularly valid point that the authors make is that even if a programme is designed with the purpose of changing individual behaviour, the organisational impact of this will be affected by the cultural context. On this note the next section looks at the individual level, focussing on leadership development and identity. The final section of this chapter will explore the literature on context and culture.

## 2.5 Identity and leadership development

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After examining what leadership development is and how existing studies have sought to evaluate it, I deem it necessary to investigate who is involved in the process and the potential impact that the programme has had on them. Identity can act as a useful conceptual lens for investigating those individuals and groups of individuals involved. Identity has been studied from many different perspectives, disciplines and philosophical positions and applied to organisational settings (Kenny et al., 2011). However only those that are most relevant to leadership development and this particular study will be discussed in this section. Little thought has been paid to identity in current evaluation based studies of management and leadership development. The first section looks at identity-based leader and leadership development before moving on to explore the literature on how leadership development programmes can shift participants perceptions of themselves from 'manager' to 'leader.'

### 2.5.1 Identity-based Leader and Leadership Development

Ibarra et al (2010) adopt an identity-based perspective to leader development; establishing the connection between knowing, doing and being. They argue that much research centres on helping people to make the progression from 'knowing' to 'doing'. Knowing refers to obtaining new knowledge, whilst doing refers to converting that knowledge into behaviour (Ibid). Furthermore they claim that theoretical developments that link leadership and identity seek to address the gap between 'doing' and 'being'. This has important implications for leadership development because it takes into account not just the skills or knowledge that individuals ascertain or how they behave but also how they are and how they perceive themselves to be.

Day and Harrison (2007) deem leadership development to be a multilevel phenomenon that has to go beyond just focussing solely on the individual leader to also take into account relationships between individuals. However they

do not just view leadership development as multilevel, they also like Ibarra et al (2010) recognise the importance of an identity-based approach. Based on the work of Brewer and Gardner (1996) and focussing on self-concepts the authors divide identity into two levels; individual and collective. They claim that identity can be used to bridge different development levels within leadership development and through the inclusion of collective and relational identities in leadership development efforts, the shift from a purely individualistic perspective to one that also acknowledges the development of social capital.

One of the clear differences between the work of Ibarra et al (2010) and Day and Harrison (2007) is that whereas the latter clearly talk about leadership development, Ibarra et al maintain their focus on leader development. Nevertheless they do acknowledge the distinction that Day (2000) makes between these two concepts that was described earlier. In response to this approach Ibarra et al (2010) maintain that as they seek to examine the relationship between 'being' and 'doing' separating personal insight from the ability to affect a social system is outside of their scope.

Lord and Hall (2005) distinguish between individual level, relational level and collective identities. Individual level identities differentiate the self from others, whereas relational identities view the 'self' in respect to particular roles or relations. Finally collective identities characterise the 'self' in relation to collectives such as organisations. The authors argue that as leaders develop there is a change in focus from individual to collective level identities. This movement they maintain happens for both the leader's self-identity and for the identities of followers.

Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) introduce the concept of identity workspaces which they define as 'a holding environment for individuals' identity work' (p44). They contend that changing working patterns are also changing the psychological contract between employing organisations and employees. Instead of long term loyalty between these two parties, there has been a movement to short-term commitment. As a result of this change in psychological contract and thus the trust, commitment and expectations, the authors argue that organisations are less likely to act as 'holding environments

for identity work'. Instead business schools are increasingly performing this role.

Petriglieri (2011) builds on this previous work by directly relating the concept of identity workspaces to leadership development. He argues that traditional leadership programmes that only emphasise the attainment of knowledge and skills have their limitations. Furthermore leadership development programmes should be conceptualised as identity workspaces. Institutions meet the requirements for identity workspaces when they firstly offer theoretical frameworks that allow individuals to 'make sense' of both themselves and their surrounding environment. Secondly identity workspaces provide communities that members identify with and that act as sources of belonging, support and challenge. Finally institutions that act as identity workspaces afford rites of passage that incorporate identity development and role transitions. This notion of identity development and role transitions is a similar approach to the one that Ibarra et al (2010) discusses.

Furthermore in Petriglieri's (2011) view leadership programmes reach their full potential as identity workspaces when they not only enhance the development of individuals but when they also strengthen a leadership community. This can be linked to Day's (2000) notion of the very heart of leadership development – enhancing social capital.

Leadership development programmes are not solely focussed on those in formal leadership roles. It was argued earlier that a large number of existing studies on the evaluation of leadership development have examined organisational outcomes rather than considered changes for the individuals involved. Some more recent studies have explored the shift in how participants perceive themselves; from 'manager' to 'leader'. The literature pertaining to leadership development and its potential impact on the way participants perceive themselves as leaders or managers is limited. The extant research in this area is examined in the subsequent section.

## 2.5.2 Leader and Manager Identities

Earlier in the chapter I discussed the way that the differences between leaders and managers and leadership and management had been conceptualised historically in the literature and whether or not it was useful to make such distinctions. A similar discussion ensued in the section on leadership development. It was argued that although distinguishing between the skills and qualities of leaders and managers may be of little value, it is helpful to make a distinction between leader, leadership and management development due in part to the way these different bodies of literature have evolved.

Leaders and managers as professions have also been addressed in the identity literature. Kenny et al (2011) claim that over the last few years more and more managers are now calling themselves 'leaders', taking part in leadership training activities and viewing their organisational role, identity and practices as leadership. The movement towards talking about leadership as opposed to management can be said to have connotations for the identities concerned. It is important to examine the literature that links the concept of identity to becoming a leader.

Sveningsson and Larsson (2006) analyse leadership and management from an identity perspective, particularly focussing on leadership as fantasy. They claim that the current emphasis on leadership development in the workplace is concentrating on and attracting a wider range of managers, including middle management. They also maintain that leadership is often presented in the literature as visionary, charismatic and coercive and has a certain appeal compared to the way that management is depicted (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). This is similar to the view expressed by Western (2007) earlier in the chapter who argued that leadership has become idealised and management pushed into a 'subservient position' (p36).

Sveningsson and Larsson adopted a qualitative case study approach to investigate how one middle manager and his employees dealt with a corporate

cultural change programme that as well as the material directly related to change contained the organisation's expectations on leadership. Specifically they looked at the way(s) that managers talked about and practiced leadership and attempted to form meaning in their day to day work in settings where there were clearly defined expectations of leadership (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). In order to do so they observed the middle manager in a workshop that he led for his employees around organisational issues such as vision, mission and commitment. Furthermore Sveningsson and Larsson carried out a series of interviews with the manager and his employees. This particular middle manager was a technical expert and in his own words known as a 'technology freak.' He was keen to break away from this image of himself and sought more leadership responsibility in the organisation. He thought he possessed many leadership capabilities particularly having completed an MBA programme. Additionally he had been measured on his leadership skills and was content with the assessments made of him. Overall he wished to be viewed as a leader.

Through observing this manager during the workshop with his employees as part of the corporate cultural change programme Sveningsson and Larsson discovered that this middle manager did not practice skills associated with his conceptualisation of leadership. For example he did not give direction and was not able to respond or contribute towards challenging discussions around vision. However when interviewed afterwards he thought that he had performed extremely well as a leader and demonstrated his leadership skills effectively. Through this empirical study the authors came to the conclusion that notions of leadership could be viewed as a type of fantasy connected to identity work and not necessarily actual practice (ibid). This highlights again the highly contested nature of what the difference between management and leadership is and whether or not it is helpful to make such a distinction. It also makes me question whether this so called 'fantasy' of leadership is widespread.

Carroll and Levy (2008) examine the concept of identity, specifically within leadership development. They draw on Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) notion of anti-identity, but in order to steer away from the possible negative connotations of this term they prefer to adopt the phrase *default identity* (Carroll

and Levy, 2008). They investigate through semi-structured interviews conducted prior to an 18 month leadership development programme, how a *default identity* can be impacted upon by a different or *emergent identity*. In this particular case the *default identity* represents being a manager and the *emergent identity* represents being a leader (ibid). What is interesting about using this method of looking at the issue of identity and connecting it to the body of literature on distinctions (or blurred line in many cases) between leaders and managers is that they investigate how these terms or roles are conceptualised in the eyes of those living them. This study also provides useful insight for those conducting and implementing leadership development programmes, and in particular forcing to a certain extent a leader identity on those taking part. Carroll and Levy (2010) build on this study by viewing leadership development as identity construction. They illustrated the tensions and conscious decisions that individuals experienced through constructing their own leadership identities throughout the leadership development intervention.

The interviews in the case were conducted prior to and after the leadership development programme; it would however be interesting to see how the narratives of the participants in relation to being a leader or being a manager evolved through the course of the programme. Furthermore it would be interesting to see how or indeed if the wider organisational context formed a part of these narratives, seeing as being a leader or manager does not happen in isolation.

This idea of the importance of context has been a recurrent theme throughout this chapter. I have illustrated that much of the leadership development literature does not focus on the wider context in which it sits. Furthermore the research on leadership development and identity does not tend to focus on context. It is for this reason that context is investigated in the last section of this chapter.

## 2.6 The Context of Leadership Development

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As has been illustrated in this chapter, there have been calls to pay more attention to context in understanding the impact of leadership development. This section will highlight the importance of context.

### 2.6.1 Leadership and Context

Recently there have been more and more calls for context to be placed at the forefront both within leadership and more generally within organisational studies. In order to advocate putting context at the forefront of leadership research, or at the very least paying it serious attention, Porter and McLaughlin (2006) review leadership literature between 1990 and 2005. They attempt to determine the degree to which organisational context is written about as a factor in both leader behaviour and effectiveness. According to these authors leadership 'does not take place in a vacuum' (ibid, p559). Instead the organisational context plays an important role and thus should not be ignored. Porter and McLaughlin (2006) concentrate on literature within the leadership field that talks about the influence of the organisation as a context that leadership happens within. It does not investigate literature that takes the reverse approach and examines the impact of leadership on context.

Articles that do study context were divided by the researchers into seven different categories or variables. The first of these was entitled culture or climate with the terms used interchangeably. Culture in this sense refers to organisational culture which is covered in more detail in the next sub-section of this chapter. The other dimensions were goals and purposes, people or composition, processes, state and condition, structure and time. Some of these factors were given more attention in the conceptual and empirical literature. Culture and climate were some of the factors given most attention overall, but the majority of those were conceptual articles and there was a distinct lack of attention given to culture within empirically based papers. Even when

organisational context is given some consideration in empirical literature, it is quite often an afterthought or as Porter and McLaughlin argue 'frequently organisational context appears to be an artefact of the sample, not an active variable' (p571). On a more positive note the authors do conclude that recently there has been increasing focus within empirical research on contextual issues, which they deem to be 'promising'.

Porter and McLaughlin (2006) strongly call for more research within leadership that maintains a focus on the organisational context. In their view there is a necessity for the leadership field to concentrate on 'the dynamic aspects of organisational context relationships' (p574). The authors compare leadership and its relationship with organisational context to the weather in that it is often discussed but not changed and hope that in the future this will no longer be the case.

In November 2009 a special issue of Human Relations centred on the idea of context. The editors, Liden and Antonakis (2009) and Fairhurst (2009) both advocate an understanding and analysis of context within leadership research but take very different approaches to understanding the issue. Liden and Antonakis take the view that context is a variable to be studied, compared and measured in a quantifiable fashion. They criticise work that stems from a qualitative approach, largely consisting of case studies where context is not separated from that which is being studied. The authors state 'to understand the role of context, one needs variation across the contextual factors that is linked to variation in independent and dependent variables' (Liden and Antonakis, 2009, p1594).

In line with this type of approach Osborn et al (2002) support the case that leadership does not take place in a 'vacuum' and that leadership and to a certain extent its effectiveness is reliant on the specific context. Furthermore they consider leadership to be 'an emerging social construction embedded in a unique organisation' (Osborn et al., 2002, p832). Through the course of their paper the authors discuss four different types of contexts starting with the most stable and simple and moving on to the most dynamic and complex. These contexts are entitled stable, crisis-functioning in the middle, dynamic

equilibrium-top-level and strategic leadership and finally the edge of chaos. They argue that the context of business is changing and becoming more diverse.

Basing their propositions on a review of the extant literature, they suggest how the ways in which leadership is performed differ as the environment increases in complexity. They do draw some interesting conclusions based on this work, but I would argue that their methodological suggestions do not appear to completely fit with a socially constructed view of leadership. For example they propose comparing dependent variables across different contexts. They also try to put the wide array of leadership contexts into four distinct categories (Bolden et al., 2011).

Schedlitzki and Edwards (2014) classify the perspectives on context in the leadership field into psychological perspectives and sociological perspectives, the latter of which include social constructionist and critical approaches. Examples of psychological based theories would be Implicit Leadership Theory and Social Identity Theory. However in line with the philosophical assumptions upon which this thesis is founded, I focus on the sociological views of context.

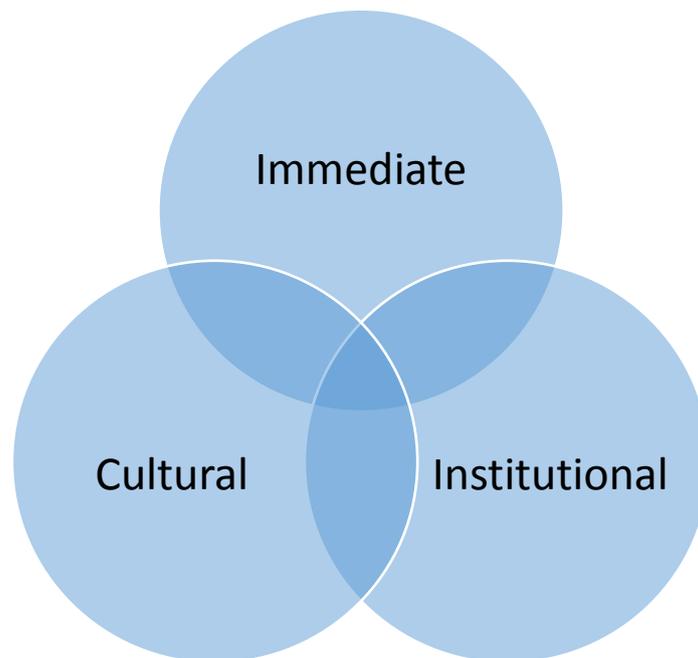
In fitting with a social constructionist view of leadership is Grint's (2005b) argument that leadership is not only embedded in context, but leaders help construct an understanding of the context. In this way context is not just simply something that impacts upon a leader, or that should determine the decisions of leaders, such as is thought by existing contingency theories of leadership. Instead Grint, coming from a social constructionist point of view, considers that leaders or decision makers have a larger impact on the context themselves and maintains that traditional contingency approaches to leadership are built on 'essentialist notions of the context' (p1470).

This view of context shares a similar perspective to Fairhurst (2009) who reviews the study of context within discursive research or 'impacted by the linguistic turn' (p1608). Pieces that come under this umbrella, she argues are predominantly social constructionist and qualitative. Unlike the work of Liden and Antonakis (2009) or Osborn et al (2002), context is conceptualised as being 'multi-layered', 'co-created' (rather than formed by an individual leader),

'contestable' and 'locally achieved' (Fairhurst, 2009). Sensemaking and studies of managerial discourse are two examples of the types of research that are deemed by Fairhurst to be discursive. Furthermore she argues that scholars of discursive leadership analyse context in-depth and seek to build local knowledge within a context. Adopting this approach could enable one to build up a view of the context not only through the researcher's own interpretations but talking to those who are living it.

An illustration of this approach is given by Eindrissat and Von Axe (2013) who, through an examination of a change programme in a large health care organisation, come to the conclusion that the relationship between leadership and context is recursive – i.e. that leadership produces and is produced by context. Specifically they take a leadership as practice perspective and argue that leadership practices both 'shape context' and are 'context shaping'.

Another example of a social constructionist approach to leadership and context is that of Edwards and Jepson (2008) and Jepson (2009a). The latter drew on qualitative interviews from the German and UK chemical industries to explore the impact of context in influencing participants' understanding of leadership. On the basis of this research and an exploration of extant literature Jepson (2009a) suggested three principal contextual levels as illustrated in figure 2.3. These are the 'immediate' context, which includes the organisation and industry; the 'cultural' context, which includes organisational and national culture; and the 'institutional' context, which includes regulation and education. Jepson proposes that each of these levels of context interact with one another for each individual. In the next section I will explore the cultural level.



*Figure 2.3 Levels of Context, adapted from Jepson (2009)*

## **2.6.2 Leadership and Organisational Culture**

Like leadership, culture is a complex concept that many have attempted to define over the years but little consensus has been reached as to the way it should be conceptualised. As Jackson and Parry (2008) state, bringing leadership and culture together is effectively ‘double trouble’ because culture has been defined and contested to an even greater level than leadership. Jackson and Parry (2008, p63) argue that ‘leadership is essentially a cultural activity’ because it is imbued with values, beliefs, language, rituals and artefacts. Although there is a significant body of work on national culture in the leadership field, for the purpose of this review culture refers specifically to organisational culture.

Martin (2002) categorises the majority of previous studies pertaining to organisational culture into three ‘single’ perspectives (Martin, 2002) or paradigms (Meyerson and Martin, 1987); integration, differentiation and fragmentation. The integration perspective focuses primarily on consistency, consensus and clarity. In Martin’s own words ‘the integration perspective focuses on those manifestations of a culture that have mutually consistent

interpretations' (Martin, 2002, p94). Although advocates of this approach see culture above all as homogenous and consistent, they do not completely reject 'deviations' from a common culture. However they do often see these departures as limitations and problems to be overcome or controlled (ibid).

Whereas integration approaches emphasise consistency, differentiation studies sit at the opposite end of the spectrum and focus on 'inconsistent interpretations' (Martin, 2002, p94). Researchers that advocate this viewpoint see inconsistencies as not only an unavoidable aspect of organisational life, but one that is necessary (ibid). The examination of subcultures form a key part of this body of research.

The final 'single' perspective as detailed by Martin (2002) is that of fragmentation, which centres around ambiguity. In earlier work Martin refers to this perspective as the 'ambiguity' perspective (Meyerson and Martin, 1987). It encompasses looking at tensions, paradoxes and contradictions.

Much organisational culture literature appears to apply the concept of culture as something universal within organisations that is shared among all its members. However I would adopt Alvesson and Sveningsson's (2008) approach that it is a 'fragile assumption' to think of completely consistent organisations where all of their members share the same set of 'unique' values. This is certainly not the case in all organisations. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) continue to argue that the term culture itself is frequently used in conjunction with the views of organisational culture that senior levels of management uphold as opposed to the organisation in its entirety.

There is a body of literature that recognises the possible existence and emergence of a set of subcultures within organisations. If we were to adopt Martin (2002)'s approach as analysed above these studies would more than likely fall into the 'differentiation' perspective. Although there are some pieces of research that include all three of Martin's (2002) 'single' perspectives.

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) maintain that the formation of subcultures is dependent upon the degree to which members of an organisation identify with it. If an organisation acts as an important place for identity work and its

members feel at one with it to the extent that they feel part of an overall 'we', then a more distinct organisational culture is likely to surface. However at the other end of the spectrum, if the organisational identity is ambiguous then members are likely to look elsewhere for their sense of identity such as their departments or the specific projects they are working on. This in turn leads to the emergence of subcultures and as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) argue the potential fragmentation of an organisation.

Van Maanen and Barley (1985) also discuss the formation of subcultures within organisations. In their view subcultures develop where some members of an organisation interact more frequently with others who share similar problems. Nevertheless they do state that homogenous or 'unitary cultures' are possible. They argue that these types of cultures can exist when all the members of an organisation confront almost exactly the same problems, when every member communicates with more or less everyone else and when each member espouses a shared set of understandings for 'enacting proper and consensually approved behaviour' (Van Maanen and Barley, 1985, p38). However I would argue that in today's complex environments the likelihood of all of these criteria being met for a single department or function within an organisation is slim and for an entire organisation it is nigh impossible. This would then imply that homogenous organisational cultures are themselves not evident in practice.

Smircich (1983) examines the importance of the notion of culture for organisational analysis. She emphasises that there is no consensus on the meaning of culture and that there are different approaches to looking at it based on different assumptions about culture and the organisation (ibid). The author separates the body of research on culture within an organisational setting into those that view culture as a critical variable and those that view it as a root metaphor. Those that view it as a critical variable see organisational culture as a background factor and something that to a certain extent can be analysed in isolation. In essence culture is something that an organisation has. We can see that it bears some resemblance to the way that context, as discussed earlier is viewed by some researchers such as Liden and Antonakis (2009). On the other hand those that view culture as a root metaphor see culture as something that an organisation is. This latter approach suggests that rather

than treating culture as something that can be found within organisations, organisations themselves can be examined as 'cultural phenomena' (Salzer-Morling, 2003, p388)

These two different sets of assumptions on culture have implications for leadership (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). Viewing culture as a critical variable assumes that it can and should be managed, with leaders playing a key role in this process. They are seen as change agents, responsible for changing culture in order to enhance organisational performance (ibid). One example of this approach is the work of Schein (2004) who explores the relationship between leadership and culture. He defines culture as 'a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration' (Schein, 1992, p12). For Schein culture can be analysed at three levels. At the surface level are artefacts which are the easily observable organisational structures. The next level down consists of espoused values which are represented for example in organisational strategies. And finally at the deepest level of culture are the basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 1992).

According to Schein (2004) leaders not only play a key role in developing organisational culture when they found an organisation but they also are influential in embedding culture at all levels of leadership. The mechanisms for doing so can be found in table 2.2 on the next page.

**Primary embedding mechanisms**

- What leaders pay attention to, measure and control on a regular basis
- How leaders react to critical incidents and organisational crises
- How leaders allocate resources
- Deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching
- How leaders allocate rewards and status
- How leaders recruit, select promote and excommunicate

**Secondary embedding mechanisms**

- Organisational design and structure
- Organisational systems and procedures
- Rites and rituals of the organisation
- Design of physical space, facades and buildings
- Stories about important events and people
- Formal statements of organisational philosophy, creeds and charters

*Table 2.2 Culture Embedding Mechanisms, taken from Schein (2004, p246).*

This table shows that from Schein's perspective on culture can and should be managed by leaders in the organisation.

However viewing culture as a root metaphor (Smircich, 1983) sees culture as 'unmanageable' and 'naturally evolving' (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014). In this way leadership is seen as symbolic and involves sensemaking and meaning making (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014, Smircich, 1983).

Alvesson (2011) provides a critical review of the extant literature on the connection between leadership and organisational culture and outlines three ways in which leadership and organisational culture are connected; leadership as local understanding, leadership as influencing organisational culture and organisational culture influencing leadership. The first of these conceptualisations maintains that cultural values influence and affect the likelihood of individuals emerging as a 'leader.' These cultural values relate to both national culture and organisational culture. A cultural understanding

approach examines the implicit taken for granted means of relating to leadership. For example different organisational cultures will have their own beliefs and assumptions about what leadership is and also potentially if leadership is itself viewed as something positive or negative (Alvesson, 2011). Some organisational cultures may reject the term leader altogether. We should also bear in mind here the view of organisational culture outlined earlier that culture is fragmented and it is neither possible nor desirable to have a uniform culture (Alvesson, 2011). I would further agree with this view that the ways in which people talk about leaders and leadership reflect wider cultural patterns and beliefs on human nature and social relations, but particularly of power.

The second perspective as outlined by Alvesson (2011) is that leadership influences organisational culture. This is the view that Schein (1992) takes in outlining the impact that the founder of an organisation has on forming its culture; an approach which can be viewed as being very leader centric (ibid). The connection here is evident between this view of organisational culture and transformational, visionary and charismatic leadership, where the leader is viewed as being heroic with a strong level of influence on his or her followers. This approach does not seem to take into account the evolving nature of organisations and cultural shifts over time. It also does not seem to place a large amount of power in other employees lower down in the organisational hierarchy having any effect on the organisational culture.

The final perspective is that organisational culture influences or forms leadership (Alvesson, 2011). Organisations are exposed to wider societal values at the same time as organisational cultures can constrain leadership behaviour. This perspective also recognises the impact that followers have on organisational cultures.

It seems that a combination of all three of these approaches is needed for a full understanding of the relationship between organisational culture and leadership, one that recognises the impact that both leaders and followers have on organisational culture, whilst at the same time acknowledging the way that organisational culture influences and in some cases constrains leadership expectations and behaviour.

One particularly important point which Alvesson makes is that 'a cultural view on leadership must balance between academic a priori definitions of leadership and openness to the meanings of the people being studied' (p161).

## 2.7 Chapter Summary

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The evaluation of leadership development has been for the most part neglected in the literature. Where it has been addressed, it has primarily been done so through quantitative studies that examine organisational outcomes and in particular those pertaining to financial matters. Although these studies have some value, there is a need for more contextually informed evaluative research (Jarvis et al., 2013). As Day (2011) argues there is a need for more longitudinal multi-level studies in the leadership development field as a whole. I would argue that this is even more essential in the evaluation of leadership development.

This chapter commenced by exploring the progression of thought in the leadership field. It demonstrated that there has been a move from leadership theories that emphasise the role of the leader and (mostly his) personal characteristics to those theories which either acknowledge the role of the follower or view leadership as a social process. This section also illustrated that there is still a continuing debate between the difference between leaders and managers, and indeed whether there is a difference. Taking the perspective of Alvesson (2011) I argue that a more nuanced view of leadership is needed in which emphasis is given to the way that research participants define leaders and leadership rather than imposing a pre-determined definition.

The next section examined the extant leadership development literature in which the debate between leadership and management continued. Leadership development was defined as the development of social capital (Day, 2000). This section also demonstrated the importance of understanding the wider context in which it sits and highlighted that there are significant gaps in the leadership development literature, particularly connected to the manner in which

it has been investigated. It was argued that there is a need for more longitudinal, multi-level research that takes into account more individualised processes.

The chapter continued to examine how management and most importantly leadership development has been evaluated in previous studies. I maintained that many evaluative studies take a limited view of evaluation, looking solely at quantitative outcomes. It was argued that this research offers a very limited perspective on the value (in a non-monetary sense of the word) of leadership development. Continuing the debate between managers and leaders, the next section explored who participates in leadership development and what impact it has on them. Identity was viewed as a useful lens for shedding light on this.

An exploration of the importance of context in the study of leadership development concluded this chapter. I maintained that leadership is embedded in context, but that context is sometimes neglected in leadership development studies and that this was something that needed to be addressed. I conclude this chapter by asserting that there is a need for more longitudinal multi-level research that seeks to evaluate leadership development by considering a wider array of qualitative outcomes, particularly for those individuals involved and that which acknowledges the importance of context.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

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This study aims to explore the impact and effects of a leadership development programme in-depth and over time. To do so it adopts a qualitative case study research design consisting of observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. It is a longitudinal study with observation occurring over a period of six months and interviews conducted with largely the same group of individuals at three different points in time during and beyond the programme. In taking this approach I seek to respond to the calls outlined in the previous chapter for more longitudinal, multi-level and multi-source research in leadership development and its evaluation. Furthermore I seek to respond to the gaps identified in the previous chapter for non-functionalist studies of evaluation, with the aim of developing a more nuanced understanding of the impact of a leadership development programme. This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this study and explains why they have been chosen.

The chapter commences by setting out the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions that this research is founded upon, before moving on to outline the use of a case study research design. The subsequent section centres on the specific methods used: semi-structured interviews, observation and documentary analysis. Having outlined the methods used for data collection the chapter moves on to discuss how the important issue of research ethics has been addressed in this study. The chapter concludes by focussing on the process of data analysis.

## 3.2 Research Approaches and Philosophies

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### 3.2.1 Philosophical Assumptions

This research stems from a social constructivist ontology. Ontology is concerned with the 'nature of reality' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012 , p18) and the nature of 'social entities' (Bryman and Bell, 2007 , p22). The fundamental question that ontology responds to is whether these 'social entities' are thought of as being objective, possessing a reality external to social forces, or whether they are subjective, developed from the actions of social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2007). At the core of both the social constructivist and social constructionist ontologies is the premise that reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Fairhurst and Grant (2010) state that the basic principle of these philosophical perspectives is that people form their own 'social and cultural world' (ibid p173) and simultaneously these worlds form them. Reality in this way is not seen as an 'objectifiable truth' waiting to be revealed. Furthermore this perspective maintains that there are multiple competing realities rather than the sole existence of one reality (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010).

Social constructionism and constructivism are often used interchangeably as terms (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Carroll and Levy, 2010, Gergen, 1999). However the two terms do carry different sets of assumptions (Gergen, 1999). Whereas social constructionism focuses on social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2007), constructivism suggests that individuals 'mentally construct' their experience (Gergen, 1999, p237). The emphasis is thus psychological and placed on individual cognition (Carroll and Levy, 2010, Gergen, 1999). Social constructivism has developed as a means of balancing the two ontologies of constructivism and social constructionism. Social constructivism suggests that individuals still 'mentally construct' the world around them, but do so predominantly with the use of categories provided by social relationships (Gergen, 1999 , p237). Taking into account these perspectives, my own ontology is one of social constructivism.

This study in adopting a social constructivist ontology views leadership as being co-constructed (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010), rather than supporting a more individualistic perspective. Studying leadership from a social constructionist or constructivist perspective facilitates a view of leadership that is not taken for granted; leadership is not something that is inevitable (ibid). Adopting this perspective allows the researcher to question the differences and inconsistencies in the accounts of individuals (ibid). I am going to assume that leadership development is a socially constructed phenomenon, which is created, reproduced and changed by people's actions and in relation to others.

It is also important for researchers to be clear about their epistemological assumptions (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Easterby-Smith et al., 2005). Epistemology is concerned with the 'best ways of enquiring into the nature of the world' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2005, p18). This study is built upon an interpretivist epistemology, which emphasises looking at subjective meaning (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Rather than trying to explain human behaviour it seeks to understand it (ibid).

A researcher's philosophical assumptions will have a bearing on the type of research approach that is adopted (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Easterby-Smith et al., 2005, Johnson et al., 2006). Based on a social constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, this study adopts an inductive qualitative approach to research. This approach is appropriate for this study because it enables me as a researcher to explore the impacts and effects of a leadership development programme from the perspectives of those attending it and allows me to be alert to wider and unintended forms of impact rather than going in with a set of pre-determined ideas. The next section explains this in more detail.

### **3.2.2 Approach Used in this Study**

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the dominant approach to evaluating management and leadership development taken in the extant literature is quantitative. This study takes an inductive, qualitative approach. An inductive approach is defined as one in which theory is an outcome of research rather than the other way around (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research is defined as

‘an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem’ (Creswell, 1998, p15).

Qualitative researchers examine things in their natural settings in order to make sense of or interpret events through the meanings people bring to these events or phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Bryman (2012) argues that it can be difficult to characterise qualitative research as it includes a large variety of diverse methods. Nevertheless, he lists three particular features that distinguish it from quantitative research. The first of these features is that the relationship between theory and research is viewed in an inductive manner. The second feature is that it takes an interpretivist epistemological stance. Finally the author states that typically qualitative research adopts a constructionist ontological position. These arguments have highlighted the reasons why a qualitative approach is deemed to be more important for this study.

Maitlis (2005) argues ‘qualitative methods are well suited to the study of dynamic processes, especially where these processes are constituted of individuals’ interpretations’ (ibid p23) However the leadership field has typically been dominated by more quantitative means of inquiry and most notably the self-completion questionnaire (Bryman, 2011b). . A study conducted by Lowe and Gardner (2000) on the research methods adopted by papers in the first decade of the *‘Leadership Quarterly’*; found that 71% used quantitative methods and 39% adopted qualitative approaches. 64% of these articles used questionnaires as a means of data collection and 20% interviews. However the picture is reversed if the journal *‘Leadership’* is examined over its first five years. 22% of papers published by the journal in this time period used questionnaires as their primary form of data collection and 51% used semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2011a). Day (2011) echoes a similar sentiment by calling for alternative research strategies to the use of questionnaires. He states ‘single shot survey based research designs are unlikely to add much value to this nascent leadership development science’ (Day, 2011, p47). He particularly argues for the adoption of more qualitative methods in the study of leadership development (ibid).

There are a number of perspectives on how best to assess the quality of qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Creswell, 1998, Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Stenbacka, 2001, Tracy, 2010). Creswell (1998) divides these perspectives into several categories based on the approach they take to verification. Verification is important because it defines the way in which the rigour of a study is ensured (Morse et al., 2002). Firstly, some traditions assume that the criteria of reliability and validity that are adopted in quantitative research should also be applied to qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). For example, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) discuss four criteria relating to reliability and validity which they argue can be used to assess qualitative research. They are outlined in table 3.1 below.

External Reliability	Internal Reliability	Internal Validity	External Validity
The degree to which researchers acting independently would unearth the same phenomena or come to the same conclusions in a similar setting	The level to which multiple researchers might be in agreement about what they observe if provided with criteria or constructs beforehand	Concerned with the degree to which observations and measurements reflect the development of theory	Reflects the extent to which results can be generalised from one setting to another

*Table 3.1: Le Compte and Goetz's (1982) Quality Criteria for Qualitative Research*

However, other authors argue that qualitative research should be judged against alternative quality guidelines (Creswell, 1998). For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that research based on constructivist or constructionist assumptions must meet criteria of authenticity and trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) view takes the place of internal validity. It is deemed to be a suitable criterion because of the emphasis on multiple accounts of reality in qualitative research. Building on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work, Bryman and Bell (2007) suggest potential strategies for ensuring that credibility is achieved, such as respondent validation.

Transferability, it is argued, should be adopted as a criterion in place of external validity (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This assesses the level to which findings can be transferred to other settings. In a similar vein,

dependability should take the place of reliability. In order to ensure that the findings of a given piece of research are dependable, detailed accounts of the entire process, such as field notes and transcripts, should be maintained. Finally the authors hold that confirmability should be used instead of objectivity. This factor takes into account the fact that qualitative research is not necessarily completely objective, nor does it seek to be.

The authenticity dimension examines the impact of the research on those participating in it. I agree that Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research are more appropriate than simply transferring those developed specifically for quantitative research. This is due in part to different philosophical assumptions that these two types of research are founded upon and also due to the different purposes that they seek to achieve.

A more recent typology of the criteria used to assess the quality of qualitative research is set out by Tracy (2010). She contends that values for quality are similar to other forms of 'social knowledge' in that they are constantly changing and are 'situated within local contexts and current conversations' (ibid, p837). She makes the case for eight broad criteria that qualitative research should fulfil: a worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, makes a significant contribution, ethics and meaningful coherence. These criteria are described in more detail in table 3.2 on the next page.

Criterion	Description
<b>Worthy Topic</b>	Qualitative research should be relevant, timely, significant and interesting.
<b>Rich Rigour</b>	Qualitative research should supply rich descriptions and explanations. Care should be taken in data collection and analysis.
<b>Sincerity</b>	Researchers should be sincere and authentic and transparent about their own biases, methods used and challenges.  'Self-reflexivity' is viewed as being important.
<b>Credibility</b>	Research findings need to be trustworthy and plausible. This can be achieved through thick description / triangulation / multivocality (multiple voices in the research)
<b>Resonance</b>	Qualitative research should be able to 'affect an audience'.
<b>Significant Contribution</b>	Research should make a contribution practically / theoretically / heuristically
<b>Ethical</b>	Research should be ethical
<b>Meaningful Coherence</b>	Qualitative research should <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Achieve its purpose</li> <li>- Use data collection methods with fit with its aim</li> <li>- Connect the literature, research focus, data findings and interpretations in a meaningful way.</li> </ul>

*Table 3.2: Tracy's (2010) 'Eight 'Big Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research'*

The next sub-section of this chapter outlines case study research design, the specific design that has been adopted in this research.

### 3.2.3 The Use of Case Studies

As stated earlier, this is an inductive study adopting a qualitative case study research design. The case study in itself is not a method but a research strategy or research design (Bryman, 2012, Hartley, 2004). A case study is defined as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009, p18). Case Studies are also valuable in highlighting behaviour which can only be fully understood in the context of wider influences within or on the organisation (Hartley, 2004). Hartley argues that case studies should not focus on 'divorcing' context from the issues or phenomena that are being studied. The joint emphasis on context and studying something in depth constitutes the primary reason for adopting such an approach. As the literature review highlighted, an understanding and analysis of 'context' is seen as a fundamental part of this research. The discussion chapter will explain how the structural and temporal aspects of context can impact on the experience of a leadership development programme. A case study is both the process of inquiring about a particular case and the outcome of that inquiry (Stake, 1995).

This research utilises a single case study, formed around one particular leadership development programme and the multinational organisation for which it is developed. There are certain advantages to using single case studies. Yin (2009) claims that there is a justification for single cases as a research method when one or more of five circumstances prevail. Firstly, the approach is justified if the case is a 'critical case' that can act as a means of testing a well-known theory and either builds on it or challenges it. Secondly, single cases are useful when the case is 'extreme' or unique, such as used in some forms of clinical psychology. Siggelkow (2007) justifies the use of single cases by giving the example of a 'talking pig'. He explains that some cases are so special that having a large number of them is not necessary. He states that if you showed someone a pig that could talk when you snapped your fingers they would not reject you from a journal just because you only had one case of a 'talking pig.' Thirdly, single cases can also be classified as representative of a particular phenomenon, and then the findings from them can be potentially applied to a wider group of settings. The 'revelatory' case on the other hand observes and analyses something that has been inaccessible to researchers in the past and therefore contributes something entirely new. Finally, the 'longitudinal' case examines the same case on at least two separate occasions.

The case that forms the basis of this research is longitudinal. I undertook participant and non-participant observation over a six month period between

November 2010 and May 2011. I conducted interviews with (for the most part) the same group of individuals at three different points in time over a thirteen month period between January 2011 and February 2012. The entire data collection period was therefore fifteen months. There is very little longitudinal empirical research in existence on leadership development. Through conducting the research over a longer time period, this study makes a methodological contribution. This contribution is outlined in more detail in chapter six. Not only does the study contribute empirically through its longitudinal approach but as the following three chapters will illustrate, different findings were apparent at each stage of the fieldwork. Had the research not been undertaken over a longer time period, the results would have been very different. I also argue that this single case study is 'representative' of a particular phenomenon to a certain degree. It is an example of a corporate leadership development programme situated in a post-merger organisational context characterised by frequent and significant cultural and structural change. However this degree of representation must be applied with caution as there are likely to be certain unique attributes inapplicable to other similar cases.

There are several advantages to adopting a case study research design. Most importantly for this research is the way that case studies account for context. In relation to this study, adopting this design provides a basis for an in-depth exploration of LDP and the organisational context that surrounds it.

Yin (2009) warns that a possible danger of using single cases is that they may not in the end turn out to be the case that the researcher thought they would be. However I consider this to be a strength rather than a weakness in relation to this particular research. It has already been argued that this is inductive research so does not rely on specific predetermined hypotheses. The way that the case has unravelled and evolved over time is in itself interesting. It has proved to be an even more interesting case than I originally thought. I would take Ragin's (2000) perspective that 'the final realisation of the case's nature may be the most important part of the interaction between ideas and evidence' (ibid, p6).

Flyvbjerg (2006) outlines some of the strengths of case study research through analysing and responding to what he terms to be 'five misunderstandings' associated with it. The first of Flyvbjerg's 'misunderstandings', and perhaps most significant for this study, is that general, theoretical and context independent knowledge is seen as being more valuable than practical, context-dependent knowledge. The author opposes this statement by arguing that context-dependent knowledge and experience is at the very core of what he terms 'expert activity.' He contends that it is impossible to progress beyond lower levels of the learning process without understanding phenomena in their context and 'the development of a nuanced view of reality' (Flyvbjerg, 2006 , p223).

Another misunderstanding that Flyvbjerg refutes is that case studies cannot contribute to 'scientific development' because it is impossible to generalise from an individual case. The author argues that whether it is possible to generalise depends on the specific case and in what manner it was selected. He also states that generalisation is not necessarily as important as is often supposed, because knowledge that cannot be formally generalised can still be valuable for the academic field or for society.

The subsequent misunderstanding is that the case study holds a bias towards verification and that as a methodology it has the propensity to confirm the researcher's predetermined ideas. Flyvbjerg attempts to falsify this claim by proposing that one of the advantages of adopting the case study research design is that it can get closer to real life situations and investigate phenomena in practice. The main reason I have adopted a case study design in this research is that it facilitates a more in-depth understanding of leadership development in its context. As Flyvbjerg argues, the intensive interaction in the field can push researchers to change their own predetermined ideas.

Flyvbjerg's final misunderstanding of case study research is that it is hard to develop general ideas and theories on the basis of particular case studies. He challenges this by maintaining that it is not necessarily helpful to summarise or generalise the findings of case studies and that something that does prove difficult to summarise may be an indication of an in-depth piece of research that

contains a variety of interesting narratives. He states 'often it is not desirable to summarise and generalise case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety' (Flyvbjerg, 2006 , p241).

To summarise, the reasons for adopting a case study methodology include the manner in which context is viewed. Case studies facilitate a more in-depth study of a particular phenomenon or phenomena in context. In this case the phenomenon is leadership development and the context is a leadership development programme, situated within a post-merger organisation undergoing significant and frequent organisational change. I will now move on to explain the specific methods used for this research.

## 3.3 Methods

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Having outlined philosophical assumptions and research approaches, this section of the chapter explains the specific case and methods I have used in this study.

### 3.3.1 The Case

The case study operates at two different levels; a leadership development programme (LDP) and the organisational context in which it sits. The leadership development programme was delivered to 28 middle managers and senior executives working for the Northern European unit of TELCORP. Of these 28 individuals, three were female. The majority of the participants were not acquainted with one another prior to attending the programme. Two of the 28 participants left the programme at an early stage, leaving a total cohort of 26 for the majority of the programme.

The intervention took place over a six month period between November 2010 and May 2011 and consisted of a one day kick-off event, four two-day modules and a one-day review session. It drew on a number of techniques such as classroom learning, small group work, psychometric tests, peer group coaching and experiential elements. As I alluded to earlier it was delivered by agents

external to the organisation. The aims of the programme included enhancing collaboration amongst employees operating in different departments in order to deter the development of organisational silos. Furthermore according to the organisational representative and the consulting team it sought to develop leadership skills and ability. In practice, however, there appeared to be some confusion about the purpose of LDP. An analysis of the programme's aims and the confusion that surrounded them is provided in Chapter four.

TELCORP is a multinational organisation that is situated in the telecommunications sector. It formed as the result of a merger several years ago between two companies of different national origin. Since this merger members of the organisation have experienced frequent structural and cultural change. This high degree of change was evident throughout the entirety of the fifteen month data collection period that occurred between November 2010 and February 2012. TELCORP had also struggled to be financially successful in the years following the merger and as a result there had been many senior level management changes. The next section outlines the issues of research access.

### 3.3.2 Research Access

Gummesson (2000, p14) refers to access as 'the researcher's number 1 challenge.' This section explores how I gained and maintained access to the TELCORP organisation, which forms the case study for this research.

'Gatekeepers' are critical in enabling research access (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Bryman, 2012, Buchanan et al., 1988). In September 2010, I began the search for suitable research sites, which I defined as those that would fit in with my research interests and at the same time would provide the necessary degree of access. In doing so, I adopted what Buchanan et al (1988) term an 'opportunistic approach' to fieldwork, which encompasses a balance between what is 'theoretically desirable' and what is actually possible (ibid, p53). They further contend that in this struggle between the two ends of the spectrum the

possible will always win. Moreover they state that 'the practice of field research is the art of the possible' (ibid, p55). Although the research site was predominantly determined by the relevant research area of leadership development, feasibility was also a key guiding factor. Buchanan et al (1988) assert that gaining access has become more problematic over time due to a growing number of researchers seeking to obtain such access and a difficult economic climate which makes employees and senior managers less willing to offer their time to research activities. Although the authors were writing at the end of the 1980s it could be argued that the economic climate is still just as much of an issue today.

An opportunity arose through a member of the Professional Network at Exeter University (where I was a student), who was due to work as a consultant on a leadership development programme for employees of a large multinational post-merger organisation. The organisation and the consultancy firm agreed to allow me to observe the programme as well as interview all individuals involved. Access was granted in return for anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore I agreed to share my findings with them around the impact of the programme. The initial contact served as a 'sponsor' (Bryman and Bell, 2007) through the entirety of the data collection process. A further 'sponsor' was found in the organisation and acted as an intermediary between the consulting team and the participants. She is referred to throughout this thesis as 'the organisational representative' and under the pseudonym 'Stacey'.

The need to maintain organisational access does not end once the initial contact has been established. Acquiring access is an ongoing activity that requires a significant amount of time and persistence (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Buchanan et al., 1988). Not only does access to the organisation need negotiating but also access to the viewpoints of the individuals within that organisation. It is not just about 'getting in' but also 'getting on' (Buchanan et al, 1988). Obtaining access to the organisation meant that I was able to act as an observer on the leadership development programme (LDP). However, continuous renegotiation was required in order to set up interviews with the participants, their line managers, the consulting team and the 'organisational representative'

The task of renegotiating access to particular individuals was made more complex by the longitudinal nature of the study. The consultants and the 'organisational representative' were interviewed at two different points in time and a group of the participants were interviewed three times over a thirteen month period. A small number of the participants left the organisation during this time period. During each interview it was important for me as a researcher to 'get on' (Buchanan et al., 1988) with participants in order to establish a good and enduring relationship, which would enable me to secure a subsequent interview with them. These relationships helped with the re-negotiation process. The interview process and the challenges associated with this will be discussed in a later section of this chapter. Having highlighted the complexities of research access and why this specific case was chosen, I will now move on to explain the case study design in more detail.

### **3.3.3 Case Study Design**

Within the case study design three qualitative research methods were adopted; observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. Figure 3.1 on the next page gives an outline of the methodology and methods adopted. It also illustrates the way in which this study is conducted longitudinally, at different points in time. The methods will all be explored in detail in the subsequent sections.

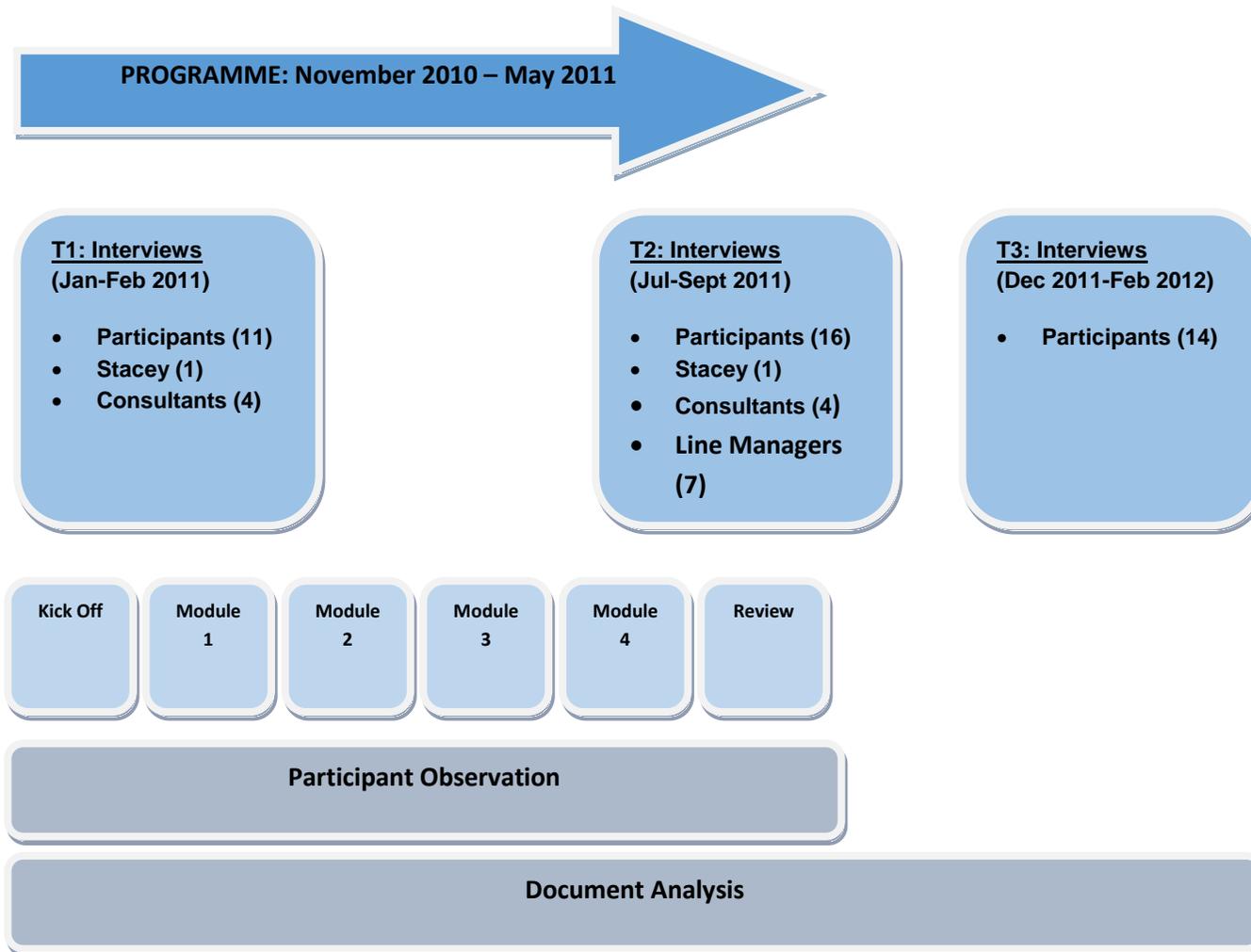


Figure 3.1: Case Study Design

### 3.3.4 Participant and non-participant observation

Participant and non-participant observation were employed as methods. I attended the entirety of LDP, which ran between the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and the 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The programme took the form of four two day modules, one kick-off day and one review day, and involved a total of ten days of observation. The degree to which I acted as either a participant or an observer varied according to activity.

Gold (1958) classifies the researcher's role as an observer into four different roles; complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer. I spent the majority of my time in an 'observer as participant' role, although on occasions during the programme I acted as 'participant as observer' or 'complete observer'. I participated in activities that I deemed to be both appropriate and feasible. I determined feasibility by the extent to which participation relied upon being a member of the TELCORP organisation and was particularly related to small group activities. For example on one occasion the participants were asked to present customer solutions specifically related to their organisational roles, making it impossible for me to participate. I determined appropriateness largely by the sensitivity involved. I did not attend one on one sessions relating to individuals' psychometric test results and I was not encouraged to take notes during peer group sessions where the content was viewed as being highly sensitive and often of a personal nature.

Throughout my role as an observer I acted in an overt manner (Bryman and Bell, 2007). I regarded it as neither desirable nor possible to disguise my identity as a researcher. All of the participants on LDP were members of the same organisation. Although many of them were unacquainted with each other prior to the initial kick-off event, it would have been extremely difficult for me to represent myself as an employee of that organisation. However the time I spent with the participants enabled me to become acquainted with and able to use some of the company specific technical jargon by the end of the research

process and I developed a rich understanding of their roles, context, and the difficulties and opportunities confronting them. I was also easily identifiable as an 'outsider' to the organisation because of my gender and age. I was the youngest attendee and one of only four females in the entire cohort. I also felt it necessary to clearly assert myself as acting in a separate entity from the organisation and the consulting agency and make it clear that my purpose was not to evaluate the performance of individual participants. The main reason for doing this was to develop trust with the participants and encourage openness, particularly in their interviews. Throughout the course of my research I came to be accepted as a member of the group by some of the participants.

Observation was not restricted to formal gatherings. During the course of the programme, I engaged with participants at coffee breaks, lunch times and evening dinner and drinks where a residential component formed part of the module. These informal discussions were often more informative than formal elements of the programme and enabled me to build up a relationship with the participants.

Participant and non-participant observation served several main purposes in this research. The first is that through participating in and observing LDP I gained a greater understanding of the organisational context in which the programme was embedded. Formal activities such as group discussions and peer group sessions shed light on organisational culture, organisational and individual challenges and perceptions of leadership held by individuals. Informal mealtime discussions with attendees elaborated on these issues. The second purpose of observation as a research method was to understand the content of LDP. This was extremely helpful during the course of the interviews and enabled me to relate to programme specific comments made by respondents.

However one of the most important purposes that participant and non-participant observation served was as a means of facilitating the development of confidence and trust between me as an interviewer and the research participants (Waddington, 2004). Through partaking in the same activities as the participants and having informal conversations with them at lunchtimes and

evenings on event days I established relationships that enabled the discussion of more sensitive topics during the interviews. I maintain that the interviewees would not have been so open and forthcoming without the prior establishment of these relationships.

According to Bryman (2012) there are seven principal advantages of participant observation, four of which are relevant to this research. Participant observation allows researchers to 'see things through others' eyes' (Bryman, 2012, p493) through participating in a large number of the same activities. Through participating in the leadership development programme I could experience the activities and discussions in the same way as the other participants. Secondly participant observation allows for a consideration of what Bryman terms 'the taken for granted' (Bryman, 2012, p494). Spending time with the participants enabled me to observe behaviour, body language and group interactions rather than simply consider what individuals said. Perhaps most importantly for this research, participant observation can help to develop sensitivity to context (ibid). Through being immersed in the programme I developed an understanding of the organisational context that could be explored further in subsequent interviews. Finally, observation can lead to coming across unexpected topics or issues that can be investigated in greater detail which affords the data collection process a higher level of flexibility. Semi-structured interviews were used to complement and build on observation and I will turn to them next.

### **3.3.5 Semi-structured interviews**

The semi-structured interview is one type of qualitative interview. According to King (2004) the objective of any qualitative research interview is to look at the research area from the point of view of the interviewee and try to understand how and why they have reached this perspective. Rather than seeing the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee as a 'distraction' to the research process and trying to avoid it by imposing structure as is the case with more quantitative based interviews, the qualitative researcher understands that this relationship is integral to the research process (King, 2004). The

interviewee is viewed as being an active 'participant' in the interview, playing a key role in shaping the process and the manner in which the conversation evolves. These factors are reflected in Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) definition of the qualitative research interview as 'an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009 , p3). King (2004) lists several advantages of using qualitative interviews. They enable research to concentrate on focussed questions about life within organisations. Furthermore King contends that it is a method which a large number of participants will accept. He posits that interviewees often enjoy the process and it can sometimes act as a way of helping them to clarify their own thoughts about the matter in question. However he also states that this type of interview is time consuming for the interviewees.

Bryman and Bell (2007) distinguish between unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The latter is the form of interview that I used within this study and so will now be explored in greater depth. In a semi-structured interview the interviewer follows a set of questions on a particular topic or an interview guide (Bryman and Bell, 2007, King, 2004). However the use of these questions, their wording and the order in which they are asked is adapted for each particular interview. Other questions may also be added during the course of the interview as the conversation progresses.

Several sets of interview guides were developed for this study. The reasons for this were because four different groups of individuals were interviewed across three different time periods; participants, line managers, consultants and the organisational representative. The interview guides are included in Appendix B with confidential information removed such as the name of the organisation and the name of the leadership development programme. The guides for the first set of interviews were comprised of broad questions around the impact of LDP. Extant literature in this domain served as a base for the formation of the questions. For the participants the interviews served as a means initially of obtaining a broad understanding of the organisation and where the participants fitted within it. They also served to collect initial thoughts and feelings towards the programme and what use it would be for them. The questions for the

second and third round interviews were more targeted and specific based on preliminary data analysis of the first set of interviews.

The interview guides for the consultants and the organisational representative were developed in a similar way. They sought to gauge pre and post programme perceptions of LDP and its impact. For the line managers the process of developing the guides was slightly different because they were only interviewed once during the data collection period. The questions formulated were designed to obtain their feelings, not only on LDP, but also their perspective of the organisation from where they worked; at a higher hierarchical level.

Because the interviews were semi-structured, it was possible to guide the conversation whilst at the same time being flexible to explore interesting issues in greater depth as the conversation progressed. Although the choice of words for each question was carefully considered, if an interviewee found a question difficult to understand, it was adapted for subsequent interviews. Having identified the groups of individuals who were interviewed, the next section will go into greater depth about the sampling strategy adopted.

### *Sampling strategy and respondents*

Interviews were carried out at three different times during the longitudinal study: early on in LDP at the end of the programme, and finally seven to nine months after its completion. The interview sample consisted of four distinct groups of individuals which varied slightly across these three phases. In total 58 interviews were undertaken over a thirteen month period. I selected interview respondents using a purposive sampling strategy (Creswell and Clark, 2011, Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon experienced by a carefully chosen group of individuals (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). My selection of informants was based on their experience with LDP. Four different groups of people were identified in order to gain a rich understanding of the impact of the programme. Each of these four groups will now be explored in greater detail.

- *The programme participants*

A sample of the leadership development programme participants were interviewed at all three stages of the process. Initially, in the first stage of interviews, a representative sample of programme participants was selected. This was done in order to try to gauge a wide spectrum of viewpoints across the board taking into account factors such as department, gender, location and nationality. Ten participants out of a total cohort of 28 (two individuals later left the programme) were initially invited for interview during the first phase of interviewing in January and February 2011. Contact details of these participants were obtained from the organisational representative, Stacey. When a number of these participants did not respond to the interview request a further three participants were selected using the same criteria. Eleven participants agreed to be interviewed. The remaining two individuals did not respond to the invitation for interview.

A second stage of interviewing ensued once LDP was brought to a close between July and September 2011. All 26 of the individuals who completed the programme were sent an invitation to be interviewed. The sample was extended so that a wider spectrum of viewpoints could be gauged and so that every attendee could feel they had a voice to express their views. Out of the eleven participants who had been interviewed previously, eight of them agreed to be interviewed for a second time, one did not respond to the interview invitation, and one declined due to work pressures. The remaining individual agreed to be interviewed face to face but did not turn up to the meeting. Interviews were also conducted with a further eight individuals who had not been interviewed in the first round. There were therefore a total of 16 interviews carried out at this stage.

The final stage of interviewing occurred between December 2011 and February 2012. All 19 participants who had been previously interviewed either in the initial interviews or second round interviews were invited to participate once more. Fourteen of these were interviewed, four did not respond, and the remaining individual had been made redundant since the programme and was therefore no longer in the organisation. The majority of participant interviews

over the course of the process were carried out via telephone. A total of 41 interviews with participants were carried out over the course of the study. Demographic information about the 19 participant interviews is given in table 3.3. The interview process and participants over time is illustrated more clearly in figure 3.2.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<b>Total Participants</b>	11	16	14
<b>Gender</b>	2 Female 9 Male	2 Female 14 Male	3 Female 11 Male
<b>Location</b>	1 Ireland 1 Northern Europe 9 UK (of which 3 predominantly home based)	1 Ireland 1 Northern Europe 14 UK (of which 7 predominantly home based)	1 Ireland 1 Northern Europe 12 UK (of which 5 predominantly home based)
<b>Organisational unit / role</b>	2 originate from smaller acquisitions 2 from smaller sub units 1 Research and Development 2 General Management (also perform sales roles) 3 Technical 1 Other support function	2 originate from smaller acquisitions 2 from smaller sub units 3 Research and Development 2 General Management (also perform sales roles) 4 Technical 3 Sales	2 originate from smaller acquisitions 2 from smaller sub units 3 Research and Development 2 General Management (also perform sales roles) 2 Technical 1 Other support function 2 Sales

*Table 3.3 Participant Interviewee Demographics*

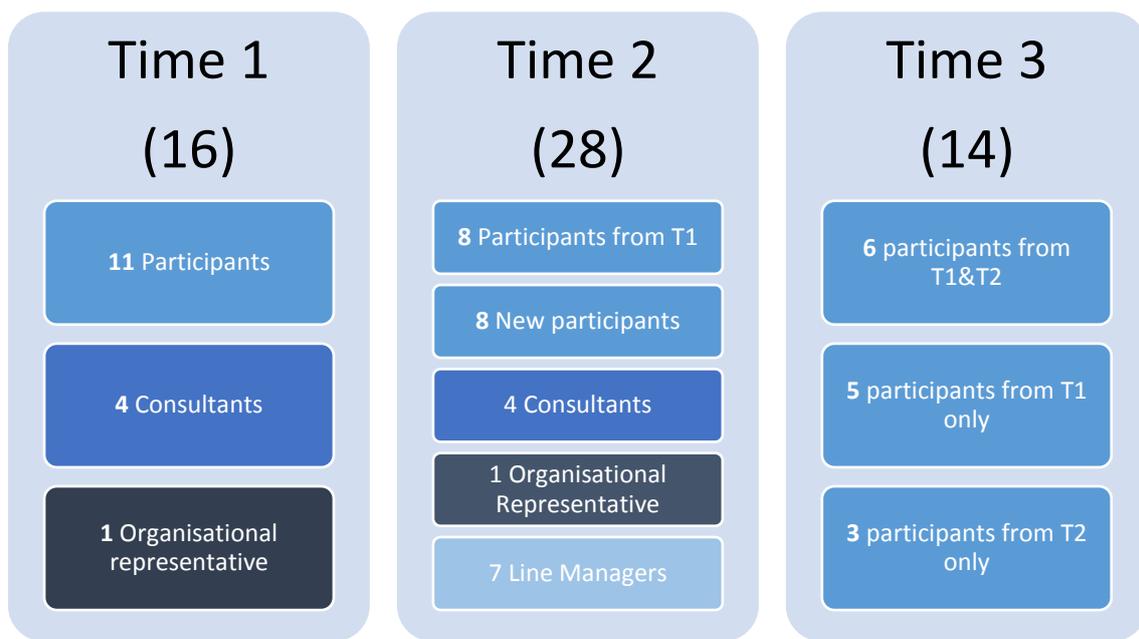


Figure 3.2 Interview Process

- **The consultants**

All four members of the external consulting team delivering the programme were interviewed early on in the programme and once it had finished. This group consisted of two lead consultants and two facilitators. The team had not worked together as a group prior to the commencement of this intervention. All consultant interviews were carried out via telephone. The purpose of the consultants' interviews was to obtain an understanding of how they viewed the programme, the participants and the organisation.

- **The Line Managers**

In order to capture a wider range of perspectives across multiple levels on both the impact of LDP and contextual factors a sample of the participants' line managers were interviewed once the programme had ended. This proved to be a complex process due largely to continual organisational restructuring, which resulted in participants' line managers changing frequently during the course of the programme. Initial contact with the line managers was made through Stacey. After this initial introduction, I corresponded directly with them. Fourteen were contacted, of which seven agreed to an interview, six did not respond and one was not aware of their employee's participation in the

programme. In an email he stated '*I think you have been given my name in error. I and my team are not participants in LDP.*' Out of the seven line manager interviews that were conducted five were face to face and two were via telephone.

- ***The 'organisational representative'***

The idea behind LDP originated from Stacey who works within its corporate university. This individual was responsible for managing all aspects of the programme and liaising with the consulting agency. She also acted as a sponsor for my organisational access. She was interviewed early on in the programme and once it had ended. Both of these interviews were carried out via telephone.

### *The use of telephone interviews*

Most of the interviews were conducted via telephone. Out of a total of 58 interviews, 49 were conducted in this manner. Telephone interviews have both their advantages and limitations (Bryman, 2012). The main reasons for conducting interviews over the telephone were issues relating to convenience and feasibility. For example some of the participants were located in Scandinavia, some in Ireland and others spread out through England and Wales. This would make conducting 58 face to face interviews time consuming and impractical. However the principal reason for conducting the majority of these interviews in this manner is because many of the participants work from home on a regular basis and operate as a part of a virtual team. The use of virtual teams and the adoption of teleworking are very popular within TELCORP. This makes the notion of meeting with this group of individuals more complex. All UK-based interviewees were given the choice between face to face interviews and telephone interviews. The majority opted for the latter, for reasons of convenience. Despite the fact that most of the interviews took place over the telephone, the informants were not completely unfamiliar to me. Apart from two of the line managers, I had met each of those interviewed via telephone face to face prior to the interview on at least one occasion.

## *The interviewer's role in the process*

The interviewer plays a key role in the interview process. Kvale (1996) lists ten criteria of a 'successful interviewer'. The first of these is being knowledgeable. The interview questions were designed carefully so as to be able to explain them clearly. Kvale's second criterion is appropriate structuring. These interviews were semi-structured rather than fully structured, but followed a clear outline and natural progression. A brief was provided at the start of the interview, and the conversation was closed by asking if the interviewee had any further comments or questions that had not been addressed. Being clear is another important requirement. The questions were designed so as to be as clear as possible and without using specific academic terminology. There were a small number of occasions where a question had to be adapted or removed for reasons of clarity. In order to respond to ethical demands, interviewers need to be 'gentle' and 'sensitive' (ibid). These points proved to be of great importance, particularly in the third round participant interviews where some of the individuals had either been made redundant or demoted. I was faced with highly sensitive situations, and many participants sought reassurance that their views would remain anonymous and confidential. When interviewees did not wish to answer a particular question, this was respected and not pursued any further. Some of Kvale's other criteria for a 'successful interviewer', such as being critical and steering the interview, are perhaps subject to debate. According to Kvale (1996) an interviewer does 'not take everything that is said at face value but questions critically to test the reliability and validity of what the interviewees tell' (p149). However I would argue that in line with a social constructivist viewpoint meanings are constructed, so the interviewees' viewpoints are important in themselves regardless of whether or not they are deemed to be 'factual.'

## *Recording and transcribing interviews*

All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Bryman and Bell (2007) point to several advantages of recording and transcribing interviews, one of which is that it enables the interviewer to be more open, alert and responsive to what is being said. It also allows for a complete picture of the discussions contained within interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) take a similar view, arguing that recording interviews allows the interviewer to focus on the particular subject matter and the dynamics of the interview itself. I transcribed each of the 58 interviews myself rather than opting to outsource this task. I felt that this would enable me to be closer to the data by familiarising myself with it throughout the process. I also felt that it would allow me to pick up on more subtle nuances such as tone, having conducted the interviews myself. The interviews were later fully transcribed verbatim including pauses. Each transcript was given an anonymising code. The identity of each anonymising code was stored in a password protected file. Having outlined the use of semi-structured interviews in this study, the next sub-section examines the third method; documentary analysis.

### **3.3.6 Documentary Analysis**

Documents were collected and analysed relating both to the specific leadership development programme being followed and the wider organisational context. Yin (2009) views documents as extremely valuable for substantiating evidence from other sources. The documents I analysed fell into two principal categories. The first of these was materials specific to the leadership development programme itself. The materials consisted of slides and other hand-outs, particularly related to group activities. Their primary use was in providing an insight into the content of the course. Also included in this category were the evaluation sheets (otherwise known as 'happy sheets') that were completed by the participants at the end of each event. These documents provided an indication of how the evaluation of leadership development was regarded in

TELCORP and illustrated some of the views held by the participants after each event.

The other type of documents consisted of news articles about the organisation. As TELCORP was undergoing continuous change, news articles, industry specific websites and relevant blogs were important sources of data about the changing nature of the organisational context and the challenges that TELCORP faced over the time period of this study. However these mass media outputs were not analysed as separate forms of data using, for example, content analysis. Bryman and Bell (2007) highlight that authenticity is a potential concern with mass media outputs. I have used them as a way of providing information about the organisational context, rather than analysing them in depth in their own right.

### 3.3.7 Longitudinal Research

Data for the study were collected between November 2010 and February 2012, with interviews being conducted with largely the same group of people at three different junctures. As argued in the previous chapter, there is a lack of longitudinal research in the evaluation of management and leadership development interventions and more generally in the leadership development field. Day (2011) calls for more longitudinal research in leadership development. This thesis seeks to address this gap.

Menard (2002) defines longitudinal research using a number of distinguishing characteristics. Firstly he argues that longitudinal research is research in which data is captured for each topic or 'variable' for two or more different time periods. Secondly the subjects or cases examined need to be the same or comparable for each time period. And lastly longitudinal research needs to contain some comparison of the data between the multiple time periods. It must be noted that this author writes from a quantitative perspective; something which is evident through the use of terms such as 'variable.' However some of these aspects of longitudinal research can be applied equally to qualitative research.

Interview data for this study were collected for three different time periods. Although some of the participants who were interviewed at the various points of time did differ, there was some constancy and certainly comparability across time. Data were compared from one time period to the next even though the interview questions differed at each stage.

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) case study research often incorporates a longitudinal component because researchers may be immersed in an organisation for a substantial period of time. Other means of including a longitudinal element in case studies is the use of archival or retrospective data (Bryman and Bell, 2007, Menard, 2002). As mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter this study adopts a case study research design incorporating longitudinal elements rather than a purely longitudinal design. A longitudinal design is usually associated with quantitative survey based approaches to research (Bryman and Bell, 2007) and connected with understanding causal influences. The longitudinal research design consists of panel studies and cohort studies (ibid). The latter has some similarities or overlap with the way that data were collected in this study. Cohort research examines a full cohort of individuals or a randomly selected sample of them and who each possess a characteristic in common. In the case of this research this shared characteristic would be their attendance of LDP.

Although much of the extant literature on longitudinal research stems from a quantitative perspective, there has been the emergence of qualitative longitudinal research (often shortened to QLR). According to McLeod and Thomson (2009) many longitudinal studies depend on either retrospective data or follow trends by repeating surveys at different points in time with different groups of people. They contend that it is much rarer to find studies that follow the same group of individuals over longer periods. Although I did not interview exactly the same group of people in each of the three interview phases, there is not much variation in the sample. McLeod and Thomson (2009) identify three different types of longitudinal studies that follow the same group of individuals over a period of time. The first of these is situated within the anthropological field and investigates a community of people over an entire career. The second type is panel studies which is one of the two types of longitudinal research

identified by Bryman and Bell (2007) and is usually quantitative in nature. The third entitled 'qualitative longitudinal research' is a methodology which seeks to 'walk alongside individuals or groups over time in such a way that privileges the present in which they are encountered' (McLeod and Thomson, 2009 , p61). The authors further argue that within longitudinal research there is an increasing appreciation of the necessity of going beyond questionnaires to more in-depth methods. Repeated interviews fit within this bracket and can provide 'a flexible and responsive approach to understanding the longer-term and unintended impacts of interventions' (McLeod and Thomson, 2009 , p62).

There are some challenges associated with longitudinal research. One of the principal challenges I encountered in this study was the influence of external factors and how to make sense of them. I argue throughout this thesis that context is integral to leadership and leadership development, and that the latter needs to be embedded within context. This is explored in further depth in chapter two. However, the organisational context has proved to be both interesting and a challenge for the conduct of longitudinal research. Due to continual organisational restructuring participants' circumstances changed substantially throughout the course of the data collection period and particularly within the thirteen month interview period. This had an impact not only on the data that was collected but most significantly on the attrition rate. Some of the participants left the organisation either through redundancy or their own volition during this time frame. McLeod and Thomson reached a similar view in arguing that longitudinal studies are very susceptible to the withdrawal of participants.

## 3.4 Research Ethics

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It is acknowledged that ethical considerations need to be addressed in any piece of research. This study followed the ethical guidelines as set out by The University of Exeter. Ethics approval was obtained from The University of Exeter Business School Ethics Committee. A more detailed explanation of the ethical considerations that this thesis adheres to is provided in this section of the chapter.

Bryman and Bell (2007) adopt Diener and Crandall's (1978) typology of the four main areas of ethical principles in research. The first of these is a consideration of whether or not the research in question causes harm to participants. This can be further broken down into physical harm, harm to participants' development or self-esteem, stress, and causing participants to perform blameworthy acts. Steps have been taken in this study to limit the amount of harm caused to participants. The pseudonym TELCORP is used throughout this thesis to protect the identity of the case study organisation. Identifiable specifics relating to the organisation have been removed wherever possible in the hope that the name of the organisation is not readily identifiable. A confidentiality agreement was signed with the consulting agency delivering the leadership development programme who then provided the access to the organisation itself. When transcribing the interviews anonymising codes were used for each interviewee. The identity of the interviewees was not shared with anyone outside of the supervisory team. No identifiable content was supplied to the organisation or the consulting agency; only summaries of findings.

Difficult issues presented themselves in the interviews, especially the later set where some of the participants had either been made redundant, been demoted or had negative viewpoints that they wished to express about the organisation or their management. These were dealt with in a sensitive manner with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Each interviewee was given the space to express their views without interruption.

The second ethical concern that Bryman and Bell (2007) highlight in citing Diener and Crandall's work is the lack of informed consent. Informed consent was viewed as being important in this research. During LDP I acted as an overt observer and made clear as much as possible that I was working for neither the organisation nor the consulting agency. My role was simply as a researcher and a PhD student at Exeter University. Informed consent was seen as equally important for the interview process. All respondents were sent briefs, which outlined the purpose of the interview, reassured over issues of confidentiality and anonymity and were given the option to withdraw or stop the interview at any time. Consent forms were also completed by the interviewees. A blank copy of this document can be found in Appendix A. All participants were asked

if they were happy for the interview to be recorded and were told when the record button was switched on. McLeod and Thomson (2009) pose one particular ethical concern around informed consent that relates specifically to qualitative longitudinal research. They claim that although each respondent may consent to each individual interview they may be unaware of what their complete set of interviews say about them.

The subsequent ethical issue is that of the invasion of privacy. The privacy of partakers in this research was not compromised at any point. And the final concern as outlined by Diener and Crandall and cited in Bryman and Bell is that of deception. Deception did not occur during this study. An outline of the purpose of my research and associated interviews was communicated verbally to participants, and in the case of interviews it was also provided in a written format. I answered any questions about my research that the interviewees had throughout the process.

Bryman and Bell (2007) also suggest three other additions to these ethical principles: data protection, reciprocity and trust and affiliation and conflicts of interest. The research was undertaken in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Trust was built with the participants throughout the research process and particularly aided by undertaking the participant observation. Although detailed findings will not be shared with the research participants, many of them expressed positive sentiments towards sharing their views and felt that the interview process provided a means of clarifying their own thoughts. In this way the study has some reciprocal benefits. However it is acknowledged that the reciprocal value that this study has for participants is limited. Finally this PhD research was funded by Exeter University Business School. There are no foreseen conflicts of interest.

## 3.5 Data Analysis

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This section explains the ways in which the data in this study has been analysed and why such an approach has been taken. Since semi-structured interviewing was the principal method employed, this is discussed first before moving on to participant and non-participant observation and documentary analysis. One of the strengths and major contributions of this study is the longitudinal approach that it takes, therefore a discussion of how 'time' has been incorporated into data analysis is included in this section. The section concludes with an explanation of how the issue of causality, in relation to leadership develop evaluation is addressed in this thesis.

### 3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

A qualitative thematic analysis approach was taken to analysing the interview data. This is an exploratory approach in which segments or components of a text are coded in relation to their contribution to emerging themes (Schwandt, 2007). It is a method that is used for recognising and analysing patterns or themes within a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Adopting such a method offers flexibility whilst at the same time providing the scope for a deep, detailed and yet complex analysis of the data to be conducted (ibid). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be used regardless of the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, as long as those assumptions are made clear.

I coded all 58 of the interview transcripts. Coding involves examining transcripts and labelling parts that appear to have theoretical importance or are 'particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied' (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p586). Each transcript was carefully read at least once before codes were attributed. In determining the codes I adopted the viewpoint of Miles and Huberman (1994) that it is not so much the words themselves that matter, but the meaning that lies within them. Furthermore in order to maintain the richness of the qualitative data set, instances of words or themes were not counted in a

quantitative manner. Miles and Huberman (1994) talk about the 'mischief' that simply converting words to numbers and then ignoring the words themselves can get the researcher into. The authors state that concentrating exclusively on numbers 'shifts attention from substance to arithmetic throwing out the whole notion of 'qualities' or 'essential characteristics' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p56). An inductive approach to thematic analysis was taken in which the codes and themes were built up from the data rather than using a preconceived coding frame.

The core foundation of the data analysis was built around the 41 participant interviews. The line manager interviews provided additional insight in relation to how the leadership development programme was viewed in the organisation, their involvement with it, their perception of the impact of it for their employees and further contextual factors. The primary function of the consultants' interviews was to understand the process behind designing and delivering the programme as well as their perception of its purpose. Finally the interviews with Stacey, the organisational representative facilitated an understanding of learning and development in TELCORP and where LDP sat in relation to other activities. As the participant interviews formed the heart of the analysis this will now be explored in greater detail.

41 interviews with participants were conducted over the course of thirteen months and at three different periods in time. Some of the respondents remained the same across the interview stages, but there were also some variations. A breakdown of these interviews is provided in section three of this chapter. They were analysed using the phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first stage is 'familiarising yourself with the data'. I transcribed all of the interviews before commencing with the analysis. Conducting the transcription process myself rather than outsourcing it allowed me to familiarise myself with the data early on. The benefits of the researcher transcribing interviews rather than being outsourced to an outsider have been highlighted in the literature (Bird, 2005, Braun and Clarke, 2006). These authors have argued that transcribing is the first stage in the process of data analysis. I then read each transcript several times to familiarise myself further with the data before coding it.

The second stage of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke is 'generating initial codes'. Codes represent the smallest segments of data that are interesting to the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Coding is the process in which data are broken down into constituent parts, which are then named (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Codes are defined as the tags and labels that are used to assign meaning to information collected in a study (ibid). All participant interviews were systematically coded. As this is an inductive study codes and the themes that were then developed from those codes were more 'data driven' than 'theory driven' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However it is impossible to ignore the influence of some level of theory. The research was entered into with a broad aim of trying to understand the impact of leadership development. This influenced the coding process.

The subsequent stage of thematic analysis involves 'searching for themes'. This part of the process entailed categorising the codes into broader themes. A theme is something that epitomises some degree of 'patterned response or meaning' within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p11) This stage of the analysis was conducted manually with the aid of visual representation. The themes were put into tables and all codes and extracts relating to that theme were displayed in those tables. The initial set of participant themes is listed in column one of table 4.4 on the next page. In line with the fourth stage of thematic analysis, 'reviewing themes' (Braun and Clarke, 2006), the themes were then refined, taking into account the overall research aim of this study. Some of the themes were removed on this basis. The refined list is provided in column two of table 2.4

Initial Themes	Refined Themes
Respondent's role in the organisation	
Perceived aim of LDP	Perceived aim of LDP
Feelings on LDP / impact of the programme	
Peer / participant relationships	Peer / participant relationships
Relationship with managers / management	Relationship with managers / management
Relationship with team	Relationship with team
Leadership challenges	
Can the programme help with these leadership challenges?	
Perception of leadership role / view of leadership	Perception of leadership role / view of leadership
View of / relationship with organisation	View of / relationship with organisation
Organisational context and culture	Organisational context and culture

*Table 3.4 Participant Themes*

*'Organisational context and culture'* served as a means of contextualising the data rather than analysed further as a theme in its own right in the findings chapter. However through analysing the other core themes it was apparent that context and culture had an impact on participants' experience of LDP and so these are discussed further in the discussion chapter. *'Peer / participant relationships'*, *'relationship with management'*, *'relationship with team'*, *'perception of leadership role / view of leadership'* and *'view of / relationship with organisation'* formed the five core themes. These five themes were then further coded and broken down into component sub themes. Themes were

identified and refined in-line with the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) which state that themes need to be internally coherent and meaningful and there should be clearly identifiable distinctions between the themes. The data was organised in a variety of ways to aid further investigation. Each of the five core themes were put in a tabular format and then rearranged in multiple ways. The data was examined across time in order to see how themes developed over time and which themes were the most prominent at each point in time. The data was also examined on an individual participant basis. Examples of how this was done can be found in chapter four.

### **3.5.2 Participant and Non-Participant Observation**

Detailed field notes were kept on every aspect of LDP through observation. Verbal accounts, body language, behaviour and aspects relating to setting such as room layout and location were all recorded. As I became more acquainted with the participants, in later modules every time a comment or an action was recorded the initials of the individual were also recorded, so as to relate the observational findings to participant interviews. Rather than being subjected to detailed thematic analysis in their own right the observational data served to support (or contradict) the interview findings. They also provided a useful means of contextualising the data. Detailed discussions centred on TELCORP as an organisation, particularly its culture helped to develop a picture of the organisational context of LDP. I would argue that this contextual understanding would not have been so great without the information obtained through participant and non-participant observation. Acting as an observer also afforded me the opportunity to visit two of TELCORP's sites.

The field notes also facilitated a familiarisation with the content and structure of LDP. I was able to draw on my observations and refer to specific tools and techniques in the interviews with participants, line managers, consultants and the organisational representative. The themes that were identified through the thematic analysis of the participant and line manager interviews were used as the basis for coding the observational data. Once the themes had been established, the field notes were studied carefully to identify any notes that

related to these themes. The data was used to elaborate, support and sometimes contradict the interview findings. Furthermore the observational data was used to create a more detailed picture of the organisational context in which the programme sat.

### **3.5.3 Documentary Analysis**

Programme specific, organisational documents and press articles all served as a means of understanding the context of LDP as a programme and TELCORP as an organisation. They were used to obtain background information rather than analysed as pieces of data in their own right. The news articles were used as a means of understanding changes in the organisational context as well as keeping on top of issues that might later be referred to in interviews or discussions within the modules. For example in one participant interview the respondent referred to rumours that his part of the organisation was being sold. Having read in the press a few days before this interview about the proposed sale, I was able to more fully understand his concerns.

### **3.5.4 Longitudinal Data**

As has already been explained the data set was longitudinal, with interviews taking place at three different points in time over a period of thirteen months. Although this added depth to the analysis, it also made the process more complex. Organisational restructuring altered the organisational context substantially over this time period, and these changes had to be taken into account. Changes and patterns within the data in each time period had to be observed as well as patterns and changes across different time periods.

Once the themes had been identified through the process of thematic analysis as outlined above, the data was sorted by theme and by time period in order to understand how the themes developed over time.

In addition to carrying out this process on a general level, it was also done for each participant so that it was possible to determine how participants' viewpoints developed over time.

Chapters four and five will highlight further the importance of 'time' in this study and demonstrate that some themes were more significant at different points in time.

### 3.5.5 The Issue of Causality

When discussing the evaluation of leadership development programmes, it is impossible to avoid the issue of cause and effect. As the literature review chapter demonstrated, there is a heavy emphasis in the literature and in practice placed on assessing the causal effects of leadership development programmes, often in numerical terms. However even when adopting a more qualitative approach to evaluation the issue of causality is still relevant. This thesis draws heavily on self-report data collected through semi-structured interviews, particularly with programme participants. Although inferences can be drawn from this data it is not possible to fully attribute organisational and individual level outcomes to the leadership development programme in this way. I am also relying on the perspectives of programme participants, whose opinions may be affected by a range of factors, such as the views that they wish to convey about LDP and the organisation for their own individual ends and purposes.

However through this thesis I am seeking to discuss participants' subjective experiences of causality and perceptions of impact rather than 'objective' cause and effects. In this way it speaks to an 'evaluation of knowledge' approach in which evaluation enables a set of ongoing conversations relating to the impact of leadership development for the participants involved (Kennedy et al., 2013).

The views expressed through interviews with participants, line managers, the consulting team and the organisational representative have been validated through triangulating this data with both documentary evidence and extensive field notes stemming from participant and non-participant observation. At each module I carefully recorded details such as programme content, room layout, observations made during informal lunch and evening conversations and participation during group activities. In the later modules I was able to attribute comments made and specific behaviours to particular individuals by noting

down the initials of participants whenever they asked a question during sessions, made a comment and examples of behaviour during activities and break times such as who opted to sit with whom. These observations in the form of field notes served to support, or sometimes contradict findings obtained from interview data. One particular example of this is the theme 'peer / participant relationships'. As the subsequent chapter will illustrate, the development of relationships with fellow participants was widely reported as one of the most important outcomes of LDP in the early interview stages. Field notes recorded through module observation verified this, as I was able to observe the networking taking place and take part in informal conversations with groups of participants. In later modules once a bout of organisational restructuring had taken place, I recorded who was conversing with who during sessions which confirmed the interview finding that fragmentation between organisational units was occurring, which once again verified interview findings.

Another important example for this thesis related to the lack of organisational buy in and line manager engagement and involvement. My field notes confirmed that only a small number of line managers were present at the end of programme review session and in some cases senior executives who initially agreed to be involved, did not actually attend. I was able to gauge the reactions of this first hand.

As explained in the section on 'thematic analysis' the interview data was further validated through a careful and systematic coding process in order to identify themes that were common to a number of different transcripts. The perspective of each participant transcript was compared first with every other participant transcript for a given time period. For example the perspectives were compared for all participants at interview stages one, two and three. The same process was conducted for each participant across time. So for example if a participant was interviewed at all three stages, the perspectives and emergent themes found in all three interview transcripts were compared. The line manager transcripts added an extra dimension to this analysis by validating, contradicting or supplementing the ideas expressed by the participants.

## 3.6 Summary

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This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods adopted in studying the impact of leadership development. It has re-iterated the point made in the literature review chapter that there is a lack of extant longitudinal qualitative research on leadership development, particularly that which examines the impact of leadership development.

This chapter commenced by outlining the ontological and epistemological assumptions that this research is built upon. It explained that this is an inductive qualitative study stemming from a social constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology.

The chapter continued by outlining the case study methodology that has been adopted and the reasons behind this choice in methodology. It was argued that it enables the study of phenomena in-depth within its context (Hartley, 2004, Yin, 2009). Within this research the phenomenon in question is one corporate leadership development programme and the context is the multinational for whom it was designed and delivered. This organisation resulted from a merger and has been subject to frequent structural and cultural change ever since. This section also highlighted the important issue of organisational research access and the impact that this has on research.

The subsequent section set out the three research methods: observation, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviewing. As this chapter has explained interviews were conducted with four different groups of individuals. The participant interviews form the core of the data set. The observational data in addition to the documentary analysis serves to reinforce (or contradict) the interview data as well as adding greater depth to an understanding of the context.

One of the key strengths of this study is that it incorporates a strong longitudinal dimension. Three sets of interviews were carried out at different points in time within a thirteen month period. This seeks to respond to the call for more qualitative based longitudinal research within the field (Day, 2011, McLeod and

Thomson, 2009). The findings chapter which follows will further highlight the important role that time plays in this study.

# Chapter 4: Findings

## 4.1 Introduction

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This chapter presents the research findings, drawing primarily on data obtained through 58 semi-structured interviews, but also incorporating findings from observational field notes and relevant organisational and programme specific documents.

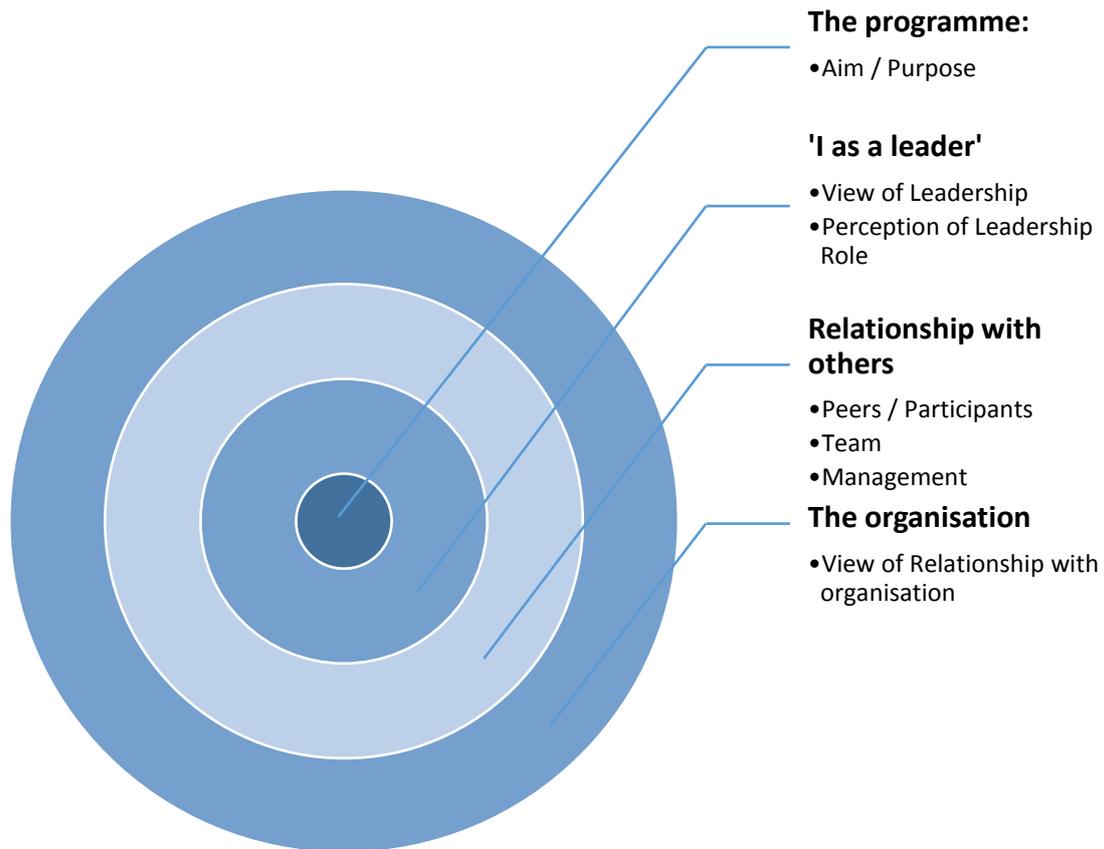
Interviews were carried out at three different points in time. The first set of interviews was carried out early on in the programme in January and February 2011. 11 participants out of a total cohort of 26 were interviewed at this point in time. The subsequent set of interviews took place within a few months of the programme ending between July and September 2011 depending on respondent availability. There were 16 respondents, 8 of which had been interviewed previously. The final set of participant interviews was carried out between December 2011 and January 2012, seven to nine months after the programme had ended and twelve months after the initial round of interviews. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this chapter in order to respect the anonymity of respondents. A list of all of the interviewees and the time periods in which they were interviewed can be found by looking at Table 4.1. It is difficult to provide a large level of detail on each of the participants in the table below, whilst at the same time respecting their anonymity, however where participants work within a smaller sub unit or acquisition organisation or regional cluster this is highlighted in the table below. Where the line managers who were interviewed directly manage any of the participant interviewees this is also illustrated.

Participants	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Line Managers	Org Rep	Consultants
<b>Anton (regional)</b>	✓	✓	✓	Adam (Vicky)	Stacey	Liz
<b>Brian (regional)</b>	✓	✓	✓	Liam (Frank, Sara, Keith, Colin, Oliver)		Kim
<b>Chris (R&amp;D)</b>	✓	✓	✓	Max		Mike
<b>Colin</b>		✓	✓	Sam (Steve)		Alice
<b>Edward (R&amp;D)</b>		✓	✓	John (Graham)		
<b>Frank</b>	✓	✓	✓	Nick (Jack)		
<b>George (unit / acq)</b>	✓	✓		Ben (Tim)		
<b>Graham (unit / acq)</b>	✓	✓	✓			
<b>Jack (R&amp;D)</b>		✓	✓			
<b>James</b>	✓		✓			
<b>Keith</b>	✓		✓			
<b>Lisa (unit / acq)</b>		✓	✓			
<b>Matt</b>		✓	✓			
<b>Oliver</b>		✓				
<b>Sara</b>	✓	✓				
<b>Simon</b>		✓				
<b>Steve</b>		✓				
<b>Tim</b>	✓	✓	✓			
<b>Vicky (unit / acq)</b>	✓		✓			

Table 4.1: Interviewees

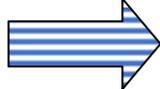
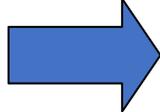
The participant interviews form the core of the data set that has been analysed. Seven of the participants' line managers were interviewed once LDP had ended. Additionally interviews were obtained from all four members of the consulting team responsible for designing and delivering the programme. These interviews were carried out in the early stages of the programme and again once it had ended. Finally the organisational representative was also interviewed at two different points in time. This individual worked within the organisation's corporate university and acted as an intermediary between the organisation and the consulting agency. The pseudonym Stacey is used to protect her identity.

All interviews were fully transcribed and a systematic thematic analysis of these transcripts ensued. More details about this process can be found in the previous chapter. The six themes explored within this chapter were formed inductively. These themes can be grouped into four categories, which are outlined in Figure 4.1. The first relates to LDP specifically. Within it the theme of '*programme aim*' can be found. The next category relates to individual level impact. LDP was positioned as a leadership development programme so within the category '*self as a leader*' the LDP participants' view of leadership and perception of leadership role are situated. The third category incorporates themes that examine the impact of LDP on participants' relationships with others. As was illustrated in the literature review chapter there have been calls for more multi-level research within leadership development (Day, 2011). This category seeks to address that gap. It incorporates the themes of relationship with management, relationship with fellow participants and the relationships with the teams that they manage or lead. The final category considers the impact that LDP has had for the participants at an organisational level. The theme of '*view of or relationship with the organisation*' can be found within it. A number of sub themes are explored within each theme.



*Figure 4.1: Findings Outline*

This chapter will highlight the importance of collecting and analysing longitudinal data when trying to understand the impact of leadership development embedded within a context of frequent organisational change. The data analysis will demonstrate that the strength of some themes and sub themes vary according to time. Had the interviews only been carried out at one or two points in time the conclusions drawn in some instances would be different. Table 4.2 on the next page provides a depiction of how the manner in which the prominence of themes varied over time will be illustrated in this chapter. The width and pattern of the arrow provides an indication of the strength of each theme at each stage of interviewing. This was determined through identifying exactly how many participants referred to each theme at each interview and the width of the arrow was calculated accordingly. A blank space in the diagram indicated that no participants talked about that theme.

	Number of participants
	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6+

*Table 4.2 Strength of Themes*

The chapter will not only highlight the positive impact of this leadership development programme on the individual participants, their teams and the organisation, but in fulfilling the aim of this study it seeks to create a holistic picture of LDP through also considering any unintended negative consequences. I will now commence with an analysis of viewpoints on what LDP sought to achieve.

## 4.2 Aim of the Programme

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In order to evaluate a leadership development programme it is helpful to start off by examining its aim and the underlying reasons for embarking on such an intervention. This is represented within the centre circle of figure 4.1. The purpose of LDP and exactly what it set out to achieve is subject to debate. The

interviews with Stacey, the consultants, the line managers and the participants illustrate that there was no clear consensus on this matter among the various actors. The only area where there appeared to be complete agreement is that the programme involved some form of management or leadership training. However exactly what this involved remains unclear.

### 4.2.1 Organisational Perspective

Stacey who sits within TELCORP's corporate university was the principal instigator of the programme and responsible for coordinating its delivery. From her perspective this particular leadership development intervention served multiple purposes. The first of these was to increase the level of collaboration between leaders within different parts of the business.

*'I think really the main objectives are to sort of enhance the collaboration and team work of senior leaders across the organisation.'* (Stacey, December 2010)

Due in part to a series of mergers and acquisitions TELCORP is characterised by 'organisational silos'<sup>1</sup> whereby employees within different parts of the organisation do not communicate with each other. The term 'organisational silos' was used repeatedly throughout the interview process and during the programme.

LDP according to Stacey also served a higher purpose which fed into organisational objectives.

*'I think you know what we're trying to do ultimately is to increase shareholder value and you know regain market share and enhance market capitalisation.'* (Stacey, December 2010)

In addition she hoped that the programme would lead to a change in behaviours of those participating in it. She termed these behaviours 'entrepreneurial

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<sup>1</sup> The term organisational silos appears in some internal company documentation as well as being a term frequently employed by TELCORP employees during the course of the programme and the interviews.

*attitudes and behaviours*' meaning that although these 'leaders' originated from technical backgrounds the organisation now wanted them to pay more attention to strategic matters and *'make a difference.'*

LDP was the first programme of its kind for the organisation, aimed at middle managers since the merger, although there is a clearly defined well established leadership development pathway for those employees deemed to be *'high potential.'* According to Stacey this refers to the top 3% of talent within TELCORP. High potential managers or leaders are sent on a series of residential programmes in exotic locations around the world. Many of the LDP participants' line managers have attended such interventions. However LDP was explicitly not positioned as a programme for high potentials. It existed for those individuals that did not fit into this category. As Stacey explained

*'It was a case of we train – we put a lot of money and a lot of investment into people we identify as high potential, but we don't really do much other than one to one HR coaching with the rest of them.'* (Stacey, December 2010)

She took the stance that those who are not classified as *'high potential'* are in the greatest need of leadership development initiatives.

*'We don't really do an awful lot with the rest of them and actually it's the rest of them for who we need to do it because they're the people who don't have that innate ability.'* (Stacey, December 2010)

## 4.2.2 Line Manager Perspectives

The line managers, many of whom had attended the series of 'high potential' programmes within the organisation provided interesting reflections on the distinction between LDP and pre-existing programmes. One line manager explained that there are two types of high potential programmes: local high potential and corporate high potential. The latter exist for those employees of a more senior level than the LDP participants. Local high potential programmes however in his view were for those of a similar level but who are characterised by better performance in their roles.

*'The local potential would be...probably that sort of level but people who are already very good at their job. So they are talent right? So it's not...the LDP course you know – people who you want to develop on which is who we sent on and people who are already doing it as a refresher. But the local high potential course you get people who have – you know are already very good at their job.'* (Adam, Line Manager, July 2011)

The phrase *'are already very good at their job'* sheds some light on the way that this manager viewed the purpose of LDP. There are implications in his interview that LDP acted as either some form of corrective action or means of rectifying poor performance. Shortly after the programme he removed all of the managerial responsibility from the only employee he had attending the programme. However he was the only line manager that seemed to view the programme in this way.

There are a variety of perceptions on the purpose of LDP expressed by the seven line managers that were interviewed. All of them included some reference to learning new tools and techniques or developing a *'management awareness.'*

However the programme in the managers' view was not simply about developing new techniques; it also served as a way of demonstrating that managers and the organisation as a whole were seen to be making an investment in people. One line manager had seven direct reports who attended the programme out of a total cohort of 26 participants. He explained that the organisation had received some negative feedback in relation to employee satisfaction around a variety of areas including their relationship to management. The programme according to him acted as a way of attempting to address these concerns.

*'And so I wanted to try and you know address that by making an investment in – you know in my managers going through the LDP programme. So I could have just sent one or two. But I chose to send them all.'* (Liam, line manager, September 2011)

The way that this somewhat inclusive investment through LDP was received by his employees varied. For one female manager Sara, it appeared to have had the desired effect.

*'I guess it just makes you think that the company cares about its managers and about leadership messages. Just the fact that the investment was made in the training...For me I mean I think I did see that as something very positive and also a bit surprised, also grateful that TELCORP took the trouble to set something like that up.'* (Sara, Participant, August 2011)

This individual may have felt as though the organisation was taking the time to invest in her but she was made redundant one month after this interview took place. This raises questions about how well LDP was integrated into other organisational processes. A substantial investment was placed in developing individuals who were soon to be made redundant. These redundancies were not made as a result of participants' performance on LDP but as part of substantial organisational restructuring plans. Although it was not possible to obtain information about exactly how many of the participants were made redundant, the interviewees suggested that there were at two least cases where this had happened.

Keith who had the same line manager as Sara objected to the way that everyone of a similar level seemed to be participating in LDP. In this way the notion of being seen to be investing in all managers in an inclusive way appeared to have an adverse effect.

*'It was initially presented as you – people were targeted individually – told they'd been selected for a high performance programme of senior leadership training. I think when people get those invitations you know they felt quite please...motivated. And they felt as though they'd been singled out. But the reality I think is pretty much everybody of the same management level got the same email.'* (Keith, participant, February 2011)

As a result of his initial perception of the selection process making him feel 'special' and then realising that actually the invite had been extended to almost every one of the same grade, he was made to feel less positively and less motivated towards LDP.

The idea of LDP existing as a result of some employee engagement and satisfaction surveys<sup>2</sup> largely went unsaid. Neither the consultants nor Stacey mentioned it and none of the other line managers did. Only one out of the 19 participants directly talked about these surveys. This could indicate an unspoken and underlying reason for implementing such an intervention. As data later in the chapter will illustrate, contrary to this perhaps extra agenda some employees came away from the programme feeling disengaged.

The line manager perspectives around the aim of the programme varied considerably. One line manager viewed LDP as being a form of reward in a difficult economic climate.

*'In modern industry, which is traditionally now flattening the normative aspects of reward...are disappearing. And remunerative rewards as in salary increases etc. are also scant. From a reward perspective you've got to look at other things...So you want them to be prepared and invested, so that when the next change comes you've got a pool of people who are prepared for change. That's what this is really about in my mind.'* (Nick, line manager, September 2011)

Nevertheless whether or not he truly sees leadership development programmes such as these as primarily about reward is debatable. The phrase '*you've got a pool of people who are prepared for change*' perhaps indicates that what these interventions also seek to achieve is a change in mind-set in those attending, making them more willing to change.

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<sup>2</sup> Some reference was made to an employee engagement survey that served to collect employee opinions on a variety of matters relating to the organisation. These employee engagement surveys are carried out once a year.

This undercurrent of *'trying to change'* comes across from other line managers. One of these managers saw the aim of the programme as being to identify *'talent'* within the organisation, equipping that talent with new tools and techniques and then using that *'talent'* within the organisation. However when discussing the potential impact of LDP he stated

*'You know it's the right thing to do, but how do you take those – that educated bunch of evangelists out of LDP and then how do you utilise them across the wider business?'* (Sam, line manager, August 2011)

On a similar note he also said

*'We need to try and capitalise on these little agents to go out and get them to force things through and maybe build their own communities of change.'* (Sam, line manager, August 2011)

At the other end of the spectrum from rewarding employees, one line manager as has already been mentioned alluded to the programme being more about corrective action. Although he regarded the aim of the programme as being about self-awareness and more specifically *'understanding yourself and understanding how others perceive yourself'* other comments indicate a further alternative motive. He stated that the individual that he sent on the programme was someone who was *'struggling'* and that as she had shown no improvement in her behaviour she had her management responsibility removed from her. This particular participant commented that she was *'feeling disillusioned by it all'* as a result of her demotion. The line manager said

*'The person that we sent on was someone who was new to managing the team and actually was struggling. And I think she enjoyed the course. I think she benefitted from it but there's been no noticeable improvement to such a level that we swapped her out of that role now. So she no longer manages the team.'* (Adam, line manager, July 2011)

This quote also illustrates the confusion surrounding the selection procedure and criteria for LDP. Although the manager said that they *'sent'* his employee on the programme, the participant claimed that she chose to attend it. There appears to be no consistent selection procedure across all of the participants.

Some it seems decided to attend to develop themselves and others were given no choice by their line managers. This line manager was the only one who had taken some form of corrective action after their employee had participated in the programme. At the other end of the spectrum one line manager stated that he sent four out of twelve of his employees on LDP because he believed that his team was extremely experienced and knowledgeable and could help and contribute to and shape the programme or in his words 'facilitate the growth of the programme'. His selection criteria among other things were that these employees were not 'shrinking violets.'

Despite collaboration being such a key focus in the eyes of Stacey it was mentioned by none of the line managers in talking about the purpose of LDP. This finding raises questions about how the programme was communicated to these managers and whether or not they were informed about exactly what the programme sought to achieve. Was it that they were not informed or in their eyes did the programme serve more important alternative purposes? The fact that some line managers were unaware of the programme raises further questions. I will now go on to investigate the aim of LDP from the points of view of the delivery team involved.

### **4.2.3 Delivery Team Perspective**

There were four consultants responsible for the design and delivery of LDP. There were two female principal consultants (Kim and Liz) who were business partners in a small consultancy; one of which, Kim took the lead on this particular project. She acted as the main point of contact between the delivery team and the organisational representative. There were then a further two 'agents' who were employed to work on this programme (Mike and Alice). These four individuals had not worked together as a team prior to the programme.

The aim as far as the consulting team were concerned stemmed from communication that they had with the organisational representative. The aim detailed in the brief which they pitched to the organisation is cited below:

*'The aim of the programme is to expose senior leaders to the latest thinking on leadership, strategy, creativity at work, talent management and other crucial aspects of leadership. It is anticipated that as a result of this programme senior leaders will have the self-belief to be vociferous in pushing their own and other leaders to challenge their thinking to ensure organisational success in today's dynamic environment – demonstrated through an appetite, belief and 'will to win.' There is a need for leaders to adapt their own individual style to embrace the 'One TELCORP'<sup>3</sup> approach, to break down silos through cooperation and collaboration in order to provide real value to the customer.'* (Delivery Team Proposal for LDP)

From the above quote it is evident that developing 'leaders' was viewed as being a key ambition of the programme. The quote above clearly talks about senior leaders however it seems that a large number of those attending the programme viewed themselves as middle managers.

The lack of seniority featured heavily in some of the discussions between the consulting team responsible for LDP during the modules that I had the opportunity to listen in on, and in some of the interviews with them. They described their surprise about the experience levels of the cohort. They were initially led to believe that the participants would be much more senior. One of the consultants said in her post programme interview.

*'I thought they were going to be more senior...and more capable really.'*  
(Kim, consultant, September 2011)

Another one of the consultants described the divide in the levels of managers that attended the programme.

*'We thought they were – no all that we knew were they were mid to senior level managers. I think when we got there...I think some of them*

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<sup>3</sup> Reference is made to the 'One TELCORP' approach in an internal company document and slides presented in the kick-off event for this programme.

*were probably...you know it was middle and senior. It wasn't middle to senior (laughs). (Liz, consultant, August 2011)*

Furthermore it appears that the programme was also about adapting to the organisational culture and the way that TELCORP believe leaders or its employees should act *'there is a need for leaders to adapt their own individual style to embrace the 'One TELCORP' approach.* Collaboration which was listed as one of the key aims from the perspective of Stacey also gets mentioned in the brief that the delivery team pitched. The *'will to win'* connects to Stacey's notion of 'entrepreneurial behaviours'. There are certainly similarities between what Stacey viewed as being the purpose of LDP and the way that the consultants viewed it. This is perhaps hardly surprising though as the pitch was prepared based on previous communication with the organisation. However the 'One TELCORP approach' was barely mentioned during the course of the programme.

The delivery team had very strict instructions as to the content that had to be included in each module of LDP and the organisational representative was very involved in determining this content. The consultants and Stacey met prior to each module to ensure that the design met expectations. Content was adapted based on a variety of different factors. Firstly more information became available about the participants, their prior experience with tools and techniques and their needs. Secondly content was adapted to a lesser extent based on programme evaluation learnings from both the 'happy sheets' collected after each session and on occasion the findings from my own research. This highlights the need for continual programme evaluation, something that is further explored in the subsequent chapter. The benefits of independent evaluation compared to informal evaluation conducted by leadership development professionals as they deliver a programme is that the evaluator is separate from the organisation. In the case of TELCORP it was important for the participants to know that the evaluation was completely separate from the organisation in order to be more open in their responses.

Finally I will now illustrate the purpose of LDP from the perspective of the participants.

## 4.2.4 Participant Perspectives

The participants identified several aims of LDP which can be grouped into different categories. The first category operates at the individual level. The programme was viewed by almost all of the participants as a means of developing themselves as either managers or leaders, principally through the acquisition of new skills and techniques. Some participants simply termed this *'to make your managers better.'* This was in a small number of cases received with a degree of cynicism. Frank in his first round interview mentioned that he had been on several of these types of courses before and he was sometimes sceptical about their use.

*'The ambition of them tends to be to try and take a kind of relatively low level management part of the business and make them more efficient.'*  
(Frank, participant, January 2011)

From his statement above we can see that this participant regarded him and his peers in his own words as *'relatively low level management.'* This perceived lack of seniority is in itself interesting because it formed the basis of much discussion and debate throughout the interviews. Stacey in her interview described the programme as being a local programme for senior leaders within the organisation. However the participants often described themselves as *'middle management.'* This is in line with the comments made by two of the consultants in the previous section about their surprise at the lack of seniority of participants.

Stepping away from the individual level purpose of the programme, another of its ambitions as seen through the eyes of the participants relates to the overall culture of the organisation. Two of the eleven participants interviewed in the first round cited improving the culture of the organisation as a reason for embarking on such a programme. The culture is generally viewed as being fragmented with very little linkup between activities and organisational units.

*'I think they need a culture. They need something that people can grasp to see that what they do matters. I think a lot of people work in isolation.'*

*Certainly from the context of other people talking at the course, there doesn't seem to be a lot of linking up to people doing very similar jobs.'*  
(Graham, participant, January 2011)

This mention of 'isolation' and overcoming this through sharing ideas links to the purpose of the programme as outlined by Stacey, that of enhancing collaboration. Graham who made this comment works for a part of the organisation that is often deemed to be a separate unit to the rest of the organisation. He believed that unlike TELCORP in general his unit had its own distinct culture. This was not the only individual who cited the purpose of the programme as being associated with culture and change. George who worked for one of TELCORP's acquisitions explained that the organisation needs to change its culture and the way that it operates, particularly when it comes to empowerment. LDP from his perspective acted as a means of empowering managers.

*'I think LDP is there now to say look we need good leaders to move forwards, we need to lighten the structure, we need to empower people and we need our middle managers to help drive that process because you can say what you like from top management but it's the middle managers who are really there on the ground driving the change forward. So we need to equip them to do that.'* (George, participant, January 2011)

It is notable that the two participants who made a connection between the aim of LDP and the culture of TELCORP both viewed their units as separate to the rest of the organisation. These individuals tended to express positive views about the culture in their own units but more negative perceptions of the culture in the organisation as a whole. The other participants did not make any direct connection between the purpose of this leadership development intervention and organisational culture. It is also interesting to note in the quote above that once again there is the talk of 'middle managers' rather than senior leaders.

The term '*leadership*' appeared frequently when participants were asked to outline the aim of the programme. This may be unsurprising seeing as the course was positioned as a leadership development intervention. The official

tag line of the programme explicitly mentioned leadership. In the case of one participant Tim, the programme was seen as a way of addressing the lack of leadership within the organisation.

*'There's a reason behind it. I think TELCORP has recognised that it's got some gaps in its leadership armoury you know...there's some good people out there who are good salesmen and there are some good people who are good technologists. Sometimes you know we have a gap in terms of good management and leadership.'* (Tim, participant, January 2011)

Metaphors and language related to 'fighting' such as 'armoury' were adopted in several of the interviews and frequently by this particular individual. A more detailed analysis of leadership metaphors can be found in Chapter five. This viewpoint was expressed in the initial round of interviews but seven months after the programme had ended his perception had not changed. In his third round interview he outlined the aim as being *'to bring a better leadership style or in fact a leadership style into TELCORP.'* This implies that he thought that there was no leadership style in TELCORP. Although this was only the opinion of one individual, it is in line with comments made by almost all of the interviewees who stated that they were not aware of the meaning of key leadership initiatives within the organisation and did not know what the organisation's leadership profile was. This is an important point because the participants were attending a leadership development programme yet even during the course of the programme they did not grasp an understanding of what leadership meant to TELCORP.

Although LDP maintained a heavy focus on leadership this participant felt that the organisation had failed to recognise or appreciate the leaders participating in the programme. In his opinion although the organisation had invested heavily in attempting to develop leadership with the implementation of this leadership development intervention they had not offered leadership opportunities to the participants; in fact quite the opposite. He explained that he was dismayed at what had happened to some of the *'potential leaders'* since the programme. Several of the participants faced redundancy within a few months of completing

it. He also felt disappointed that he had not been approached for job opportunities internally within the organisation since attending LDP. He realised that he may not be deemed to be a young employee but stated *‘that still doesn’t mean you can’t be a good leader.’* These comments perhaps raise questions about whether the organisation was really seeking to develop leadership and how well integrated the programme was with other organisational processes.

The notion of developing some commonality in the way leadership is conceptualised was another perceived aim of LDP as cited by several of the participants both in the initial interviews and once the programme had ended. Brian made this point in his first round interview.

*‘At least coming out of this after the five or six months this group of individuals may have a common view about what leadership is, what leadership in TELCORP means and what role they can play.’ (Brian, participant, January 2011)*

There is some implication that the programme sought to develop a common view of leadership among the participants. The participants’ view of leadership and the potential impact that the programme has had on this is explored later in the chapter.

#### **4.2.5 Summary of the Aim of the Programme**

This section has scrutinised the aims and purposes of LDP. From drawing together and analysing the interviews from the participants, delivery team, organisational representative and line managers and looking at documentation related to LDP there appears to be little consensus on the aim or purpose of the leadership development programme between and in some cases within these different interested parties. This raises an interesting question about how you evaluate the impact of such a programme when no clear purpose exists. The multitude of ideas around the aim makes this process more complex.

As has been illustrated the organisational representative, Stacey viewed the fundamental aims of the programme as being to enhance collaboration among the participants and to develop a set of *‘entrepreneurial attitudes and*

*behaviours*'. The delivery team talked about collaboration in a similar way but also the development of other individual level behaviours such as self-awareness. In contrast collaboration was not discussed as being a primary aim among the line managers. Instead they saw the primary objectives of LDP as being to develop management skills, self-awareness, to drive change and to make their employees feel as though they are being invested in. The participants also viewed the programme as being there to develop management skills or '*to make management more effective.*' Two of them talked about the aim of LDP being related to cultural issues and the majority mentioned networking.

The selection process and selection criteria are also connected to the aim of the programme. The way that individuals are selected can affect their perception of the programme, as in the case of Keith who at first considered that he was being singled out as 'special' and then came to the realisation that this was not the case. This is something that organisations and leadership development practitioners need to carefully consider.

Building on an analysis of the aims and purpose of LDP the next section examines the way that participants view leadership and whether this perception has been altered at all by LDP. It is also valuable to examine how participants see themselves as leaders within the organisation seeing as LDP was clearly positioned as a leadership development programme. All of the subsequent sections stem primarily from the coding of participant interviews but also incorporate some data from line manager interviews and observation carried out during the course of the programme to support and triangulate the findings. A thematic analysis of the data was carried out. More details about this process were provided in the previous chapter.

## 4.3 Self as a Leader

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As LDP was positioned as a leadership development programme it seems apt to look at the way that those attending it shifted their perceptions of leadership and the way that they viewed themselves in relation to it. This next section draws primarily on data collected through semi-structured interviews which were coded thematically.

### 4.3.1 Perception of Leadership Role

This section examines the way that participants viewed their role in the organisation and whether or not this perception has been altered by their experience on the programme. The first sub-theme relates to if individuals saw themselves predominantly as managers or leaders. It is important to state that myself as the interviewer did not supply definitions of *'managers'* and *'leaders'* to the respondents. Any distinction that is made between the two terms is down to the respondents' own interpretation. This section then continues to analyse how participants talked about themselves as *'leaders within TELCORP'*. Figure 4.2 below shows the progression of these themes over time. T1 represents the first round of participant interviews, T2 the second and T3 the third. The blank spaces indicate that a theme was not discussed at that period in time.

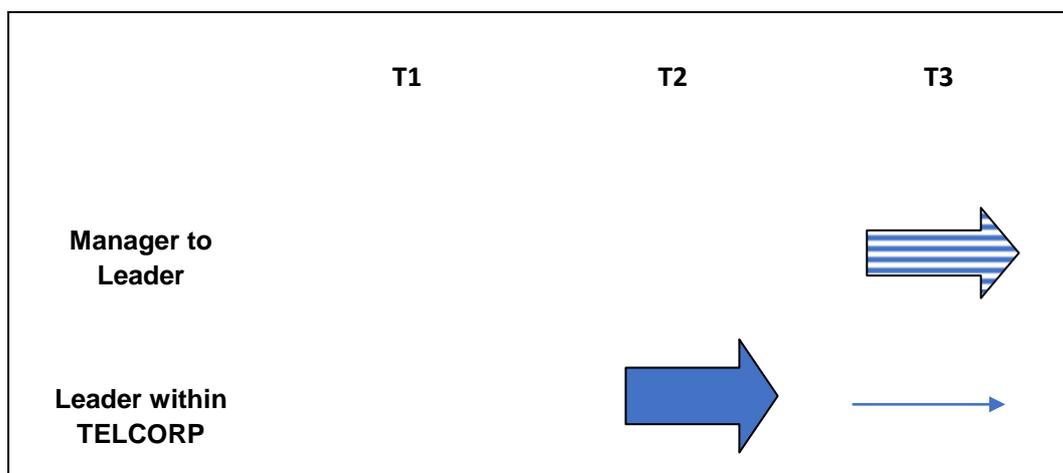


Figure 4.2: Perception of Leadership Roles

## *Manager to leader*

LDP was positioned as a leadership development programme. However the majority of those attending it initially viewed themselves as managers. This was evident in both the language that they used in referring to themselves during the modules and more explicitly in interviews when asked to describe their roles. However approximately one third of the participants interviewed in the third round of interviews talked about the transition from seeing themselves as a manager to a leader. Sometimes this was as a result of the programme and on other occasions because of a change in role. As the diagram above shows, all of these changes were reported in the third round of interviews because it was at this stage that they were specifically asked about whether they viewed themselves as a manager or a leader. Lisa who worked within one of TELCORP's acquisitions felt that she was still a manager but LDP had enabled her to see herself more as a leader.

*'I hadn't really thought of myself much as a leader. And I think maybe this is the view that's changed slightly since the programme is that I do respect now that I have a great deal of influence as a leader in my sphere that sits on the management team...And I guess I've become more aware of my influence as a leader in the wider management team because of LDP.'* (Lisa, participant, December 2011)

For this individual influence played a key part in understanding her role as a leader rather than a manager in the organisation. This is similar to the view adopted by Keith who worked in a different part of the organisation because he still viewed himself as a manager but the programme had helped him to lean a little bit more towards leadership.

*'You know do I feel as though I'm more of a manager or more of a leader? Then I suppose I'd say yeah I could do more from a leadership point of view. You know I could do more to you know express a strategic vision and to motivate people who work for me to go and do the same. Could definitely do more there. Has the course helped me do more? Maybe.'* (Keith, participant, December 2011)

He however was made redundant as a result of organisational restructuring within a few months of the programme ending not permitting him to perform any sort of leadership role. In another instance one participant, James frequently referred to himself as a manager in his first round interview but when asked in his final interview how he saw himself he stated

*'I think more of myself as a leader rather than a manager...which is a slight change.'* (James, participant, January 2012)

This slight change outlined by James was typical of the views expressed by some of the other participants. A large number of them experienced a change in job role either of their own volition or as a result of organisational change shortly after the programme. In one such case a change in role meant that the participant no longer had much management responsibility. He saw his role of being more aligned with leadership.

*'I think the opportunity to be a leader I need to push that to obviously within this new role. Whereas in the past being a manager yes and I think a lot of learning on the course was about you know perhaps you know becoming a leader rather than just a manager. I think beforehand I'd consider myself a manager and I probably didn't consider myself a leader.'* (Colin, participant, January 2012)

Taking a completely different stance, Matt felt that he had shifted his perception of himself from leader to manager. This was the result of a change in role. He was arguably one of the most senior participants on the programme. He was promoted during the programme and gained more management responsibility as a result. In his third round interview he commented

*'I did see myself as a leader because I didn't have any management lines during the beginning of the programme. During the course of the programme I got promoted to become a manager...so I was able to pull on those sort of leadership skills...And I have you know in the cold light of day sat down and actually employed some of the techniques and skills I've learnt on LDP.'* (Matt, participant, January 2012)

Although Matt was the only participant to mention a shift in role from leader to manager, the challenge of being a manager without any direct management responsibility was one experienced by several of the LDP participants. This has come about in part through the use of virtual and geographically dispersed units. Three of the participants who were interviewed viewed themselves as a leader because in their eyes they could not possibly be a manager without any direct reports to manage. His viewpoint was therefore typical of many other individuals participating in the programme that you could not be a manager without having people to directly manage but you could be a leader without having direct reports. The next sub-theme examines how participants see themselves as a leader in relation to being a member of the TELCORP organisation.

### *Leader within TELCORP*

This sub-theme explores whether or not participants have a clearer sense of their role not just as a leader, but specifically as a leader within TELCORP. Participants were asked the question *'do you think you now have a clearer sense of your role as a leader within TELCORP?'* in their second round interview or third round interview if no second round interview had occurred.

Seven of the nineteen interviewees did believe that they now had a clearer sense of their role as a leader within the organisation. One participant, Simon stated

*'Yeah I have an absolute sense of that's what I should be doing.'* (Simon, participant, August 2011)

However he did not feel that this was supported by the organisation. *'You know and it's really just me banging on the table saying 'where's the opportunity please?'* This connects to the concern around no follow up to LDP existing and will be explored in greater detail in section five on *'view of or relationship with the organisation.'*

In a couple of cases having a clearer sense of their role as a leader in the organisation meant that individuals felt more responsible or accountable for their area within TELCORP.

*'I think I feel a clearer sense of responsibility for leading this area of the business and the people within my team so that rather than just letting things happen that we make a positive – move in a positive direction.'*  
(James, participant, January 2012)

Perhaps contrary to the aim of the programme, one participant found that having a clearer sense of his role as a leader meant that he no longer wanted to work in the role that he was doing and was looking for opportunities elsewhere. He was not the only participant who had sought a change in role following on from the programme.

*'You know within the company the level where I am at the moment there are so many boundaries put around what you can and can't do you know. You generally can't (laughs). That you know if you like if I have a clearer sense of anything it's that I want to be doing something else either by going you know higher or elsewhere in the organisation.'*  
(Oliver, participant, August 2011)

This kind of comment makes one question what is deemed to be a good outcome of a leadership development programme. It could seem that the participant realising that he no longer wanted to be a part of his part of the organisation was a negative outcome. However on the other hand perhaps the programme made him realise that he was not fully committed to the role and this could be a good outcome for the organisation in the long term. Although in one sense this is an isolated point of view it clearly links to the findings in section five which highlight the way that LDP has resulted in a group of participants viewing the organisation in a more negative light than before they attended the programme.

Sara who operated in the same part of the business as the individual cited above said that she thought the TELCORP perspective on leadership was made visible to her during the programme. It had exposed her to the TELCORP

leadership profile. Before the programme as managers they had not had much exposure to it. She thought that the TELCORP expectations on leadership were reinforced in all of the sessions. This is a different opinion to that expressed by the majority of other participants who did not feel that the TELCORP view of leadership was presented during the course of the intervention. In fact she was the only participant who did appear to get a sense of the TELCORP view of leadership as a result of LDP. It is an interesting reflection that the only participant to have derived a clearer sense of the organisation's view on leadership was one of the participants who was made redundant shortly after the programme and therefore unable to make use of this understanding in her job.

Three of the participants felt that they now had a clearer sense of their role as a leader but not within the organisation. One example of this is Graham who works for a small unit within TELCORP and did not feel any more a part of the organisation since the programme.

*'I have a better idea of my role as a leader. Whether it's within – whether I feel it actually makes a lot of difference to the bigger TELCORP I'm not sure. I'm not convinced. I still feel it's a very bitty organisation. And I still feel a little bit – well I work for one part of it. This is my little section.'*  
(Graham, participant, July 2011)

Tim felt that he had a better sense of his role as a leader but not within the organisation. This is because he did not feel that TELCORP knows what it wants of his leaders. He also worked in a largely separate part of the organisation and solely focussed on one customer.

*'I think I have a clearer sense of my purpose as leader in myself. But to be honest TELCORP's got more layers that you can shake a stick at, And you know it's – I'm sort of losing the plot as to exactly what TELCORP wants as leaders.'* (Tim, participant, July 2011)

The programme made Tim think about where he sat in the organisation. When another round of organisational restructuring was announced he decided to opt

out and leave his former role. He now takes more of an independent consulting role within the organisation.

The third participant who was of a similar opinion to the two mentioned above also felt that the structure of the organisation was partially to blame for his lack of clarity on what a leader within the organisation should represent. He did believe that he now had a clear sense of his role as a leader but

*'Do TELCORP understand what they want out of their managers and provide guidance? I don't think they do. You know personally I think there is a big gap between the organisation and the structure of the company and the individual managers within it.'* (Frank, participant, July 2011)

Furthermore three interviewees thought they felt no clearer about their role as leaders within the organisation.

The perceived lack of clarity around what leadership in the organisation meant became apparent through an investigation of one of TELCORP's leadership frameworks. This was brought to the forefront in the kick off session and defined as

*'People managers taking action to increase the level of belief and optimism in the future of TELCORP.'* (LDP programme documentation, November 2010)

However this notion that appeared at first to be central to the programme barely got mentioned again. The majority of the participants had never heard of it before and where they had heard of it only one of them knew what it meant. Some of them did not even think that it applied to them or their level of management. It is also interesting that although this framework was framed as 'leadership' it talks about 'managers' rather than 'leaders'. 'Optimism' is a key part of it which says something about the view that employees take towards the organisation. The next sub section looks at the way that participants view the concept of leadership and how or if this perception has changed as a result of attending LDP.

### 4.3.2 View of Leadership

This sub section investigates participants' understanding of what leadership is and whether there has been any shift in this perception as a result of the programme. It is divided into participants who have developed a less restrictive view of leadership and those at the other end of the spectrum who have developed a more negative view of what management or leadership represents as a result of LDP. Figure 4.3 below illustrates how the manner in which each of these was discussed changed during the course of three rounds of interviews.

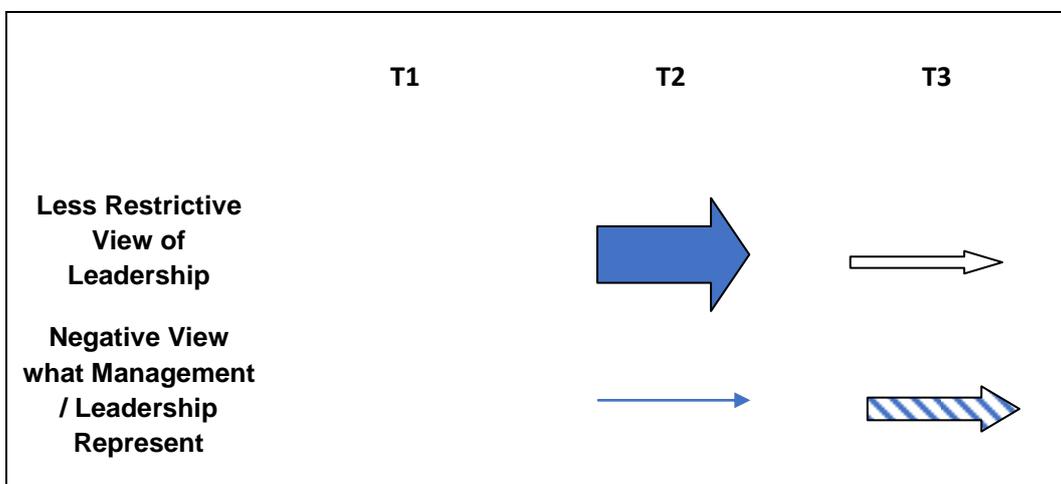


Figure 4.3 View of Leadership

#### *Less restrictive view of leadership*

The participants were asked in their second round interviews whether or not their view of leadership had changed since attending the programme. Ten out of the 16 interviewed at this stage felt that LDP had widened their perception of what leadership is. The size of the arrow in the above diagram illustrates this. The nature of this shift varied by informant but mostly consisted of a move away from an autocratic or '*command and control*' type leadership approach to a more 'coaching' or participative style. This command and control approach seemed to be the common understanding and means of talking about leadership within the organisation. George said

*'I think probably you know I've kind of been subconsciously subscribing to the sort of command and control idea of leadership where you have a leader who leads and people who follow. I'm not actually saying that I ever actually practiced that but conceptually I think it's kind of one of these subconscious things that you subscribe too.'* (George, participant, August 2011)

Lisa who operates in the same part of the organisation as George did not possess a purely autocratic approach before but she has shifted away from what she terms a 'tell' approach. In her second round interview she said

*'I found it far more valuable being able to coach and lead as opposed to tell.'* (Lisa, participant, July 2011)

Both of the respondents above work for one of TELCORP's acquisitions. Another manager who works in what is deemed to be a separate sub unit felt that the programme opened his eyes to a wider view of what leadership is.

*'I suspect my view of leadership was a little bit – you know someone stands up and takes the bullets and flack. Whereas learning that there were different approaches and different ways was interesting. Some of them I still haven't actually seen in practice. But knowing they were there was interesting.'* (Graham, participant, July 2011)

The pre-existing belief of leadership as 'command and control' was reinforced by the responses of another participant. However for this individual his pre-existing understanding of what leadership was, was not so much shaped by the organisation as his military background. In his opinion LDP had enabled him to appreciate that there are other effective leadership styles than those autocratic in nature.

*'Leading from the front, being inspirational, going the extra mile, inspiring everyone – all this – valid, really valid. But there are other things. You need to understand people more...I'd rather have you know productive you know team members by working with them rather than sort of shouting at them. I don't shout but you know that kind of autocratic style'.* (Matt, September 2011)

The shift from a 'command and control' approach to leadership is revisited in Chapter five. Throughout the modules different examples of leadership were presented. In one of the modules participants were presented with images of different types of leaders such as Ernest Shackleton, Roger Bannister and Tracey Emmin. This appears to have had an effect on how a small number of the respondents view leadership. Chris who works in research and development felt that LDP had widened his view of leadership. He found it reassuring that there were other leadership styles than those that are autocratic or heroic.

*'You tend to think you know of Shackleton or Churchill or people who you know are these big charismatic leaders and that generally isn't applicable.. And I think it you know...seeing the confirmation that you know other styles or methodologies or people are – who can be just as effective without having to go down the route of the heroic or autocratic leadership. So from that point of view it's been - it's very refreshing and (laughs) very comforting I think.'* (Chris, participant, July 2011)

Although around two thirds of the respondents in the second stage of interviews did report some form of movement to a more inclusive, less autocratic view of leadership there were three participants who did not feel that their view of leadership had changed at all as a result of the programme. One of these in particular was due to the fact that he thought of leadership in an extremely negative light. This perception was apparent throughout his only interview and came to the forefront during the modules. As a result of the way he questioned content and raised his views of the organisation's management one of the consultants in an informal conversation with me referred to him as one of the main '*protagonists*.'

This leads on to the next sub-theme; *Negative view of what management or leadership represent*. It also connects with the later section on '*relationship with management*'. However whereas '*relationship with management*' focuses its attention on participants' relationship with or view of managers or 'the management' within TELCORP the next sub theme looks at the way that participants' view management or leadership as concepts.

## *Negative view of what management or leadership represent*

As previously mentioned there was a prevailing negative view of management and leadership among the LDP participants. For a handful of participants elements of the programme developed a more negative view of leadership than they had before they attended it. It should be re-iterated that this theme refers specifically to definitions of management and leadership rather than the views that participants hold on their individual line managers. The size of the arrows in figure 4.3 shows that although we are talking about small numbers here, the number of participants that discussed the development of more negative views towards management or leadership increased over time from no participants in the first round, to three in the third round.

Sara was particularly disturbed by a talk about leadership by one of the external speakers. Based on the way that leadership was presented in this particular session she did not feel that she wanted to be a leader. She explained that the way leaders were talked about left her with a negative view of leadership.

*'Kind of leaves you with the impression that to be a top world leader you need to be quite neurotic, self-centred vindictive...It gives the impression that to be one of these top leaders we were talking about...you have to be seriously messed up somehow as well. So probably that's not what you or I particularly want to be.'* (Sara, participant, August 2011)

Frank who worked in the same part of the organisation as Sara did not consider that his view of leadership had changed but had an extremely negative perception of it. LDP has had no impact on this. He has had a new manager every six months for the past four years and continually questioned the level of engagement and buy in from senior management surrounding the leadership development intervention.

*'As you go higher up in the management chain you see more and more people that just do it the way they want to do it rather than using any techniques on it. They just do it because they think they can do it and they're powerful enough to get away with doing it that way (Laughs).'*

*You know – I mean leaders...you know they just do it.’ (Frank, participant, December 2011)*

### 4.3.3 Summary of ‘Self as a Leader’

This section has investigated the impact that LDP has had on both the way that participants perceive their management or leadership role and their view of what leadership is and what it stands for. As we have seen since attending the programme approximately a third of participants interviewed now appear to view themselves more as *‘leaders’* than they did previously but this has been partially due to a change in role. Very few respondents have any clearer sense of their role as a leader within TELCORP as a result of participating in LDP. In a similar vein there seems to be very little clarity surrounding what leadership represents or should represent in the organisation. Key organisational leadership initiatives have failed to be understood or even acknowledged by the employees attending the programme.

However LDP does seem to have widened the way that the majority of participants define leadership and indeed their own leadership style. As has been illustrated in this section a large number of the informants have developed a more inclusive view of leadership than the *‘command and control’* approach which appears to be embedded within TELCORP’s organisational culture. However it is not all positive, for one individual LDP led to her developing a more negative view of what leadership is and what it stands for through the manner in which it was discussed by an external speaker to the programme.

The next section investigates the perceived impact of the programme on participants’ relationships with others; management, their teams and fellow participants.

## 4.4 Relationship with Others

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If we refer back to figure 4.1 the next circle after *‘self as a leader’* is *‘relationship with others’*. This overarching category contains three principal themes within it;

relationship with managers / management, relationship with team and relationship with peers / participants. The section starts with an examination of the relationship that participants have with both their direct line managers and more senior levels of the organisational hierarchy termed here as 'the management'

#### 4.4.1 Relationship with managers / management

The relationship that participants had with managers in the organisation was a contentious issue that was discussed at length throughout both the interview process and LDP itself. There are two types of management relationships that are presented; those with direct line managers and the more general relationships that exist with senior levels of the organisational hierarchy. Both of these kinds of relationships are incorporated into the subsequent sub themes. Figure 4.4 below illustrates how the prominence of the sub-themes changed over time.

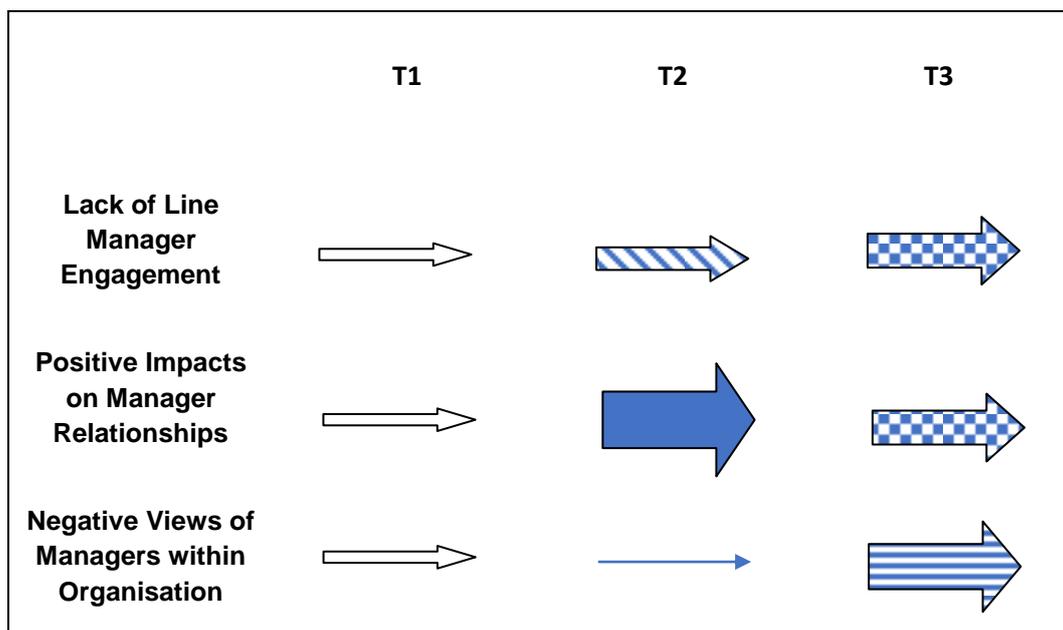


Figure 4.4 Relationship with managers / management

## *Lack of line manager involvement and engagement*

The lack of line manager involvement and engagement in LDP was viewed as an important inhibiting factor that proved detrimental to its success. It was discussed at length by the participants throughout the interview process, but most frequently once the programme had ended. As figure 4.4 above shows the number of participants that mentioned this increased steadily over time. As an example of this point, one manager who was only interviewed in the second round, within a few months of the programme ending said

*'They had far too little exposure to it...But you know the reality is that like with all of these things there has to be you know senior level sponsorship. Not just in terms of yes this is a great idea, here's a cheque, now go away and do it but active participation I think. And without the participation and support then I think you have very little impact in the upper end of the management team.'* (Steve, participant, August 2011)

This manager was not the only participant to express such a view at this stage in the process. Another individual Tim stated *'I don't think line managers have been as supportive as they could have been in all cases.'* Additionally the interest, enthusiasm or commitment for the programme from line managers has in some instances waned as time has progressed. Tim iterated

*'I think what I saw with some of the absentees, I think that line managers were slightly intolerant. I mean mine wasn't. Although he did – you know at first it was 'no you must attend' and then at the end 'well can you let that slip?'* (Tim, participant, July 2011)

However the lack of involvement, engagement and support by line managers from the perspective of participants was most apparent in the final set of interviews, which were conducted seven to nine months after the programme had ended. One manager was asked what would have made LDP more effective for him. He replied

*'Some more exposure to some of our more senior people. And we got some for sure we did. But we didn't in my view I don't think we got enough at the end of the day. They didn't really get as involved as they – as we were led to believe at the start of the programme process that they would be.'* (Frank, participant, December 2011)

This comment was typical of those expressed by a large number of the respondents. Another participant Vicky did not feel supported by her manager.

*'I think one thing I've found very disappointing is the level of support that I've had from doing the course. I had pretty much no support from my senior.'* (Vicky, participant, December 2011)

Vicky had commented in an earlier interview on the difficult relationship that she had with management within her part of the organisation. She is the same individual that was mentioned earlier in this chapter that was demoted after the programme and she had the majority of her management responsibility removed.

The way that line managers treated or viewed LDP extended beyond simply a lack of support or lack of engagement. There were instances where line managers questioned the importance of the programme or openly showed their lack of understanding or approval for such an intervention. Lisa experienced a change in direct management three times during the course of the programme. Her current manager could not understand the need for LDP.

*'I have a boss that's said 'I think it's all mumbo jumbo and teaching a mother to suck eggs and I don't know why you're on it in the first place.'* (Lisa, participant, December 2011)

With so many management changes occurring during the programme that directly affected the participants this lack of line manager continuity also could be said to have had an impact on the success of the intervention.

Furthermore some managers demonstrated a lack of understanding or awareness of either the programme itself or of their direct reports' involvement with it. For example one participant during module four of the programme

recounted that his manager until recently did not realise that he was attending a leadership development programme. He told him every month that he was attending LDP. A few months into the programme his manager turned round to him and commented that he thought he was a bit old to be having driving lessons. He thought that was where he had been every month instead of attending a leadership development programme. Unsurprisingly when I interviewed this particular line manager he gave no indication of his unawareness of the true nature of the programme. He did however state that conversations he had about the programme were largely driven by the participant rather than himself.

*'We had over the training period quite a number of interactions mainly driven by him saying this is what we're going to do and this is how it works.'* (Max, Line Manager, August 2011)

The observation of the LDP modules support these findings that there is a perceived lack of involvement and engagement by both direct line managers and more senior level executives. During module three the participants were given a group task of identifying a problem in the organisation that needed to be addressed and brainstorming ways to address it. One of the groups focussed on a *'senior level engagement plan.'* They had to then present this idea to a panel of senior TELCORP executives as well as external panel members. The debate became quite heated and was something according to one of the participants that resembled an attack on the senior management that were listening to the presentation. Another participant whilst reflecting on this experience commented that one of the senior executives in particular seemed switched off by the presentation. The participants at this point were also asked to analyse who the stakeholders would be for their ideas that they had presented to the senior executive panel. They were requested to determine what level of interest and power each stakeholder held. One participant commented that one of the internal senior executives held a lot of power but very little interest.

Furthermore during a break time in the third module of the programme I listened in to a discussion that participants were having about whether or not they fed

back to their managers about LDP. Most of them had not done so. There was a sense that managers did not necessarily know that their employees were on the programme. One individual in particular said that he was not discussing the programme with his manager because he did not think that it would be a useful conversation to have. Another individual stated that his manager was being put under pressure to attend the course but did not realise that his direct report was already participating in it.

The delivery team foresaw a greater level of involvement in the programme by line managers and attempted to build this into the structure of the programme. In their brief they clearly stated

*'Participants will discuss and agree their well-formed outcome for the programme with their line manager and other relevant stakeholders.'*  
(Delivery team's' proposal)

Participants were asked to complete a '*learning contract*', which detailed what they hoped to gain from attending the programme as well as providing a reflection on their strengths and weaknesses. They then were tasked with listing a series of actions that they would take in order to '*change their leadership practice.*' Line managers had to sign off against these lists of actions. It appears though that these learning contracts were not visited again on completion of the programme. Not one participant or line manager mentioned these 'learning contracts' in their interviews.

However the line managers were not in their entirety talked about in a negative light. In a few isolated cases the programme was considered to have had a positive impact on the relationship that participants had with either their line managers or other senior management in the organisation.

### *Positive impacts on the participant-manager relationships*

In the initial early interviews a couple of individuals expressed some hope that LDP might help them to either manage or communicate upwards. As figure 4.4 illustrates, in the second stage interviews positive impacts were discussed more widely. Under the over-arching umbrella of '*positive impact*' there were two

main types that were apparent. The first of these can be referred to as *'communicating or managing upwards.'*

Three of the participants reported an improvement in their ability to communicate with more senior levels of the organisation rather than just with their peers or direct teams. For example Sara felt that senior management were not always interested in her ideas and that the programme was helping her to communicate upwards.

*'I mean the area where I didn't have or I didn't – haven't put too much attention was in communication upwards towards executives, towards senior managers. So I have definitely – obviously the training has made me think about my communication style and about applying a different style.'* (Sara, participant, August 2011)

This individual was made redundant a few months after this interview as a result of large scale organisational restructuring.

Communicating or managing upwards was not such a prominent theme in the third round of interviews. However one participant did state an increase in confidence in communicating with more senior management. Interestingly he includes fellow participants as being a part of this senior management.

*'I'm more confident in my communications with dealings with senior management. I feel more comfortable. You know and some of the people on the course could be deemed as you know kind of senior management as well. So you know I've got good relationships with them. So yeah I think it's helped quite a bit.'* (Colin, participant, January 2011)

In the case of this individual one of the LDP participants became his direct line manager once the programme had ended. The majority of the participants who talked about an improvement in their ability to communicate upwards either in the second round or third round interestingly shared the same line manager. This manager commented that he had noticed some small 'softer' differences in how his reports related to him as a manager.

The second sub theme that emerged here is related to the participants viewing themselves as equals to their managers. In the second round interview Tim felt that the programme had changed the way that he viewed more senior management.

*'Because of my background in (previous organisation) you tend to be a bit rank oriented you know? And I think that's something over the years I've tried to move away from. And I think that we – those sort of initiatives help you to ensure that you can get into the space where actually these guys do shave and go to the loo in the mornings you know exactly the same I do. And let's forget the badges of honour and let's just get on with it.'* (Tim, participant, July 2011)

The battlefield type language that is used within this quotation is typical of many other quotes throughout the interview process by a large group of the participants. It is particularly representative of the language adopted by Tim. The use of military style metaphors in the organisation comes across strongly in both the participant and line manager interviews. It sheds some light on the culture of TELCORP and the espoused view of leadership. It is explored in more detail in Chapter five. Chris also felt that the programme had enabled him to view himself as more equal to his seniors than he had done previously. The terms *'adult'* and *'child'* were introduced to the participants in one of the module sessions on 'Transactional Analysis.'

*'I've always been a good follower (laughs). So I've always – I think with people I've respected I've always ended up being kind of a child to them. And that isn't always helpful. So I think in those – in those respects you know coming in as an equal and you know persuading yourself that you are the equal and coming and having adult discussions with them is useful yes.'* (Chris, participant, July 2011)

The 'viewing themselves as equals' sub theme was not mentioned in the third round of interviews at all. The shift from 'battlefield' language to the use of more parental leadership metaphors is revisited in Chapter five.

It should be noted that in one instance there was already a good pre-existing relationship between the participant and his direct line manager before LDP. His manager reciprocated this sentiment by informing me *'Graham was always a good manager.'* This individual works in a separate sub unit of the organisation.

It is interesting from the diagram that between the first and second round of interviews the number of participants who talked about positive impacts on their relationships with their managers increased, but after a few months this declined. This could be the result of no long term change in these relationships over time or as a result of other organisational events or circumstances that happened between the second and third round interviews to change their views. Despite some positive impact a negative view of managers in the organisation still prevailed among participants.

### *Negative view of managers within the organisation*

As alluded to earlier on in this chapter a negative view of managers within the organisation prevailed through the entirety of the interview process. This was one sub theme which was apparent in every stage of interview at each point in time. A *'them'* and *'us'* view of senior management within the organisation was expressed in the first round of interviews. *'Management'* as senior managers were sometimes referred to was on the whole blamed for the large scale changes happening in the organisation. As Frank said

*'It's a difficult one to you know unless they come in and tell management to stop changing.'* (Frank, participant, January 2011)

As the figure 4.4 highlights, in the second round of interviews only one participant expressed negative attitudes towards managers within the organisation. This was directly related to the management style adopted by his former line manager.

*'He's very autocratic, very shouty. 'I tell you do.'* You know that kind of approach.' (Matt, participant, September 2011)

However in the third round of interviews, negative reflections on managers were more widely expressed. This was the point at time in which this theme was most significant. Five participants out of a total of 14 interviewed provided negative opinions. Vicky expressed concerns relating to managers in her first round interview. She was interviewed again in the third round. When arrangements were made to visit her office to interview her line manager she emailed requesting to know exactly who I was interviewing. In the third round interview she said *'My relationship with my senior – I mean it's really, really difficult I'm afraid.'* It should be noted that in between her finishing the programme and talking to me she was demoted and had the majority of her management responsibility taken away from her.

In the last module of the course participants were informed that their line managers would be attending the review session to look at what they had learnt from the programme. This individual expressed some surprise when she was told that her line manager would be present and some anger and disappointment when he failed to show up.

Keith expressed a particularly negative view of senior managers within the organisation. He did not believe that the structure of the organisation is representative of empowerment. *'You know whilst we have a hierarchy in the organisation it's not necessarily a hierarchy of knowledge or empowerment.'* He felt that there were problems with more senior levels within TELCORP.

*'I think the real senior leadership is a bit broken frankly.'* (Keith, participant, December 2011)

Furthermore he did not draw any support from his manager.

*'You know I've got some great sort of peer relationships and that's really my only sounding board to be honest. As I say in terms of leadership from my management it's a bit of a black hole of if I'm honest.'* (Keith, participant, December 2011)

However there were evidently other forces at play that had an impact on such viewpoints as these. This individual who maintained such a negative perception of both his immediate management and senior managers in general in the

organisation was made redundant within a few months of the programme ending. By the time of this particular interview his redundancy had been announced and he only had a few weeks left in the organisation unless he could find another position.

There were further instances during the course of the programme that highlighted the existence of a negative view of managers. During a talk conducted by the Head of UK and Ireland in the Kick Off event one participant asked '*do you think your focus on managing customers rather than staff is working?*' This illustrates the perception that people management was not perceived as being the organisation's priority. In the subsequent session one individual commented that he wished leaders in the organisation would come and talk to '*them*', them in this case being the participants and their peers of a similar level on the hierarchy. It was interesting how these comments on the senior management were received by the 'leaders' themselves. The use of 'them' and 'us' when talking about senior management in the organisation was common place throughout the modules and interview process.

Relationship with managers or senior management in the organisation is one of the types of relationships that come under the umbrella theme 'relationship with others.' The next section examines another type of relationship; participants' relationships with the teams that they manage.

#### 4.4.2 Relationship with Team

After examining the relationship that participants have with their line managers, it is important to analyse the impact that LDP has had on the relationship that they have as managers with their teams. '*Relationship with Team*' forms the next theme contained within '*Relationship with Others*' as can be seen in figure 4.1. The team relationship was most heavily discussed in the second round of interviews that took place between July and September 2011. The participants were asked about their relationship with those that they manage specifically in the first and second round interviews. They were also asked in the third round if

they had not been interviewed in the second round. The principal way in which the way they interacted with their team had changed was through the participants adopting an alternative leadership style or approach than they had done before embarking on LDP. This is explored in more detail in the following sub section. It also relates to the section on ‘view of leadership’ earlier in this chapter. Figure 4.5 below shows the progression of the themes over time.

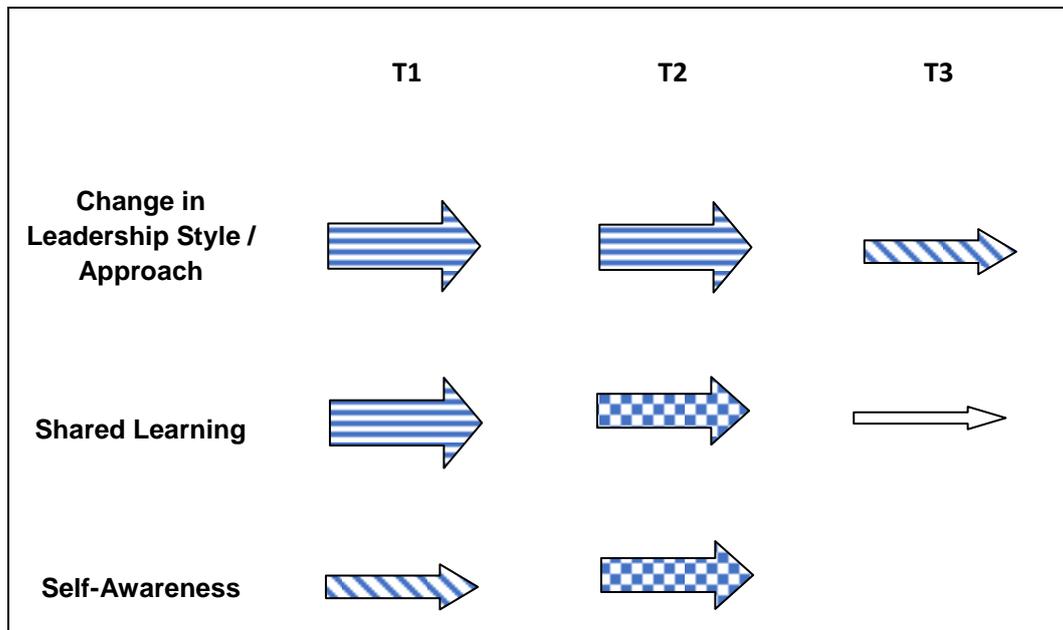


Figure 4.5: Relationship with Team

### Change in leadership style or approach

Early on in LDP five out of a total of eleven interview respondents talked about a change in leadership style or approach. Out of these, four had hoped that their leadership or management approach would be assisted by attending the programme in some way. The extent to which they believed that any change would occur varied.

*‘I mean the challenge is we all like to think we’re good leaders and managers. In reality you certainly hope so. I mean I think it would be arrogant to say that you know I won’t do anything better or differently. And I guess you know if I do things better or differently then you should*

*see some benefit and some change in the reaction in the people that I work with.’ (George, participant, January 2011)*

At this early stage two participants had already noticed a difference in the way that they treated their team members, such as learning to listen more to their employees and understanding the impact of wider organisational change on their teams.

It is surprising that as LDP was positioned as a leadership development programme that only four out of eleven interviewees in the first round hoped that their management or leadership approach would be helped in some way through attending the programme.

In later interviews once the programme had ended actual changes in leadership style and approach were more widely reported. Matt originated from a military background and tended to adopt an autocratic leadership approach. As a result of the programme he had changed this approach.

*‘I think the whole moving from tell to coach type approach...And I think what we’re doing is learning by just talking about the lessons learnt, that we as a group have come up with.’ (Matt, participant, September 2011)*

He did however think that some members of his team ‘cannot cope’ without his using an autocratic leadership style. But he did not consider this to be a behaviour that TELCORP perpetuates. *‘There’s some action in there to – for me to replace some of those people. Coz that’s not the type of organisation (TELCORP) wants to be.’* Another participant also commented that she was learning to coach her team more but this was not always appreciated by her team who felt that she was making them work harder than before.

Frank who had been sceptical from the beginning about the impact that LDP would have, felt that it had changed his behaviour and approach towards his team. By the time of his second stage interview he thought that the programme had already had an impact on his team in an ‘emotional’ sense. *‘It’s trying to be more involving and considerate to other people’s feelings.’* He thought that the team had noticed a change in his behaviour but the feedback had not always been positive.

*'They said that they felt on this course I've lost some of my passion.'* He went on to explain *'they actually quite liked you know the kind of knee jerk passion.'* (Frank, participant, July 2011)

This is an interesting reflection on the programme and what it sought to achieve. In this case it reduced the *'passion'* that the participant had for what he did. He was the only participant who reported feeling this way.

However he did believe that the programme had helped him to appreciate the individuals within his team. He now considers the needs and motives of each individual within the team rather than just treats them as a group.

*'It's allowed me to give them more time as individuals and maybe rather than address people as a group address them as individuals.'* (Frank, participant, July 2011)

Keith who shared the same line manager as Matt also felt that the programme had enabled him to recognise that the team is made up of a group of individuals, each with their own needs.

Vicky when interviewed early on in the programme said that she hoped that the programme would enable her to be more supportive towards her team. Developing herself within the team was one of the leadership challenges that she saw herself facing. She hoped that LDP would enable her to provide her team with more support. She thought that that the programme would help her with the relationship with her team because it would allow her to think differently and understand people's reactions. However as discussed in other sections she had her management responsibility taken away from her shortly after the programme ended. This has resulted in some confusion around who her team actually is.

*'I've still got sort of a team around me. It's been a bit unsure as to who exactly they report to.'* She also comments on how she has been removed from the management team. *'I'm not on a leadership team. I'm not where I want to be.'* (Vicky, participant December 2011)

This theme was most prominent in the second stage of interviews, with only two participants reporting any change in their approach towards their team in the third round of interviews. The next theme examines any learning from the programme that participants have shared with their direct reports.

### *Shared learning*

Figure 4.5 at the start of the section provides a clear indication to the level of learning that participants discussed sharing with their teams over time. At each interview stage the amount of participants who reported sharing learning with their teams declined. A small number of the participants shared learning from the programme with their teams at an early stage. As one participant said

*‘These type of courses that we’re doing are very useful because they allow me to say to my team that you know if they’re training me and I’m training you, it’s a downward flowing peak you know.’ (Graham, participant, January 2011)*

Tim echoed these sentiments and believed that it was his responsibility to share what he had taken away from LDP with his team.

*‘One of the facilitators has got to be me because you know it’s a bit like these puzzles. You gotta get out there and spread the gospel... You know they can take it or leave it but you know it’s down to us to say our piece.’ (Tim, participant, January 2011)*

In this instance his line manager had also hoped that some of the learning from the programme would be spiralled downwards to employees within the team. This line manager had four employees in total on the programme. He argued

*‘The investment was important for me as a leader to make sure that they got some benefit. But also you know they can use that information for their own junior managers within their own teams as well. So it’s – you know it’s a waterfall kind of impact as well because they’re now educating and mentoring their own junior managers on the stuff that they learnt from the LDP programme.’ (Ben, line manager, August 2011)*

Immediately after the programme a small minority of the participants were still sharing the learning from the course with their team or using it in their day to day management and leadership work. This generally took the form of the adoption of specific tools and techniques. The participants listed the most useful aspects of the programme content for them and their teams as being the Change Curve, Transactional Analysis and the GROW model.

However by the final stage of interviews several months after the programme had ended there were even fewer individuals applying or transferring the learning within their teams. The enthusiasm for sharing and applying the learning appeared to have waned as time progressed. Only one participant stated that she was putting into practice some of the learning with her direct team. Another participant stated that he thought there was learning he could share with his team but had not yet done so.

The analysis moves on to explore the theme of '*self-awareness*'. Although self-awareness it could be argued relates specifically to the participants self-development, this theme relates to the impact of developing self-awareness on the participants' teams.

### *Self-awareness*

Self-awareness according to the delivery team responsible for designing and delivering LDP was a key objective of the programme and was discussed during the modules on a frequent basis. The 'learning contract' which was previously mentioned in the section in this chapter on '*relationship with management*', asked participants to answer questions relating to self-awareness. Many of the participants felt that the programme had helped them to develop some form of self-awareness. This in turn in their opinion has had an impact on those that they manage. Self-awareness was also a key aim of the programme from a line manager perspective.

*'I think it's sort of...management awareness I think. There's... understanding yourself and understanding how others perceive yourself. And it's sort of I guess using that to improve the way you can sort of*

*manage and lead teams. So I think a lot of it's about self-awareness.'*  
(Adam, line manager, July 2011)

Self-awareness was discussed by three of the participants in the initial set of interviews. They were all from different divisions of the organisation. However in the second round of interviews self-awareness was considered in more detail. George who comes from a TELCORP acquisition felt that self-awareness was a vital quality in being a leader.

*'I think you know certainly better self-awareness makes you a better leader because you know you're much more able to – to be yourself and I think that authenticity is important for leadership. So a better understanding of your Motives Values Preferences I think helps you be a better leader because you will be more authentic.'* (George, participant, August 2011)

Nevertheless self-awareness was not mentioned at all in the third and final round of interviews.

It is also important to note that for many of the participants their team changed either during the course of LDP or shortly afterwards. This evidently has had some bearing on the extent to which they could apply the learning within the team and equally the extent to which they could determine the impact that LDP had on the relationship that they have with their team. Furthermore changes in organisational structure have meant that some of the participants have been promoted internally. This has not always been welcomed from within the team.

*'There are people out there who are put out because I got the job and they didn't. There are people put out because within any organisational change there'll be some people who are winners and some who are losers. And there are some people who just don't like having a different manager.'* (Chris, participant, July 2011)

In this particular instance the programme helped the participant with obtaining a promotion.

In addition due to the nature of the organisation and the way that work is organised within it there are a small number of individuals who do not have a team who directly report to them as such. Having considered the impact that LDP had on participant's relationship with those that the participants report to and those that report to them, I now move on to explore any impact on the relationships that they have with their peers and fellow participants.

### **4.4.3 Peer / Participant Relationships**

From an organisational perspective as we have already established enhancing collaboration between managers was one of the principal aims of LDP. This stems from a culture of organisational silos whereby different parts of the organisation do not communicate with each other. However as was highlighted in an earlier section of this chapter collaboration was barely mentioned by the line managers and the participants as a key aim of the programme.

Nevertheless the development of peer relationships was listed as one of the most significant impacts of LDP by the participants. This theme is present throughout every stage of interviewing. Its prevalence does not appear to diminish over time, although many of the relationships that were developed were not maintained in the long-term. It is therefore discussed in detail in this section.

The peer coaching session which took place for two hours on the second day of each module was cited by the majority of participants as being one of the most useful activities of LDP. It acted as a forum and a 'safe space' to share problems. The participants were divided into four groups at the beginning of the programme and they remained largely the same for the programme's duration. Each group was given a member of the consulting team to act as facilitator. Every individual took it in turns to talk about a problem or an issue that they were currently dealing with in the workplace. The rest of the group then were welcome to ask questions about the issue that would hopefully help the participant in some way. Some of the relationships that were established among attendees stemmed from these groups. The sub-themes and their prevalence over time is illustrated in figure 4.6 on the next page.

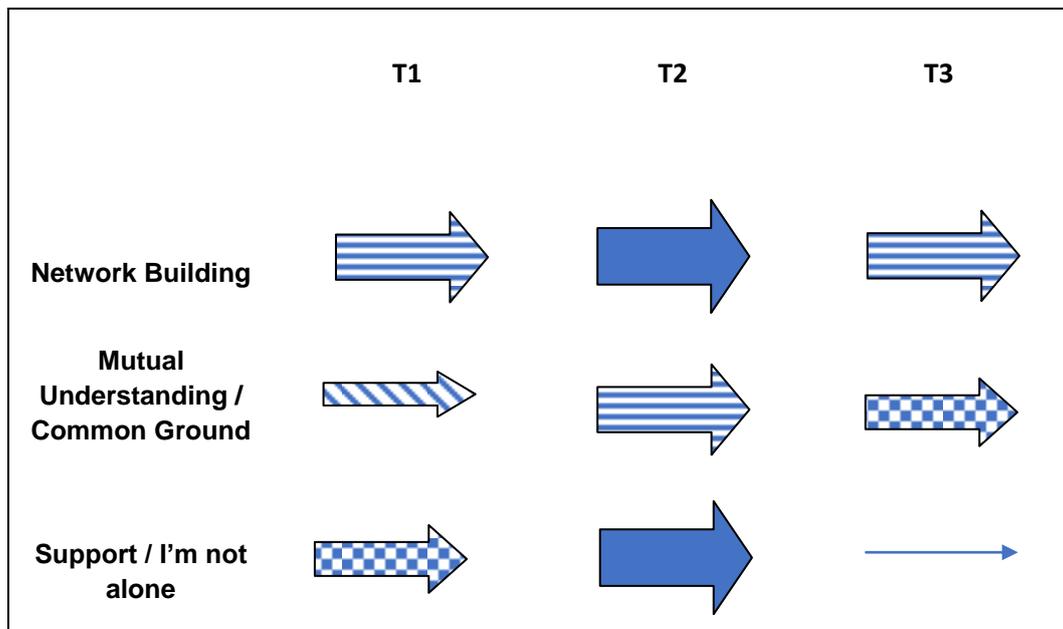


Figure 4.6: Peer / Participant Relationships

The first theme relating to participant relationships is ‘*network building.*’

### *Network building*

LDP served as a means of facilitating the extension of networks among its attendees. This was highlighted at every stage of the interview process, but particularly in the second round. The majority of respondents discussed the importance of networking in their interviews. Several participants cited it as being the most useful outcome of the programme. As one participant said

*‘Whilst this isn’t necessarily as a direct result of the content of LDP I found it good to meet up with other people within my business that I would never have any contact with. And it was good to get that – you know that level of networking in place and understanding and it was generally a good bunch – well not generally – they were all of them a good bunch of people.’ (Matt, participant, September 2011)*

The line managers that were interviewed also cited networking as a particularly useful outcome from LDP. Six out of the seven line managers discussed the value of the relationships or the networks that had developed as a result of the programme. In one instance the manager did not feel that their employee had

gained much from the programme itself but had appreciated the networking aspect.

*'It's been a good experience in terms of networking and there's probably been more value in terms of almost for this particular individual on the networking aspects than maybe the course itself.'* (Adam, line manager, July 2011)

Whether or not these networks have been maintained is explored under the theme '*maintaining relationships.*'

### *Mutual understanding / common ground*

The establishment of peer relationships facilitated many participants in developing some form of common ground or mutual understanding between themselves. As figure 4.6 illustrates, this theme was evident from an early stage in LDP. As one individual said '*It's funny when you get with likeminded people.*' Four out of the eleven participants interviewed in the first round talked about developing a mutual understanding or establishing a common ground with fellow participants. Sometimes this was implicit in the language that was used. For example one participant used the phrase '*LDP community*' implying that the participants are working as a group.

*'I mean I think the support of the LDP community and the ability to discuss issues and get input and questioning and feedback is very helpful.'* (James, participant, January 2011)

The establishment of a '*common ground*' was also seen to have practical implications for day to day managerial work. Sara explained

*'A number of us are involved and attending the LDP programme together, which has given us a kind of common ground...It should also help transferring the learnings into our day to day management and leadership work because we are kind of interrelated – the work and deliverables from our teams are closely linked.'* (Sara, participant, February 2011)

The programme also helped the participants to realise that they shared similar problems or *'it's about realising that we're all in the same boat.'* This additionally connected to the sub theme 'I'm not alone'.

This sub theme became more prominent within the second stage of interviewing, which took place once the programme had ended. Sara who commented on the impact of developing a common ground on her managerial work in the previous interview used the phrase *'one team'* to capture the sense of community that had developed among the participants.

*'I guess it's brought us kind of together to act as I was saying earlier as one team. It has achieved the objective to bring us – to bring the different UK organisations together to make us feel as one team.'* (Sara, participant, August 2011)

This notion of *'one team'* was of paramount importance to this individual. In the final review session in May 2011 all attendees were asked to prepare a poster based on their experience of the programme and the benefits that it had for them. In the centre of her poster was the title *'one team'* It was impossible to see if this sentiment would have persisted over a longer time period as this individual was made redundant shortly after her second interview. Mutual understanding was also mentioned by another participant as being one of the biggest impacts of the programme.

In one case the presence of a common ground served as a way of excluding management from conversations. Frank described how it had been useful in developing a language that the line manager did not understand. He saw this of being a particular benefit.

*'It's quite entertaining actually coz our senior manager who obviously didn't do the course sometimes misses out on some of the stuff we're talking about. You know because you know we tend to go back...to some of the kind of phrases and buzzwords that we used on the course... He obviously doesn't understand well enough and you know sometimes I think he feels a little bit left out of some of the conversations.'* (Frank, participant, July 2011)

This individual throughout his interviews appeared to take a 'them' and 'us' approach to management and referred to them as 'the blocking level.'

Two of the participants also talked about the value in understanding that they all shared the same problems or 'frustrations.' One participant argued

*'I think that's probably one of the key things to take away maybe from a company point of view that you don't necessarily have to spend lots of money on training courses per se. It's just the sheer act of getting some people together and discussing problems. And you find out the problems you've got are very similar to the problem everyone else has got.'*

*(Edward, participant, August 2011)*

All of the above examples demonstrate the importance of mutual understanding as expressed by a large number of the interviewees in the second round. The sub theme of '*mutual understanding and common ground*' was not as prominent in the third stage of interviewing which took place seven to nine months after the programme had ended, however for a small group of participants this theme was still of great importance. Tim who had been working for the organisation on a particular project for a few years talked about mutual understanding in both of his previous interviews. This still resonated with him in his third interview. However for him it went deeper than simply establishing a common ground. He felt an affiliation with the other participants.

*'I feel an affiliation with the guys who are on the course. That's why I took it as a personal insult almost when those two guys were made redundant. But I think I wouldn't say there's a sense of shared purpose because there's been no sort of continuation of the programme in a sort of an offline way...I wouldn't say I feel a particular affiliation based on the programme.'* (Tim, participant, December 2011)

So although this individual feels affiliated with some attendees on the programme this did not have an impact on his day to day work.

A small group of the participants still reflected on the value of sharing common experiences in the third round. However there was a divide in opinion about

whether or not these experiences were positive. Edward commented *'the strongest shared experience really is it's bad everywhere.'*

Although many of the participants did comment on the development of mutual understanding or an affiliation with their peers, there were a small number of instances where this was not the case. The organisational silos still exist in the same way as they did before and LDP has not succeeded in breaking down these barriers. When asked about who he felt affiliated to Frank said

*'I don't really see a lot of people on the LDP programme. They're not part of my business. So I suppose the answer to that is – by default is like the allegiance has to be to my organisation.'* (Frank, participant, December 2011)

However there are other external factors that may have had an impact on this statement. Frank at the beginning of the programme was working in a team with five or six of his fellow participants. After the programme there was large scale restructuring and he was no longer working with any of them. In a similar manner Jack who operates in research and development did not feel any sense of connection with peers in other parts of the business. He said that this was because the other participants were *'sales guys'*. He saw no need to have any contact with them and maintained a strong sense of divide between the *'sales guys'* and employees like him who work in research and development. In a few cases there appeared to be a strong sense of professional identity that maintained the divide between research and development and the *'sales guys.'* Similar viewpoints were reinforced by some of the line managers that were interviewed after the programme who saw no need for any connection between employees in their part of the business and other areas of the organisation who conduct completely different types of activities.

### *Support / I'm not alone*

This sub-theme relates to the manner in which the development of peer relationships has either acted as a means of support for participants or has

made them feel less *'alone'* in their roles in the organisation. As figure 4.6 illustrates, this theme was present in very stage of interview.

During the initial round of interviews the feeling of not being alone and the impact that the establishment of peer participants relationships has had on this was particularly prevalent among those that work within one of TELCORP's acquisitions. Vicky felt that meeting other people helped in the transition from a small company to a 'big organisation.'

*'Especially with regards to things like you know the peer coaching and everything, which for me has you know built a lot I suppose you know more internal strengths, feeling more supported and especially for you know coming into a big organisation – you know being new into the organisation.'* (Vicky, participant, February 2011)

From observing the modules it was evident that small groups formed between some of the participants throughout the duration of the programme. Those attendees that originated from TELCORP acquisition organisations or who worked within small units that were deemed to be separate from the wider organisational structure tended to stick together and go to each other for support and advice. George was also from an acquisition organisation and felt that other participants were a source of support.

*'I mean some of the peer coaching gives you an opportunity to talk through problems. Coz it can get quite lonely the further up the management structure you get.'* (George, participant, January 2011)

This theme was even stronger during the second round of interviews, which took place once LDP had ended. George reaffirmed that meeting other managers had increased his sense of feeling part of the larger organisation. Nevertheless in the second round this theme was not solely limited to those working in one of TELCORP's acquisitions. Seven of the 16 participants interviewed during the second stage talked about this. For Colin this sentiment was particularly strong.

*'And the one thing is sometimes as a manager you feel very isolated. You don't quite – you don't know whether other people are going through*

*similar issues and similar problems, similar doubts, concerns you know... You find out that actually you know thirty other people are experiencing similar things I'm experiencing... and that's quite comforting to know so that you're not alone (Colin, participant, August 2011)*

Interestingly the notion of '*not feeling alone*' did not present itself in the third round of interviews and the feeling of deriving support from fellow participants was only mentioned by one respondent. Vicky felt the loss of this means of support now that the programme had ended. Her interview took place seven months after LDP came to a close. She blamed the fact that everyone is dispersed geographically in different offices for the disappearance of this support mechanism.

*'So all of the support structure that was developed and you know matured or nurtured I suppose is the word...has all sort of dissipated because we're all obviously quite far away from each other. I think that's what I got out of the – the most was the support network – you know having other people there.'* (Vicky, participant, August 2011)

On this note the next sub-theme within this section is '*maintaining relationships*', which investigates whether or not these relationships between the participants which were seen as so important and essential during the course of the programme have been maintained over a longer time frame.

### *Maintaining the Relationships*

Despite the value that was placed on the development of these relationships, few participants have stayed in contact with their peers. Large scale organisational restructuring has inhibited to a certain extent the maintenance of these relationships. Early on in LDP TELCORP announced that it was separating the UK and Ireland part of the business from the Nordics. UK, Ireland and the Nordics had up until that point been working as one unit. The

Nordics were moved to a different unit that also included the Baltics. This led to three of the participants no longer being aligned with their UK and Ireland counterparts. I happened to be spending the day at one of the TELCORP sites when the change was announced. There was apparent surprise and discomfort at the news. I interviewed one of the Nordic participants on this day who had only just discovered the news and had the responsibility of communicating it to others in the business. He was concerned that they were being aligned with the Baltics partially due to historic political reasons.

The change also meant that the relationships that were being established between the Nordic participants and those operating within UK and Ireland through LDP were no longer deemed necessary for day to day work. Only on rare occasions would these two geographical regions have the need to work together once the change had come into effect.

This was not the only organisational initiative that had a detrimental impact on the development of long standing relationships between the participants. Teams were divided, management changed and redundancies were announced. A more detailed exploration of the impact of organisational restructuring on LDP and its participants over time can be found in Chapter five.

Nevertheless there were several instances where the development of these relationships with peers had aided individuals experiencing organisational change. In one such case a participant changed roles so that he was now the line manager for several of his fellow attendees once the programme had ended. This individual was interviewed three times during the course of the process. In no interview did he mention this shift in responsibility but his new direct reports did. They felt that LDP had helped with this transition.

*'And knowing the person, having worked with him quite closely on LDP obviously made that transition a lot easier as well.'* (Colin, participant, January 2011)

This same manager had also maintained contact with another participant which was proving beneficial in his new role. He sought his advice and they are now working on a project together.

*'He and I have shared a view let's say. We've built up a relationship through LDP. And on this particular project we've been able to work very effectively together.'* (Brian, participant, February 2012)

His fellow participant also felt positively about this relationship.

*'You know that relationship has been good and Brian knows my way of working and I know Brian's way of working and mainly from our peer review sessions.'* (Tim, participant, December 2011)

There was a further case where the establishment of these relationships had proved useful to participants' day to day work. Vicky who worked in one of TELCORP's recent acquisitions was finding her role challenging and the environment in which she was working, particularly coming from a smaller business into the wider TELCORP organisation. She was described by her line manager as 'struggling' and had a different relationship with senior management. Two of the other participants were now adopting an informal coaching role towards her.

### *Fragmentation and / or deterioration of relationships*

The peer participant relationships were discussed at every stage of interview, although as has been shown many of them were not maintained in the long run. One of the core aims of LDP from an organisational point of view was to enhance collaboration between disparate organisational units by bringing participants together from different parts of the organisation. However both the interview data and observational data from this study has shown that contrary to this aim LDP in some respects enhanced or reinforced fragmentation in a number of different ways.

The first instance of this is the fragmentation between different regional clusters. There were instances of organisational restructuring that heavily impacted upon participants' experiences of LDP and the benefits that they were able to draw from it in the long term. The first of these changes involved a separation of the Nordic part of the organisation from its UK and Ireland counterparts. At the start of the programme they had operated as one unit and within a few months had

been separated to work independently. There were four members of this unit participating in LDP. This affected the impact of the programme for those particularly affected by this change. One of the goals of LDP was to bring people together from disparate parts of the business but those from the Nordics no longer saw this as being of prime importance. For example Anton had not got as much from the programme as he had hoped because

*'We changed the organisation.'* (Anton, participant, September 2011)

Although this change was not so much as a result of the programme itself and more as a result of this organisational re-structuring, what LDP did do in his view is strengthen the relationships with those in the same cluster as him participating in the programme. The change reinforced and strengthened the differences he felt with his UK and Ireland peers attending LDP because

*'There's a clear distinction between those from the Nordics and those from the UK and Ireland.'* He also stated *'we are very far from the UK from an organisational point of view now.'*

However he felt that through the programme he got to know his colleagues in the same geographical cluster as him better, which he found very useful. It could therefore be said to have improved the in-group relationships rather than in-group to out-group.

This is not the only example of LDP having enhanced fragmentation. Five of the 26 participants on LDP worked within either one of TELCORP's two acquisitions or one of its smaller largely autonomous sub-units. For them the programme did not succeed in breaking down the organisational silos and making them feel part of the larger organisation. One of the aims of LDP was to bring these individuals closer together with their colleagues. However the observational data illustrated that these individuals tended to form strong relationships with each other rather than the rest of the cohort. They tended to sit with each other during the modules through choice, converse together during lunchtimes and breaks and could be seen leaving for the train station together after the final session. Part of this could be attributed to the negative view that

they developed of the wider organisation, something which is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The final example of fragmentation relates to professional identity (Kenny et al., 2011). The programme has not so much enhanced fragmentation as in the other two other examples but it has failed to cause integration. There are a variety of functional divisions from which the LDP participants originated such as technical or research and development, sales, finance and customer support. The research and development division was represented by three participants on the programme who were all interviewed as part of this study. There were also a variety of other technical roles represented who did not necessarily work within research and development. The sales-technical divide was not lessened by the programme. As mentioned earlier, one participant referred to them as 'sales guys' and did not see any need to remain in contact with them after the programme had ended. This fragmentation is reinforced in the line manager interviews.

#### 4.4.4 Summary of Relationship with Others

The theme '*relationship with others*' encompassed three different types of participant relationships. The first of these relationship types to be investigated were those between participants and their line managers and more senior level managers in the organisation, sometimes referred to as 'the management.' As this sub section demonstrated the lack of management involvement and engagement was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. It was only talked about by a few participants in the initial set of interviews but more saw it as a primary concern in the follow up interviews. Eight of the 19 participants interviewed talked about it at some time or another. Managing and communicating upwards was another significant management impact that was experienced by the participants. This sub theme was mainly talked about in the second round of interviews, which took place within the first few months of the programme finishing. It was hardly discussed in the first and third round interviews.

The second type of relationship that was examined was the participants' relationship with those that they manage or lead; their team. This illustrated that any impact that LDP had on the participants' relationship with their team for the most part happened early on in the programme or soon after it had ended. By the final set of follow up interviews self-awareness was not mentioned. Furthermore by this third stage of interviewing the notion of sharing learning with the team was hardly discussed. Although a group of participants had noticed a change in their management or leadership approach towards their team immediately after the programme ended, only a small minority talked about this sort of shift in the final set of interviews. It was also brought to attention that the majority of participants experienced some level of change in their team members either during the course of LDP or once it had ended.

Finally this section looked at the relationships that developed between the participants. In the majority of cases these relationships served to establish common ground, mutual understanding and compare experiences. This sub theme was apparent at every stage of interview. However many of the relationships were not maintained beyond the close of the programme. In some instances relationships were strengthened within units or 'in-groups' whilst the sense of separation increased between units or 'out-groups'. Furthermore organisational restructuring acted as a barrier to long term relationships existing.

I have now explored the impact of LDP on the relationships that participants have with their management, their teams and their fellow participants. The last section of this chapter focuses on the TELCORP organisation and any effect that the programme has had on their relationship with it or view of it.

## 4.5 The Organisation

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Having examined the impact that LDP has had on the participants' relationship with their peers, their teams and their managers it is important to look at whether or not the programme has impacted upon their view of or relationship with TELCORP. In the second round of interviews which took place between

July and September 2011 respondents were explicitly asked about whether or not their view of or relationship with the organisation had changed since LDP.

Discussions of *'the organisation'*, the way it was perceived and opinions around its culture were common place throughout LDP. This is hardly surprising seeing as all of the participants stemmed from the same organisation. At the time of the programme TELCORP and its employees were being subjected to frequent structural and cultural change. Two large organisations of different national origin had merged four years previously and since then struggled to make a profit. Both the press and internal documentation signalled a three year period of *'transformation.'* LDP occurred about half way through this transformation period.

A series of redundancies were announced within a few months of the programme ending which impacted on at least two of the participants. In September 2012 TELCORP announced yet another quarter of losses and consequently 5000 more redundancies.

All participants were from the Northern European part of TELCORP including one organisation that had been acquired previous to the merger and one post-merger acquisition. The existence of *'organisational silos'* was talked about frequently by the participants, their line managers, and the organisational representative, Stacey.

TELCORP is characterised by a large number of geographically dispersed and virtual teams. It is common place for managers to either be managing teams across international borders or to be a member of such teams. It also means that some employees have more than one manager that they report to.

What exactly the culture of the organisation represented was a particular source of debate in both the modules and the interviews. It was generally described in a negative manner. Terms such as confused, risk adverse, hierarchical and bureaucratic were adopted in defining it. One participant in module one commented that TELCORP does not *'work on its identity.'* He compared the organisation to his workplace where everyone was clear about the organisational values. Nevertheless the participants did identify some positive

aspects to it particularly its innovative heritage having been awarded several international prizes and many patents. It was not only the participants who expressed such views. Their comments were very much in line with those made by their managers.

The participants that attended LDP were spread over the UK, Ireland and the Nordics. TELCORP currently has seven sites in the UK, one of which is solely dedicated to an acquisition organisation and carries this acquisition's name. At the time of LDP it also had an additional site for another of its acquisitions. This company was sold to a private equity firm shortly after LDP. I visited five of these offices during the course of data collection. Each of them had a slightly different feel and appearance about them. There was a striking sense of emptiness in three of these offices. They had a 'shell' like feel to them. Many of the employees who inhabit these offices are home workers and so there are many desks that are unoccupied. I was not the only one to be struck by the stillness of these workplaces. One of the participants who is based in Norway found the set up to be most unusual because in his office everyone comes in every day. He talked about the lack of people found within the UK TELCORP sites during an informal lunchtime conversation in one of the modules. He questioned how a team spirit could be developed in such an environment.

The subsequent sub sections investigate the ways in which participants' perception of TELCORP and their relationship with it have changed as a result of the programme starting with positive outcomes.

#### **4.5.1 Changes in perceptions of the organisation**

Figure 4.7 illustrates the prominence of the sub themes within changes in perceptions of the organisation. As the diagram shows the participants' relationship with the organisation was most discussed in the second round of interviews.

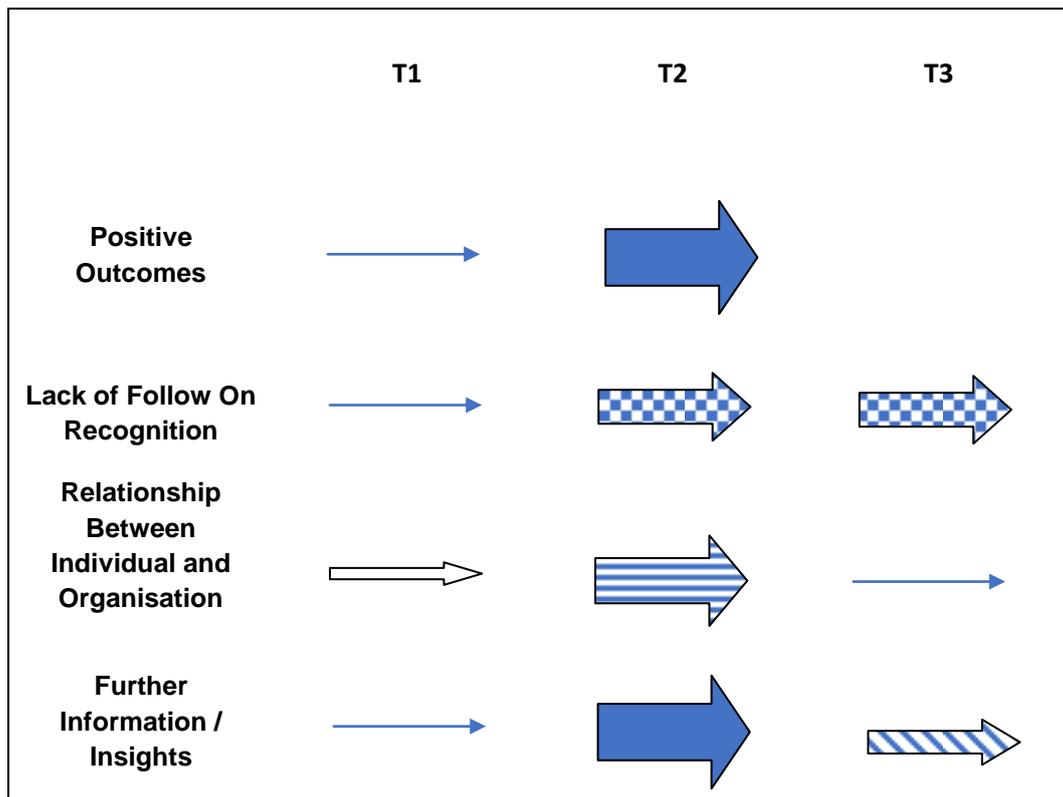


Figure 4.7: Changes in Perception of the Organisation

### Positive Outcomes

As figure 4.7 illustrates, some individuals reported a positive shift in their attitude towards the organisation as a result of LDP due to the manner in which TELCORP had decided to invest in its employees. George who worked in one of the organisation's acquisitions explained in his first stage interview how he felt pleased that the organisation had decided to invest in its managers. He reinforced this viewpoint in his second interview.

*'I think probably the single biggest thing was actually that you know they've taken the time and the effort to invest in their people. And at a time when there's clearly a lot of cost pressure. You know they didn't skimp on how they did it. I think they actually spent you know serious amounts of money to provide high quality training, which is you know – demonstrates their commitment to invest in their people going forwards.'*  
(George, participant August 2011)

He was however unavailable for a third interview. His part of the organisation was sold by TELCORP to a private equity group a few months after the programme ended. He was not the only respondent to appreciate the level of investment that had been placed in individuals through LDP. Lisa from the same organisational unit made a similar point.

*'I think as an investment in managers, I think it was excellent. And I think you know that – that for me was quite a positive reflection in (TELCORP) to do that course. I think it was a good thing.'* (Lisa, participant, July 2011)

This sentiment was echoed by a further manager within the organisation. When interviewed a few months after the programme Sara explained that she now felt more positively towards the organisation as a result of the investment made by the organisation and its employees.

*'I guess it just makes you think that the company cares about its managers and about leadership messages. Just the fact that the investment was made in the training and that was planned so carefully and that such a... diverse cross section of the UK organisation was invited to participate. For me I think I did see that as something very positive and also a bit surprised, also grateful that that (TELCORP) took the trouble to set something like that up.'* (Sara, participant, August 2011)

This individual clearly felt as though she was being invested in as a manager and appreciative of the organisation for taking the time to do so. However it should be noted that she was made redundant shortly after the interview had taken place, making a third and final interview impossible to arrange. Within five months of the programme ending she had left the business. She was not the only programme participant to be made redundant. Another manager within the same team who directly reported to the same line manager was made redundant two months after her.

Their line manager held a strong view that investing in employees was an important thing to be seen to be doing. In his own interview he commented on how the programme had come about partially as a result of some employee

satisfaction surveys and for him it was important to send every one of his direct reports on it. This has already been mentioned in the section of this chapter on the aim of the leadership development programme.

By the time of the third and final set of interviews none of the participants had anything positive to say about their view of TELCORP or their relationship with the organisation. One of the reasons for this is due to the lack of follow on after the programme or recognition for those attending it. This will be explored in greater detail in the subsequent sub-section

### *Negative outcomes: lack of follow on / recognition*

Some of the biggest areas of contention for the participants in relation to their view of the organisation were the lack of follow on that ensued from the programme and the perceived lack of organisational buy in for the programme. It was a theme that started to emerge in the initial stage of interviews but became more widely discussed in later interviews. Only Graham expressed his concerns initially about the lack of buy in from the organisation.

*'Well one of the things I haven't actually managed to find out is if someone else is buying into the concept at the organisation.'* (Graham, participant, January 2011)

During the subsequent stage of interviews that occurred once LDP had ended the level of disappointment at the lack of follow on and organisational buy in became more apparent. Graham once again questioned the level of organisational buy in and especially the lack of follow on.

*'And that's the part that disappoints me slightly that there's no follow up to that.'* (Graham, participant, July 2011)

The frustration was felt equally by his line manager who was annoyed that LDP had ended with no plans of it being run again in the foreseeable future.

*'I would reiterate it's a pity that it's stopped. And it's a pity that LDP2 is not there. I think that you know it was one of the few things that the*

*company seemed to be investing in. Coz all the company's doing at the moment is stopping things.'* (John, line manager, August 2011)

In the quote above the line manager also referred to LDP2 which according to him was another programme that was meant to be running parallel to LDP for a different level of management. This is the only interview that refers to the LDP2 programme.

The necessity of finding some way to follow on from the programme was an issue where both the participants and line managers seemed to agree. For the latter it was about finding a means of capitalising on the investment placed in LDP. Four of the seven line managers interviewed raised concerns about the way that the learning from the programme could be implemented and integrated into day to day work. There were some suggestions of forming cross functional or cross departmental teams for certain projects that could be led by LDP attendees that would draw on the informal networks that they have developed as a result of the programme. However no action had been taken by the organisational representative or line managers as of yet to formally implement the learning or develop these networks.

Furthermore many participants were dismayed at the lack of recognition that they had for completing the programme. The organisation has in no way formally acknowledged their attendance. Tim in particular clearly displayed his frustration with the way that LDP had been treated.

*'The fact that it's all gone very quiet and no one has actually issued any sort of recognition and said the following people have completed the LDP course...would indicate to me that actually mm pretty much forgotten. It was going on over there somewhere. So I think you know that's symptomatic of where the company needs to smarten up.'* (Tim, participant, December 2011)

The disappointment and frustration surrounding the lack of follow on and recognition had not dissipated by the third round of interviews, even though it took place seven to nine months after the programme had ended. Tim described how his view of the organisation had changed for the worse.

*'I don't feel having been part of the LDP programme is a badge of honour. I don't think it's something that there's been respected or acknowledged by anybody within the business apart from those that took part in it...If we're not maximising the potential that, that generated then you know where's the return on investment?' (Tim, participant, December 2011)*

He was not the only individual to feel this way. It is interesting that contrary to the organisation's intentions surrounding the programme, participants now have a more negative perception of TELCORP than they did before they embarked on LDP. This is not due to the programme itself but the failure of the organisation to provide any follow on or recognition for those attending it.

*'Yeah it's for the worst because you know you go and do this and then we'll offer nothing afterwards.'* (Edward, participant, January 2012)

It should also be noted that many line managers did not respond to the interview requests that were issued to them. This could in itself be symptomatic of the importance (or lack of it) afforded to LDP in the wider organisation. The next theme explores the impact that this leadership development programme has had on the relationship between individual participants and the organisation in which they work.

### *Relationship between the individual and the organisation*

This theme investigates the way that respondents view themselves in relation to TELCORP and whether or not this has changed as a result of LDP. This was discussed particularly in the second round of interviews.

This theme was viewed as being especially important for those attendees that saw themselves as operating in a separate unit to the wider TELCORP business either as a result of acquisition or long standing organisational structure. Graham works for a part of a business that has its own site away from the sales and research and development divisions. The site has a significant manufacturing focus. On my own corporate site visits I noticed substantial differences between this unit and others that I observed. For

example not only did they have a TELCORP flag flying but they also had signage solely dedicated to the pre-merger organisation that it originated from. In his initial interview this manager did not feel that he was part of the wider organisation. *'I'm not part of the matrix organisation.'* And he went on further to explain *'I think the thing that's very different is, we are one unit, we are vertical.'* In his view his part of the organisation works more closely together as a unit than its counterparts.

*'So we have to work very closely together. Whereas a lot of other people that seem to be on LDP courses, seem to be very much part of a little European part where the British part is very big and powerful.'* (Graham, participant, January 2011)

Throughout the interview rather than talking about 'TELCORP' he referred to it as the name of the pre-merger organisation that he stems from. Furthermore he saw the goals of his unit as being more closely defined and understood than within the wider organisation.

*'It's really clear that our organisation knows its goals.'* (Graham, participant, January 2011)

By the time of his second round interview his view of himself in relation to the wider TELCORP organisation remained largely unchanged. This interview took place shortly after the end of LDP. He still viewed his part of the organisation to be a largely separate entity. Furthermore he was still of the opinion that his division operates more closely together as a unit than others that he had knowledge of.

*'I do think we are a unit in its own right. And we do have different values and priorities. Not massively different. You know we're not out there – we're not some type of cult. But we seem to be much more in tune with one another...I came away from the LDP programme thinking there's a lot of good people here who actually have very little direction.'* (Graham, participant, July 2011)

Graham believed that LDP should have made him feel more a part of the wider organisation but failed to do so.

*'I still feel it's a very bitty organisation. And I still feel a little bit – well I work for one part of it. This is my (laughs) little section. Which is unfortunate. Because I think the LDP programme should have broken that down a little bit more than it did.'* (Graham, participant, July 2011)

He also talked about the sense of identity associated with his part of the business.

*'Because you're a factory people are there. So you have a sort of sense of identity in your own right.'* (Graham, participant, July 2011)

By the third round interview which occurred several months after the end of the programme, he appeared to revel in being so separate from the wider organisation. LDP made him appreciate his own unit more than he did before.

*'I think the culture is still a problem for the organisation. I was saying before I tend to regard myself as a (department) person rather than a TELCORP person. Courses like that should have opened it up a bit. It's actually just made me appreciate more what I've got to be honest.'* (Graham, December 2011)

He also added *'so in many ways not being part of the main organisation I think assists me.'*

LDP included participants from two of its acquisition organisations. There were a total of three attendees from these two acquisitions. Vicky in her initial interview described in great detail how her part of the organisation is different because they have not long been acquired and that they still have their own distinct culture.

*'We're still allowed to be quite dynamic and we still have quite a company culture.'* She also talked about having a TELCORP identity as well as her acquisition company identity. *'This sort of identity on the outside affects my role.'* Her perception of her part of the organisation was largely unchanged by the LDP programme. In her third round interview she said

*'I think we are still quite on the peripheral of the whole TELCORP picture. So we've not really been touched by that very much.'* (Vicky, participant, December 2011)

She still viewed herself as half TELCORP and half acquisition organisation.

*'I suppose I've been working with TELCORP people probably the longest out of all of the non-TELCORP employees who we have here. So I think I was already in a position where I half considered myself TELCORP and half (pre-acquisition organisation). Whereas most people probably think maybe ten percent TELCORP and ninety percent (pre-acquisition organisation). So I think I was already there. Do I feel more TELCORP? I don't think I feel more TELCORP.'* (Vicky, participant, December 2011)

George who worked within the other acquisition organisation adopted a slightly different stance. He does view his organisation as being largely separate.

*'In terms of (acquisition organisation) we're kind of a little aside from the rest of the TELCORP organisation.'* (George, participant August 2011)

However unlike the previous individual the programme has aided him in feeling a greater part of the wider organisation. As he said *'and clearly improves your sense of being part of the larger organisation.'*

The last theme in this section focuses on further information or insights about the organisation that participants have obtained from attending the leadership development programme.

### *Further information / insights*

LDP had afforded many of the participants the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the organisation in which they work. As shown in figure 4.7, this was illustrated at every stage of interviewing, but predominantly in the second round. However when describing the ways in which this greater understanding had occurred it is apparent that it was not due to any of the content of the course, instead it was as result of meeting peers from all over the TELCORP organisation.

There were several participants who did not feel as though they had developed any greater understanding of the organisation as a result of LDP. In some instances it was because they believed they already had a sound knowledge of the organisation and how it works. They did not expect a leadership development programme to enhance this. As one individual said *'I understand the organisation inside out, back to front.'* However the purpose of LDP was not to give participants a greater understanding of the organisation as such.

In another example it was because the participant in question did not believe that the organisation was capable of being understood.

*'Yeah you used the wrong word there coz you keep referring back to organisation. I mean it's not an organisation – it's a disorganisation by its nature.'* (Frank, participant, August 2011)

Furthermore he was under no pretence that a leadership development programme in any shape or form could help with this.

*'The only way you can understand an organisation is to actually live it and breathe it. You don't need somebody – especially from outside of the business coming in and telling you what it looks like because they don't know.'* (Frank, participant, December 2011)

#### **4.5.2 Summary of 'The Organisation'**

This theme has explored the way that respondents feel towards the organisation and whether or not this has changed as a result of their participation in LDP. It has illustrated that for a small group of participants LDP ameliorated their perception of TELCORP through the manner in which they felt invested in. However the majority of participants also expressed their frustrations at the lack of apparent follow on or recognition since the programme ended. Their anguish over this issue appeared to increase over time. This has in some cases led to a more negative view of the organisation developing among respondents.

This section additionally investigated the relationship between the individual and the organisation. In the majority of cases this was most closely related to those individuals who worked for one of TELCORP's acquisition organisations.

Rather than facilitating these participants in achieving an increased sense of feeling part of the wider organisation, it has predominantly highlighted the differences between their unit and TELCORP as a whole. In a few instances LDP has made them appreciate the culture of their own organisational units more.

## 4.6 Chapter Summary

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This chapter has sought to present the findings obtained through an analysis of 58 semi-structured interviews that were carried out at three different points in time over the course of thirteen months. The interviews were conducted with four groups of individuals: the delivery team, the organisational representative, line managers and participants. The latter of these groups forms the core of the data set. These findings have been supported through observation of the leadership development programme that forms the basis of this longitudinal case study research.

From the interview transcripts a number of themes were identified inductively, all of which have been explored through the course of this chapter. All of the themes are deemed pertinent to the aim and contribution of this study, which adopts a longitudinal case study approach to evaluating the impact of a leadership development programme embedded within a particular post-merger context characterised by organisational change.

The first theme that was presented in this chapter focussed on the aim of LDP. It was argued that there was no clear consensus on the aim or purpose of the intervention between and on occasions within the different groups of individuals interviewed. This poses an interesting question; how can the impact of a leadership development programme be understood when no clear shared purpose exists?

Questions were also raised about the participant selection process and criteria for LDP, and the manner in which they were communicated to the participants. For example one interviewee was initially made to feel 'special' before realising that everyone of the same managerial level had been invited to attend LDP.

The subsequent set of themes explored was predominantly formed from an analysis of the participant interviews relating to the impact of LDP in a number of key areas. The first of these, 'self as a leader' consisted of the two sub themes of 'perception of leadership role' and 'view of leadership'. This section considered the impact that the programme had on the way that participants view their management or leadership role and their perception of leadership. The data demonstrated that LDP appeared to have widened the way that most of the interviewees defined leadership and viewed their own leadership style. For the most part this represented a shift from a less autocratic or 'command and control' approach which dominated TELCORP's organisational culture to one that was more participative. Furthermore around a third of participants shifted their leader identity to seeing themselves more as 'leader' than they did prior to attending the programme. However they did not always feel empowered or able to enact this 'leader' role in the organisational context, which in some instances led to increased levels of frustration.

The next set of themes identified sit under the umbrella of 'relationship with others'. This includes data relating to three different types of relationships; relationships with managers, relationships with the team and relationships with fellow participants. This section highlighted the lack of management involvement and engagement throughout every stage of LDP and the detrimental impact this had on participants' experience of the programme. A large number of line managers were not aware that their direct reports were attending LDP. This can partially be attributed to organisational change which has led to frequent changes in line management. Furthermore it was evident that although participants shared learning with their teams early on in the programme, they tended not to do so as time progressed.

The importance of the participant to participant relationships that developed as a result of LDP was something that was highlighted by almost every respondent

during the earliest stage of the interview process. This sub theme was present at every stage of interview. However as was illustrated earlier in this chapter, many of these relationships were not maintained. It was argued that organisational restructuring acted to inhibit the establishment of longer-term relationships. Organisational context including restructuring initiatives is discussed in greater depth in chapter five.

The final theme related to 'the organisation'. Early on in LDP and immediately after it had ended a group participants felt more positively towards TELCORP as a result of the organisation investing time and money in setting up and running such an intervention. However by the final set of interviews not one single participant expressed a positive attitude to TELCORP. Contrarily a group of individuals viewed the organisation in a more negative manner than they had done at the outset. This was largely attributed to the lack of follow on and recognition for attending the programme.

This chapter has shown that there are a variety of positive outcomes of LDP at the individual, group and organisational level. However it has also demonstrated what could be termed a shadow side of leadership development programmes characterised by a series of unintended negative consequences. The section on the theme of peer participant relationships highlighted the way that LDP has enhanced fragmentation between groups or organisational units represented on the programme but has strengthened relationships within these groups. Additionally the analysis has shown that through attending LDP members of TELCORP's acquisition or smaller sub units have realised that the organisational culture of their own units is more favourable to that of the organisation as a whole, further contributing to fragmentation. In addition the section on 'the organisation' has demonstrated that in some instances LDP has led to the disengagement of participants from their organisation, which for some participants has led them to consider other job opportunities elsewhere.

The analysis presented in this chapter had also shown that different themes often varied in strength and the manner in which they were discussed by participants according to time. This highlights the importance of longitudinal research in the field of leadership development and more specifically when

attempting to understand the impact of leadership development interventions. One theme which varied considerably according to time was the relationship that those attending LDP had with their fellow participants. These relationships were seen to be one of the most positive aspects of the programme at the early stage of interviews. Directly after the programme they were still highly valued. However re-visiting the same group of respondents seven to nine months after the programme had ended showed very few relationships were still being maintained. Another theme which differed noticeably over time was the way in which the organisation was viewed by participants. As has already been argued, as time progressed negative views about TELCORP became more apparent.

It is evident from this analysis that the organisational context (particularly organisational structure and organisational change) and organisational culture had a significant role in determining the impact of the leadership development programme for the participants and for the organisation. They influenced the way that participants see themselves as leaders and their leadership role. They also affected the relationships they held with their line managers, their teams and their fellow participants on LDP. The discussion chapter will draw on the key themes analysed within this chapter using three conceptual dimensions: identity, organisational context and organisational culture.

The discussion chapter will also further elucidate what I refer to as the shadow side of leadership development, something that has permeated the key themes identified within this chapter, particularly 'peer participant relationships', 'relationships with managers' and 'the organisation.'

# Chapter 5: Discussion

## 5.1 Introduction

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The previous chapter analysed the interview and observational data, drawing the findings together under three key themes: 'self as a leader', 'view of / relationship with the organisation' and 'relationship with others', the latter of which was further divided into 'peer / participant relationships', 'relationship with managers' and 'relationship with teams'.

This chapter builds on that analysis using three conceptual dimensions, identified in the literature review which will highlight the impact and effects of LDP for participants and TELCORP over time. These dimensions are identity, organisational culture and organisational context.

Identity and its relationship with leadership development was discussed at length in the literature review chapter and was defined as the ways in which 'a person makes sense of themselves in relation to others and how others conceive of that person' (Kenny et al., 2011, p3). Identity is analysed in relation to LDP in two principal ways, both of which the literature review and findings chapters have found to be important in developing an understanding of the impact of LDP on the participants at an individual and group level. Identity is first considered in relation to whether participants view themselves as leaders (or not), and contextualises this by paying attention to the role of culture and context in this over time. In doing so it draws attention to a discursive view of leadership development. The discussion then moves on to consider identity in relation to the development of relationships between the participants. It particularly focusses on the concept of social capital.

Culture is a social dimension of the organisation, enacted in the way that people do things and how they think about and frame what they do. Rather than organisational structures and behaviour culture is about 'mental phenomena'

and the ways in which the individuals within a group consider and 'value reality' in related ways (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008).

The findings demonstrated that when discussing organisational culture, the participants largely referred to management approaches, mind-set behaviours and cultural conflict between the American and European parts of the organisation. Common comments included being 'risk averse', 'political', 'bureaucratic', 'fear of failure', the lack of empowerment and the lack of a common organisational culture. Also included within this cultural dimension is the approach to leadership within the organisation, which is discussed through leadership discourses and the language that participants used.

It has been suggested that leadership does not 'take place in a vacuum' (Porter and McLaughlin, 2006, p559) but is instead embedded in context (Grint, 2005b). The same I would argue could be said of leadership development. Context as discussed in previous studies often includes culture. As indicated in Chapter two, distinctions made between context, culture and climate in the extant literature are opaque and highly contested. However based on the findings of this research the notion of context is used to refer to those organisational aspects described by the participants in terms of them being passive recipients and having little or no control over, such as organisational structure and imposed change. For participants in this study this was summed up as context and mostly often described in terms of more tangible aspects of the organisation such as structure and restructuring initiatives, where they were situated within the organisation and the manner in which this changed over time. Therefore for the purposes of this analysis 'context' consists of both a structural and temporal aspect. This chapter will discuss the manner in which context impacted upon both organisational culture and identity over time. In doing so it will shed light on the importance of 'time' in evaluating leadership development programmes and the value of adopting a longitudinal approach.

Using the combination of these three conceptual dimensions over time, I argue is a valuable way of examining a leadership development programme. It enables an understanding of individual, group and organisational level impacts

and the role that context plays in both inhibiting and facilitating developmental outcomes.

This chapter will also discuss through these dimensions what I refer to as the shadow side of leadership development, which was also talked about in the previous chapter. Many studies highlight the benefits which leadership development programmes impart (Avolio et al., 2010, Campbell et al., 2003, Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 2002, McCauley et al., 2004, Yeung and Ready, 1995, McGurk, 2010). However an important finding of this study is that LDP contributed to fragmentation between different organisational units or 'out-groups' whilst strengthening relationships within these factions or 'in-groups'. Furthermore it contributed to the disengagement of participants from the organisation. This 'shadow side' is something rarely considered in the analysis of leadership development programmes, yet as this chapter will show it can have a powerful effect on the developmental consequence of an intervention. This thesis contributes to leadership development theory through drawing attention to unintended forms of impact that are less positive and may have long lasting effects.

The latter part of this chapter illustrates how the findings of this study build upon and add to the extant theory on leadership development evaluation. It then provides a series of practical recommendations for leadership development practitioners and organisations seeking to evaluate interventions.

## 5.2 Identity

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From the data analysis one key finding was that as a result of LDP a large number of participants started to refer to themselves as 'leaders' rather than 'managers'. Secondly one of the most important benefits in the eyes of the participants was the development of relationships with their fellow attendees. This thesis contends that identity is a useful way of exploring both of these important outcomes and is a dimension that helps in understanding the impact

of other leadership development programmes. Identity as a concept has received a significant amount of attention over the years from a diverse range of fields, which has resulted in the development of a variety of approaches to understanding and examining it. In recent years there has been increasing attention in the literature directed towards the connection between leadership development and identity. The interaction between LDP and identity is analysed in two different ways, which connect to the themes in chapter four; 'self a leader' and 'relationships which participants.' This study further highlights the important role that time plays in understanding identity effects and concludes that organisational context and culture can impact on the relationship between leadership development and identity.

### **5.2.1. Identity and 'Self as a Leader'**

LDP was explicitly positioned as a leadership development programme. The impact that it had on the participants' sense of identity in terms of whether they saw themselves as a 'leader' or not was something discussed at length in the later interviews. As this section will show organisational context, culture and time were all influential in developing participants' leadership identity.

There have been recent developments in the field that have highlighted the important role that identity plays in leadership development, and in particular the transition from being 'a manager' to becoming 'a leader' (Carroll and Levy, 2008, Kenny et al., 2011, Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). Kenny et al (2011) maintain that there is no well-defined set of technical knowledge or skills that are required for the act of 'managing' which means that the identity of 'a manager is left in an ambiguous and precarious position' (ibid, p78). The authors further reason that the identity of being 'a manager' is a largely contested category, which can entail 'identity work'. This process of identity work might mean that individuals develop a new identity as 'manager' (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002) or 'leader' (Carroll and Levy, 2008).

'Manager' is the term or title used in TELCORP to denote some level of responsibility for its employees. Having been in their management roles for some time one of the aims of LDP was trying to get participants to view themselves more as 'leaders' and to develop the type of skills, abilities and above all attitudes that the organisation considers to be associated with the term 'leader' rather than restricted to those being deemed appropriate to be a 'manager'. This goes against the traditional separation between leaders and managers as set out by Zaleznik (1977) and outlined in Chapter two.

Although the programme was positioned by both the programme documentation and the organisational representative as being for senior leaders, early on in the programme the participants did not see themselves as such. Instead the term 'manager' was much more frequently employed during the early interviews and during the modules of the programme itself. One reason for that is that the term 'manager' is often embedded in job titles. They are a 'manager' of people, 'a manager' of a division or 'a manager' of a resource or operation. It appears that culturally at TELCORP the term 'manager' was more frequently employed than 'leader'.

Approximately one third of the participants interviewed in the third stage of interviewing discussed the shift that they had experienced from seeing themselves as 'a manager' to 'a leader'. When the participants were asked about their view of leadership in the second stage of interviewing ten out of sixteen of them noted a change in perspective. This tended to be a change from an autocratic, 'command and control' view of leadership to one that was more participative or recognised that leadership did not necessarily reside in position. Chapter four investigated the case of one participant, George, who experienced such a change. It is worth illustrating this point again here.

*'I think probably you know I've kind of been subconsciously subscribing to the sort of command and control idea of leadership where you have a leader who leads and people who follow. I'm not actually saying that I ever actually practiced that but conceptually I think it's one of these subconscious things that you subscribe to.'* (George, participant, August 2011)

However from the data it appears that rather than necessarily there being a marked shift in emphasis from 'management' to 'leadership' behaviours, there was a discursive shift in the way that participants talked about themselves and their roles from seeing themselves as 'managers' to 'leaders'. It appears that the LDP provided them with a different terminology to describe the roles they were doing. From the quote above we can see that George was talking conceptually about how he saw leadership rather than behaviours that he actually practiced. Part of the reason for this shift is that the programme provided alternative, more inclusive, definitions of leadership rather than that of the traditional heroic leader. This enabled a large number of the participants to redefine the things that they were already doing as examples of leadership. This was not the only illustration of this discursive shift in the data. Another example was provided by Lisa:

*"I hadn't really thought of myself much as a leader. And I think maybe this is the view that's changed slightly since the programme."*

According to Kenny et al (2011) more and more managers are now professing to be 'leaders' participating in leadership training and describing their role, identity and practices in leadership terms (Carroll and Levy, 2008, Kenny et al., 2011). Leadership it could be argued is an 'aspirational identity' (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). However this notion perhaps assumes some form of willingness or volunteering on the part of managers to engage in leadership development. It appears to presume that participants put themselves forward for leadership development programmes in the hope of becoming 'leaders'. As Chapter four illustrated, in the case of LDP there was some confusion and little consistency in the selection process for the programme. There were individuals who volunteered to attend the programme but others who were told to do so by their line managers. There were individuals who saw the programme as a form of reward and others who did not. From a leadership development perspective this could be problematic because participants arrive with a mixture of expectations and assumptions about the programme, particularly why they are there and who if anyone is evaluating their performance. As a researcher it was impossible to obtain a full picture of how participants were selected apart from them being all of a similar management level. It seems that the selection

process varied between organisational units and by participants. In one example a participant felt disappointed because he thought he had been singled out for the programme and felt special as a result. This feeling soon vanished when he realised that all of his peers of the same level had also been selected. This provides evidence that the way in which a programme or intervention is communicated has a fundamental impact on those attending it, particularly the feelings and expectations that they have towards it. It is something that leadership development practitioners and organisations should be aware of.

Furthermore in an organisation where senior management and leadership were considered in such a negative light, certainly by a large number of LDP participants, the data illustrated that the appeal of leadership was not so great. For many of the participants, initially being a 'leader' was not something that they aspired to, due to some of the negative connotations in their eyes that went with it such as 'shouting the loudest', not empowering employees and imposing change on others. Perhaps in an interview context the participants wanted to distance themselves from this language of leadership. It would be interesting to see whether in fact their own employees viewed themselves in this way, and this could be an area for future research. However the programme it could be argued provided them with a different way of thinking and talking about leadership that was more participative, more positive and more appealing. The dominant leadership discourses as conveyed by the participants, and other organisational members such as line managers, are discussed in more detail later in this chapter in the section entitled 'organisational culture'.

A large number of the participants, line managers and the organisational representative also talked about a blame culture in the organisation. Almost mirroring this blame culture, these participants seemed to blame what they referred to as 'the management' in the organisation for many of the issues that they faced. By this they meant both their line managers and also more senior executives within TELCORP. The 'management' is an interesting term to use as nearly all of the LDP attendees were managers themselves. The respondents constantly distanced themselves from 'the management' in effect implying a distinction between 'them' and 'us'. Sometimes the terms 'management' and 'leadership' were used interchangeably for the highest levels

of the organisation such as the CEO or those that directly reported to him. However the latter of those terms was only ever reserved for the upper echelons of the organisation and hardly ever used by the participants to refer to themselves or peers of a similar level. There was also a rather heroic view of leadership in the organisation. The CEO was talked about by the participants throughout the modules and in the media as coming in to 'transform' the organisation and his main ambition was to make them into a 'normal company'. This latter phrase was used by the participants throughout the programme. One could therefore infer based on this terminology that this 'leader' was in effect brought in to 'save them', thus demonstrating evidence of a dominant leader as 'messiah' discourse (Western, 2013).

The transition from a 'manager' to a 'leader' is interesting in an organisation where leadership is portrayed in such a negative light. Although the CEO, who came into the organisation when it was struggling a few years ago, was generally talked about positively by the participants, any members of the senior management below him were generally not discussed in such a positive manner. The words that the participants used in connection with the CEO were 'direction', 'guide' and 'vision'. The terms were not so complimentary when talking about their line managers or other senior managers in TELCORP. Examples of these terms are 'the blocking level' or comments such as 'the senior leadership is a bit broken.' However reinforcing this idea of the heroic leader as well as the blame culture in the organisation, two years after the programme and after the data collection period of this study, the CEO did leave TELCORP as he was blamed by shareholders for not being able to 'transform' the organisation into what he deemed to be a 'normal company' in the agreed time period. The views on leadership as expressed by the participants, and specifically the interviewees can be related to Sveningsson and Larsson's (2006) research on leadership as fantasy.

As outlined in chapter two, Sveningsson and Larsson (2006) examined leadership and management from an identity perspective, and in particular leadership as fantasy. They argued that the current popularity of leadership development is attracting more middle managers. The authors went further and claimed that leadership is often written about in the literature as being

charismatic and visionary and thus is more appealing than the manner in which management is presented. Through adopting a similar qualitative case study approach to the one taken within this study, they concluded that ideas around leadership could be seen as a form of fantasy connected to identity work and not necessarily actual practice. They found that one manager wished to be seen as a leader and believed that he performed effectively as one. However when the authors observed him they found that he did not practice skills associated with his conceptualisation of leadership such as setting direction. If we reflect on the cases of LDP and TELCORP in relation to Sveningsson and Larsson's work it leads to a slightly different conclusion. Leadership in the eyes of the participants was not viewed in such a positive light. Rather than being drawn in by a 'fantasy' of leadership as being charismatic and visionary, they seemed to be more opposed to it. Many of them were not attending LDP of their own volition and had instead been asked or told to do so by their line managers. For a large group of them it was only when they started through LDP to step away from the view of leadership as being 'command and control' or about those that 'shout the loudest' and start to broaden their idea about what a 'leader' is that they could start to identify themselves as 'leaders' rather than 'managers'. Although arguably participants could be being sold a different leadership fantasy, whereby they can be leaders without having to assume a command and control approach. This could be a means of trying to portray leadership in a more positive light in order to get them to engage more actively with the concept and their potential agency as leaders.

This raises an interesting point. The literature review chapter illustrated the debate between the definition and qualities associated with management as opposed to leadership. Dating back to Zaleznik's (1977) paper this is certainly not a new discussion. However perhaps what is important from an identity perspective, rather than getting caught up in discussions about what a leader is and what a manager is, is the meaning afforded to these terms by those living the experiences. For these participants it was only when they started to attribute different meanings to what a leader is that they started to see themselves as one. There also appears to be a conscious shift from an organisational perspective to a leadership discourse. In the 2010 annual report

the Chairman, CEO and immediate reports were referred to as 'The Management Team' with a sub-heading 'The Direction Setters'. However in the latest documentation on the website (accessed February 2014) the executives are referred to as the 'Leadership Team'. Presumably these executives are performing the same roles as before, but are now 'leadership' as opposed to 'management'. This raises the question about what purpose from an organisational perspective does it serve to be talking about 'leadership' rather than 'management'. Perhaps it is a means of affording extra status and authority to those involved and LDP could have been part of this process. There are some potential risks of a change in discourse without a change in behaviour. Changing the way programme attendees talk about leadership has limited impact if their behaviour does not change subsequently.

Carroll and Levy's (2008) work on leadership development and identity construction took a narrative approach to examining the concept of identity in relation to leadership development programmes. They explored through conducting semi-structured interviews prior to an 18 month leadership development programme how a default identity can be impacted upon by an alternative or emergent identity. In their work the default identity represents being 'a manager' and the emergent identity represents being 'a leader'. The authors argue that the eminence and regard attributed to being a leader goes some way to explaining why this identity is so appealing. However a slightly different picture develops through looking at the case of TELCORP. Within this organisation there does not appear to be a significant amount of esteem attributed to leadership; certainly not in the eyes of the level of management that were participating in LDP. However this leader identity does become more appealing to participants as they reconfigure their understanding of the role and characteristics represented by the term.

As Chapter two illustrated, Carroll and Levy (2010) built further on their earlier work by viewing leadership development as identity construction. They provide interesting insights on the transition from participants viewing themselves as managers to leaders through a leadership development programme. However due to the fact that the participants worked for a variety of different organisations their study was not organisationally situated and hence less able

to give insights into how context impacts on conceptions of identity. This thesis focusses on a leadership development programme where all the participants work within one company albeit comprising different subsidiary organisations, thus enabling aspects of organisational context to be studied in relation to the leadership development intervention and its impacts.

Although the programme aimed to enhance 'self-awareness' in developing leadership capacity we cannot ignore the inherent political complexities. The LDP presented certain ideas or even ideals about what leaders and leadership are. Nicholson and Carroll (2013) relate two of Foucault's (1977) types of power to a leadership development programme; hierarchical observation and normality judgement. The latter is particularly helpful in this discussion. According to Nicholson and Carroll (2013) leadership development programmes provide and advocate a particular rhetoric or set of norms about what leadership is and the kind of work that leaders need to engage in. In this way LDP promotes a certain kind of leadership that is largely agreed upon by the consultants and the organisational representative, who had a key role in determining the content of the programme.

One could therefore question what purpose it serves to provide the participants with an alternative language of leadership if they are not significantly changing their behaviour. One could further question why it is important from an organisational perspective that participants do identify themselves as 'leaders' rather than 'managers'. One reason could be an attempt to give participants a heightened sense of power in the organisation to drive the subsequent organisational changes through. A hint of this is given when the organisational representative otherwise known as 'Stacey', says that individuals need to 'win' rather than 'lose'. In this way a shift in discourse affords participants a greater sense of agency. Being a manager gives a sense of little positional power, whereas leadership may give individuals an illusion of agency.

However arguably one of the problems with allowing the participants into this so called fantasy of leadership or shifting the leadership discourse and selling them the idea of a more inclusive, more participative and less autocratic, command and control view of leadership, is that when going back into the organisation,

they may be faced with an organisational reality that is in contrast to the 'safe space' of the leadership development programme. This could actually supply the participants with a heightened sense of frustration, as illustrated in the quote below:

*'I've tried to be a leader but that's...can be difficult. I'm definitely a manager (laughs)...It can be tricky to work the leadership side because of the way we're structured at the moment' (Edward, participant).*

This participant clearly connected his ability to view himself as a leader to organisational context and particularly organisational structure.

This could also lead participants to decrease their level of engagement with the organisation or consider other options when leaving the programme.

A small number of the participants who did now see themselves as being more of a leader did not list LDP as being the primary reason behind this shift in perspective. Shortly after the programme ended a significant restructuring plan was announced which affected many of the participants on the programme. The majority of them experienced a change in role as a result of the restructuring which took place between October and December 2011. A number of them explained that they identified themselves more as leaders because their role changed. This connects back to the notion of leadership residing in position (Grint, 2005a, Grint, 2005b). Generally this meant overseeing a larger scale of operations and obtaining a more strategic role or being responsible for or being in charge of a larger team. Interestingly in this organisation, there was a prevailing view that in order to be a manager you needed to have direct reports. However you could lead an operation or an organisational unit, or a project team for example without having any direct lines of responsibility: that is, because you were not a manager but still held a significant level of responsibility you could be a 'leader'. Consequently a group of individuals felt that the change in role that occurred not long after the programme ended was a step up in the hierarchical ladder even though they no longer had any direct reports. They felt that it was the change in role more than the programme which made them see themselves more as a 'leader' rather than a 'manager'.

From this I would argue that without the programme they would not have perceived this change in position as a move from 'management' to 'leadership'. The programme provided an alternative conception of leadership than the dominant 'command and control' or 'controller' approach seen within TELCORP. The programme did from one of the participant's perspectives aid in making the transition between roles.

*'I think the opportunity to be a leader I need to push that to obviously within this new role. Whereas in the past being a manager yes and I think a lot of learning on the course was about you know perhaps you know becoming a leader rather than just a manager. I think beforehand I'd consider myself a manager and I probably didn't consider myself a leader.'* (Colin, participant, January 2012).

The programme in a sense could be said to have provided participants with a notion of their possible selves as leaders. Possible selves are defined by Ibarra (2007, p9) as 'the images one has about who one might become, would like to become, or fears becoming in the future.' Ibarra specifically discusses this concept in relation to career change and argues that possible selves act as reasons or enticement for career change. However based on this thesis one could reasonably argue that the LDP provided a new favourable leadership discourse that participants were willing to embrace in the hope of becoming a 'leader'. However once again this is rather problematic if when returning to the organisation, the context does not support the transition to this new 'leader' identity.

Although the organisational restructuring was unforeseen as far as the participants were concerned, potentially the programme could have been a means of trying to promote certain notions of leadership in order to get them to embrace the organisational changes that were in the pipeline. In this way part of the aim of the programme could have been to make this group of individuals better 'followers'. A quote from one of the line managers supports this idea of the participants becoming drivers for change.

*‘One of the things I know the management team have been discussing is – how can we use some of the guys within the LDP programme to maybe be the change agents and the catalysts (...) we need to try and capitalise on these little agents to go out and get them to force things through and maybe build their own communities of change’ (Sam, line manager, August 2011).*

The interaction between context and this individual identity as leader is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter. Whilst this section has focussed on identity and the individual leader and therefore ‘leader development’ (Day, 2000), the discussion now moves on to consider group level identity and ‘leadership development’. In particular it explores the development and dissipation of relationships between the participants and draws attention to the notion of social capital.

### **5.2.2 Identity and ‘Peer / Participant Relationships’**

As the findings chapter illustrated the relationships that participants developed with their fellow attendees was described as being one of the most important outcomes of LDP by the majority of those interviewed. It was mentioned in every stage of interviewing as well as during informal discussions throughout the programme modules and on the module evaluation forms. According to the participants the range of benefits that these relationships served consisted of: building networks to help them in their work, developing mutual understanding, a shared purpose, a common ground and a means of sharing problems so that they no longer felt isolated in their roles. Some interviewees also talked about the ‘LDP community’ and acting as ‘one team’. The value of these relationships was further highlighted in the interviews with the participants’ line managers. However the majority of participants did not maintain these relationships long term once the programme had come to an end. This section will draw upon literature to discuss these relationships further.

The previous section of the chapter considered identity at the individual level and how LDP helped to shift this sense of identity from ‘manager’ to ‘leader’. It therefore relates to leader development as defined by Day (2000), who

distinguishes between leader development and leadership development. The former is defined as the development of human capital, focussing primarily on the development of intrapersonal skills and abilities. Leadership development on the other hand corresponds to more recent definitions of leadership as a social influence process, and is defined by Day as the development of social capital such as networks.

From the data it is evident that networks developed and, with them, the potential social capital of participants. However the majority of these relationships were not maintained in the long term beyond a simple greeting in the corridor or coming into contact with a fellow participant occasionally when the day to day job necessitated it. In Day's notion of leadership development as the development of social capital he makes no distinction between different types of social capital and he makes no comments about how this social capital is developed, maintained or used beyond the length of a given intervention or programme. This thesis builds on Day's work by distinguishing between different types of social capital in the context of leadership development. It does so by discussing the data through the use of Willem and Scarbrough's (2006) classification of two types of social capital; instrumental and consummatory.

The instrumental view focusses on benefits resulting from relationships created between people in organisations for knowledge sharing purposes. The consummatory view on the other hand concentrates on benefits associated with shared norms, values and trust (ibid).

From the data analysis I would argue that the relationships between participants in different parts of the organisation were seen mainly in instrumental terms, as a means of gathering information and establishing networks that could be drawn upon to help them in their day to day jobs. However these relationships dissipated once this capital was perceived to be of no further value. There are various factors that are likely to have affected the perceived value of these relationships by the participants. The first of these is the organisational restructuring that has already been mentioned. The restructuring in many cases meant that individuals who were working in the same team before, no

longer were working together. They therefore arguably had little need to remain in contact with fellow attendees. Organisational pressures and constraints are also likely to have had an impact. Although the relationships may at first have seemed valuable, when entering the workplace again after the programme, participants were faced with day to day pressures and maintaining those relationships were not high on the priority list.

Consummatory social capital arguably developed within some of the sub-groups but not in the organisation as a whole. One example of this is one of the geographical units of the organisation that had four members attending the programme. With the majority of participants being from the UK, this unit was a minority group. One participant was particularly vocal about how rather than building long lasting relationships with the wider LDP group, it was more the case that relationships amongst his own unit had become much stronger. During the LDP observation it was evident that this group of individuals used the programme as a forum for discussing ideas and organisational problems amongst themselves and could often be found using their own national language as a means of doing so.

A further in-group which was strengthened consisted of those who worked for the smaller acquisition organisations. Each of these individuals worked in a separate building to the rest of the LDP cohort and tended to work in a financial function rather than technical or sales roles. This group spent most of the time during the modules sitting with one another and socialising together during the breaks. One way in which the programme could be said to have strengthened these relationships is that it acted as a forum for discussing problems and TELCORP's organisational culture and organisational challenges. In many respects during these discussions negative aspects of the culture were brought to the forefront. As a result of this a group of participants commented that it made them realise how the culture of their own units was preferable to that of the wider organisation. They therefore distanced themselves as a group. However with this particular 'in-group' there were perhaps other forces at play as well. The fact that all of the members of this 'in-group' had experienced working in a part of the organisation that was either acquired by TELCORP or treated as largely a separate entity meant that they all had a shared sense of

identity in that they both saw themselves as different to the other participants on the programme and the data shows that other attendees saw them differently. All being from financial or accounting backgrounds one could also reasonably infer that in a sense they shared a 'professional identity' (Kenny et al., 2011) which was different to the other participants who all worked in sales, customer support, technical or research roles.

The strengthening of in-group relationships whilst at the same time unintentionally increasing the sense of separation between in and out-groups counteracted the collaborative aim of LDP. It provides evidence for what I refer to throughout this thesis as the shadow side of leadership development. These unintended consequences of leadership development interventions that can have damaging effects are important for leadership development practitioners and organisations to be aware of before they embark on designing and delivering programmes.

Although it shows that consummatory capital was developed within those groups, this form of capital did not develop across the organisation as a whole, and the sense of separation between organisational units increased rather than decreased. This development of consummatory social capital within sub-units could have the impact of making people feel happier and more comfortable with immediate colleagues but fragmented and distanced from the organisation as a whole.

This discussion has shown that whilst LDP was successful in developing certain aspects of social capital, this was probably not in the ways that had been anticipated or intended by the organisation or developers. It is therefore not just important to consider leadership development as the development of social capital, but there is value in distinguishing between what type of social is being developed. Although arguably LDP sought to develop consummatory capital throughout the total programme cohort, what actually developed between members of different organisational units was instrumental capital that was not long lasting. As soon as the perceived value of those relationships decreased, they were on the whole not maintained over time. Consummatory social capital is said to be more long lasting (Willem and Scarbrough, 2006), and did appear

to develop between participants of the same unit, but this at the same time enhanced the sense of fragmentation between units. This almost counteracts one of the principal aims of the programme, which is one of collaboration across the whole organisation.

### 5.2.3 Identity Summary

This section has highlighted the importance of how the programme is communicated and how people are briefed about selection. The discussion has shown that this impacts on participants' overall performance and engagement with the programme.

This section has also drawn attention to the need for leadership developers to be alert to dominant discourses and role models in the organisation as this shapes people's expectations and how they engage with the leadership development process. It has further revealed the potential for leadership development to facilitate the adoption of new discourses that enable people to engage differently with authority and agency. The discussion in particular focussed on the shift between participants' perception of being a 'manager' or a 'leader' without necessarily representing a change in behaviours. Dominant discourses prevalent in TELCORP are discussed further in the next section on 'organisational culture' and in particular the shift in these discourses over time.

This section has further argued that it is helpful to distinguish between instrumental and consummatory social capital when considering the impact of leadership development programmes. This builds on the work of Day (2000) who contends that leadership development is the development of social capital. In the case of LDP instrumental social capital developed between participants of different organisational units but this was not long lasting beyond the end of the programme. Consummatory social capital appears to have developed within sub-units, which has enhanced the sense of fragmentation between different parts of the organisation.

Furthermore the shadow side of leadership development defined in this thesis as the unintended and sometimes detrimental effects of leadership development programmes has been highlighted in several ways. Firstly there is a danger that if participants are sold a different definition or discourse of what leadership is, that does not sit with the context or organisational reality and constraints that they are faced with when re-entering the organisation after the 'safe space' of the leadership development programme there is the likelihood that will increase the sense of frustration. Secondly as the discussion has shown, LDP has helped to strengthen relationships within subgroups whilst at the same time contributing to fragmentation between groups.

Whilst this section of the chapter on identity has focussed predominantly on the individual level, the next section focussed on group level impact through its discussion of organisation culture.

## 5.3 Culture

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As highlighted earlier the findings revealed that organisational culture was an important dimension in relation to examining the impact of LDP. This section firstly draws attention to some of the key aspects of TELCORP's culture as defined by the participants and line managers during interviews and observation. It then moves on to discussing the dominant leadership discourses in TELCORP and metaphors that participants used when talking about their organisation as expression of those discourses.

### 5.3.1 Culture and Subcultures

Culture acted as a powerful influence on the impact of LDP and its participants throughout the programme. TELCORP could be described as consisting of a number of subcultures. During the course of this study I share Alvesson and Sveningsson's (2008) view that culture is not something that is universal within an organisation that is shared among all its members. The authors maintain that it is a 'fragile assumption' to think of completely consistent organisations where all of their members share the same set of 'unique' values. By using the term 'subculture' I am adopting Morgan and Ogbonna's (2008) definition of a subculture as being a term used to imply that an organisation's culture can be a fusion of many different cultures.

From the participant and line manager accounts it is evident that there are a number of different elements that feed into the existence of subcultures within TELCORP. One of these is as a result of a large merger as well as a number of smaller acquisitions that have occurred both since the merger and prior to it. This was always referred to by the participants as a 'merger' rather than a takeover. Nevertheless there was some tension felt during the programme with the name of the merged organisation. On occasion during the course of LDP

TELCORP was referred to as its pre-merger name by the consultants. This did not sit well with some of the participants, as a comment on one of the participants' 'module evaluation forms indicates, '*the company name is TELCORP, not (pre-merger organisation). I am a proud member of TELCORP; I never worked for (pre-merger organisation).*' This raises an important point that terminology is important in post-merger contexts and the way that it is used has implications for power. By calling the organisation by one of its pre-merger names it implies that this part of the organisation was seen as the most dominant and powerful, something which did not sit well with participants.

The data from this study demonstrates that a divide between the two merged organisations still persisted and the cultures of both parts of the organisation were seen very differently. As Stacey said

*'I still think that we haven't actually merged in terms of our culture and that there are still two organisations. And that's a very personal view but you know I still think that people don't...some people still sit in that mould 'I work for (former pre-merger organisation). Or 'I work for (former pre-merger organisation).' And you know the cultures are quite different' (Stacey, organisational representative, December 2010).*

There is a similar trend with the acquisition organisations. In one instance the organisation has kept its original name and sought to maintain its own identity. Professional identity (Kenny et al., 2011) can also said to have had a role in these subcultures. TELCORP sits within the telecommunications industry and thus has employees dedicated to sales and those who stem from an engineering background and concern themselves with research and development. In the case of LDP both of these groups were present as well as three finance managers and one manufacturing manager. The three finance managers were the only representatives on the programme of the acquisition organisations. One of the pre-merger organisations had a particularly strong reputation in research and development and had numerous patents and high profile awards to its name. Sometimes the professional identities and those associated with the pre-merger organisation still stood strong once the programme had ended. For example one individual reported that he did not see

any need to stay in contact with the majority of the participants because they were 'sales guys', he being an engineer working within research and development. This is further evidence that LDP developed instrumental rather than consummatory social capital (Willem and Scarbrough, 2006). The relationships were only viewed as being valuable if they were directly useful to the participant's day to day roles.

Rather than alleviate the divide between the different organisational units, as mentioned in the previous section, LDP appears to have encouraged the participants working within smaller acquisition units to maintain these divisions. From analysing the interview data it is apparent that the programme had enabled negative aspects of the TELCORP culture to surface and thus they did not wish to be associated with it. Graham felt that the culture within his unit, which specialises in manufacturing was more favourable than the way he understood the wider TELCORP culture to be. As he was cited in the findings chapter as saying he still sees himself as being 'a (organisational unit) person rather than a TELCORP person.' And that made him better appreciate his unit more.

Alvesson and Sveningsson's definition of culture includes how organisational culture is conveyed through stories, rituals and language. The latter of these appears to be of greatest relevance to LDP. The next section considers dominant leadership discourses in TELCORP and how LDP has introduced an alternative discourse. The metaphors that participants used when talking about the organisation are expressions of these discourses and thus representations of organisational culture.

### **5.3.2 Leadership Discourses**

The previous chapter demonstrated that many of the participants claimed that LDP widened their definitions of and perceptions of leadership. Ten out of a total of sixteen participants interviewed in the second round of interviews reported some alteration in their perspectives. The exact nature of the shift

varied, but for the most part involved stepping away from a 'command and control' leadership perspective that was typically autocratic to one that was seen to be more participative. The section on identity and 'self as a leader' earlier in the chapter discussed how this change in viewpoint had to some extent enabled a group of participants to shift their view from seeing themselves as 'managers' to 'leaders'. It also drew attention to the role that organisational culture plays in enabling a change in identity. This section explores the discourses of leadership prevalent in the organisation, the important role that they played in terms of the impact of LDP and how the prominence of these discourses in TELCORP changed over time. Furthermore it considers metaphors, expressed through the language that participants and line managers used as artefacts of the discourses. Discourses and metaphors were not explored in detail in the literature review chapter because it was not recognised that they would be so significant. However data analysis provides evidence that LDP had an impact on leadership discourses, whilst at the same time these discourses arguably affected the impact of the programme. It was therefore deemed to be an important aspect warranting further investigation.

Western (2013) identifies four prominent leadership discourses into which views and approaches of leadership in organisations can be categorised, the development of which are influenced by history, society and change over time. The four discourses are leader as: controller, therapist, messiah and eco-leader.

The most dominant of those discourses found in TELCORP is 'controller', which prioritises controlling resources, controlling environment and in some instances controlling and coercing employees, all in order to maximise efficiency. Furthermore with this discourse there is the belief that control resides in the position rather than in the person. Strong evidence of the dominance of this discourse can be found in TELCORP through the language, and in particular the frequent use of military metaphors by LDP participants in their interviews. The use of certain metaphors, I would argue provides evidence of the dominance of a particular leadership discourse. Examples of metaphors used by the participants to describe leadership or their understanding of it in the organisation are 'command and control', 'badge of honour', 'leadership

armoury', 'battle', 'everybody is marching', 'shoot them down', and 'take the bullets and flack.' It is interesting in an organisation where there seemed to be in the words of the respondents a 'confused culture' that the dominance of this discourse was not limited to the members of one specific organisational unit or just one of the pre-merger organisations, but it was instead widespread.

The controller discourse as displayed by the abundance of military style references in the participant and line manager interviews seem to be very much at odds with the 'collaborative behaviours' that LDP in the eyes of the organisational representative and the consultants sought to achieve.

Nonetheless collaboration seemed to be encouraged between disparate parts of the organisation with the aim of breaking down organisational silos rather than necessarily the kinds of behaviour that is encouraged when acting in a leadership capacity. Yet an examination of the organisational documentation on the leadership competencies that LDP was based upon shows that collaboration features heavily. It seems from this analysis there is a disconnect between the competency frameworks and reality. This is in line with the widespread critique of competency frameworks (Bolden and Gosling, 2006).

About a quarter of the LDP participants in their interviews described TELCORP as being risk averse. This has been expressed as a criticism of the organisation's culture along with being one of blame and characterised by fear of failure. This could be because employees only feel empowered to follow instructions from a 'controller'. It certainly poses the question, who is the controller in this situation? Immediate thoughts turn to the CEO. However the way that the CEO is described by participants and how his role is explained in organisational documentation and media reports provides strong indication of a secondary leadership discourse that is dominant within TELCORP; leader as 'messiah'.

According to Western (2013, p218) the messiah discourse represents 'vision and strong cultures'. The leader 'character' associated with this discourse is a 'charismatic figure' which utilises 'culture control to influence employees' (ibid, p240). The CEO was talked about by the participants and line managers as being a charismatic, visionary character brought in to 'transform' the

organisation. He was talked about as being the originator of the focus on 'winning' by the consultants, the organisational representative and the few participants who knew anything about this initiative. As mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter the CEO is thought of as providing 'direction', acting as a 'guide' and providing vision. In contrast the levels of management below him were characterised as inhibitors or 'the blocking level'. One could infer therefore that the CEO of the organisation was viewed as some sort of 'messiah' whose purpose was to come into the organisation and 'save' them from a struggling organisation and move them into a 'normal company'.

However one could also state that because the shareholder and board deemed him to have failed in his mission within a three year deadline he was pushed out of the organisation. There seemed to be a perception that the failure of success of an organisation rested on his shoulders. When he was unable to transform the company, the blame culture talked about at length during the interviews came into play. One of the problems with this discourse is that it can create dependency amongst employees who have the perception of the leader as a 'saviour' who can free them from crisis. There therefore is evidence that there were two dominant leadership discourses prior to LDP; the messiah in relation to the CEO's role as a leader and 'controller' for the rest of the leadership in the organisation.

However there is evidence that LDP introduced a different leadership discourse; leader as 'therapist', which highlights the emotional aspects of the leader-follower relationship (Western, 2013). The leader character associated with this discourse as described by Western is an individual who looks after the team and becomes the 'unconscious' good father / mother' (ibid, p213). Based on this personification of the therapist discourse, I would argue that parental metaphors provide some evidence as to the existence of this discourse.

In post programme interviews participants started to use language related to the parent child relationship. This however is specifically related to the language that LDP had supplied to the participants. In one of the modules Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1964, Stewart and Joines, 1987) was used as a model and a way of understanding and adopting communication style. This model proposed

different types of communication for example adult to adult, critical parent to child and nurturing parent to child. This language was adopted by some of the participants when discussing leadership in the organisation or the relationship that they may have with their line managers.

*'I've always been a good follower (laughs). So I've always – I think with people I've respected I've always ended up being a kind of a child to them. And that isn't always helpful. So I think in those respects you know coming in as an equal and you know persuading yourself that you are the equal and coming in and having adult discussions with them is useful yes' (Chris, participant, August 2011).*

This quote demonstrates that this model helped one of the participants to see himself as more of an equal rather than an unhealthy parent-child relationship. The usefulness of this model depends in part on the way that it is used. If it encourages more 'adult to adult' interactions then this could lead to more equal lines of communication. However if contrarily it leads to the view of a leader as a parent and follower as a child then this could be rather dysfunctional. It would be helpful to question here whether or not the organisation was aware of this model being introduced to the participants and whether or not the organisation would endorse such a shift in perspective. However the organisational representative had a significant amount of influence on and say in the content of LDP. From the line manager interviews it became apparent that they were not aware of the specifics of the content.

Once the programme had ended several participants continued to use parental metaphors to describe themselves as leaders. The use of this type of metaphor did not occur in any of the first round interviews. Whilst parental and therapist discourses are not synonymous, given that a therapist discourse focuses on the emotional aspects of the leader-follower relationship then parental metaphors represent a certain enactment of the therapist discourse. Frank used parental metaphors several times in his first round interviews. He talked about meeting his new team for the first time who had experienced a lot of significant change recently and whose manager had been made redundant

*'You know when I meet these people for the first time or instance or when I formally met them for the first time it was no good being impulsive, you had to be sat down there and be quite like a) concerned for them and b) understand that you know it was in parent-child mode almost. You know you were nurturing them and say look everything is going to be alright – you know change happens.'* (Frank, participant, December 2011)

The approach to leadership described above indicates an unhealthy dependency by Frank's team on him as a leader. It could actually be a way of making his team more accepting of change and fostering a sense of trust in him as a leader. This is especially true in the quote 'look everything is going to be alright – you know change happens.'

Later in the same interview Frank talked about how useful the programme had been in dealing with the leadership challenges that he was facing at the time. In doing so he directly referred to the Transactional Analysis model that was discussed during the course of the programme. He used the parental metaphor to describe the way he now led his team. It provides further evidence of a dependent relationship forming.

*'You know and almost like I said you know it was almost in this kind of parent child mode rather than peer to peer. So you know – basically I said look you know I'm here. I'm your parental figure effectively. I'm going to put my arms around you and cuddle you – you know metaphorically (laughs).'* (Frank, participant, December 2011).

The introduction of a different leadership discourse also had implications for identity. Moving away from a 'controller' discourse and thus a 'command and control' understanding of leadership enabled some participants to view themselves more as leaders. However despite this discourse not being so explicitly one of dominance, there is still a strong underlying current of control and power. Frank moved from a more direct style of leadership to adopting this father figure type figure for his team when he was introduced to them for the first time during a phase of restructuring. Although this could have the impact of reassurance it could also be a way of trying to soften the reaction to the

organisational changes for those that he managed. Through this parental type figure it could also be a means of fostering loyalty. This therapist discourse, which LDP introduced can thus be said to be fragile and at risk of reverting to the controller, through a dependent parent child relationship.

I would argue that LDP also attempted to introduce an eco-leadership discourse which emphasises 'connectivity and interdependence' as well as 'organisational belonging' (Western, 2013, p254). Eco-leaders connect people and create networks (ibid). One of the principal aims of LDP was to enhance collaboration and work towards breaking down organisational silos. In this way there was an attempt to bring in this eco-leadership discourse. From the initial set of data it would seem that this ambition had been successful, as a lot of importance was attributed by the participant interviewees to the establishment of relationships with their peers, in terms of both networking and sharing similar problems. However as we have seen the majority of those relationships were not maintained in the long-term. Therefore the attempt to introduce this discourse was unsuccessful, largely as a result of contextual factors such as organisational restructuring and because leadership continued to be associated with people in formal management roles rather than more broadly within the organisation.

The next sub section examines another aspect pertaining to organisational culture that emerged through the data analysis as of being particular significance to LDP and its participants; manager and management engagement.

### **5.3.3 Manager / Management Engagement**

It is inadvisable to ignore the role that line managers and more senior management play in the leadership development process. This builds on section four in the findings chapter on 'relationship with managers.' However not only is the support of line managers important for leadership development programmes to be effective as argued by Yukl (2010) and Burgoyne et al

(2004), but as this study shows a lack of engagement can also bring detrimental effects. Participants reported that they developed a more negative view of the organisation partly as a result of the lack of support or interest of line managers and senior executives in the process. One particularly important example of this was the failure of the HR Director to attend a session in which she was due to present in the module 'leading talent'.

Despite the fact that LDP was positioned as a leadership development programme and it was based on TELCORP's own 'leadership profile', leadership as a term was very rarely used by participants during the course of the interviews. Apart from a few exceptions it was generally only adopted as a term when participants were asked directly about it, for example 'are you a manager or leader?' Or 'has the programme changed the way you perceive your leadership role?' In contrast the term leadership was used continuously by the consulting team throughout the programme. As the previous sections have shown, culturally 'leadership' as a term did not appear to be employed within TELCORP. This was not just the case for the participants. 'Leader' as a term was barely used by the seven line managers that I interviewed as part of the process. The only individual that tended to be referred to as a leader within the organisation was TELCORP's CEO. It is interesting that a programme so explicitly aimed at leadership is situated within an organisation that does not tend to use leadership as a term.

Leadership therefore could be considered to represent a fantasy (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2008, Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006) that only the upper echelons of the organisations can touch. Perhaps in this instance by so explicitly positioning LDP as a leadership development programme TELCORP was trying to fundamentally shift the way that the concept was viewed by organisational members. As stated earlier there is an indication of a planned shift in organisational discourse from 'management' to 'leadership' through renaming the management team as the 'leadership team'. Whether behaviour was actually changed or whether it was affording some level of agency or self-importance to the participants was another matter. A large number of the participants saw them being recipients of organisational change being imposed on them with little notice and then having to communicate that change to their

own employees even though in many cases they did not agree with the change. Therefore they were not just middle managers but in a sense middle men or women too in an organisational change process. By getting participants to view themselves as leaders it could be a way of giving them a greater sense of power than they actually have and thus make them less resistant to change. This further highlights the impact that organisational culture, and in particular discourses of management and leadership have on identity at the individual level.

Additionally as has been noted above 'the management' in the organisation was portrayed by the participants in an extremely negative light. The lack of empowerment that existed was talked about frequently. This relates strongly to the culture of the organisation. However management as a process was viewed in a less negative way. This was partly due to the fact that although participants did not see themselves as 'the management', they did all relate to the process of 'managing', most of them being line managers themselves or having experience of managing projects.

On several occasions the management was referred to as 'the blocking level.' It is interesting the way that development is treated in the organisation. Many of the participants did not feel that their own line managers were engaged in their development and at the same time there were barriers put in place to inhibit the development of their own teams. For example there has been a recruitment freeze that has been in operation for some time within TELCORP. One participant talked about a situation where he wanted to help members of his team develop and had spotted good opportunities in other teams for them. However he knew that if he encouraged them to leave his team, which he thought would be beneficial to both the organisation and this particular employee then he was not allowed to recruit anyone to fill his place. He would then be put under constraint by having one fewer team member. By helping this individual develop it could almost be seen as sacrifice to him and his team. In effect the organisational context, in particular organisational constraints limit the extent to which developmental opportunities can be sought and obtained. One can presume then that the same would be said of LDP. If the programme provided participants with the skills and abilities that would be better served in

another part of the organisation or department then there would be little opportunity to move accordingly because if they do, their current team are not in a position to replace them. Therefore even if a leadership development programme such as LDP has a goal of cross-departmental collaboration and breaking down silos, this can only be achieved if the organisational context allows. If such organisational constraints mean that departments are forced into a position whereby if they lose a manager or team member to another part of the organisation, then they themselves suffer in terms of reduced head count then there is likely to be protectionism and silos are limited in the extent to which they can be broken down. In the case of LDP and TELCORP there seems to be limited opportunity for integration between the 'development' and 'utilisation' part of the 'leadership development bundle' (Burgoyne, 2010).

In summary there did not seem to be a culture of encouraging learning and development through leadership development initiatives in the organisation. Leadership development programmes were not common place for TELCORP. The only individuals that tended to attend them were those deemed to be high potential. LDP was the first programme of its kind in the merged organisation whose participants were not labelled as 'high potential' and did not benefit from this heightened status. In organisations such as TELCORP that have a strong risk averse culture then identifying people as 'high potential' could be a self-fulfilling prophecy. These high potential managers are identified as the top 3% of talent at the beginning of their TELCORP career, invested in heavily through attending a series of elite leadership development programmes and awarded senior management positions. When deciding who to promote those already labelled as 'high potential' seem to be the less risky option - thereby fulfilling the prophecy.

Additionally a large number of participants felt frustrated at the level of engagement from senior management and their line managers which has resulted in them feeling disengaged from the organisation and as stated in the findings chapter in some cases developing a more negative view of the organisation. This is clearly an unintended consequence of LDP and adds further strength to the shadow side of leadership development.

### 5.3.4 Organisational Culture Summary

This section has drawn attention to the leadership discourses which are dominant in TELCORP. The 'controller' discourse represented by a command and control approach to leadership and the use of military style metaphors is arguably the strongest discourse in the organisation. The messiah discourse is also present, in the manner in which the CEO is perceived and represented. LDP introduced an alternative 'therapist' discourse evident through parental metaphors. However the danger in introducing this discourse is that it is still characterised by a dependent relationship. And therefore there is a danger of reverting back to the controller discourse.

This part of the chapter has also highlighted the lack of management engagement in the organisation and the lack of culture that supports developmental activities. This organisational context therefore, arguably makes it difficult for an intervention to reach full impact.

The subsequent section discusses the impact of organisational context on both identity and culture.

## 5.4 Context: Structure and Time

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Organisational contexts have been identified by many researchers as being 'critical determinants of behaviour in organisations' (Liden and Antonakis, 2009, p1588). I would argue that it is also an important influence on leadership development programmes. In the light of the programme, organisational context consists of those organisational givens that participants are subjected to such as organisational restructuring. For the purposes of this discussion it consists of both structural and temporal dimensions. This thesis suggests that organisational context is considered by participants in this study as the more

material aspects of the organisation that frames the psychological dimensions of identity and how culture plays out.

This thesis adopts a constructionist view of context such as that taken by Fairhurst (2009) who claims that context is 'multi-layered', 'co-created', 'contestable' and 'locally achieved'. In this way a more social or cultural lens is used rather than one that is individual or psychological (ibid). The point about context being 'locally achieved' is particularly pertinent to this thesis, because the way context is understood stems primarily from the data. Organisational restructuring and structure more generally were talked about at length by almost all participant interviewees. This section examines the two dimensions discussed previously; identity and culture and considers how they are impacted by structural and temporal aspects of context.

There is evidence of two main leadership discourses in TELCORP. The most dominant of these is the 'controller' discourse, which according to Western (2013) comes into prominence in situations of crisis. This is supported by Spicer (2011) who claims that the metaphor of 'commander' as leader is also supported by these critical situations. TELCORP can be said to be in a time of 'crisis'. It has struggled to make a profit since the merger and the CEO came in with the ambition of transforming the organisation into a 'normal company'. It is facing increased competition on both a domestic and international scale and in an industry facing pressures for consolidation. Furthermore organisational change is frequent and significant and particularly carried out by a series of large scale restructuring initiatives, the majority of which have led to job losses. Given this information, it is of little surprise that the controller discourse is still strong.

Grint (2005b, p1471) posits that leadership encompasses 'the social construction of the context which legitimises a particular form of action and constitutes the world in the process'. In this way if a problem is presented as being critical or a situation presented in a crisis, it legitimises a commander approach that is typically authoritarian and does not involve others in the decision making process (ibid). In relation to LDP and TELCORP I would argue that the same can be said of the controller discourse, which is legitimised by

constructing the organisational context as a critical situation or crisis. The controller leadership discourse is reinforced in this way (Western, 2013).

The language that is used to discuss the organisation provides evidence of the way the context is socially constructed. Through the CEO stating that he needs to 'transform' the organisation and by implying that TELCORP is not a 'normal' company suggests that there is a crisis situation. This image gets reinforced by the way that line managers talked about the culture and the participants.

'Chaotic' for example was frequently used to describe the culture. When asked to analyse TELCORP in relation to the change curve in one of the modules the term 'anarchy' was used. The constant headcount reduction and reorganisation delivered by the CEO and senior executives reinforces this message of a crisis situation. The changes come across unplanned and are communicated at the very last minute.

By reinforcing this construction of the organisational context as a 'crisis', I argue serves to strengthen the controller discourse and hence legitimise a command and control approach to leadership. To a smaller extent it also reinforced the messiah discourse and the need for a charismatic individual to 'save' them from the pressures and challenges that they are facing. It legitimises the notion that everything is a 'battle' in which commanders are needed. It therefore leads to a very strong power dynamic whereby 'leaders' are imbued with power and authority to take an autocratic approach to leadership, one that resides in position and a culture that is about 'shouting the loudest.' It also has an impact on the risk averse culture found in TELCORP.

The LDP started to provide different conceptions of leadership that were not simply 'command and control' and were more participative. This did impact on participants' leadership identity and as mentioned before encouraged a shift away from viewing themselves as 'leaders' to 'managers'. One of the ways that this was done was through introducing an alternative discourse as 'therapist' represented through parental metaphors. However because of the way that the organisational context is constructed as a 'crisis' in which immediate action and decision making are needed, it is likely the dominant discourse will remain that of 'controller'. This will have a reciprocal impact on participants' leadership

identity, because if they find that this alternative view of leadership does not fit with the organisational context and reality they are presented with, there is a risk that they revert back to no longer seeing themselves as 'leaders'. As one participant discussed earlier has already found when re-entering the organisation after the programme.

Importantly however, I have found that this way of presenting a crisis situation, and hence legitimising a controller discourse has important implications for leadership development. To shift to a different discourse, such as that of therapist may require a reframing of context away from that of 'crisis'. Without this it is almost inevitable that the controller discourse will remain dominant and that an authoritarian commander approach to leadership will be legitimised. Essentially organisational culture necessitates presenting context in a different way, rather than just trying to apply a new discourse in the hope that it will address organisational issues, or in the case of LDP that will solve problems of collaboration and organisational silos. In this way context has an impact on the emergence, and perhaps most importantly the maintenance of different organisational or leadership discourses over time.

The timing of the leadership development programme is important when considering the impact of context. Two large bouts of restructuring occurred during the course of the programme. The first of these occurred just prior to the first module of LDP and involved a separation between two geographical units, both of which had participants attending the programme. The change was largely unexpected. The second reorganisation occurred a few months after LDP had ended and led to redundancies and role and team changes.

The constant restructuring that was going at the same time of the programme precipitated a string of situations that would impede the capacity for a reframing of context as anything other than a 'crisis' requiring the intervention of a 'commander'.

What also could have had an effect was the choice of venue for the programme. Due to cost constraints the second day of the second module was held at one of TELCORP's sites rather than off site as in the case of the day before and

previous modules. However two days prior to this the restructuring had been announced. A number of line managers used this opportunity to call some of the attendees out to meetings to discuss the changes during the course of the programme. This is demonstrative of the lack of engagement of a number of line managers in the process or the lack of perceived importance of the programme. The 'safe space' of LDP was therefore invaded raising the levels of discomfort and allowing day to day pressures to infringe upon the developmental space. This is an important point for those responsible for designing and delivering interventions. The choice of venue impacts upon participant experience. However in relation to the points raised above, I would argue that by having the module on site at the same time restructuring initiatives heightened the sense of the context being one of 'crisis'.

The next section discusses the contribution which this thesis makes to the leadership development and evaluation literature as well as providing practical suggestions for those commissioning, developing and evaluating interventions.

## 5.5 Leadership Development and its Evaluation

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This section builds upon arguments presented in the earlier parts of this chapter to draw attention to the theoretical contribution that this thesis makes to the leadership development and evaluation literature. It then provides a series of suggestions and considerations that leadership developers and organisations are encouraged to take into account when commissioning and implementing corporate leadership development programmes.

This chapter has highlighted the importance of a discursive approach to leadership and leadership development. The prevailing discourse in TELCORP was what Western (2013) refers to as 'controller' which is somewhat reflected in the use of command and control metaphors (Spicer, 2011). This dominant

discourse had an impact on participants' leadership identity. A number of them were unwilling or hesitant about viewing themselves as leaders because of this dominant 'controller' leadership discourse, enacted in autocratic leadership approaches. This was something that they did not associate themselves with. However LDP started to introduce alternative therapist and eco-leadership discourses, which enabled participants to view leadership in a different way and thus associate themselves more with being 'leaders'. These findings highlight the need for leadership development practitioners to be aware of and sensitive to the dominant leadership discourses in the organisation. These discourses, I argue have the potential to enable or inhibit individual and organisational level change. Although there was an attempt to introduce both a 'therapist' discourse through the use of Transactional Analysis and an 'eco-leader' discourse (Western, 2013) through the emphasis placed on collaboration, it is unlikely that these changes will be sustained in the long term. The 'controller' discourse is still dominant and constantly reinforced by the manner in which the context is continually being presented as a 'crisis' situation. This not only reinforced this discourse but legitimises the idea of a leader as adopting a command and control autocratic approach to leadership (Grint, 2005b).

One of the potential problems is that if there is friction between the view of leadership presented within a programme and the way that it is conceptualised in the organisational context, there is a danger that when participants leave the 'safe space' of the programme and attempt to apply their learnings they could meet with an increased sense of frustration. This further leads to organisational disengagement which is a part of what I refer to throughout this thesis as the shadow side of leadership development. This shadow side refers to those unintended and sometimes detrimental effects of leadership development interventions. Another example of this within LDP has been the manner in which the programme could be said to have enhanced fragmentation between organisational sub-units or 'out-groups' whilst at the same strengthening relationships within these units or 'in-groups'. This is particularly important within LDP because one of the principal aims of the programme was to increase collaboration and break down so called organisational 'silos'. This is something that goes largely unmentioned in the extant leadership development literature,

with most studies focussing on positive programme outcomes or those that have had little effect. However it is important that leadership developers and organisations are aware of the potential detrimental effects which programmes can have for participants and for organisations.

Time and timing are important here. The sense of disengagement of participants from the organisation increased over time beyond the end of the programme and as further organisational changes were put in place.

These findings also shed light on some of the limitations of the dominant functionalist approach to leadership development evaluation identified by Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008). This approach tends to focus on cause and effects, often in financial terms. However this thesis has shown that there are also qualitative effects that are important in understanding the impact of a given intervention. Adopting a functionalist approach to evaluation, for example through relying on information from programme evaluation forms would not have uncovered the importance that leadership discourses play in leadership development. For this a more constructivist (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008) or interpretivist (Mabey, 2013) approach to evaluation is needed.

This thesis also emphasises the need for line manager and senior level executive support and engagement throughout and beyond the leadership development process. One way that this can be done is through demonstrating a presence on the programme itself. The findings from this study showed that when a senior level executive from human resources management failed to attend one of the sessions, participants raised this as a point of dissatisfaction in their course evaluations. However it is important to strike a balance and appreciate inherent political complexities and power dynamics. There is a risk that by including senior executives on sessions participants could feel they are being 'watched' or 'evaluated' and it could diminish the sense of a 'safe space' within the leadership development programme.

I would also argue that it is important that line managers give participants the time and space to discuss how they can apply the learnings from a leadership development programme to their day to day roles, so that that they are 'doing' the programme rather than simply 'going on it' so to speak. With LDP there was

little evidence of support for the transfer of learning from the programme into the workplace. There was also, importantly with regards to organisational context little attempt to address the impact of organisational changes that occurred during the course of the programme. I would argue that there should have been space to discuss these changes and identify how the material from the programme could help them in dealing with the individual and organisational challenges that these changes brought. There needed to be a stronger connection between what was going on in the organisation and what was happening on the programme. Without this once participants left the space of the programme and re-entered their day to day roles they were faced with a series of constraints that restricted their ability to apply their learning and take up a change in leadership role. This simply adds to the frustration and can result in participants becoming more disengaged from the organisation. There are examples of this presented earlier in the chapter.

Burgoyne's (2010) leadership development bundle as explored in the literature review comprises three components that he argues need to be aligned with one another in order for leadership development to have a lasting impact: development, acquisition and utilisation. He contends that development efforts need to be aligned with acquisition in terms of employee selection and recruitment as well as how development is then further utilised in the organisation, in terms of organisational development. The 'bundle' is positioned at the organisational level. My study on the other hand is positioned at the programme level and supports Burgoyne's suggestions. It demonstrates that development needs to be supported by line managers and senior level executives and there needs to be a dialogue between what happens or is learnt during the programme and what is going on in the organisational context which is likely to have an effect on the programme for individual attendees as well as the organisation. In terms of acquisition there needs to be careful consideration given to the programme selection process and how this is communicated to participants. The findings from this study have shown that there was a confusion surrounding how and why participants were selected which ranged from providing a reward for good performance to acting as a means of determining poor performance.

An important question that developers and organisations should consider when designing and implementing initiatives is the one put forward by Carroll et al (2012) who adopted a critical perspective to analysing leadership development interventions, 'who gets to be involved?' I would also extend this by stating that it's not just who gets to be involved but how that process is perceived by the participants. This could have an important knock on effect on the impact of a given intervention. For example in the case of LDP one participant stated that he felt 'special' when he initially received the invite to attend the programme, but this feeling soon dissipated after discovering that everyone of a similar level had also been invited. The answer to the question 'who gets to be involved?' could also provide some indication as to the importance afforded to the programme by the organisation. LDP was explicitly positioned as an intervention not aimed at 'high flyers' but for 'the rest' of them. Throughout the line manager interviews there was frequent comparison between the well-established high-flyer programmes and LDP although, interestingly perhaps, these programmes were not mentioned at all by participants.

This thesis illustrates the importance of both time and timing in the evaluation of leadership development programmes. There have been calls for more longitudinal studies in both leadership development (Day, 2011) and the evaluation of leadership development (Abrell et al., 2011). It is difficult if not impossible to determine the longer term impacts of a given intervention without adopting a longitudinal approach. For example a shift in leadership discourses takes time as does the development of social capital, both of which were discussed earlier in this chapter.

One useful evaluation framework which is discussed in Chapter two is EvaluLead by Grove et al (2005). This framework advocates a multi-source, multi-level approach to evaluation through examining episodic, transformative and developmental results at the individual, organisational and societal levels and through drawing on evocative and evidential sources of data. Although there is an implicit understanding of time in this framework through identifying different levels of results it is not a key factor. I build on this work by adopting a longitudinal approach and by examining the effect time has on the impact of a

leadership development programme. It is explored as being one important, influential component of the context.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, EvaluLead focuses only on programme outcomes rather than leadership development process itself (Grove et al., 2005). Whilst there is no doubt that understanding outcomes is important to assessing the success of a given intervention, there is a danger that nuances involved in the leadership development process are missed. Through collecting and analysing data at multiple points during and beyond LDP I picked up on leadership discourses in both the programme and the organisation. These discourses, as shown, have important consequences for the impact of a leadership development programme. For example although LDP could be said to have introduced alternative leadership discourses to the participants (Western, 2013), the extent to which these could be adopted was influenced by existent dominant discourses in the organisation. These discourses affect the way that leadership is perceived, participants' identity and the way that they enact leadership in the workplace. My research thus supports multi-level and multi-source evaluative methods but offers a means of providing a more comprehensive analysis of leadership development that draws attention to process as well as outcomes.

# Chapter 6: Conclusion

## 6.1 Introduction

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The aim of this thesis was to adopt a fine grained approach to explore the impact and effects of a leadership development programme on its participants, in-depth and over time. This chapter concludes this study by first reviewing its key findings and the wider implications they have for both leadership development research and practice. Most importantly it will shed light on theoretical, methodological and practical contributions this thesis makes. Finally the research limitations and future directions for research will be discussed.

## 6.2 Key Findings

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This thesis has considered the impact and effects of a corporate leadership development programme for participants over time and has found that the process and changing organisational context surrounding them are hugely impactful with regard to programme impact and effects. My analysis integrated findings at individual, group and organisational levels and identified several conceptual dimensions which together offer a fine-grained answer to my research endeavour. The overarching analysis drew together issues of identity, culture and context, the latter of which was defined as comprising of elements of 'structure' and 'time'. Context was found to have a substantial impact on identity and culture over time in the case of this particular leadership development programme.

At the individual level, or what can be referred to as 'leader development' (Day, 2000) this research has shown how a leadership development programme can impact upon participants' sense of leadership identity, specifically whether they

view themselves as 'leaders' or 'managers'. Much of the shift in perspective was attributed to participants redefining what is meant by the term 'leader' as the result of an alternative leadership discourse introduced by the programme. This study draws on Western's (2013) analysis of four leadership discourses that can be found within organisations to argue that LDP introduced a 'therapist' discourse, characterised by more participative leadership approaches and partially represented through parental style metaphors.

However the extent to which the new discourse presided and had a lasting effect on identity is questionable due to the already dominant 'controller' and 'messiah' leadership discourses present in the organisation and changing context, which paradoxically seemed to reinforce the extant discourses rather than enable change. I add to Western's work by examining the interplay of different leadership discourses at both the organisational level, and in the context of a leadership development programme, and the tension between the two. Based on these findings, I argue that it is important for leadership developers to be alert to the dominant discourses in the organisation, particularly the manner in which leadership or leaders are viewed. Some inferences can be drawn from organisational documentation and from early conversations with those instigating a given programme in an organisation. However equally, if not more critically developers need to be open to the language and terminology that participants draw upon during the programme in relation to leaders and leadership.

In terms of culture, one of the findings from this research is that manager and management engagement is important for the success of a given programme. The lack of it in the case of TELCORP and LDP had a detrimental effect on the impact of the programme for the participants. At the organisational level it is imperative to not only ensure leadership development efforts connect to wider organisational development as argued by Burgoyne et al (2004) but that organisational development does not counteract or contradict these efforts. Arguments such as this in the literature tend to focus on deliberate interventions at the organisational level when discussing organisational development. In the case of LDP there appeared to be little consideration given to how this restructuring which strongly affected the participants, impacted upon the

programme. In the programme itself what was going on in the organisational context was barely acknowledged in the sessions and participants were not given the space to discuss the changing challenges they were facing.

In terms of evaluation this research has found that time and timing are essential to the analysis of leadership development programmes such as this. The data showed that the manner in which participants discussed the impact the programme had had on them differed according to the stage of the interviewing process. We have seen, for example how respondents discussed in-depth the importance of relationships with their fellow attendees early on in the programme and immediately after it ended. However many of these relationships had dissipated by the final stage of interviewing. Day (2000) defines leadership development as being the development of social capital. However the findings from this study build on this by arguing that it is important to consider what type of social capital is being developed, and whether or not that social capital lasts beyond the close of a programme. It draws on Willem and Scarbrough's (2006) work to distinguish between instrumental and consummatory capital in the context of a leadership development programme. Taking a longitudinal approach to evaluation enables a 'movie' rather than a 'snapshot' of findings. Only through a longitudinal approach can we see the important role that context plays in this process.

Through the research findings and the methodology in this thesis I argue for the importance of a different approach to evaluation beyond the traditionally functional methods which dominate both the academic literature and practice and tend to focus on 'cause and effects'; (Anderson, 2010b). Although functionalist approaches can be useful in trying to ascertain quantifiable outcomes or participant satisfaction such as in the form of programme evaluation forms, they do not enable the researcher to explore more qualitative longitudinal effects such as the impact on identity and culture, which have been found to be of particular importance in this study. Functionalist approaches to evaluation also limit the potential for identifying unintended programme outcomes including 'shadow' effects which are an important research finding and explored in greater depth in the later section on theoretical contribution. This study builds on frameworks such as EvaluLead (Grove et al., 2005) by

considering process as well as outcomes through an analysis of identity, culture and context and adds more fine-grained, qualitative detail with which to flesh out the evaluative findings.

Although this study has implications for leadership development and its evaluation as highlighted above, it is important to reiterate that this is a situated study of a programme in a particular post-merger context in the telecommunications sector. An understanding of context, particularly with regards to 'time' and 'structure' is a fundamental part of this research. While more specific findings have limited generalizability in other contexts, the importance of time, process and context have relevance to the impact and effects of all such programmes or those who take part in them.

A later section of this chapter will illustrate how conducting similar studies in different contexts could form an important direction for future research. The next section sheds light on the theoretical contributions which this thesis makes.

## 6.3 Theoretical Contribution

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Little attention has been paid to understanding the impact of leadership development interventions in the academic literature (Avolio et al., 2010, Collins and Holton, 2004, Hannum and Craig, 2010). Nevertheless Hannum and Craig posit that careful evaluation of leadership development is essential if we are to better understand the ways in which leadership development interventions influence individual, group or organisational performance. Where studies do exist they tend to focus on positive outcomes (Avolio et al., 2010, Campbell et al., 2003, Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 2002, McCauley et al., 2004, McGurk, 2010), or the achievement of pre-determined targets. Hence a theoretical contribution of this thesis is through drawing attention to what I refer to as the shadow side of leadership development. This encompasses those unintended and potentially counter-productive and dysfunctional effects of

leadership development interventions to which developers and organisations need to pay careful attention.

One specific example of this in this study has been through contributing to fragmentation by strengthening relationships within units or 'in-groups' whilst at the same time increasing the sense of separation between units or 'out-groups'. One of the contributing factors to this has been through unintentionally providing participants with a chance to share their organisational experiences. It has led to some participants to come to the conclusion that life is better in their own organisational unit rather than wishing to associate themselves with the organisation as a whole. The timing of large scale organisational restructuring which took place early on in the programme also played a key role in this fragmentation.

Another important shadow side to LDP has been disengagement from the organisation as well as increased negative sentiments towards it. A number of participants initially felt pleased that senior managers in the organisation had decided to invest in them and their development. However this feeling of being valued was short-lived, as there was no follow-on support and very little recognition of having attended the programme. Two of the participants were also made redundant shortly afterwards as a result of organisational restructuring. Additionally there was a lack of line manager and senior management support and engagement throughout and beyond the programme. A combination of these factors have led to disengagement from the organisation, as well as increased negative sentiments towards it. In some instances participants have reconsidered their roles and careers.

Although there is research on 'the shadow side of leadership' (Conger, 1990, Kets de Vries and Balazs, 2011), this notion does not appear to have been translated across to the analysis of leadership development interventions. However it is important that both organisations and those delivering programmes are aware that there is the possibility of unintended shadow effects.

This study also elucidates the importance of a discursive perspective on leadership development which explores the possibility for leadership

development to enable a shift in discourse and in so doing provide opportunities for alternative ways of engaging and for culture change. It also demonstrates that the emergence of these new discourses may have shadow effects. This is particularly important when a leadership development programme provides a certain view of leadership that does not resonate with the organisational environments in which they work when leaving the safe space of the programme. As this thesis has shown this in turn can lead to frustration and disengagement from the organisation.

By taking a critical perspective this thesis also considers the impact and effects of a leadership development programme in terms of tangible possibilities in addition to the potential for fantasy, (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006) in terms of an illusion of agency when there is in fact none. This is particularly illustrated through participants shift in identity from viewing themselves as 'managers' to 'leaders'. In addition through focussing on leadership discourses, this research illustrates how they enable and / or inhibit change at the individual and organisational level.

This study makes a further contribution to the leadership development literature by examining the differential impact of a leadership development programme on two different aspects of social capital over time; instrumental and consummatory (Willem and Scarbrough, 2006). Day (2000) contends that leadership development is the development of social capital rather than human capital. However I build upon this by exploring the differential impact of a leadership development programme on different aspects of social capital over time. Through this analysis I maintain that the relationships between participants in different parts of TELCORP were largely seen in instrumental terms such as 'building networks' or sharing ideas and problems. However once this capital was perceived to be of no further value these relationships dissipated. There were some instances where consummatory social capital appeared to be developed in terms of 'mutual understanding' and a 'common ground' but those tended to be within the sub-units.

I therefore argue that it is not just important to examine whether or not leadership development programmes have developed social capital, but it is

also important to understand what type of social capital has been developed. I also draw attention to the importance of the issue of 'time', which is not a prominent factor in Day's work. By adopting a longitudinal approach to evaluation it is possible to develop a better understanding of whether social capital lasts long-term.

## 6.4 Methodological Contribution

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There are calls in the literature for more longitudinal research in leadership development (Day, 2011) and more specifically in the evaluation of leadership development (Burgoyne et al., 2004, Ely et al., 2010). However there is still a lack of studies which consider the impact and effects of programmes over an extended time period. As stated by Abrell et al (2011, p208) 'the leadership development literature is limited by its short time frame'. This thesis examines a corporate leadership development programme from its initial session in November 2010 to the final follow up interviews in February 2012, during which time 58 interviews were conducted and analysed. The data was multi-level because it comprised interviews from participants, their line managers, the consulting team and 'the organisational representative' responsible for instigating the programme. Where possible the same group of individuals were interviewed on three occasions. It is argued that repeated interviews can provide 'a flexible and responsive approach to understanding the longer-term and unintended impacts of interventions' (McLeod and Thomson, 2009, p6). Qualitative longitudinal research is still relatively rare, particularly following the same group of individuals over a longer time period. In comparison many longitudinal surveys rely on retrospective data or repeated surveys at different points in time with different groups of people (ibid). This study is also multi-source, drawing on data from interviews, observation and programme and organisational documentation.

Through taking this approach I draw attention to the complexities of collecting, and particularly analysing qualitative longitudinal data. One of the initial

challenges was not only securing organisational access but maintaining access to participants beyond the length of the programme. This was particularly difficult given the context of the research. As mentioned before, the organisation was undergoing significant restructuring which meant that participants' roles changed. Also two of my interviewees were made redundant. This not only made staying in contact with the interviewees difficult, but made it imperative that I as a researcher remained sensitive to the situations in which participants found themselves.

I would argue based on my experience that the most important factor in maintaining the same group of interviewees throughout a longitudinal process is to establish trust at the beginning. I maintain that through attending and participating in aspects of LDP I built trust with my interviewees and generated interest in my research. Despite these efforts I was not able to maintain exactly the same group of participant interviewees throughout the research process, but six out of nineteen of my participants were interviewed at all three stages and a further nine were interviewed twice.

Given the longitudinal research design and the vast quantity of data collected, data analysis was a complex and challenging process of which more detail can be found in chapter three. Dealing with the issue of 'time' was particularly difficult. Based on my findings I will provide several recommendations for research conducting longitudinal studies, evaluative or otherwise. Firstly it is important to analyse data both within each time period or stage of interview as well as between time periods. This allows the researcher to determine which themes are most prominent at each stage of the research process as well as obtain a picture of the progression of themes throughout time. Data analysis should be conducted after each data collection period in order to feed into subsequent interviews. For example in my research I noticed early on that participants talked about relationships with their peers, this then formed the basis of interview questions in subsequent rounds of interviews. It is important to look at the overarching themes, but also the development of themes for each individual participant across time. In the case of evaluative studies, this facilitates the researcher in understanding the impact long term of a particular intervention through following the same group of individuals throughout the

process. If this is not done, you lose the benefit of keeping the same interview sample. The next section focusses on the practical contribution of this thesis.

## 6.5 Practical Contribution

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As discussed in section 5.5 of the previous chapter, the findings for this research provide a series of practical suggestions for leadership developers and organisations about issues to consider when commissioning and implementing a corporate leadership development initiative. For example as stated above it is important to give consideration to the selection process and the venue (whether it takes place off or on site) as these factors all impact on participants' perceptions of or experience of interventions.

This study has also highlighted the advantages of carrying out evaluation over an extended time period, which distinguishes it from the majority of other extant studies which tend to be more short-term in focus. It not only evaluates leadership development over a longer time frame, but it also examines impact on a continual basis conducting interviews at three different points in time. One of the key advantages of conducting evaluation in this way is that it offers the potential for leadership development practitioners to adapt their content during the course of a programme to suit the needs of participants and take into account any learning which they may accrue regarding the organisational context. I would argue that this approach is particularly valuable with programmes that are modular and take place over an extended time period such as LDP. It would be extremely difficult if not impossible to incorporate findings during the course of a short intense two day programme.

However this presents a challenge for developers as organisations and participants often want the curriculum and learning points to be mapped out well in advance and could be uncomfortable with an emergent approach. To handle this tension leadership developers could still outline a set of programme learning outcomes at the beginning as well as topic headings for each module and appropriate learning methods. However the more specific details can be adapted to the learning needs of the participants and the organisational context.

There should be frequent communication between developers and the organisation throughout the process. Developers need to highlight to organisations the advantages of adapting content to the needs of participants and the organisational context. Ultimately if any barriers to learning are identified before it is too late at the end of a programme then the likelihood of the programme being more effective is higher.

However this thesis has also shown that the process of leadership development is as important if not more so than the content of programmes. Of particular importance is the selection process, the level of recognition or follow on activities and the degree of management engagement and wider contextual or cultural factors which facilitate or inhibit learning.

## 6.6 Research Limitations and Future Directions for Research

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Despite the contributions highlighted above and efforts to maintain methodological rigour in both data collection and analysis, I do acknowledge that there are some limitations that could form the foundations for future research.

As discussed above this research adopted a qualitative longitudinal methodology. Whilst this provided interesting insights, that would not have been possible without adopting this approach, it did have its challenges. I ideally sought to interview the same group of individuals throughout the research process, but organisational restructuring meant that in some instances this was not possible. Redundancies and job role changed shortly after the programme as well as everyday work pressures and time constraints means that not all participants were available at different points in the data collection period. However the interviewees remained largely the same throughout every stage of interviewing. Six participants were interviewed in all three stages. Five participants were interviewed in stages one and three. Only three of the nineteen participants were only interviewed once. Figure 3.2 in chapter three

illustrates this point more clearly. Organisational context is an important dimension in this research and affected the impacted of LDP at the individual and organisational level, but it made conducting this research more complex.

Although the 41 participant interviews provided rich data, if the study were to be conducted again I would invite every single participant to be interviewed in the initial stage rather than a representative sample. This would increase the data set further and permit each participant to share their views regarding the impact of the leadership development programme. Furthermore if the research were to be repeated it would be helpful to not only obtain the perspectives of participants and their line managers but also those of the people that the participants manage (or lead). However this would increase the political complexity involved and there is the danger that participants may feel that they are being judged on their performance.

This study used self-report data and examined participants' perceptions rather than objective behavioural or performance measures. However this data was triangulated with interviews with some of the participants' line managers, and to a lesser extent with interviews with the consultants and the organisational representative. Furthermore these accounts were triangulated with observational notes from LDP. In order to explore the impact of leadership development programmes on organisational cultural change, they could be supported by behavioural accounts and performance data. Nonetheless these would be very problematic to obtain without observing participants in the workplace and gaining access to confidential records. This could provide the foundations for future research. Through observing participants in the workplace one could investigate how the programme has had an impact on participants in terms of their day to day leadership (or management) roles. This could enable a further exploration of the impact of organisational context on the success of interventions. However it is unlikely that this level of access would have been granted within this particular organisation. It would have been difficult to observe the majority of participants in this study in their workplace because many of them work from home on a regular basis, if not all the time. This method of working in some ways makes this case study particularly interesting but makes it difficult for any level of workplace observation.

Nevertheless in the case of LDP and TELCORP it perhaps would have been interesting to compare the participants who predominantly work from home and manage globally dispersed teams (mainly UK employees) to those who spend most of their time working on site (those from the Nordics).

In particular it would be interesting to explore how the impact of a leadership development programme on identity might be different depending on whether the participants spent the majority of their time working at an organisational site with their peers to those who were virtual workers, and how the organisational context might shape this.

This study focussed on a single case study of a leadership development programme (LDP) and the organisation in which it sits (TELCORP). This allowed for an in-depth situated analysis and understanding of context and culture. However the use of a single case study methodology limits the extent to which findings are applicable and generalizable to other leadership development programmes as the data was obtained within a very specific organisational context. As illustrated in the contribution sections above there are wider implications for other programmes and organisations, but future research could explore similar programmes within different types of organisational setting to compare the findings. The post-merger organisation which forms the focus of this thesis is presented as in a 'crisis' situation. It would be interesting to explore the impact of similar leadership development programmes in a different type of situation as well as in organisations whose contexts are not presented in this manner, such as presented in Osborn et al's (2002) typology of contexts.

## 6.7 Chapter Summary

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This chapter has summarised the principal research findings and highlighted the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions made by this thesis. A particularly important issue explored in this study is the potential 'shadow side'

of leadership development, referring to unintended programme effects with a detrimental impact on individuals, groups and/or organisations. This builds upon extant literature that tends to emphasise the positive effects of leadership development with little consideration of the potential for harm. It also has important implications for practice in terms of the commissioning, design, delivery and evaluation of leadership development interventions. It is important for leadership developers and organisations to be alert to the possibility that without a nuanced understanding of how programme dynamics interact with the wider organisational culture and context over time there is a very real risk of programmes having a net detrimental effect on individual and organisational commitment and engagement. This study has demonstrated how institutional changes that occur alongside, yet are not directly associated with, leadership development interventions can play an important role in programme effectiveness and impacts over time. This thesis also contends that in order to understand the shadow side of leadership development and to be alert to unintended outcomes it is important to move beyond functionalist approaches to evaluation, which focus on quantifiable cause-effect relationships, to consider the ways in which leadership development and its effects are socially constructed through discourse, identity and culture. This thesis makes a further methodological contribution through adopting a longitudinal, multi-source, multi-level approach that enables an understanding of the importance of time in assessing impact at individual, group and organisational levels.

In conclusion, though a detailed analysis of a corporate leadership development programme this thesis has demonstrated the complex interplay between individual, group and organisational identity, culture and context and their impacts (positive and negative) on programme effectiveness over time. Findings indicate the need for a more nuanced approach to programme design and evaluation that takes account of the discursive nature of such interventions and the importance of structural and temporal aspects of context in shaping perceptions, experiences and learning.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

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### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

**Interviewee:**

NAME: .....  
ROLE: .....  
ORGANISATION: .....  
EMAIL: .....  
DATE: .....

The research team confirm that:

- the identity of interviewees will not be disclosed outside the research team under any circumstances;
- the names of organisations will not be disclosed without prior consent;
- the contents of interviews will remain completely anonymous;
- where interviews are recorded, transcriptions will be coded and remain anonymous
- interview transcripts will be stored securely in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act;
- any quotations used from interviews will remain anonymous and non-attributable;
- participants are free to refuse to answer any question or terminate the interview at any point.

.....  
Participant Signature                      Print Name                      Date

.....  
Interviewer Signature                      Print Name                      Date

Please tick here if you would like to be informed of the outcomes of this research (we will require your email address).

NOTE: Should you have any questions about this research please contact:

Parisa Gilani (PhD student):                      P.Gilani@exeter.ac.uk  
Professor Annie Pye (supervisor):                      (email addresses removed for purposes of thesis)  
Professor Richard Bolden (supervisor):

# Appendix B. Interview Brief and Interview Guides

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## Brief

This is the first / second / third of one / two / three interviews. Within these interviews I am not looking to focus on the specific details of programme content, style and delivery or to make judgements around the performance of individual participants. My role is as a PhD researcher from Exeter University rather than as either working for either TELCORP or (consulting agency). I will be using the information from this interview and other interviews to form part of the analysis for my PhD. I am studying leadership development within a context of organisational change. Interviews will follow a semi-structured format. A summary of the findings from this research will be given to TELCORP and (consulting agency), but only in a way that ensures that no individual participant can be identified. I would like to record the interviews for research purposes and so that I capture all that is discussed. However all content is fully confidential and non-attributable. You may of course end the interview at any time or ask for the tape to be stopped.

## Participants Stage 1

### Questions

- 1) Could you give a very brief overview of what your role is in the organisation? (*What is your role? Which part of the organisation are you in? In which location are you based?*)
- 2) How do you view the context in which you sit in the organisation (*what's different about where you are? How similar to do you see your part of the organisation to other parts? Provide evidence of similarities and differences*)
- 3) What do you make of LDP and the reason behind it? (*What do you think of the (organisation leadership) concept? How do you think LDP relates to your work? Why do you think you're here? How do you feel about this programme?*)
- 4) What leadership challenges are you facing? (*please give some examples of leadership challenges that you are facing*) *How might you through the use of this programme respond to these challenges? How is the organisational context affecting these challenges?*)
- 5) In what ways do you think this programme is / might impact upon your relationship with the people you are expected to lead? (*Is there any learning you can share with them? Have they noticed any changes in your behaviour / approach so far? Have you noticed any changes in how they relate to you?*)
- 6) Can you identify any significant barriers and / or facilitators to you transferring the learning from this programme into your day-to-day management and leadership work within the organisation?
- 7) Are you doing the ILM project as part of the programme?

## Participants Stage 2

### Questions

#### A. About yourself (only for those not previously interviewed)

- 1) Could you give a brief overview of what your role is in the organisation?  
*(What is your role? Which part of the organisation are you in? In which location are you based?)*
- 2) How would you describe the organisational context in which you work?  
*(What's different about where you are? How similar do you see your part of the organisation to other parts? Provide evidence of similarities and differences)*

#### B. Your experience of LDP

- 1) How have you found the LDP programme? *(Which elements have been particularly helpful? What has been the biggest impact for you?)*
- 2) What opportunities has the programme afforded you? *(What learning / insights has it given you?)*
- 3) Has the programme changed the way in which you approach/ think about your leadership role? *(Please give specific examples)*
- 4) In what ways do you think that the programme has impacted upon your relationship with the people you are expected to lead / follow? *(Is there any learning you can share with them? Have they noticed any changes in your behaviour / approach so far? Have you noticed any changes in how they relate to you?)*
- 5) Do you think that others now regard you differently since participating in LDP? *(Do others in your team view you differently?)*
- 6) Now that the programme has finished, in what ways do you think you will be able to draw on / use the relationships you developed during LDP?  
*(Explain how you'll keep in touch, give specific examples etc.)*

### **C. Your leadership challenges**

- 1) What are you trying to achieve in your particular role at present? (*What are your key priorities? Are there any challenges associated with these?*)
- 2) What would you say, are the key leadership challenges that you currently face? Are there any other particular challenges you expect to face over the coming years? (*Please give some examples of leadership challenges that you are facing. How is the organisational context affecting these challenges?*) – question only for those not previously interviewed
- 3) Do you think that LDP has in anyway helped you in responding to / preparing yourself for these challenges? (*please give specific examples*)
- 4) Has your view of leadership changed since the programme? (*In what way has it changed? Has the programme helped you to shed unhelpful or restrictive views of leadership?*)
- 5) Where do you get support from in performing your day to day management / leadership role?
- 6) In the light of this programme do you now have a clearer sense of your role as a leader within TELCORP? (*please elaborate*)

### **D. The organisational context**

- 1) To what extent has the organisational context facilitated or inhibited applying any ways in which you would like to act implementing what you have learnt during LDP?
- 2) What behaviours does the organisation recognise and reward and what are the implications of this for managerial / leadership practice?
- 3) What cultural / leadership challenges do you think the organisation may need to respond to?
- 4) Would you say that the LDP programme has brought about a positive shift in the culture of the organisation?
- 5) Has LDP changed the way in which you view TELCORP? (*Has your view of TELCORP changed? Do you have a greater understanding of the*

*organisation as a result? How do you view yourself in relation to  
TELCORP?)*

**E. And Finally...**

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important to discuss,  
particularly in relation to LDP or TELCORP?

## Participants Stage 3

### Questions

#### A. About yourself

- 1) Has your role changed since the programme (*Has the programme influenced this?*)
- 2) Has the way you view your role changed since the programme?

#### B. Your experience of LDP

- 1) What did you perceive the aim of the programme to be? (*Do you feel that the programme achieved this? Did your perception of the aim change at all during the course of the programme?*)
- 2) Have you drawn on any of the relationships that you developed during LDP? (*In what ways have you drawn on the relationships? Have you stayed in contact with any of the other participants?*)
- 3) Do you view yourself as a leader or a manager? (*Has this view of yourself changed since the programme?*)
- 4) Is there any learning you've taken away from LDP that you use in your day to day role?
- 5) Has the way you view yourself and your role changed as a result of the programme?
- 6) Have you been through other leadership development initiatives in the past? (*How does the LDP programme compare?*)
- 7) What has been your experience of embedding the learning from the programme into your day to day role? (*How have you found the experience? What have been the facilitators and inhibitors?*)
- 8) Seven months on do you feel that the programme has had a lasting impact on you? (*In what ways? What evidence?*)
- 9) How will / do you intend to carry this learning forward? (*What would help / support you in this?*)
- 10) What could have made this programme more effective for you?

11) What have been the critical incidents / insights during this initiative?

### **C. Your leadership challenges**

- 1) What are you trying to achieve in your particular role at present?  
*(What are your key priorities? Are there any challenges associated with these?)*
- 2) How has LDP helped you in responding to these challenges?
- 3) During the six months since the programme has ended do you think your view of leadership / management has changed? *(Do you think that this is a result of the programme or other factors?)*

### **D. The organisational context**

- 1) Is there anything specific about your context that impacted on your experience of LDP?
- 2) Has your view of the organisation changed at all since the programme? *(Do you feel part of the bigger organisation or just relate to your organisational unit?)*
- 3) Do you feel that your relationship with the organisation / senior managers has changed since the LDP programme?
- 4) Did you experience any contradictions between what you learnt in LDP and your own experience in the organisation?
- 5) To what extent have you been able to transfer your learning to the workplace
- 6) With whom / what do you feel most affiliated / a sense of shared purpose?
- 7) How would you describe the culture of TELCORP? *(3 adjectives)*

### **E. And finally**

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important to discuss, particularly in relation to LDP or TELCORP?

## Line Managers (only interviewed in stage 2)

### Questions

#### A. About yourself

- 1) What is your role in the organisation? (*What is your role? Which part of the organisation are you in? In which location are you based?*)
- 2) What formative experiences have you had in your own professional development as a manager? (*Have you attended any leadership development programmes? Have you participated in any other developmental experiences e.g. coaching?*)

#### B. About LDP

- 1) How many of your employees participated in the LDP programme?
- 2) What did you perceive the aim of LDP to be?
- 3) Have you noticed any differences in terms of attitudes and behaviours since the programme? (*Please provide specific examples of changes in attitudes and behaviours. Is there any learning that they have shared with you? Have you noticed any changes in their behaviour or approach? Have you noticed any changes in how they relate to you?*)

#### C. About the organisation

- 1) What sort of leadership do you think that TELCORP needs to develop and foster?
- 2) What changes do you think TELCORP needs to respond to?
- 3) What do you consider to be the most significant challenges that that TELCORP needs to address?
- 4) Do you think that LDP addresses these challenges?
- 5) How would you describe TELCORP's culture?

#### D. And Finally...

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to talk about?

## Organisational Representative Stage 1

### Questions

1. Tell me about yourself – how long have you been at TELCORP?
2. Can you tell me about TELCORP University and where it sits in relation to the rest of the organisation?
3. Why did TELCORP decide to instigate such a programme?
4. In what context does it sit – how does it fit into any wider strategies, organisational objectives?
5. How were the participants selected?
6. What parts of the business do the participants come from?
7. In your opinion what do you think the programme seeks to achieve?
8. What challenges do you foresee?
9. Have you conducted any similar programmes?
  
10. What do you foresee as a measure of success?
  
11. How is leadership viewed in TELCORP? How would you define leadership?

## Organisational Representative Stage 2

### Questions

#### A. About LDP

1. What are your thoughts on the LDP programme? (What worked well, what could have been better?)
2. Do you think the programme achieved its objectives (please elaborate)
3. How do you think that LDP has been received by the wider organisation?
4. What value do you think the organisation will derive from LDP as a result of the individuals attending it?
5. What challenges have you faced in implementing such a programme?
6. As LDP was a pilot programme are there any plans to roll it out to other employees?
7. What challenges do you think participants will face in applying the learning?
8. Is there anything that the organisation is going to do to help participants embed the learning from LDP? (e.g. coaching, mentoring, peer sessions, use of online learning)
9. Is there anything that the organisation is going to do to help maintain the networks / peer support that has been developed through LDP?
10. What other leadership development programmes / management training programmes exist in TELCORP? (e.g. 'local high potential' and 'corporate high potential')?

#### B. About leadership the organisation

1. What sort of leadership do you think that TELCORP needs to develop and foster?
2. What changes do you think TELCORP needs to respond to
3. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges that TELCORP needs to address?

### **C. And Finally...**

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to talk about?

## Delivery Team Stage 1 (Lead Consultants)

### Questions

1. What was your initial brief from TELCORP?
2. What is your vision of the programme?
3. Apart from what you have already covered what tools and techniques will you be using and why?
4. What challenges to do you foresee?
5. Is there anything else about the context I should be aware of?
6. How have you decided on what to include in the programme?
7. What would make it a successful programme for you?
8. What do you know about the context in which it sits?
9. Did you have criteria that you had to fill?

## Delivery Team Stage 1 (Facilitators)

### Questions

- 1) How did you come to work on LDP?
- 2) What are your thoughts of how the programme is going so far?
- 3) What challenges do you foresee or have you experienced?
- 4) What would make it a successful programme for you?
- 5) What do you know about the context in which it sits?

## Delivery Team Stage 2

### Questions

#### A. About LDP

- 1) What are your thoughts on the LDP programme? (What worked well, what could have been better?)
- 2) Is there anything you would have done differently?
- 3) Do you think that the programme achieved its objectives? (please elaborate)
- 4) What challenges have you faced in implementing such a programme?
- 5) What challenges do you think participants will face in applying the learning?
- 6) Do you think there is anything that the organisation can do to help embed the learning? (Is there anything you'd like to see them do?)
- 7) Are there any plans to work with the participants or the organisation now the programme has ended? (Is there any ongoing relationship with the organisation?)
- 8) Did you notice any changes in behaviour of the participants during the course of the programme? (please elaborate)
- 9) What do you think the key outcomes of LDP will be for the participants? (Any overall messages, what has been the biggest impact?)

#### B. About TELCORP

- 1) What have you learnt about TELCORP through working on the programme?
- 2) What is your perception of the organisational culture?

### **C. About the delivery team**

- 1) You said that you have never worked together as a team before – so what was your experience of working together as a team? (Positives and negatives, how did you work together as a team?)
- 2) Have you had any contact with the team since the programme?
- 3) Did you as a team work on any other projects / leadership development initiatives together?
- 4) How did LDP compare with other programmes you've been involved in?

### **D. And Finally**

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you think is important to discuss in relation to LDP or the delivery team?