A Combined Framework for Investigating Communities of Practice and the
Function of the Learning Organization: A Case Study of an Industrial
Training Unit in the United Arab Emirates

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

At the University of Leicester

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August, 2011

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Abstract

Organisational change aimed at increasing individual, group and organisational learning has been widely discussed over the last two decades in bodies of literature surrounding Communities of Practice and the Learning Organisation. Both bodies of work are ultimately concerned with ways that learning and practice development is pursued and constructed within organisations and the groups of people working within them. Emphasis in literature on Communities of Practice is placed on groups of individuals developing and maintaining a body of practice focused on specific tasks. Models of Learning Organisations emphasise the processes of organisational capacity to facilitate and access internal learning for overall improvement and development.

This thesis argues for the synthesising of these two bodies of work when approaching the diagnosis of an educational institution for its capacity to foster internal Communities of Practice that are supported by, and work for the benefit of, the larger institution in terms of producing, evaluating and implementing new learning and practices.

This thesis is an interpretive case study of a technical training institute operated by a national oil company in the United Arab Emirates. It seeks to identify teachers' perceptions as they indicate the presence or absence of elements of models of both Communities of Practice and Learning Organisations within the Institute. Middle and Senior leadership perceptions of where they believe teachers place themselves in relation to power and decision making capacity further illuminated the landscape drawn by the study.

Focus group and individual interviews guided by a q-sort activity wherein placement of 15 statements related to elements of a synthesised framework of the two bodies of literature gathered perceptions to present the case study. Qualitative analysis of group discussions of statement placement based on group negotiation of more and less true of participants' experiences drew a landscape of group and organisational function.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank Dr. Hugh Busher. His guidance, humour and kind mentorship through this project made it not only possible, but fulfilling and exciting. Patient and firm in equal measure, Dr. Busher has been a supportive and constructively critical friend through every step of this process.

Additionally I would like to thank the leadership and teachers of the training institute in which this study was carried out. Their candour, willing participation and interest in the study was of immeasurable benefit.

Finally to my wife Kathryn, thank you. Through one move of country, a change in career and five moves of home you have remained constantly supportive. Having lost your husband to a computer and piles of notes, your faith and patience have been boundless.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1   Introduction

This thesis is focused on discovering the precursors for development of organisational learning in a single educational setting. The study took place at an Industrial Training Unit (hereafter ITU) owned and operated for the benefit of a national oil company in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The underlying premise of the study is the necessity for understanding the extant context and dynamics within an educational institution for the development of organisational learning. This is approached through the marriage of two conceptual frameworks; communities of practice (hereafter CoP) and the learning organisation. These are discussed in chapter 2.

Substantial attention has been paid to these frameworks in literature on school improvement and organisational change both in education and industry (see chapter 2). Literature on both CoPs and learning organisations stress the importance of an understanding of specific elements of a context prior to constructing plans for their intentional development. This thesis presents a framework designed to discover the presence or absence of these elements and present an interpretive narrative of findings within the ITU.

1.2   Nature of the Study and Research Questions

The idea that organisational learning can be nurtured and harnessed for improvement and change has received substantial attention in education and industry (Senge, 1990; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Boud & Middleton, 2003; Blackman & Henderson, 2005). The

importance of clear comprehension of context (Handley et al., 2006) has emerged as a fundamental precondition to constructing change for organisational learning. Understanding the relationships between personal, group, and organisational learning provides a basis on which the use of internal learning of an organisation can begin to be measured (Senge, 1990; Tomlinson, 2004).

The CoP concept as a framework for examining the internal learning of working groups has developed from Lave and Wenger's (1991) discussions of situated learning and evolved to include multiple definitions and forms (Huffman &Hipp, 2003; Lea, 2005). At its heart the CoP conceptual framework is concerned with the processes and dynamics governing the learning that takes place within groups of people engaged in a shared body of work. These include the nature of collaboration, levels and access of participation and the nature of leadership within and surrounding these groups. The CoP is discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

The conceptual framework of the learning organisation arose from Senge's (1990) work describing the disciplines of individuals and organisations that allow personal and group learning to be accessed and evaluated for the benefit of the organisation. Discussions of this as a framework for organisational change have spanned education and industry (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 1998; Senge et al., 2000). Fundamental aspects of a learning organisation include its capacities for recognising, facilitating and integrating the learning and development of new practice achieved by the individuals and groups that comprise it. The learning organisation is discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

This study is founded on the recognised need for understanding a context as a precursor to facilitating organisational learning. The CoP and learning organisation frameworks provide a base for conceptualising a study which aims to discover dynamics and perceptions related to both frameworks. This discovery is posited as a necessary step in the development of change aimed at enhanced organisational learning and improvement.

The two frameworks, as shown in chapter 2, encompass shared elements that interact. In order to establish a relationship between the two frameworks to describe a specific context, a cultural and procedural diagnostic tool must be created that accounts for elements drawn from the two bodies of literature. Development of enhanced organisational learning that manifests as valuing and nurturing internal individual and group learning requires an understanding of how this learning occurs, the extent of its accessibility and facilitative capacities of the organisation.

The following research questions were devised to explore these issues:

1) What elements of models of Communities of Practice are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

2) What elements of models of learning organisations are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

3) Where do participants place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

4) Where would senior and middle managers believe staff members would place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

1.3 Context of the Study

The UAE is comprised of seven semi-independent Emirates. The main industry is the production of oil and gas for export. In mid-2010 the population was estimated at approximately 7.3 million. Of this, 12.95% are nationals and the remainder are expatriates (www.uaestatistics.gov.ae). There is a recognised need in the country for the development of skills and education capacity to facilitate the participation of nationals in all sectors of employment (ADEC, 2010). This need has driven policy in education and nationally owned industries toward policies designed to improve the education and employment skills of young nationals (ADEC, 2010; Unpublished ITU internal document, 2008).

The site of this study is an industrial training unit owned and operated by one of the two National Oil Companies (hereafter NOC). Agreement on access for this study stipulated that the company not be named. Within the NOC there are a number of operating companies engaged in drilling, processing and exporting oil and gas. The ITU was formed in recognition of a need to provide the necessary training to young UAE national males for their participation and employment in the oil and gas industry, specifically within the company operating the unit.

The mission of the ITU is stated as:

> "To contribute with (NOC) Group Companies to the development of young
>
> UAE Nationals for entry-level positions as plant maintenance technicians and
>
> process operators in the oil and gas industry."
>
> (Unpublished ITU internal document, 2008)

Originally established in 1980, the ITU was tasked with the above mission. In the early years another, social, mandate was placed on the ITU. Applicants were to be young national males who had not succeeded in the national secondary school system. The ITU was seen by the government owned company as a vehicle for providing opportunities for training and employment to this sector of the population. Upon completion of their studies in the ITU graduates were employed in one of the NOC's operating companies. The NOC, as with other companies and industries in the UAE are actively engaged in an "Emeratisation" process whereby investment and resources are dedicated to the education and training of nationals for the purposes of higher levels of employment. An ultimate aim is to replace expatriate workers to the greatest extent possible. The ITU represents a pillar of the NOC's efforts in this regard.

In 2003, a re-evaluation of the efficacy and mission of the ITU resulted in two fundamental shifts. Firstly, applicants from that point in time were required to have attended preparatory school to the age of 16, although graduation was not required. Secondly, a new senior leader, the Senior Academic Advisor, was given the remit of evaluating the needs of the companies receiving graduates as employees. This evaluation formed the basis upon which the mission and the efficacy of the ITU were

assessed. The result of this assessment was the design and implementation of a complete overhaul of curricula and the addition of a new level of courses. New instructors were brought into post in teams to design the new curricula.

The structure of the ITU at the end of this process resulted in a Foundation Programme in which students are given instruction in English, Maths, Sciences and Arabic. Upon successful completion of this programme students receive a qualification equivalent to a secondary qualification from the Ministry of Education. Students are then placed in one of two Technical Programmes; Process Operations and Engineering. The criteria for placement are based on the projected need of the operating companies and evidence of students' capacities as potential employees in the fields taught in the programme. A 'Basic' programme was created to cater to the students who do not pass the entrance requirements but show potential for admission to the ITU. Admission to this 'Basic' programme is ad hoc and each applicant is considered by the Board of Directors and the ITU manager.

By 2006, the Foundation Programme had been redesigned and was operating under the new structures and using new curricula. The change initiative as this point moved its attention to the Technical Programme. At the time this study was performed, the Foundation Programme had been operating with the new structures for two years and the Technical Programme was in the first stages of implementing new curricula.

The leadership hierarchy and organisational structure of the ITU is presented in Appendix A. Briefly, a board of directors comprised of representatives of the NOC and its operating companies oversee the ITU through a Manager who is a member of this

board. Below the Manager are the Academic (Foundation and Basic Programmes) and Technical Departments as well as student affairs and administrative sections. All employees and students of the ITU are male.

1.4   Significance and Scope of the Study

A "collective commitment" to on-going re-evaluation of shared value and process is a defining feature of a learning organisation (Bryk et al., 1999:41). Change involves people and process. A procedural shift in an organisation which involves new or realigned values and goals calls for both the explicit articulation of these goals and the "intentional" discussion of them if they are to be invested in and aligned to those of individuals (Richardson, 1995: 95).A conceptual shift in an organisation calling for the valuing of collaboration and the sharing of learning occurring through individual and group agency equally calls for open communication that is explicit and allows for both the alignment of values and goals and the recognition of valuable extant processes and dynamics.

A shared task or tasks and the knowledge required to accomplish them is a necessary precursor to the existence of a CoP (Wenger, 1998; Mittendorf et al., 2006). Values and goals that emerge as a result of pursuing this shared task are either able to inform a process of organisational learning, or have a negative effect as they remain hidden from view. Clear and collegial communication within and across boundaries is required for learning achieved in working groups to be accessible and useful to a larger setting (see chapter 2).

A facilitative leadership that promotes "social cohesion" and is explicit about the values it shares and develops is a precursor to building an environment in which the movement of learning described above is possible (Busher, 2005: 17). The power of clear shared goals and values is fully realised only in an environment that allows for them to be clearly understood and embraced by all. Where this embrace requires negotiation, a leadership culture which exhibits a value of open and collegial communication is required.

The aims of understanding the processes, beliefs, and dynamics that affect the learning of internal groups and the capacity of the encompassing organisation to integrate that learning across internal boundaries requires examination of the shared elements that define the two spheres. An approach based on a synthesis of the CoP and the learning organisation provides a framework that potentially captures the lay of the land in a manner that allows discussion not only of both concepts, but the relationship between them. The argument underlying the design of this thesis is that this approach provides the necessary narrative for pursuing productive change in organisational learning that values and is based on the learning taking place within and between its internal structures. This narrative would illuminate the extant functions and relationships that must be understood to attempt building "values consensus" (Busher, 2006: 124) that is authentic and provides a basis for the alignment of identity, value and goal (Bryk et al., 1999).

An underlying interest of this study is the question of obtaining a picture of a context that is comprehensive enough to allow planning change of the nature described above. The significance of the study lies in the marriage of the two conceptual frameworks and

the capacity of that synthesis to provide this comprehensive narrative. The relationship between models of how CoPs learn and those of organisational learning is central to this study and its place as a contribution to knowledge. As discussed in chapter 2, literature on CoPs and learning organisations is extensive and both draws upon, and informs, work on leadership, school improvement, and organisational culture. Both frameworks have been used to build change initiatives and diagnose contexts. However, in an extensive search of the literature (see chapter 2), the explicit synthesis of the two for diagnosing an organisation with the ultimate aim of their intentional construction has not been found.

Following the literature review in chapter 2, a study is described in Chapter 3 that attempts to use this synthesis to analyse the perceptions of individuals and groups within the ITU described in the previous section.

The scope of the study is small. The study is confined to a single site. This is in line with the aims and underlying framework of the study which emphasises comprehension of individual contexts. The findings comprise a narrative that captures participants' perspective at one point in time. Chapter 3 discusses the design of the study in full.

1.5   Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides a review of the literature on CoPs and the learning organisations. This includes discussion of relevant literature on leadership, organisational culture and change. A synthesis concluding this chapter presents a rationale and framework for a marriage of the CoP and learning organisation concepts for use as a lens for analysing the data.

Chapter 3 describes the design of the study. With the literature review and the aim of the research forming a theoretical basis; a qualitative study in the interpretive paradigm is described. This chapter discusses the theory and methodology of the study. It additionally discusses the procedures and sampling for data collection. This chapter concludes with discussion of analysis, ethical issues and challenges.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. The findings are organised and discussed in answer to the research questions. This chapter concludes with a synthesis of the findings and presents a model for exploring a context through the combined framework discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings. This chapter includes discussion of implications for change in the ITU, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research. The thesis concludes with the author's reflections on the process.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research is founded on two conceptual frameworks: the Community of Practice and the Learning Organisation. These are supported by work on organisational culture and development. The central thesis of the research is an exploration of the use of these two concepts in tandem to create a synthesised approach to capturing a view of current structures that may aid or hinder the intentional pursuit of organisational learning. The purpose of this approach is the discovery of the presence or absence of precursors to functioning CoPs that are supported by and support, an organisation seeking to learn from internal practice. While Communities of Practice and the Learning Organisation are concepts born separately (Senge, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991) they have been discussed in their respective bodies of literature as, at the very least, relatable.

2.1.1 Purpose and Structure of Chapter

In this chapter the two frameworks will be discussed and related. The main purpose of the chapter is to present the Community of Practice and the Learning Organisation as frameworks with rich individual bodies of discussion and criticism that are relatable as a framework for organisational diagnosis. Corollary concepts of the CoP such as that of

the Professional Learning Community and issues of organisational culture are discussed to show evolution and contextualise the main frameworks.

Section 2 of the chapter discusses the Community of Practice as a framework for framing, analysing and discussing the dynamics of working groups within an organisation or school. This section includes discussion of Professional Learning Communities; a significant variant of the CoP. Within section 2 the dimension and structures of CoPs are discussed including leadership, collaboration, permeability and tasking (see below). Section 3 discusses the Learning Organisation. Definitions and dimension are discussed followed with sections on shared values and the creation of shared meaning. Section 4 presents a discussion of organisational culture as applied to the frameworks. Section 5 discusses a synthesis of the two main frameworks in question and points the way toward their use in the research at hand. The commonalities and tensions shared between the two frameworks are discussed to establish the relationship which forms the conceptual framework on which data collection and analysis is based. As will be discussed there is tension between the concepts in terms of the efficacy of CoPs and their use for enhancing organisational learning. There are also, however, mutually defining and complimentary elements and it is these elements that will form the basis for the synthesis mentioned above and its potential use as a development tool.

The desire to learn from collective practice is central to the CoP concept and fundamental to the forming of a Learning Organisation (see sections 2.2 & 2.3). However, discussion of their conscious marriage as a basis for primary exploration is scant within the relevant literature. In searches of major academic databases (Emerald, Ingenta, Expanded Academics ASAP) and library holdings covering roughly 1980 to

the present, there is substantial and long running discussion of both CoPs and learning organisations. While CoPs have been discussed in ways that show them to function as learning organisations and similarly learning organisations have been shown to benefit from organised and intentionally created internal groups of inquiry (see below) there has not been substantive discussion of their use in tandem as an exploratory template for development work. Self-generating CoPs working towards finite and closely bound goals are discussed below as capable of developing and retaining learning hidden from overarching or "parent" organisations. Similarly organisations which exhibit a desire to benefit from shared internal learning but lack the necessary communications and leadership structures to productively do so are evidenced in the discussions in this chapter. It is this marriage that is at the heart of this research. Discovering the structures of both frameworks that need development or alignment drives the use of data gathered to draw a landscape of the ITU that suggests its capacity to build or encourage structures for internal learning.

2.2 Communities of Practice

2.2.1 Overview

The concept of the Community of Practice (CoP) is well established and has been discussed in corporate, industrial and educational contexts (Wenger, 1998 :2004; Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Snyder, Wenger, & de Sousa Briggs, 2003; Guldberg & Pilkington, 2006; Mittendorf, et al. 2006; Schenkel & Tiegland,

2008; Koliba & Gajda, 2009).First discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991), the CoP springs from their work in Situated Learning Theory. Early definitions of CoPs (Wenger, 1998: 2004; Mittendorf et al., 2006; Roberts, 2006) focus on how they are made up of people who share a task or tasks and mutually engage in the development, augmentation and maintenance of ways of performing those shared tasks.

CoPs have been described as places where "collective learning" takes place, resulting in the creation of a rally point around which a community of those engaged in a body of work develop (Wenger, 1998: 45). Bouwen (1998) adds that they are defined as a "set of relations among persons" that include "overlapping communities of practice" both reiterating Wenger's (1998) assertion that these communities require a group of people with shared work and that there are potentially several sets of practice pursued by groups that link together. He also claims that they are "an intrinsic condition to the existence of knowledge" and provide a basis for understanding the "context and history" of practice in a given context (p.304). This references the shared exploration and creation of new knowledge groups are able to engage in.

Definitions of practice take this history and context into account by expanding beyond tasks and procedures to include the language, roles and objects created by its pursuit to form a "record of shared learning" (Wenger, 1998: 47). Wenger (1998) defines practice first as "a way of talking historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives" that allow for continued engagement in "action" (p. 5). This is elaborated to state that "doing" is at the heart of this, and that action is performed in the social and historical context of the group or community (p.47). It is this contextually based participation by actors working together that creates the environment in which meaning is negotiated

and created, thus forming a community. Wenger's initial concept of context can be limiting (Hughes et al, 2007: 27). Emphasis on learning which is generated within a community does not fully account for that which takes place in larger contexts (a whole organisation) or in interaction with other communities that may reside within the larger context. Defining the nature of a CoP's boundaries then becomes an important component in defining what is meant as practice within a given community.

Practice, and its development, can provide grounds for its own conservation and stasis if communities feel they are under threat or have reached a perceived pinnacle from which innovation is seen as unnecessary (Mittendorf et al., 2006; Roberts, 2006: 308; 630). The perception of threat or coercion is one possible result of formal, hierarchical leadership taking an interest in the internal dynamics of a working group in a manner viewed as pejoratively evaluative or unsupportive. In these contexts learning and practice can become submerged and the leadership of learning "emanates from personnel" within the CoP and is hidden from formal, institutionally defined leadership (Richardson, 1995: 16). Richardson (1995) presents learning within an "iceberg" metaphor with a visible section which is accessible and "amenable" to "control strategies" by formal leadership wishing to shape learning. The "submerged" portion is hidden and leadership here resides within the group engaged in the practice at hand. The content of this "iceberg" is fluid and as formal leadership acts upon working groups their practices and the output of their shared learning can move within it, becoming accessible or inaccessible as perceptions of motive and agency on the part of formal leadership change (p. 16).

Some authors argue that CoPs may form naturally (Boud& Middleton, 2003). This leads to their being "strongly bounded" and their internal learning difficult to influence and access (p. 201). These boundaries, when seen through the "iceberg" metaphor are liable to strengthen as portions of a CoP's dynamics move further beneath the surface.

The CoP will be discussed in greater depth in the following sections. The proceeding section presents a significant variant of the CoP, the Professional Learning Community. The literature surrounding Professional Learning Communities both extends upon CoP discussions and distinguishes between the two. Writing on Professional Learning Communities provides a fuller foundation on which to discuss the form and function of CoPs that are either extant or as a model to be pursued for intentional construction.

2.2.2 Professional Learning Communities

A variant of the CoP is the Professional Learning Community (hereafter PLC). The PLC is significant here as there is substantial discussion of it in the field of education (Leithwood& Seashore-Louis, 1998; Bottery, 2003; Huffman &Hipp, 2003; Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003; Barton & Tusting, 2005). One reading of the thread connecting the literature leading from CoPs to PLCs is a need to address certain key perceived weaknesses in the CoP model. These weaknesses can be distilled into the following:

1. How learning is defined and transferred.

2. How membership is defined and transferred.

3. Intentionality

In early conceptions of CoPs, learning is placed within a model of Situational Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where learning takes place through increasing levels of participation by new entrants in the shared practice at hand constituting a graduated process of induction. Described as Legitimate Peripheral Participation, this model has been seen to exhibit significant problems. In essence Legitimate Peripheral Participation is a process whereby new entrants in a CoP engage in increasingly substantive levels of participation as they learn the culture and practices of the community. Wenger calls this an "inbound trajectory" (Wenger, 2004) and acknowledges the potential for non-participation either through choice of the entrant or through the boundaries placed in his/her path that create a state of continued or even permanent peripherality (p. 166). This potential is among those cited as creating a need for another way of framing and discussing the learning processes of communities.

Learning is seen to be "reproductive in nature" and does not explain how "communities can transform themselves" (Martin, 2005: 142-3). It has been proposed that a Socio-Cultural model of learning which places mediation and collaborative engagement at the heart of learning processes as opposed to induction presents a more useful way of discussing learning in CoPs and PLCs (Martin, 2005:143). Lave and Wenger (1991) themselves recognised this difficulty in stating that "different people give meaning to their activities in different ways" and that "because the place of knowledge is within a CoP, questions of learning must be addressed within the developmental cycles of that

community". They acknowledge that access is the key to legitimate peripheral participation and that it is both "essential" and "problematic" at the same time (p.100).

Membership in PLCs is tied to the third point above of intentionality. As has been discussed CoPs can be organic and form around shared practice without there being an explicit acknowledgement of a formal community. PLCs are discussed in terms of being intentionally pursued and thus membership in them is explicit (Huffman &Hipp 2003; Bottery, 2003). One implication here is that guidance is required in order for members of a group to begin working as a definable community. One example of an attempt made to form PLCs through building structures into teachers' timetables resulted in the following: "teachers sat together during PLC time confused and, in some cases, even frustrated by this new direction. Simply putting well-meaning individuals together and expecting them to collaborate was not enough." (Thessin & Starr, 2011: 49).

As discussed above, this dynamic is a potential whether or not the project is conceived in terms of a CoP or a PLC. CoPs also need to be "assisted in their creation and development" if they are to innovate and potentially aid in larger organisational learning (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003:78). The similarities between the two when discussing their explicit creation do not end there. Looking at some of the cited elements or dimensions of PLCs multiple parallels both in spirit and in concept between the two emerge. One area that this study seeks to examine is the extent to which participants characterise themselves, explicitly or not, as members of a community and whether or not they feel the assistance above is present.

2.2.2.1 Professional Learning Communities: Dimensions

Bottery (2003) begins with Senge's (1990) definition when describing the dimensions of a PLC. As a starting point PLCs are "… a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly aspire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together"(p. 189).

To this he adds the following to expand the definition when discussing schools as PLCs:

that they are not exclusive for reasons of finance, race, or religion;
that they act as a bulwark for thinking linked neither to the state nor the market;
that they are not only reflective and reflexive about learning but about the cultural and political conditions surrounding that learning;
that such reflexivity of learning leads to a criticality of existing frames of reference, of organisational structures, and of economic and political contexts.

(table 2.1) (2003: 189)

Bottery (2003) notes that one problem with the above is that it is "context free" (p. 189). For the purposes of this research, where an argument is made for using the CoP and learning organisation frameworks to discuss and frame organisational change, the question of context is vital. As will be discussed in the proceeding synthesis, pursuing a

diagnostic exercise in context is central to gathering the information required to build a change map.

Huffman and Hipp (2003) describe dimensions of PLCs as the following:

Shared and Supportive Leadership
Shared Vision and Values
Collective Learning and Application
Shared Personal Practice
Supportive Conditions

table 2.2 (2003: 6)

Six "core processes" of a PLC are identified as:

Capability refers to the capacity for dialogue in an organization.
Mutual commitment in a community of learners builds when people are an active part of the experience of creating something they value together.
In healthy communities opportunities for diversity of contributions are clear.
Continuity is essential for survival of a community. Community members must learn how to build bridges linking the past with the present.
Collaboration supports interdependence by creating a web of multiple constituencies and stakeholders who are working to achieve a shared vision.
A democratic organization is guided by a positive conscience that embodies common principles, ethics and values.

table 2.3 (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003:242)

The commonalities between the CoP and PLC frameworks are evident in the cited dimensions and processes of both. The primary divergence emerges in discussing the way in which learning is framed, discussed and pursued. The notions of collaboration, a supportive leadership that shares decision making power and an emphasis on mutually agreed upon goals and values run through both frameworks. Additionally, common themes are found in the difficulties or pitfalls found in attempts to create them.

CoPs and PLCs have been noted as being popular ideas that are often "uncritically used as a top-down model in which practitioners" are asked to "follow some guidelines" (Lea, 2005) and are expected to form them. The focus on "design and implementation" has left little room for critique (186-8). Similarly, Bottery (2003) states the following: "There seems little doubt that 'learning communities' is a phrase of the moment and discussion of the leadership of learning communities has become popular". One can understand why: the concepts are easily fitted into the agenda of different pressure groups, to be filled up with particular preferred versions" (p. 188).

These echo the problems discussed above in forming CoPs. The use of the framework by a leadership or administrative team to pursue goals without the necessary building of engagement and participation through distribution of decision making power and in the absence of guidance as to how collaboration and participative functions should be built are dangers that have been cited in discussions of both CoPs and PLCs.

Conversely, if successfully created, PLCs are also described with many of same terms and concepts as CoPs as they appear elsewhere in the literature. Requiring supportive and shared leadership, aligned goals and values, and active intentional participation the

professional learning community moves beyond the organic CoP in that practice is defined collectively and areas of inquiry are identified and explicitly pursued (Huffman &Hipp, 2003). The term CoP is used in this research to refer to the communities being sought in the research site and defined in this review. Themes and criticisms of PLCs as discussed here are important to place within the framework as evolved elements of the CoP. The shared dimensions and augmented discussion on the function and dynamics of learning within a community are central pieces in framing the CoPs as discussed in the context of the research site. The term CoP is used in the following discussions with the caveat that it includes the evolved and shared dimensions discussed in this section.

2.2.3 Basic Structures of the CoP

Basic structures for CoPs share some common elements such as shared work and the transmission of procedure to incoming members. For the purposes of research in which the intentional fostering of CoPs is central, the idea that "practice is best explored in groups" (Supovitz, 2002: 1615) is important. CoPs discussed as becoming "mini-cultures" set within larger organisational cultures by (Mittendorf et al., 2006) form around three necessary elements; a domain of knowledge, a community of people, and a shared practice (p. 300).

Early examination of knowledge based organisations identified "groups of employees getting together to solve-work related problems without management directive or involvement" (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003). These "often organic structures" are now called communities of practice (p. 31). The domain of knowledge noted above provides

the context for these CoPs. The knowledge needed, acquired and assessed to perform a function forms the basis on which a domain of knowledge that a CoP engages with can be defined. These domains vary as widely as do organisations in which work is performed. Operational or conceptual, though, the context of a CoP cannot be defined without understanding the knowledge base with which the community is engaged.

The term "community" has been noted as problematic for its inherent implication of being a "warm and cosy place" of "common understanding"(Roberts, 2006: 632). This reading of "community" is at odds with the noted potential for tensions between members and for participation of new members to be impeded or rigidly structured by older members (Wenger, 1998). However, it is the sense in which it provides a defining identity for a group of people connected by a shared experience or endeavour that I use it here. As will be discussed, they can be far from "warm and cosy" for members, particularly when conflict, leadership and the use of power are discussed as part of the defining context in which communities form.

A shared practice points to the operations and goals for which the domain of knowledge is developed and used to pursue. Practice, as discussed, is not confined to the methods of work displayed by a group. It also encompasses the evolved social rules, embedded assumptions and the "unarticulated" cues that one is participating in a group's practice (Wenger, 1998: 47). The social aspects of identity construction, the standardisation of behaviours and the collaborative ownership of goal and method are markers for the existence of a CoP.

Divergent elements of CoP structure and function are represented in part by discussion of the relationship different CoPs have to the power structure in which they operate and the influences exerted upon them by this structure. CoPs that can productively contribute to innovating practice and communicate innovations to the wider organisation operate within an environment in which not only is their output valued but the way in which their members conduct themselves is valued. Traditional top down leadership, where members of a CoP are potentially placed in unilaterally coercive relationships, is not the ideal setting for flourishing CoPs (see section 2.2.3.3 below). CoPs can and do form in these environments and their structure, health and contributions are then largely dependent on the character of that leadership.

In light of the possible natural formation of CoPs formation, and their ability to become covert and hidden from the leadership structures around them (Richardson, 1995:16); the argument here is that in order to become productive engines for development and organisation-wide learning CoPs must be embedded in an environment which displays values that allow them to share and be transparent about their processes and outcomes (Leithwood& Seashore-Louis, 1998; Huffman &Hipp, 2003; Richardson, 1995). Leadership and its part in the character of member participation, as discussed in the proceeding sections, are fundamental elements in building this environment.

Bate and Robert (2002), in a discussion of knowledge management and CoPs state that they are made up of members who select themselves and that their main purpose is the exchange and construction of knowledge through the mutual development of members' capacities (p. 653). Members do self-select inasmuch as their level of participation and collaboration dictates their input and effect on the CoP of which they are member. It is

possible to be a member of a group but exhibit a level of participation that effectively

results in opting out of the community's development. The lack of participation,

collaboration and implied isolated independence of practice may have enough effect on

the larger community that membership cannot be questioned, if only as evidenced by

the null and/or negative effect it creates.

In addition to this self-selection and participation as a mark of membership, existing

members of the community, including Wenger's "old-timers" (1998) can act, both

purposefully and passively as obstructing gatekeepers, echoing the aforementioned

informal leadership of Richardson (1995:16). "Old-timers" refers to those existing

members who may define the parameters of the "legitimate peripheral participation"

process by which newcomers gain membership into a CoP (Wenger, 1998: 99-100).

Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that formal training by an organisation alone does not

allow for the knowledge of practice that conveys membership in a CoP to new entrants.

This process whereby existing members allow newcomers to participate in both the

practice and the culture of the CoP is described as one way membership is gained

(Wenger, 1998). Knowledge and experience gained at the periphery of a community's

practice through participation in practice seen as having less risk and "intensity" allows

several key processes to occur. The newcomer gains legitimacy through interaction with

old-timers and, importantly, this is where newcomers learn not just "about" the practice,

but its history and cultural objects (Wenger, 1998: 99-100). The combination of

increasing legitimacy in the eyes of older members and the transmission of the

historical basis of practice allows new members to move in from the periphery and

themselves become full members. The dynamic between a new member's willingness

to participate and the group's longer standing members allowance of continually increasing participation holds one key to the growth and continued survival of the CoP. Wenger argues that the conflict that can arise within this dynamic, through the negotiation of old and new perspectives, can drive practice forward (p.101). However, when that negotiation breaks down, communities can be damaged or evolve in unpredictable directions.

Owen-Pugh (2007) cites weaknesses in this framework concerning its de-emphasis of formal learning, the lack of discussion of the impact of new-comers on the "previously successful" relationships of older members and the potential affect the marginalisation of new-comers may have on the evolution of the CoP (p. 93). These are dynamics which can influence and/or result in limited or structurally qualified participation. The isolation or lack of participation that can fracture or substantially change the way a CoP functions arises as new-comers attempt to gain mastery in spite of as opposed to because of old-timers engagement with them.

Huffman and Hipp (2003) write about schools as professional learning communities (See section 2.2.2 above). Wenger (1998) would argue that there is a potential here for the creation of a "constellation of communities". Shared goals, histories, problems and discourses may bind multiple CoPs together, but that "at the level of practice" there are enough substantial differences within the whole that separate communities from one another (p.127). Boundaries of CoPs are not fixed, but porous and shifting (Roberts, 2006: 631). A professional learning community that encompassed a whole school as in Huffman and Hipp's (2003) framework would then resemble Wenger's (1998) constellation. Enough shared purpose and history exists to unify CoPs within the

organisation (school) but separate CoPs with boundaries that accepted movement across them would form to perform discrete areas of practice.

While the importance of group and individual identity construction will be discussed below, it is useful here to note its centrality to the existence of CoPs. The perceived identity of a CoP both as a whole within a larger organisation, and of the individuals that form it is a key factor in determining its function and character (Bouwen, 1998; Wenger, 1998; Busher, 2005; Handley et al., 2006). Values and beliefs shared across generational expectations change, especially in light of the evolution that the newcomer / old-timer dynamic discussed above can bring about in both the development of practice and the culture of the CoP. That the negotiation of identity is part of the formation and survival of a CoP is noted (Bryk et al., 1999; Leonard &Leonard, 2001; Irwin & Farr, 2004). The values, expectations of self and employer and beliefs about conduct and good practice change over time. As part of the building of CoPs the sharing and acceptance of people's historical experience of their work becomes important.

New members, while in a position to learn and potentially measure the extent to which they wish to participate, must have their expectations and views respected even if in conflict with older members of the community. Disregarding the training, history and experience a new member brings not only closes the door on potentially interesting new ideas, it can also cause new members to dissociate and thus reject the identity of the CoP (Wenger, 1998; Hobby, 2004: 89; 8). This type of marginalisation may result in members becoming isolated and, if sufficient numbers emerge, create the core around which a new community forms.

2.2.3.1 Elements of Concern: Communities of Practice

Given that work practices are a core factor that shapes a CoP, those practices and the context in which they are performed should be examined. This creates a need to contextualise any examination and search for the existence of CoPs and generates the following elements of concern:

2.2.3.2 Elements of Concern: Professional Context

The character of school or institution, its core mission and goals build the initial shell in which work is defined. External factors including legislative directives, corporate goals where applicable and the expectations of the surrounding community and society additionally inform the definition of work and its desired outcomes.

In terms of the learning required to gain entrance to a CoP the context in which that learning takes place is key (Handley et al., 2006). It is problematic to envision knowledge of a group's practice as accessible in a purely formalised and mechanical fashion as learning is bound up and "inseparable" from social practice (p. 643). Reinforcing the idea of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the process of increasing participation, acknowledgment and discussion of the professional context in which CoPs function is important. An understanding of the contextual dynamics, such as those mentioned above, helps define not just practice in a given setting but some of the ways in which it can be learnt and evaluated.

The size and scope of the overarching organisation's function will also help define the type of "alignment" that takes place (Wenger, 1998). This is described as a "mode of belonging" and concerns the extent to which members of a group connect with the practice at hand through the "coordination" of action and process. In terms of defining the existence of a CoP, this dynamic is important as one can appear to be engaged with fellow members of a CoP without aligning one's own practice to any "broader enterprise"(p. 179). The professional context being examined then can show a researcher whether or not there are multiple groups which form "constellations" (Wenger, 1998; Barton & Tusting, 2005: 96;127). Additionally, the constructed structure of an organisation can show where formal boundaries of these constellations may be and where informal boundaries may emerge. The professional learning communities above represent an example in which the structural boundaries of school departments may represent one set of boundaries, and the commonalities or differences in practice found in sets of those departments may represent areas where informal boundaries emerge.

Discussing context constructs the necessary definition of environment (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003). Context includes but is not limited to remit, external and internal forces informing remit, demographic make-up of staff and students, and organisational structure. This definition in turn begins to show the purpose of work being performed, its relevance to any larger enterprise, the expectations which potential CoPs have of themselves or are imposed upon them, and a shell in which to discuss the culture of one or multiple CoPs (p.146). When discussing CoPs as having potential for building learning organisations, the context in which they may form and operate is central to how they may contribute to or impede that relationship. In the synthesis below (section

2.5), this relationship and the importance of professional context is further discussed. As will be discussed in the findings of this study, the industrial nature of the research site poses specific and interesting challenges and questions when viewed as the context for CoPs and organisational learning.

2.2.3.3 Elements of Concern: Leadership

The placement, distribution or lack thereof, and character of leadership have strong implications for the way in which CoPs may form and function (Berry, 1997; Barnett et al., 1999; Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Barton &Tusting, 2005; Busher, 2005, 2006; Garavan, et.al, 2007; Akkerman, et al., 2008) Access to leadership, both in terms of its ability to provide reasonable boundaries and resources and its generative potential for inspiration is a key element for examination.

Irwin and Farr (2004: 360) discuss "power over" and "power with" leadership and school "climate" in their relationships with communities of teachers. "Power with" being noted as more successful in meeting needs of learners in their schools. The primary difference here is the kind of hierarchy which exists and whether access to decision making powers is open or closed. In a study of a group of teaching staff in secondary schools in the English midlands, Busher (2005) presents a set of indicators to look for in emerging learning communities. These include the extent to which middle leaders are facilitative in involving staff and teachers in decision making and creating understanding of policy; the presence of shared values held by teachers and staff about vision and direction; the use of a variety of means to create and maintain clear and open

communication; the development of "social cohesion" that is aware of the distribution of power; and a management that facilitates collaborative improvement of practice with an "explicit" foundation of shared values informing decision making (p.17).

The parallels between emerging professional learning communities and the CoP as discussed above bring the concept of the "constellation" (Wenger, 1998: 96) of communities deeper into discussion. The "facilitative" middle leadership (Busher, 2005) that involves staff in decision making and creation of meaning and understanding will, in these constellations, likely be comprised of members of separate CoPs and the CoPs in which they hold positions of leadership. Gajda and Koliba (2008) discuss "role clarity" and the difference between "consultative" and "deliberative" decision making exercised by members of a CoP as one indicator of the character of the leadership environment in which they reside (p. 109).

The dispersal of leadership which leads to power and decision making being embedded within CoPs allows a conception of leadership as being "about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (Hayes, et al., 2004: 521). This dispersal can come in several guises, "distributed" and "shared leadership"(Coleman, 2011) are additional frameworks which point to the necessity for leadership to be open to the dispersal of decision making and the creation of meaning and understanding within a CoP.

Harris and Young (2000) point to the dangers of labelling "any form of devolved, shared or dispersed" leadership as distributed (p. 164). Additionally, in discussing a series of case studies reported by Crowther (1997), Andrews and Crowther (2002) put

forward the concept of "parallel leadership" to describe teachers as leaders working together to identify common aspects of good practice and working with principals to "generate alignment of their agreed pedagogical principles" (p.155). Dimmock and Walker (2004) point to the "strength of department leaders to impose views of identity and responsibility" (p. 66). It has been observed that the development of CoPs among administrators has fallen behind those efforts of teachers (Bloom & Stein, 2004). If various levels of power and authority are not engaged in community norming and value sharing processes signals sent into the organization around it will not have the coherence necessary to allow CoPs to form around organizational goals.

The arguments seem to point in a common direction. For CoPs to form that are not covert and have substantive connections to other CoPs and any commonality within the school or organization, leadership and power needs to be accessible. Furthermore, the conveyance of decision making powers to members of CoPs and the creation of communication between multiple CoPs and institutional leadership is needed to create the environment in which common purpose can be pursued in a manner which allows evaluated and refined practice to be transparent and usable to the whole.

That leadership for CoPs is ideally centred not in the hands of one person, but made accessible to members who can make decisions based on their learning, continued evolution of practice and perceived need is noted in much of the relevant literature (Bryk et al., 1999; Clement & Vanderberghe, 2001; Harris, 2005; Fleming, et al., 2004; Huber, 2004; Chalmers & Keown, 2006; Guldberg & Pilkington, 2006; Handley et al., 2006). However, defining the nature, extent and character of this accessibility has

resulted in a plethora of names and concepts with which to discuss just how leadership should be exercised and how power to make decisions should be shared.

Within the abovementioned distributed leadership, a key function is that leadership is perceived not as "positional" but as a "functional phenomenon" (Coleman, 2011). Here, leadership resides in the professional ability and "capacity" and not in a "hierarchy" (p. 307). Huber (2004) states that comprehension of the dynamics and relationships between collaborating groups and individuals are essential for leadership of a collaborative process such as the creation of a CoP (p. 679). A top-down and hierarchical approach to leadership makes this comprehension difficult to attain and maintain. The engagement in leadership activity by people at various levels within an organization and "collective leadership" where decision making is shared allows collaborative development of expertise and can begin to be defined as distributed leadership (Harris, 2005:165).

Coleman (2011) in a discussion of leadership approaches for collaborative environments discusses five types of leadership to present a case for a "blended model" of leadership. These are Authentic, Relational, Distributed, Political and Constitutive. The main elements for each are presented as such:

Authentic leadership places focus on transparency in how leaders present their "values and actions" to those around them. The main limitation of this type of leadership is evident when a leader's "authentic" behaviour is at odds with the needs and norms or those around him. The promotion of "trust, empowerment, respect and mutual

identification" is seen as a strength of this model (p. 303-4). In the light of previous discussion of identity alignment the need for shared goals, the strengths of this leadership model as applied to CoPs are evident. However, the cited weakness could be crippling and incite CoPs to protect themselves through the previously discussed methods of closing ranks and limiting their externally accessible output.

Relational leadership centres of the relationships built between a leader and those around him. These relationships can vary and allow for the decision making power to be placed in the hands of others. Whilst strong relationships are clearly necessary for collaborative processes to be truly so, there is a danger that one relationship becomes favoured over others (Coleman, 2011: 305-6).

Distributed leadership is discussed above, however, cited dangers are the ambiguity in discerning whether decision making power has been given by a leader or seized to fill a perceived "void" in leadership. There is also a potential to "understate the importance of an individual leader on organisational effectiveness", or in other words, leadership may become too diffuse and render effective decision making nearly impossible (Coleman, 2011: 307). In the construction of a CoP a level of decision-making control that allows for the exploration of practice must reside with its members. This control, whilst retaining goal and value alignment to the larger organisation, requires explicit clarity of roles if the diffusion above is to be avoided.

The political leadership referred to here is concerned with the use of politics in resolving tension and conflict and with the promotion of interests both within and outwith the school. Whilst the need to behave politically is seen as unavoidable at times, it sits uneasily beside concepts of authentic and distributed leadership. It is potentially "morally and ethically" conflicted. Additionally, its reliance on a nuanced and keen understanding of relationships between agents invokes the risk of political actions being taken based on misunderstood dynamics (Coleman, 2011: 308-9).

Finally, constitutive leadership concerns the way "in which context is defined". Vital to this is the ability to communicate clear and unambiguous messages and expectations (Coleman, 2011: 309). As it centres on the construction of the conceptual and policy environment in which collaborative working is expected to occur, it is bound up closely with the notions of shared values and vision that runs throughout the CoP literature. As Bottery (2003) points out "a first step for leaders of learning communities…lies in articulating them" (p. 206).

Coleman's argument is that "Collaborative Leadership" (p. 312) comes from a carefully balanced blend of the above models. In a framework such as the one used in this research which relies so heavily on collaboration and mutual pursuit of practice development a balanced conception of multiple leadership models is called for. The disparate needs of allowing room for innovation, clear articulation of expectation, the development of cross-organisational learning structures and the provision of training in how to accomplish these things calls for the considerations of the strengths and weakness of more than one approach to leadership.

Running through the above is an implicit acknowledgement that while leadership can and perhaps should be usefully shared in a variety of ways, there is need for some focus if not centrality in leadership. The increased influence leaders have on creating collaborative cultures as they have "access to decision making power" is noted, however, this is paired with a "need for awareness and sympathy for the emotional, work-related, and social needs" of employees (Busher, 2006: 122). Additionally the invocation again of shared values requires a starting point for those values and Busher (2006) also notes that "values laden" decision making is political as choices made include choices not made "and the allocation and withholding of resources as a result"(p. 80). This resonates with the creation of the environment implied in the constitutive leadership above and argues for a considered approach by leaders to multiple models of leading and sharing power.

Huffman and Jacobson (2003) point to the "absolutely necessary" ingredient of a leader who is a change agent in developing school improvement initiatives that rely on collaborative processes (p. 243). There are aspects of development of CoPs that require championing and the provision of both boundary and resource. "Ownership and support, professional development, clear improvement process and differentiated support" are cited as required to support the development of learning communities (Thessin& Starr, 2011: 49). As all four of these involve the allocation of resource and articulation of value, expectation and context appropriate support, the implication is that there is a need for some focussed point of leadership.

The balance of the need for power and decision making ability to be dispersed to the extent that CoPs can investigate and innovate and the need for the output of those CoPs to be comprehensible and useful to the larger organisation presents a dissonance when discussing leadership. One argument running through this research is that change mapping and the construction of CoPs and learning organisations is best pursued contextually, in other words, that an understanding and exploration of context is vital to the success of such a project. Similarly, recommendations on how to structure and pursue leadership models should be based on context and need and are intimately bound up with the individual needs and difficulties faced by the school or organisation in question.

2.2.3.4 Elements of Concern: Tasking / Work Performed

The specific tasks of a CoP and the placement of those tasks in the wider context speak to not only the type of learning and development that may take place, but also the character of any knowledge that may be generated for integration into the larger organisations. Goal oriented, short term CoP's will function differently than long term ones and often both dynamics are at work as short term goals come together to address long term goals. One such example of short term CoPs are "collectivities" of practice (Roberts, 2006: 633), a group concerned with the exploration of a specified task or creation of policy/meaning exercise. Membership in multiple CoPs becomes possible as working groups are formed and disbanded to address specific tasks. The level of formality and strength of boundaries with which these short term groups work will have an effect on their impact on longer term CoPs.

The focus on task which is one organising centre of a CoP provides one focal point around which community norms can be formed (Bryk et al., 1999: 755). The leadership and power environment in which a CoP operates additionally has an impact here. When comparing the more facilitative and/or dispersed types of leadership which give members of a CoP some participation in decision making to highly structured top-down leadership which dictates tasking, the defining of tasking, and thus the practices needed to pursue it, is increasingly relevant.

2.2.3.5 Elements of Concern: Collaboration and Participation within CoPs

It has been noted that the terms participation and practice "overlap" in definition (Handley et al., 2006: 642). This ambiguity makes the issue of participation central to recognising the existence of, functions of, and intentional creation of CoPs. Leonard and Leonard (2001) state that a key element of collaboration is a "shared responsibility for participation" (p. 387-8). Wenger (1998) cites participation as ultimately an issue of refining practice and ensuring that practice is passed to new generations within CoPs (p. 8). He also notes that the negotiation of meaning which is at the heart of creating knowledge and practice is a "convergence" of participation in the process and the reification of accepted practice (p. 93). The character and quality of participation exhibited by members of a CoP has substantial impact on its ability to create, refine and certify its practices in terms of function and efficacy. It also deeply affects the wider sense of practice in terms of the internal processes of identity, individual and group agency, the successful transmission of processes and knowledge and, ultimately, the CoP's success in creating meaningful contributions to the overarching organisation.

The limitations of the idea that participation alone carries such defining weight in both the formation and coherence of CoPs have been discussed. Particularly Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) and Edwards (2005) in Hughes, et al. (2007) who note, respectively, that participation as a single factor cannot explain learning that has universal applicability or as a way of illustrating the construction of new learning and knowledge (p.22). The danger inherent in these arguments is that enculturation through negotiated participation does not equal the creation of new learning, nor does it necessarily take place peacefully. Wenger (1998) notes the potential for conflict in the process of new membership (see above), he even acknowledges that this conflict can be an engine of growth. However, the point argued here is that defining learning as only taking place through participation is limiting and carries the potential to lose sight of other avenues and processes through which learning happens and is examined.

The issues of participation and the implied collaboration is a vital element in identifying the presence of CoPs. Whilst participation alone cannot denote the presence of a CoP, it is also true that one cannot exist without participation and some degree of collaboration. The utility of the CoP in generating knowledge that can be vetted for, and integrated into, organisational learning is heavily dependent on the character of collaboration both within a CoP and across its organisational boundaries.

2.2.3.6 Elements of Concern: Permeability of CoP Boundaries to the Larger Organisation

If boundaries between CoPs are porous (Roberts, 2006: 631), the information, collaborative practices, values and expertise crossing those boundaries are central building blocks in building a picture of CoP function. The nature of this transmission can mean that cross-fertilisation and growth is occurring or that there is active blocking and vying for attention/power. If shared meanings and organisational vision are unclear and unexamined, this permeability can become a liability that is as powerful as its potential as an asset. The way in which output of a CoP, either in new practice or proposed use of new learning, is reflected back into it by the organisation is a determining factor in characterising a CoP as productive for the organisation as well assessing an organisation for the way it values and makes use of the learning happening within its constituent groups.

In describing a national project in Australia, Day (1999) states that the researcher "assumed a relationship between the organisation and teachers" work and that there was an "interactive" connection between teachers' work and school development (p.183). While this may be a reasonable assumption to make, it is also an illustration of the importance of then defining the interactive nature of the relationship and how knowledge, use of power and learning moves across and between boundaries within the organisation/school.

The use of CoPs as an organising principle is not without pitfalls. The literature, from the earliest discussions, has thrown up numerous cautions about the casual use of the framework as a tool. Issues of power, leadership, identity and ownership arise when one begins to explore the CoP as a vehicle for mapping change. The CoP is, however, a useful tool for examining workplace learning when the definition is broadened to include the issues of agency, power and identity. Day's (1999) assumptions about the connection between teachers' work and the organisation may manifest very differently in this study. The 'interactive' aspect may or may not be shown to be present, more interestingly, however, will be the extent to which participants perceive this interactivity and its impact on their work practices.

2.3 Learning Organisations

2.3.1 Overview: Definitions and Processes

The second conceptual framework on which this research rests is that of the learning organisation. As with communities of practice this idea has developed into a broad discussion of theory and practice (Senge, 1990; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Richardson, 1995; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 1998; Pool, 2000; P. Senge et al., 2000; Bogler, 2005; Grieves, 2008). Discussions have ranged from the overt promotion of the idea as a solution for organisational stagnation and inertia (Senge, 1990; Brown & Duguid , 1991; P. Senge et al., 2000) to calls to recognise that its day is done and it is time to

move on to new pastures of organisational theory (Blackman & Henderson, 2005; Grieves, 2008).

Blackman and Henderson (2005) argue that transformation of knowledge and practice do not occur in efforts to create learning organisations as "events" and evaluation will be filtered to concur with established worldviews (p. 54). Grieves (2008) argues that there is too much subjectivity in the effort to create a learning organisation and that the framework is "weak" in "demonstrating the type of knowledge it seeks to pursue" (p.472). These are among the reasons, which will be discussed below, that this research is attempting to marry this conceptual framework to that of the CoP. The question of whether this lack of real dynamism, self-reflection and clarity these authors discuss is ameliorated or worsened by this marriage is one this research seeks to address.

Between the two extremes are two decades worth of debate on the efficacy, various uses for, and limitations of viewing an organisation as an entity which is able to learn from its internal practices and evaluate that learning in ways that are beneficial to that entity as a whole.

In *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge, 1990) dialogue began in earnest by the laying out of a theory of organisational learning in which "systems thinking" underlie the way in which an organisation might be able to learn from its internal practices. This learning is then available not only to assess performance and move forward in the development of practice but also as a tool for the continued reassessment of goals, aims and desired

outcomes. His description of two types of complexity, "detail" and "dynamic", in part shape how a view of organisational learning may be constructed (p. 71-2). "Detail" complexity being an understanding of the functions, goals, and importantly, the structure of an organisation; "dynamic" complexity referring to the exploration of the causes and effects of learning over time. At the heart of his argument is that the whole is seen, as opposed to static snapshots, and that this may allow the identification of patterns of change over time (p. 69). These changes would then be assessed as possible reflections of learning.

Definitions of learning organisations have evolved over time and have included the delineation of various types (Richardson, 1995), required elements (Dimmock & Walker, 2005) and benchmarking and implementation models (Phillips, 2003). Embedded in these discussions are on-going debates on the structure, limitations and uses of the learning organisation as a tool for viewing learning and mapping change.

The integration of facilitated individual and group learning into change and development (Tomlinson, 2004: 185) has emerged as one fundamental pillar of defining and constructing learning organisations. This is the process whereby individuals and groups within an organisation are given the tools and resources to learn within their sphere of work. This learning becomes the basis for acquiring, creating and transferring knowledge within an organisation. Richardson (1995) divides learning organisations into three broad categories:

Facilitated, creative and innovative

Unfacilitated, creative and innovative

Blocked, frustrated and destructive

(p. 26;28;30)

The central difference between these types of organisation is the leadership and management structure within and, in certain cases, around them and the cultures these structures allow to form. The latter pair would exhibit an unwillingness to recognise internal learning, limited permissible levels of individual or working group autonomy and active blocks to collaboration and communication across organisational boundaries. The first of these exhibits an environment in which emergent leadership is valued and encouraged. Additionally, in the first case, both the evaluation and retention of knowledge and the means of communicating this usefully across boundaries is facilitated. This is the context where the "shared learning", stable "manifestations" of that learning and the integration of learning from "disparate" parts of the organisation which Dimmock and Walker (2005: 64) describe as essential elements of a learning organisation are possible.

Calls for organisations to focus on the internal learning of individuals and groups are "not new" (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 1998: 3). Schools are faced with changing and evolving external contexts. Legislative, societal and community shifts require that in order to best meet students' needs, schools are able to thoughtfully and reflectively adapt to the needs of their primary stakeholders- students. The capacity to encourage

and integrate new learning in addition to meeting the needs and requirements of the surrounding context is a complicated task. Negotiating the values of collaboration, personal agency and shared construction of knowledge take time. Conversations and the freedom to explore practice require breathing space for practitioners and groups. Responding to political dictums that can change quickly and meeting the day to day needs of simply functioning as a school often mean that this precious time is limited and co-opted for other tasks.

The requirements of shared learning and "stable"(Dimmock & Walker, 2005: 64) manifestations of that learning that can be assessed and integrated become all the more vital to the development of a learning organisation when seen in the light of the barriers mentioned above. As time to develop work, build collaborative practices and share learning in a meaningful way is often difficult to find, the need for clear and facilitative constructs for these to happen is clear. The danger of conceptual leadership becoming submerged within working groups and internal goals superseding organisational goals is real. Organisational goals can be seen as irrelevant by a community of practitioners who are without a clear and easily accessed structure whereby organisational goals are communally understood and clearly delineated. The learning organisation as a construct then falls in the face of the needs for working groups to define their tasks and simply get on with those immediately at hand.

The relationship between organisational learning and personal learning is complex. The theoretical requirements of internal consistency between the "structural elements, culture and organisational goals" of an organisation undergoing development are highly dependent on individuals (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 1998: 242).Structural elements

include the skills, values, and identities represented by individuals. Only the organisational goals here do not explicitly imply individual involvement. It is possible that goals are presented to individuals as complete artefacts of external decision making. As stated above, these goals can then be seen as irrelevant to individuals who are either too busy or disengaged from the wider picture to buy into or see personal value in them. Connecting personal learning with practical and realistic pursuance of organisational goals may require that those goals be refined or filtered by the individuals themselves. The issues of power and agency involved in allowing individual members of an organisation interpretative control or developmental input over organisational goals requires a leadership willing and able to facilitate this in a way that builds communal ownership while retaining enough rigour that goals are coherent and attainable.

Defining an organisation as a learning organisation can be difficult. Blackman and Henderson (2005) note that it is "difficult to point at something and say 'that is a Learning Organisation'" (p. 43). Tomlinson (2004) lists "meaning, management and measurement" as "critical" for defining a learning organisation (p. 17). Given these, this relationship between personal and organisational learning is key. This is where intentionally built structures that value and place responsibility on individual learning and its use within the organisation can be become a valuable tool or conduit for building support. To create meaning that is meaningful requires the input of those by whom the impact of decisions made or ideas pursued will be felt.

In Blackman and Henderson's study of four organisations (2005) Shrivastra's typology of four perspectives (1983) on organisational learning is included in an effort to begin identifying transformational learning. These include:

1)   Adaptation

2)   Developing knowledge of Action Outcome relationships

3)   Assumption sharing, and

4)   Institutionalised experience

(p.42)

The first two of these relate to incremental change based on experience and reactive behaviour. Assumption sharing is noted as being "constructed" knowledge (Blackman & Henderson, 2005) as it is based on individuals creating meaning together through the sharing of assumptions and the negotiation of their relevance, impact and implications. Finally, institutionalised experience forms "a combination of frameworks" which reflects the knowledge gained by repeated practice of skill with the strong implication that the skill(s) improves (p. 42). That reflection and assessment is needed for that improvement to manifest brings into play Senge's (1990) discussions of both personal mastery and systems thinking wherein the relationship between individual learning and the translation of that learning into useful artefacts for the whole organisation is a key element.

A model for the input and output of a learning organisation is also put forward in Blackman and Henderson's (2005) study. It provides a useful, though not exhaustive, tool for identifying elements to examine when assessing an organisation for the identification of elements for the construction of structures of a learning organisation.

Organisational Process Inputs	Learning Organisation Meaning Inputs	Outputs
Radical New Structures/Leadership	New People-Centred Culture Encouraging Challenge	Competitive Advantage
Enable Continuous Monitored Learning Opportunities	Systems Thinking	Knowledge
Personal Mastery	Sharing New Mental Models	
Information/Knowledge Generation and Sharing	Shared Vision	Transformational Change

table 2.4 (2005:43)

Each column begs separate sets of questions. The inputs column contains within it four complex ideas/functions with very distinct implications for eventual output. The first two involve the direct agency of leadership. New structures or people within a hierarchy bringing a significant change into the expectations or possibly the values of the organisation could arise from either of these. The second two involve personal agency on the part of people engaged in the work of the organisation. Personal Mastery being one of Senge's (1990) five disciplines that lead to organisational learning, notably one that even as he advocates it as part of the process is described as "very difficult to

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measure" as being of use to the organisation (p.135). The final element in the first column, sharing of information and knowledge is a dynamic that may happen spontaneously but can be severely limited by organisational structures that do not facilitate it, especially as regards to crossing organisational boundaries. As the literature on CoPs implies that they are able to develop organically, the sharing of information on at least a simple scale is inevitable when groups are engaged in a body work together. The character of that information and the formal structures around which sharing is built begins to define the organisations access and use of it.

In the second column an attempt is made to delineate some the functions whereby meaning is created. Stemming from the functions of actions taking place within the ideas from the first column, these seem to me to represent both on-going processes and potential outputs themselves. A new people-centred culture which values challenge would require some intervention to develop, whether this intervention come solely from leadership or as part of a larger and more organic movement could vary. However, as the label implies there must be active agency to create it.

"Systems Thinking" is the whole that brings Senge's (1990) ideas together. In essence he posits that seeing patterns, cycles of causality, and recognising the varying types of feedback chains these cycles create allow one to view an organisation as a whole. Recognising cycles of causality in his view allows people to feel as if they can be agents within them (p.73). This agency in turn can create several types of feedback loops within an organisation. "Reinforcing feedback" is a mechanism by which growth or recognition and integration of learning occurs, "Balancing feedback" is goal driven

and provides a "stabilising" element through the reaching and evaluating of milestones or endpoints (p.79).

There is additionally a destructive form of feedback termed "Compensated" whereby a formal push for change can create resistance that in his view can be equal to or greater than the force (Senge, 1990:79). Among the obvious dangers here is that of causing practice development or learning to become submerged and rendered hidden and thus useless or even destructive to organisational learning. In its ideal form the systems thinking model allows for learning to be focussed, more fully vetted and integrated into work and align values to a holistic ideal rather than in the fractured or balkanised manner that develops when isolated groups are left to address single tasks or goals.

The outputs presented in the model are listed as knowledge resulting in competitive advantage or transformational change. In a school the latter would be the output most likely to be examined and sought, however, in industrial training, national education structures where schools are placed in competition with one another and in fee paying higher education, the former becomes increasingly equal in importance. The simplicity of the model in its attempt to show possibilities means that there is a great gap in its leaving out the processes whereby knowledge actually translates into these two outputs and its placement before them as a step begs the question of what impact knowledge that isn't translated into these has. Again, isolated groups or communities may be translating new knowledge into practice that benefits their own work, but is not fed into the larger organisational structure.

In practice there are clear dangers present in a model that relies so heavily on mutual agreement of meaning, goal orientation and the sharing of mental models. This sharing

of models and the shared vision that both affects and results from it is a complex process. In this study, there are visible manifestations of change that are the output of directed interventions. New curricula and teaching strategies followed the change initiative discussed in Chapter one. However, the emergent picture of the effects of these in terms of Senge's (1990) feedback types does not point clearly to only one of them.

2.3.2 Values and Meaning Making

The processes of sharing mental models, negotiating meaning and working to a shared vision are closely bound up to the issues of values, beliefs and the creation of meaning that is useable and comprehensible. These areas begin to define the synthesis of the two bodies of literature discussed above. They are of equal and complimentary importance in both the micro definitions of CoPs and the functioning (or not) of an organisation as one that learns. Participation, use and distribution of power, the nature of sharing and the movement of created knowledge though a process of assessment, translation across contexts, and reification for use are central to the use of CoPs for organisational learning.

One definition of Learning organisations is as "a group of people pursuing common purposes (individual as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing them" (Leithwood and

Aitkin, 1995: 41). It is this "collective commitment" that relies on the shared construction and acceptance of meaning, values and belief. Furthermore, the nature and results of these processes that define the meaning of 'accomplish'. This is particularly in education where the end 'product' is not so starkly simple to define as the bottom line or commodity quality found in business, where much of the research into these has been done.

2.3.2.1 Values

Huffman and Hipp (2003) note creation of shared values as vital to "reculturing" a school as a professional learning community (p. 15). "Evidence of value consensus" is listed as one primary criterion for defining a learning community (Busher, 2006: 124). Bryk et. al (1999) state that if formed in a "collaborative and dialogic" manner, shared values can aid in aligning identities, creating opportunities for buy-in and ameliorate a communities propensity for conservatism (p.755). Disparate values held by members of a CoP or by CoPs within an organisational context have the potential to damage the efficacy of communication within and between CoPs and thus the organisation as a whole. Additionally, tensions between groups holding differing values about the work at hand and the results pursued inhibit the development of any kind of shared vision that is practical and coherent.

As the structures being examined in this study are related to how groups or communities within an organisation affect and generate learning within that

organisation the existence of coherent shared values crosses both sets of literature and pulls them together in an intimate way. Huffman and Hipp (2003) note that "change in education comes when teachers are helped to change themselves" (p. 4). Given the earlier discussion of participation, self-selection in terms of CoP membership, and the construction of identity as part of building functional CoPs, the statement above is problematic. As "emergent facilitative leadership", "reflexive management" and "open communication systems" appear in the same list of criteria as the consensus around values mentioned above (Busher, 2006: 124), the idea of helping teachers change themselves becomes a complex one. The nature of that "help" is the central question in how a drive to create shared values can be initiated. This is where the "explicit and intentional discussion" (Richardson, 1995) of values must be performed in an environment in which voices are heard and opinions valued (p. 95).

Wenger et al. (2002) (in Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003) emphasises the importance "that a community and its supporters are aware of the value that a CoP is generating" (p. 212). Valuing the contributions, opinions and beliefs by members of a CoP is a first stepping stone to reaching a position where the contributions of the CoP as a whole are valued. The creation of shared values that are not just espoused by all but held by all rests on the ability of the organisation and the internal leadership at whatever level initiating the development of those values to exhibit a reflexive and conceptually supporting environment for discussion.

Holliday (1999), in a discussion of organisational culture writes of an "onion skin" of shared values that permeate in- and outward (p.239). He differentiates between "Sub"

and "Small" cultures; the former existing in "ideological tension" to the larger organisation/culture and the latter existing "within and between" the same. The implication being that a "Small" culture is more aligned to the larger organisation. His use of the words within and between indicates a conception of these cultures as not only supporting the larger culture but as acting as its constituent elements. In other words, the larger culture would not exist were it not for the smaller. This is true of his "Sub" cultures, but this distinction points to a substantively different quality to the relationship between internal cultures that lie in tension with their larger cultures and those that genuinely make-up the larger culture with all the input and value placed on their contribution that implies.

The values inherent in the previous paragraphs in turn rest upon the existence of trust. Trust is a "critical" value in and of itself (Huffman & Hipp, 2003: 39). In its absence there is little possibility of emergent leadership to manifest productively. The absence of trust also makes it difficult to examine whether or not espoused values are actually held and acted upon. A contentious environment in which individuals or groups are hiding their practice or learning from one another through a belief that they will not be valued or worse, discarded out of hand, is hardly one in which any meaningful attempt can be made to establish shared values that help build shared vision and establish common grounds for development.

2.3.2.2 Creating Meaning

Wenger (1998), in discussing the creation of meaning in CoPs, places the negotiation and creation of meaning in the convergence of "reification" and "participation". Reification in his usage being "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects" and participation as the active process of engaging with one's own experiences and those of the groups to which they belong (p.55). Thus the creation of meaning in a CoP or a larger organisation is here a process of engaging actively with both the results of work practice and social interaction and with the perceptions and expressed experiences and opinions of members. Evidence for this may or may not be physical; a collaboratively written curriculum has as much to say about the functioning and agreed values of the group of authors as the mechanical processes (working groups, editing, piloting etc.) they used to get to the finished product. The extent to which individuals engaged in the process and contributed / were allowed to contribute begins to define the nature of participation.

Given the importance of trust it is interesting to look at the relationship between leadership and the creation of meaning. Hayes et al. (2004) express agreement with Lambert (2000) who argues that, "leadership needs to be embedded in the community as a whole [because] leadership is about learning together, and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively" (p. 3). Shared meaning and values and the way in which they inform work processes and organisational functioning are greatly affected by the way in which leadership is exercised. Forces both within and without can affect the creation of meaning and its ability to create values. In schools it has been

noted that that the values "teachers hold or are expected to hold" is a source of great tension (Busher, 2006: 72). Where external values and meaning are imported from areas perceived as holding power (top-down leadership or external political and social forces) and where that power is perceived as carrying an expectation of acceptance of those meanings and values, Wenger's (1998) active participation and engagement are endangered. Engagement very easily becomes engagement in resistance or sabotage.

If interaction and relationships are the "carrier of meaning"(Bouwen, 1998: 300), then when interaction valued by all engaged in it is disallowed and relationships are defined by deference to those one does not agree with, creating meaning that is useful and encourages trust and development is difficult at best.

The motives of those involved and their evolving relationships "guide" the way which meaning is created to a certain extent (Bouwen, 1998: 302). Not only is true motive important but perceived motives act as well on the process, particularly in dynamics where a real or perceived disparity in power and value is present. In Wenger's (1991) convergence of reification and participation it is "control of these (that) affords control of meaning created" (p.93); a further argument for valuing emergent leadership and the active valuing of listening to all agents in a dynamic where meaning is being negotiated.

The relationship between how meaning is negotiated and how values are consensually arrived at and utilized has clear impact on the construction of CoPs and their role in creating learning organisations. As has been discussed both bodies of literature place

high relative importance on accepted shared values and supportive collaborative processes. For learning emerging from a CoP to have value to and be productively transmitted into the larger organisation, structures of trusting and open communication must be present in order for explicit and frank evaluation of practice and development to take place.

2.4 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is another aspect where the CoP and the learning organisation present potentially differing and difficult dynamics. From a broad body of literature discussing organisational change in the context of culture (Bogler, 2005; Bouwen, 1998; Holliday, 1999; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Davies & Ellison, 2001; Huffman &Hipp, 2003; Hobby, 2004), the question of cultural change as a vehicle for school improvement and as a means for framing discussion of improvement has emerged and evolved. Hofstede (2001) stated that organisations are "symbolic entities" whose "implicit models" are "culturally determined" (p. 375) in a discussion focused on nation level culture and its role in constructing organisational culture. Evolution to discussions of organisational cultures as separate entities, accounting for but not limited to, the effects of the national culture(s) of their members has led to ideas of purposeful change and measurement specifically to inform change (Holliday, 1999; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Hobby 2004).

In the framework this research is seeking to establish, internal groups (CoPs) share their output with the larger organisation and are aligned to common organisational goals, practices and values. This model of nested and/or interdependent groups requires that the cultures of these groups be aligned; at least to the extent that communication and open collaboration is possible. In a discussion on the roles of school leaders in creating a culture of professional development Law (1999) quotes Schein (1985) as saying that "the only real thing of importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture" (p.70). Leaders must take an integral role in a change process and not simply act as initiators or overseers (Clement & Vanderberghe, 2001; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Heaney, 2004; West et al., 2005). This is further argument for a distributed leadership where these "integral roles" can be taken up in some part by those engaged in other activity (p.70).

In a framework in which leadership plays such a central role in the creation and maintenance of culture, there are difficulties when discussing a model in which there are potentially multiple cultures operating under the same umbrella. To a certain extent, this is perhaps inevitable when smaller groups within the whole are departmentalised or engaged in very different tasks. Where a large scale end result may be unified, the separate tasks and areas of work involved in reaching that can be wide ranging. Teachers of different subjects may have a similar or even intentionally unified pedagogical approach, but within groups independent approaches may develop to solve specific problems. In the framework being constructing here, this is desirable so long as these practices are transparent, measurable for value to the rest of the school and in line with the ultimate vision and aims of the whole school. As shown above, this can be a daunting construct.

Mittendorf et al. (2006) discuss CoPs as being able to develop their own unique "mini-culture(s)" complete with their own habits, rituals and, customs (p. 300). In a discussion of organisational culture Hobby (2004) posits that "semi-automatic" routines "based in tradition" can be examined and utilized to create change and that "reinforcing behaviours" extent in an organisational culture (or CoP) can be used as part of "communicating" and value setting (p.10). The informal emergence of communities and the formal creation of and / or encouragement by organisations of CoPs lie on a continuum of increasing organisational involvement in the functioning of CoPs within an organisational structure. Discussion of formal or intentional encouragement of CoPs places them in the realm of what Holliday (1999) describes as sub-cultures as opposed to "small cultures". Sub-cultures being in "ideological tension" with their larger cultures, and "small cultures" running "between and within" their larger cultures (p. 239).

Bouwen (1989) states that "An organisation can be considered as a community of communities, that continuously interacts to adapt to ever-changing requirements in the environment" (p. 304). When these communities are functioning as Holliday's "small cultures" and the larger culture interacts with them with support, facilitation, and active participation one begins to see the framework involving a relationship between CoPs and Learning Organisations emerge. A conceptualisation of organisational culture as both parent and partner is useful here. Drive in providing common vision, goals and values around which communities can build identities and common practice development mechanisms is the central parental role an organisation has in relation to these communities. Partnership plays out in the active dispersal of leadership amongst internal communities and the use of the above mentioned commonalities and identity building to create means of sharing information, experiences and new practice.

This relationship between CoPs and learning organisations is an exercise in conceptualizing and managing complexity. Tasks and goals may be broken down into their constituents, but the endeavour as a whole is large and dynamic. Responsibility for building a culture that can successfully negotiate this complexity falls upon all involved. While leadership may initially set boundaries and goals, it is these communities of communities and all they encompass who will construct the culture in terms of practice. The relationship between internal communities and the organisation is intimate and inextricable. The reflective and cyclical processes of knowledge conversion make it necessary to approach the construction of CoPs within a learning organisation as a relationship and not a linear process emanating from the top of an organisation into the creators of knowledge within it. Where there is separation it is in the necessary breaking down of complex holistic endeavours into pieces that make sense and make the ultimate task achievable. In schools the ultimate goal is the successful education of students; however that is defined by the individual context. In order to achieve this goal there are innumerable tasks to be pursued by multiple groups of people engaged in the process, including the students themselves. The framework I am attempting to show here places all these in relationships that are at the very least dependent upon one another, and at their most successful, supportive of one another and learning from collective experience.

2.5 Synthesis

Preceding sections of this chapter highlight several important areas of overlap in the delineation of what elements and mechanisms make a CoP and a Learning Organisation. If CoPs are shown to exist and, whether productively and positively or not, they create an environment for learning and transmission of procedure and practice, then there is output to be captured. Initially the concern is not the character of this output, simply its existence; judgments of function, type and character are a subsequent step. In the sense that an organisation may have several or many CoPs functioning within its boundaries and to some extent furthering its goals, its role as host to these presents it with certain choices as to the manner with which culture development and expectations of work are constructed and conveyed. The way in which these choices are evaluated, made and their consequences assessed begins to tell one if an organisation can begin to be defined as a Learning Organisation as presented in the literature discussed above.

The main areas of overlap in conceptual framework lie in the collaborative and process oriented aspects of CoPs and learning organisations. For example, as is seen in the literature, regardless of determinations about efficacy and value, shared learning and a process by which that learning is evaluated and used to inform further learning are common elements in both frameworks. Assessment of learning and tools for doing so is a vital piece of the puzzle for the functioning of both a CoP and an organisation that wishes to evaluate and make use of internal learning. Furthermore, processes of assessment cannot take place without mechanisms for capturing learning, another

element common to both frameworks. The lifting of learning above the level of working group (or CoP) and its evaluation for utility to larger organisational goals and aims begins to define where overlap of process and constituent building blocks begin to either diverge and/or aid in building nested communities that contribute to learning beyond the boundaries defined by individual tasks.

2.5.1 Commonalities and Tensions

CoPs and learning organisations are, at their hearts, concerned with two overarching endeavours. Firstly there is a task to perform. This may be as discrete and as clearly bounded as cutting a tree down properly or preparing a report for a meeting. It may also encompass as large and complex a task as facilitating a student's movement from matriculation to graduation. Secondly there is the means by which this task is completed, or the practice of it. The question of intentionality comes into play in judging the extent to which a group of workers or an organisation can be termed as a CoP or learning organisation respectively. In other words, if knowledge is being created and evaluated to perform a task or achieve a goal it is the level of awareness of process and the on-going evaluation of that process that can begin to show whether a CoP is moving from the organically and spontaneously formed entity that occurs when people self-organise around perceived needs and ideas (Richardson 1995: 15) to a more codified mode which functions as an intentional CoP. Similarly, the level to which an organisation consciously builds structures to cultivate, capture and evaluate the knowledge and processes being refined by its various members begins to indicate whether it can be termed a Learning Organisation as defined in the literature.

Discussions of both frameworks share the idea that knowledge is being created somehow and that something is done with that knowledge, even if, in cases where organisations create the "Blocked" dynamic whereby the creation of new practices or knowledge is ignored or actively impeded (Richardson, 1995: 30). A vital common element of both frameworks remains their preoccupation with the creation and use of knowledge, even in instances where that preoccupation is the discouragement of this.

This continuum from organic to intentional is not a clean line. When discussing the two frameworks together it is important to note that as shown CoPs can operate quite productively in the absence of a formalised and intentional learning organisation. The boundaries of their influence may extend only to their members or to a community whose tasks and remit create an overlap, but in terms or formal organisational learning their influence can be severely limited or impeded. The reverse is also true; an organisation may take clear and intentional steps to build structures that allow for the sharing and evaluation of new learning and practices but experience a total lack of buy-in from the agents actually creating this learning and practice. The various waypoints along this continuum are characterised by the relationships between agents and the organisations in which they act, the alignment of values, goals and perceived efficacy of practice and ultimately the character of interaction between the formalised structures of an organisation and those created by CoPs within them.

An interesting question in this study will be the participants' perceptions of the organisation's willingness and desire to use their learning, practices, and created processes to further its larger goals. In the light of the acknowledgment within the literature above that working groups may, some say even are likely to, behave in some

of the ways that a formal CoP would, it is teasing out the perceptions of the participants

that will allow for determining whether or not at least the seeds of formal and

intentional construction of CoPs exist. Their orientation towards the organisation in

which they reside in terms of feeling heard and having their practice valued will help

begin to determine what elements, if any exist, of a formal learning organisation.

Issues of perceptions of the location of power, its intentions and its accessibility have

enormous impact on both sides of the equation. As discussed, identity, shared values

and goals and a common understanding of purpose are vital to the existence of both

functioning CoPs and learning organisations. Inherent in all of these is power; its use

and its accessibility. Decision making about practice, innovation, experimentation and

evaluation is central to the development of CoPs that creatively and productively

develop, share and reify practice. As ideas, concerns and processes are "shared and

reshaped" (Bouwen, 1998) all voices must be heard and allowed ownership of the

processes and decisions (p. 312).

Futhermore, the willingness of these CoPs to share outwith their boundaries is self-

evidently fundamental to the creation of a Learning Organisation. In discussing

indicators of emergent learning communities Busher (2005) notes the importance of the

extent to which middle leaders are facilitative in involving staff and teachers in decision

making and creating understanding of policy; the presence of shared values held by

teachers and staff about vision and direction; the use of a variety of means to create and

maintain clear and open communication; the development of "social cohesion" that is

aware of the distribution of power; and a management that facilitates collaborative

improvement of practice with an "explicit" foundation of shared values informing decision making (p.17). For these to be evident and genuine it is clear that autocracy in decision making, setting of goals and the dictation of identity creates the less than ideal setting for organisational learning and development of CoPs. It is not simply the reality of autocracy, but the perception of it that can create a damaging environment for these.

Learning teams as opposed to professional development "workshops" or interventions are recognized as having the potential to significantly improve instruction and provide an environment of dignified and engaged professionalism amongst teachers (Schmoker, 2004). In fact it is noted that "there is broad, even remarkable, concurrence among members of the research community on the effects of carefully structured learning teams on the improvement of instruction. Add to this that such structures are probably the most practical, affordable, and professionally dignifying route to better instruction in our schools" (p. 5). Subsequent to this recognition is the question of how a "learning team" develops into a CoP that then aids the development of organisational learning. Additionally the phrase "carefully structured" here is important for the intentionality it implies. The implication is that a "learning team" can function as a replacement or partner to professional development opportunities in the successful pursuit of improvement and/or evaluation of group practice. The distinction between this and a CoP in the framework I am constructing here lies in the intentional role the CoP plays within the larger organisation.

In a discussion of recent studies on improvement strategies in the UK funded by the Department of Education and Skills, Chapman and Harris (2004) found that where the

practice of teachers was poor, investment in collaborative development schemes led to better instruction (p.224). The structure provided by the CoP offers a generous framework in which to pursue developing collaboration and reflection on practice. Whilst clear central leadership may be required to begin a project of this sort, if and as it progressed a more democratic form of decision making is needed (Chapman & Harris, 2004: 224). This democratic form allows middle leaders to perform the facilitation discussed by Busher (2005) and potentially aids in creating an environment in which identity construction around commonalities of purpose is productive in eliciting buy-in and engagement.

The question of shared values is a strong common element between the two frameworks. As above, they are vital to the creation of CoPs, however otherwise well-functioning CoPs with differing values to others within the organisation or to the whole are not best positioned aid the formation of a learning organisation. In a discussion of CoPs Handley et al. (2006) note not only that value construction is part of how a CoP forms, but that its context, or what is happening "beyond" the CoP, has clear impact on how it functions (p.642). A sense of shared values and beliefs is noted as central to CoP efficacy (Leonard and Leonard, 2001; Hayes et al., 2004) and organisational success to some extent is "dependent" on a "strong culture" of these (Tomlinson, 2004: p. 151). It is also noted that shared values make it easier to "engender trust" and contribute to feelings of communal responsibility towards improvement (Bryk et al., 1999: 755;758).

We are led again to questions of power and leadership. If centralised energy for change successfully moves toward a more democratic exercise of power and decision making,

then values are easier to align across boundaries as CoP members feel their contributions are welcome and that they are part of something larger than their department or working group. This is not about teachers or other staff having "total freedom" but feeling that their work and decisions are valued to the extent that there is empowerment emanating from leadership, wherever it resides, as opposed to dictation and heavy handed imposition of structure (Irwin and Farr, 2004: 352).

In addition to shared benefits, both CoPs and learning organisations face common difficulties and are prone to some of the same pitfalls. In light of the discussion above, an environment in which values are not aligned and where work is undervalued damage can be done to both CoPs and learning organisations. As a productive relationship between the two will necessarily be reflexive and reflective, dysfunction on either side of the equation affects the other. The most democratic and nurturing of organisations will not succeed in becoming learning organisations if CoPs within are not participating in the exercise. Conversely, CoPs creating solutions to their own difficulties and improving their own practices will be unable to share those experiences with the larger organisation unless they feel able to do so through a combination of communicative structures and distribution of decision making that make it possible.

The danger of "balkanisation" (Dimmock & Walker 2005: 66) affects both CoPs and organisations. The need of the "bureaucratic organisation" to impose structures and dictate who can be termed innovators can cause CoPs to create "mock bureaucracies" that act within an organisation. Here there is also the danger that two or more CoPs within an organisation "collude" (Richardson, 1995: 15) to build these and share good practice with one another in spite of rather than in support of the larger organisation.

CoPs working in what they feel is isolation may "submerge" their learning, as discussed in the previous chapter and remain hidden in plain sight to the organisation (Richardson, 1995: 28).

Again this submersion could mean that individual groups are isolated, or that two or more groups are allied in their attempts to solve problems and move forward without the hindrance that they perceive the larger organisation processes to present. Conversely, there is a danger here that, in an attempt to unearth this learning, an organisation could very easily create structures of power distribution that exacerbate, rather than ameliorate the dynamic. In the framework constructed here, the suggestion would be that there is open dialogue not only of learning and practice development, but of the ways in which that is shared and developed. This requires the informal structures of CoP function to at least be transparent and that the organisation be clear in its aims, allowing at the minimum some dispersal of decision making authority.

This open dialogue and transparency requires resources. Time and funding are recurrent and very visible barriers to improvement strategies and organisational learning. I would add leadership capacity to these. Schools are busy places and when discussing CoPs and their generative potential for practice development and organisational learning these can be severely impaired by the lack of time available to teachers and other staff to talk and think collaboratively about the work they are engaged in. Whilst informal discussion is noted as being invaluable (Gentry & Keilty, 2004; Hayes et al., 2004: 527;151), there is substantial evidence that setting aside time for learning and exploration is vital (Bryk et al., 1999; Clement & Vanderberghe, 2001; Supovitz, 2002; Bloom & Stein, 2004;

Hayes et al., 2004). Collaboration depends on participation and this in turn depends on participants having time to discuss and explore. Where the provision of this time requires the release of people from hours of other work or the provision of training, the perennial issue of funding comes to the fore.

I place leadership capacity in this look at resource for its central place in both the formation and functioning of both CoPs and learning organisations. As discussed above, the character of leadership and access and use of power has great impact on these. Where power as a currency and resource is inaccessible for decision making or where it acts to frustrate exploration of practice and learning it functions as a barrier. A leadership structure which exhibits trust and allows CoPs to make and act on decisions is more likely to produce learning output accessible to the organisation. In addition to the provision of time, resources and incentives (Mittendorf et al., 2006: 305) an interested leadership takes an integral role in a change process and the learning involved, not acting only as initiators or supervisors (Harris & Young, 2000; Clement & Vanderberghe, 2001; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Heaney, 2004). One implication of this is that some portion of leadership and power should reside within CoP membership and have an interactive and trusting relationship with the larger leadership environment.

Here we confront the question of leadership versus management. There is separation of the two into the facilitative aspect of management and the conceptual drive of leadership in the literature (Bryk et al., 1999; Hobby, 2004: 757;12). The logistics surrounding the provision and distribution of physical resource is a management issue. An initial assessment of how much of what resource is needed where is connected to

conceptual leadership and strategic planning; implementing decision made on this assessment is structural. In the framework I am presenting here, this distinction is important. Whilst I argue for a distributed leadership and a democratic access to decision making power, the administrative aspects of logistical work would be the purview of middle and senior managers. In many ways, I am arguing that middle leadership be facilitative *and* participative, furthermore these levels of leadership should explore their own function as distinct CoPs themselves, as will be discussed below.

If CoPs are, broadly speaking, engaged in developing and refining practice as it applies to group specific remit and learning organisations have a central purpose of evaluating, reifying and applying internal learning to organisational goals there are further tensions illustrated in the frameworks. The scope and remit of the two have significant differences. On the issue of identity, CoPs are heavily engaged in identity construction (Handley et al., 2006; Wenger, 1998). Learning organisations are equally interested in identity construction, but given the larger remit and potential diversity of working groups within them they are prone to the imposition of identity (Dimmock & Walker, 2005: p.66) even under the guise of collaborative construction.

Perceptions of access to power and trust are at the heart of this tension. CoPs may also fall to this danger through overly strong transmission mechanisms and the ignoring of new elements of identity new members bring, however, organisational identity has a further distance to travel and is potentially filtered through multiple layers of leadership. Some research shows that the development of CoPs at leadership levels is

below levels of those efforts by teachers (Bloom & Stein, 2004: 20). If the centres of power and authority are not engaged in community norming and value sharing processes messages intended for the organisation around them will not have the coherence necessary to allow CoPs to form around organisational goals.

Tensions can additionally arise when CoPs are working against organisational goals. This may not necessarily involve malice or intention to obstruct those goals. As noted it is possible for CoPs to conserve themselves in ways that work against organisational goals simply in an effort to maintain their internal practices or protect themselves from perceived external pressure to change. That control of learning and leadership for learning can become "submerged" within a CoP; rendering larger organisational goals irrelevant (Richardson, 1995:15) has been noted. Senge (1990) further points to perceptions of management and the larger organisation as an internal enemy engaged in control and the silencing of dissent as a mechanism whereby sharing and development of practice is stifled (p. 18-25). It may also be true that rather than stifling learning, this simply places internal learning beyond the reach of the organisation as CoPs reticence toward sharing causes them to hide their practices, processes and new ideas.

The concluding sections of chapter 5 present a model for understanding the findings of this study (figure 4.1). The synthesised elements of the above frameworks are further discussed in the context of a discussion of findings. The proceeding chapter presents the design and methodology conceived to carry out the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1   Purpose and Structure of Chapter

This chapter discusses the research design and the collection and analysis methods used for this study. The choice of the interpretive paradigm and the type of case study is followed by methodology, including discussion on constructing credibility, ethical considerations pertinent to the study, and issues surrounding insider research.

3.1.1 Key Research Questions

The aim of this study leads to the key research questions:

Key Questions:

1) What elements of models of Communities of Practice are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

2) What elements of models of learning organisations are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

3) Where do participants place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

4) Where would senior and middle managers believe staff members would place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

3.2 The Interpretive Paradigm Choice and Research Stance

The interpretive paradigm is centred on gaining an understanding "of the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen, et al., 2004: 24). It grew out of Max Weber's (1968) writings in response to perceived limitations of positivist approaches to describing social phenomenon. Central to these limitations was an argued inability of positivism to "stand back and question itself" (Baert, 2005: 109) with a growing conviction that social phenomenon could not be examined and described by laws akin to those emergent and described in the physical sciences (p. 41). Issues regarding the formulation of laws that govern social phenomenon included that "knowledge of social phenomenon" is bound up with the significance people place on events in specific situations and that "no law can reveal how and in which situations" events acquire significance for individuals (p. 42).

The idea of "Methodological Individualism" holds that as people although "purposeful" agents in knowing why they do something, their actions can have results beyond the initial reasons for acting (Baert, 2005: 57). Weber (1968: in Baert, 2005) was fundamentally concerned with the problem of applying positivistic methods and expectations to social meaning and interaction. In response to trends for the use of social and historical research to define what was good for a given society, he held that the social sciences cannot "judge between competing values" (p. 55). Interpretivism then is essentially a framework which states that the individual perception and

construction of social reality is a phenomenon that can be described, but is not subject to codifying or causal laws (Baert, 2005; Cohen et al., 2004). Individuals and those researching their interaction and behaviours both bring unique, and to an extent unquantifiable, realities to a situation. The purpose then is to describe social phenomenon with an open and explicit understanding that the existence of the individual constructions of reality people as actors bring to social phenomenon must be acknowledged.

The idea that social science can describe phenomenon, but not delineate a law of correct behaviour is important here (Baert, 2005: 55). For this research, there is no assumption that CoPs and learning organisations represent an ideal way of constructing a social context. The study is concerned with the extent to which the participants view their working environment as manifesting these concepts as described in the literature and whether or not their construction would be useful to their work. The effort is in discovering and describing their perceptions of their work and the context in which they perform it. The two bodies of literature provide a conceptual framework for describing a possible way to envision and structure the organisation around participants in a way which may facilitate the successful collective pursuit and refinement of their work practices. It does not build a social reality which can be constructed through the application of any rule or law derived from the description of their perceptions.

The constructivist assertion of the making of meaning people engage in during their interactions with the world (Cresswell, 2003: p. 9) provides an epistemological base for research examining agency, motivation and personal choice in a group setting. The analysis of perceptual data and the subsequent application of that analysis to discussion

of change that could result in shifting relationships, communications and allocation of

decision making power requires an epistemological base that recognises the personal

construction of meaning. These meanings are "varied and multiple" (Cresswell, 2003:

p. 8) and it is within the complexity of them that this study can begin to discuss how the

participants' teams function, both internally and as bodies relating to the larger

organisation.

The stance I have adopted here is intended to account for the way that the internal and

personal perspectives of individual participants will inform a discussion of the external,

i.e. relationships and the artefacts of power. My goal in adopting this is to allow

rigorous discussion of individual perceptions whilst acknowledging and additionally

accounting for the influences of multiple perceptions of the environment in which the

participants operate.

Pragmatism holds that research takes place in a context- historical, social, or other.

Further it holds that there is not a "unity" of reality that can be represented (Cresswell,

2003: p. 12). As this research is concerned with organisational structures that are not

closed to the world but are bounded by mission and membership, the pragmatic

approach allows for the acknowledgement of the need for, and the construction of,

context appropriate instruments.

The interpretive paradigm, concerned as it is with the construction of the social reality

agents create within spheres of action, provides a foundation for designing the research

(Cohen et al., 2004, Briggs and Coleman, 2007). It is important to note the danger of interpretivism in its potential to "hermetically seal" data from external influences (Cohen et al., 2004: p. 27). The concern is that artificial boundaries are placed around participants' behaviour, hence the importance of studies firmly located within, and situating perspectives within, participants' contexts. If the process of reflexivity and engagement with the data is transparent and rigorous, the advantage of an interpretive approach in informing the construction of analysis is not to be ignored. Examining and acknowledging the process by which any boundaries are placed on discussion of participants' perceptions allows both a means of engaging more deeply with the discussion and for a critical reader to see the purpose and thought behind such placement.

To ensure that research in the interpretive paradigm is carried out rigorously, bias and researcher perspective must be addressed. "Reflexivity", as explicated by Morrison (2007: 32), calls for the consideration of the place of the researcher within the research and the knowledge produced. The central supposition here is that:

"…evaluative judgements are made at every stage of the research process-in deciding what questions to ask, what evidence to record or collect, how to interpret that evidence, what findings and interpretations to emphasise in reporting the work, and in thinking about the practical or policy implications of the research" (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2006: 142).

The argument is for "ethical reflexivity" in that they maintain that not only is research used to form and inform policy but that the "implications" for policy are "embedded" within research (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2006:147). This was in response to Hammersley's (2000) discussion of reflexivity in social research. Hammersley (2008) said that "sociologists must take account of the difficulties and dilemmas that face practical actors, rather than producing abstractions that ignore these", but rejecting the notion that there are embedded implications for policy that researchers must be advocating or at least be aware of (p. 550). Conceding that findings are "often taken to imply such conclusions (by policy-makers or practitioners, and often by researchers as well)" he also notes that "they only have those implications within a particular context of assumed factual knowledge and value commitment" (p. 550). The danger of the assumption that specific policy implications will be inferred from findings alone lies in the fact there "will always be alternative frameworks of assumption" leading to multiple interpretations in terms of implications for policy (p. 550).

The notion described here virtually defines the strengths and dangers of an interpretive approach. That the researcher must account for their own assumptions, understandings and choices in describing the design and findings of research is clear. It is equally clear that, as individuals with individual social constructions, readers will bring their own understanding to the research and may very well infer from findings ideas that go beyond what is described. This speaks directly to Weber's charge that researchers must use theoretical concepts and be aware of and explicit about them in order to "avoid misusing" them (Baert, 2005: 47). Indeed one must define and explicate theoretical concepts used in research "properly" with the knowledge that as society changes so too will meaning attached to concepts not carefully defined (p. 47). Reflexivity calls for

equal attention to be given to making clear the purpose behind choices a researcher employing the interpretive approach makes.

This project calls for the interpretation of statements made by individuals and an understanding of the context in which they are made. The identification of assumptions and unearthing of underlying meanings affecting statements made by participants which stems from ethnomethodology additionally calls for an understanding of the researcher's position within the project. Ethnomethodology holds that "commonplace" activities should be afforded the same attention as extraordinary events in order to describe the sense people make of their everyday experience (Garfinkel, 1967, in Cohen et al., 2004: 24). In this study participants are asked to discuss their perceptions of everyday events and dynamics experienced in the workplace. Dynamics of collaboration, the construction of a shared practice and the sharing of that practice within and without their working groups are evidenced in both "commonplace" and extraordinary activities as will be shown in chapter 4.

The positioning of the researcher will be an important element to consider in the analysis of data. As an insider researcher (refer section 3.7.1) identifying these commonplace and extraordinary events will involve distance from my own perceptions of what is and isn't commonplace. There are ethical as well as operational implications implied. Criticism of self-reflexive approaches have been voiced, noting the danger that researchers become concerned more with the study of social phenomena rather than with the phenomena itself (Baert, 2005). The result of this criticism should not be to stifle reflexivity, but to ensure that the researcher is careful to explicate their orientation

to their own influence on data analysis during the analysis process. Thus retaining the ability of reflexivity to shed light on the impact of the researcher and allow for "new and imaginative" ways of evaluating the phenomena being discussed (Baert, 2005: 166-7).

This research is essentially about participants' perceptions of questions of agency, placement, professional orientation to task, and access to decision making power. Tensions and processes surrounding the perceptions of individuals as members of a working group, that group's orientation around ideas of community and their place within organisational efforts to evaluate and improve teaching practice are additionally represented in the key questions. Identity, values, shared or otherwise and individual beliefs about group process and organisational learning are embedded in the discussions represented in the data. The data is qualitative in nature. Thus the constructivist and pragmatic approach within the interpretive paradigm (Cresswell, 2003: p.12) discussed in this section has been chosen to conceive the project.

3.3 Design

3.3.1 Case Study

The research is a case study of one institution and the perceptions of a sample of its employees. This institute is an industrial training unit of a national oil company (see

chapter one), hereafter referred to as the ITU. The case study falls under the "exploratory" , "descriptive", and "picture drawing" categories of case studies (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Cohen, et al., 2004: 145;183). The object of the study is to build a picture of participants' perceptions in order to discuss these in the context of the combined CoP / learning organisation framework.

Bassey (in Briggs & Coleman, 2007) presents a list of attributes and necessary features of case studies that illustrates well the rationale behind choosing this as a means of designing the research described here. The first is that they are set "within a localised boundary of space and time", and in the case of a "picture drawing" case study where gaining an understanding of a current dynamic or situation is desired as opposed to a description of unfolding events ("story-telling") these boundaries form the frame within which the picture can be drawn (p. 143-5).

Two more of these attributes are that they "examine interesting aspects of activity or institution" and that they "inform judgements and decisions of practitioners and policy makers" (p. 143). Examining the perceptions of working groups in a focus group setting allows for examining the "interesting aspects" in terms of their views that illustrate orientation towards the combined framework. Additionally it builds the foundation for discussing a model that may inform both their working practices and the policy environment in which they work.

In a discussion of naturalistic and ethnographic research Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that studies "must be placed in their natural settings as context is heavily implicated in meaning" (p. 138). In this study, context is vital in terms of drawing a boundary. In the same way that reliability (see below) is an "impractical concept" (Bassey, 2007: 144) for case studies as they are one time occurrences and not precisely replicable, the context in which working groups reside and their views on those contexts will never be the same from one organisation to the next, or even from one point in time to another point in time within a single organisation. The context is inherent in the discussions a working group will have and is part and parcel of any analysis of their views. Understanding context and its influence on participants is important for making sense of their perspectives. As will be discussed in chapter 4, the institutional context, both in structure and culture, play a significant role in how participants discuss their relationships to power and the ability to develop practice.

Additionally, the "utilisation of tacit knowledge" is described as inescapable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 138). This speaks again to the need for contextual explication in discussions of work and perceptions of working environment. Part of the descriptive task is to make tacit knowledge understood by participants and their interlocutors comprehensible to a reader whilst avoiding over-exhaustive or unnecessary explanation. Writing for this kind of study "should strive to be informal and capture informality" where appropriate (Cohen et al., 2004: 152).

This case study, falls outside of the "explanatory" and lies within the "descriptive" and "exploratory" modes (Yin, 1984, in Cohen et al., 2004: 183). The purpose of the study

is not to explain the why of the discussed behaviours and structures, but to build a vivid enough picture that judgements can be made in terms of the research questions, which are concerned with the participants' views and what they say about the presence or absence of dynamics drawn from the two frameworks. In addition to the vivid picture, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995; in Cohen et. al, 2004) point to the framing of this picture by stating that case studies are performed in "contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn" (p. 182). Delineating the boundaries within which discussion takes place further allows a reader to judge the inferences and connections presented by researcher based on his/her analysis of the data.

Arguments for the construction of comprehensible and vivid representations of the data and the outcomes of analysis include the cited dangers of case studies as potentially being prone to "observer bias" and "easily open to cross checking" despite attempts to display "reflexivity" by the researcher (Yin, 1984, in Cohen et. Al, 2004: 184).

3.3.2 Credibility and Trustworthiness

As discussed, this study is situated within the interpretive paradigm and the data is qualitative in nature. Thus questions of credibility or trustworthiness require an approach appropriate to the data. In the type of case study presented here it has been noted as possible for two researchers to examine the same phenomenon and conclude with very different but equally "reliable" conclusions (Cohen, et al., 2004: 118). The central concern for this study is to show that conclusions are reached based on a

credible analysis and a trustworthy approach to handling the data. The framework constructed for the analysis of data cannot be ambiguous, most especially in an interpretive design, in order to have a meaningful discussion of the trustworthiness of the research.

This research is concerned with individual perceptions within a specific educational context; the goal is not to gather generalisable data. Thus trustworthiness and credibility are pursued to evidence the attempt to ameliorate bias and pursue as accurate a depiction of participants' views as possible. Organisational cultures and CoPs, being made up of individuals inside specific contexts, will manifest processes of communication, expressions of leadership and use of learning differently as contexts change. Credibility will be discussed in terms of the variety of perceptions present in the data and their confirmation / clarification throughout the process.

A comprehensive attempt to show the credibility of analysis will be established in several ways. The development of "rich, thick" descriptions that allow the reader to immerse herself in the context and the perceptions of participants is one of these (Cresswell, 2003: 196). Additionally the use of "negative" or "discrepant" information to query the data whereby disagreement and contrary arguments are presented to discuss analysis is used to make transparent my own thinking and choices. The reflexivity discussed in the design section of this chapter is a process which, through candid acknowledgment of my own knowledge and perceptions, can show potential areas of bias and ameliorate to the extent possible (Cresswell, 2003: 196).

Extreme responses, or outliers, will be addressed in the interview stages and discussed in the context of the framework built from the literature. Furthermore, the above will serve to aid reflexivity in identifying and discussing of my own orientation and potential biasing perceptions, an important consideration given both the nature of the research and my position as an insider (see below).

Throughout the design and prosecution of this study stringent efforts have been undertaken to combat the inherent danger of subjectivity posed. An interpretive study that attempts to build a narrative of personal perceptions required an approach that was constantly and consistently aware of the question of subjectivity and bias. There was continuous awareness that their stories were being told and that my understanding of any assumed knowledge or dynamic was not a part of those stories.

Additionally, the challenges posed by my role as insider researcher were thoughtfully addressed and constituted an on-going process of consideration of my role, my relationships to the participants and my knowledge and perceptions of the context. I had been a member of a teaching team within the same department the participants were drawn from for one year and a team leader of that team for a further year. In the eight months prior to performing the study I was working in an administrative role, processing student data. While in this role, I remained physically in the same office as the teachers of two teams.

Despite no longer being engaged in teaching, I remained, as a result of my history with the participants and my physical presence, a colleague. As a former team leader I was often part of discussions of the course I had worked with and consulted with on

curricular and assessment issues. As administrator of student assessment records, I was in contact with all instructors across the ITU. In order to access the data this study sought, my role as an insider researcher posed both advantages and disadvantages.

3.3.3 Insider Research

Of four teaching teams I chose two for the sample that I had not been a member of. Whilst familiar with the remit and general curricula they worked with, I was never privy to their pedagogical or practice development and had never worked directly with any of the participants in delivering courses. In other words, whilst familiar with the context, I had no previous direct experience of their functioning as a working group. My role moved from teaching to the administration of the institutional digital student information system (SIS) in the months prior to the start of data gathering. This role left me physically with the teaching teams, but no longer engaged in the same work. My relationship to teachers at the time of the data being gathered was centred on response to their administrative needs and providing the necessary resources and training to use the system.

I am familiar with the organisational structure the teams work within and the pedagogical paradigms, but not the specifics of practice they approach their work with. In terms of reflexivity my familiarity with the context is a double edged sword. Whilst I was able to place responses and data within an understood framework of jargon and process, I remained cautious with this familiarity in my analysis of responses. My own

perceptions could have been at great variance with the participants. Furthermore, my own agreement or disagreement of voiced perceptions could not be part of any process of coding or analyzing data. My placement within the institute requires that I cautiously apply a process of engaging my own perceptions and an examination of their potential influence on analysis throughout the proceeding discussions.

This placement brings it several concerns in constructing and prosecuting the research. One concern voiced in discussing insider research is the temptation to withhold or purposefully obfuscate the goals and processes of the research in dealing with participants, a clear ethical issue (Lomax, 2007: p. 168). The purpose of this research is such that this was unnecessary and undesirable. Furthermore, in order to gain consent from the management level to carry out the research I had to make clear that the areas to be discussed were very likely going to include participants' relationships to, and feelings about, the structures of power they operate in. For this research to be practical in terms of generating and discussing a picture of this particular institutional context, expressed clarity in my own goals was vital.

The concept of being an insider does not encompass merely my previous position as a teacher or position within the ITU while the research was being conducted. The definition of insider can include further elements or "status sets" (Merton (1972). In this instance my position(s) within the institution, my training as a teacher and my personal relationships to some of the participants all make up my status as an insider researcher. As administrator of the SIS mentioned above, I held no overt power; however, I acted as gatekeeper and facilitator of a system the participants were required to understand

and use and thus held informal authority over a required aspect of their work. I was what might be termed an "intimate" insider (Mercer, 2007: 3) as I am well known to the participants and my pursuit of the Doctorate for which the research was conducted was well known.

In addition to seeking to describe and discuss the perceptions of participants, recognition of my own perceptions as both one who is familiar with the specific context and the professional sphere, education, in which the participants work was vital in approaching the data (Wilson, 1997). There is an argument here for my placement as an insider conveying an ability to empathise with the participants (Mercer, 2007:5); however this advantage was tempered with the need to exhibit a reflexivity and transparency of thought that ameliorates tacit assumptions underlying that empathy.

This study asks participants to discuss questions of collegiality, individual and group beliefs and values and the use of, and relationship to, leadership and power. The topics discussed in the focus group sessions are entwined with participants' identities as professionals and the values with which they approach their work. These are sensitive and as the data gathering process began, all efforts possible were made to make participants comfortable with the exercise and provide assurances of confidentiality.

3.3.4 Sampling

Purposive, a type of non-probability, sampling is noted as disadvantageous in terms of generalisability (Cohen, et al., 2004: 103). This does not apply in this study. It is the choosing of a sample "satisfactory to specific needs" that forms the rationale behind choosing this type of sampling (p. 102-3). A randomised sampling of staff would not have provided insight into the functioning or decision making processes of working teams. Thus the sample represents the "underlying interest", here the team function and perceptions of specific working groups within the ITU (Brewerton & Millward, 2001: 117).

Thus the sample for this study sample is purposive (Cohen et al., 2004: 103) in that focus groups consist of two of the four teaching teams in the Foundation programme (refer chapter 1). The researcher purposefully chose to include entire teaching teams as they constitute the key unit in terms of identifying a possible presence of CoPs. Random sampling of teaching staff would bring members of separate teams together which would not yield the desired data on the internal dynamics of groups of teachers that share a task. The inclusion of the head of department and the senior academic advisor as separate participants is intended to draw in perceptions of leadership as they compare to the practitioners around them.

Below is an illustration of the staff population of the programme in which the focus groups work:

Staff Population of Foundation Programme:

Teaching Staff		Formal Leadership	
English:	35	Department Head:	1
Mathematics:	13	Senior Academic Advisor:	1

table 3.1

Of the 48 members of the foundation teaching staff the sample includes 15 representing 31.25 % of the population. The leadership participants represent the entirety of academic leaders directly connected to the teaching staff. Whilst the purpose if the research is not to generalise data in relation to the entire population, the focus groups represent two of four teaching teams and provide valuable insight into the communication structures and perceptions of use of power and constraint within the ITU. See appendix B for additional data on members of the sample including time spent with the team, educational background and years in the profession.

3.3.5 Ethical Considerations

Access and permission do not ameliorate all ethical concerns (Cohen et al., 2004: 67). As I am an insider to this research several important issues are immediately raised (Busher & James, 2007; Morrison, 2007: 114; 168). Informed consent is vital and must be carefully obtained, the anonymity of individuals in reporting data and the nature of the research have to be carefully and fully explained. Being an insider also requires that in my analysis of data and construction of interview schedules take into account an

acknowledgment of my own understandings about the ITU and my place within its various structures.

In a permission letter presented to and signed by all participants (see appendix C), the purpose of the research was explained, as was the procedure by which participants and the institution would be identified in the study. Participants were given, in writing, assurances that individual identity would be preserved and that participation was voluntary. I chose to explain the purpose of the research in order to gain "informed consent" (Cohen, et al., 2004: 142).

A key ethical concern with this research is that it elicits conversations that ultimately are change oriented, or at least provocative. In these terms, the goal is provocation of discussion and not destruction. The tension is between asking people to discuss their perceptions of their work experience which includes power and collaborative processes and the avoidance of those discussions channelling into destructive behaviour. Were the process to result in any significant changes in peoples' behaviour or orientations, the nature of those changes could not be predicted.

That voluntarism by participants is a "key principal" for ethical research is noted (Busher & James, 2007: 110). Respect for the individual is vital; however research must be of use to the wider community (Baez, 2002). The question here is the balance between informing participants as to the purpose and potential outcomes of the study and limiting the potential damage informed consent may cause to the gathering of data. In the letter given to participants, very brief descriptions of the two frameworks were

given. Initially I was concerned that this could potentially create a schema informed by the frameworks when discussing cards and placement during the q-sort activity. In the end, only one participant asked any questions about the frameworks and neither framework was mentioned during any of the sessions.

I felt it important to inform participants that the Senior Academic Advisor who is responsible for the design and management of the programme in which they taught could receive the final product of the research, this thesis. I assured them that the raw data would not be given to the ITU and when gaining permission to perform the research I was clear that this was a requirement I was asking for. In the end, as will be shown in the following chapter, participants seemed in large part quite keen to discuss the issues raised and exhibited very limited unwillingness to do so during the sessions or the follow-up interviews.

Participants were invited to approach me at any time with concerns they may have had about the sessions and/or the content thereof. As the discussions had the potential to involve revelations about power structures and working habits there was potential for participants to expose themselves to harm (Busher & James, 2007: 113), most easily by opening topics of discussion with immediate colleagues that had never been broached before and could have an effect on their working relationships. My intention was, in addition to anonomysing the data and institute, to limit potential or perceived harm by allowing participants to question me about the research and withdraw their participation if the so wished, I was not approached at any point during the research and no participants withdrew.

Informed consent was seen as necessary to gain the candour and willing participation of the participants. Given that ultimately, the research is potentially change oriented in that it is discussing potential new ways of thinking about working in teams and within the organisation, I felt the balance lie more heavily on the side of respecting participants' professionalism and personal "sovereignty" (Baez, 2002: 41). The q-sort itself makes clear to participants that the aim is to discuss their current perceptions of their environment *and* how they would wish it to be. Informing them in brief about the conceptual frameworks I was working with did not seem to present a danger to the quality of data.

3.4 Methods

Data collection using teacher focus groups was performed in four stages. Two focus group sessions and two interview stages. Research questions 1-3 relate to teachers' perceptions. Focus group data was analysed to both gain an understanding of the group dynamics and roles of members as related to these questions, and identify areas that required more detailed clarification and enhancement in an individual interview stage. Data collected with leadership to answer research question 4 was performed in two sessions each, use of the instrument and a follow-up interview. The first stage functioning to elicit perception and the second used to clarify areas identified as unclear or particularly meaningful to the participants.

3.4.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups are not "geared" for testing hypotheses, rather they are settings in which participants' perspectives can be explored and hypotheses potentially generated (Brewerton & Millward, 2001; Cohen, et al., 2004: 80; 289). As discussed above, one of the weaknesses of the case study model used here is the potential for the researcher to bias analysis towards implicit knowledge based on familiarity with the setting and participants, it is noted that with focus groups there is potential strength in the moderator being someone who is familiar and "sensitive to" the research issues and the "need for methodological rigour" even when their skill as a moderator may be "unpolished" (Brewerton & Millward, 2001: 81). One caution connected to this is that the researcher must "maximise self-disclosure" by balancing "sensitivity and empathy" with "objectivity and detachment" (Brewerton & Millward, 2001, p. 84).

Morgan (1996) also cites the "unnatural" nature of the setting as a potential weakness but notes the strength of the focus group as a means of gaining a "large amount of interaction" on a focussed topic in a "limited period of time" (p. 8). Another potential weakness of the focus is that behaviour discussed by the group cannot be recreated "on demand" by the group in that particular setting (p. 8). However, the data produced is concentrated "precisely on the topic of interest" and with "self-contained" focus groups such as those formed in this research the results are described as being able to "stand on their own" (Morgan, 1996: 13;18). The implications here is that these working groups are discussing issues they face as groups, thus the output of the discussion reflects their collective and individual perceptions of a work experience they face together. As the research is concerned with these perceptions and in part with the ways in which the

participants orient themselves as members of a group this self-contained nature of the focus group mirrors to a certain extent the self contained nature of their experience as a working team.

Following from this ability to gain insight into group perspective it is noted that analysis must "acknowledge the impact of the group on individuals" and vice versa (Morgan, 1996: 62). In order to avoid both "psychological and social reductionism" where inference and conclusions focus too narrowly on either individual motive and action or group function and dynamic, a balance between emphasising individual statements with perceived group perspective must be pursued when analysing the data produced by a focus group (Morgan, 1996: 60). Particularly where the topic of interest is in large part focussed on precisely the individual perception of environment and group as it is here. An additional caution for analysis of focus group data is noted as the need to distinguish what participants find "interesting" from what they think is "important" (p.62). The moderator's role here is probe without derailing discussion and use follow up interviews as a means of teasing out statements that had substantive importance to individuals and balance these with any group perception that may have emerged.

Focus groups were also chosen for their strength in gathering perspectives. Additionally, as research questions 1 & 2 are tied to group dynamic and process, the focus group sample of working groups allowed colleagues to interact with Q-sort statements with the people they experienced the areas of discussion with. The opportunity to access colleagues discussing their work together is central to this research and underlies the choice of focus groups as a means of doing so.

Focus group sessions took place twice for each group, a first session asked participants to discuss their current experience and the second to discuss their ideal experience (see q-sort below). The Q-sort activity, both the statements and the requirement that placement of them on a structured grid be negotiated by the groups, represents the interview schedule for the focus groups (see section 3.4.2). The researcher rarely interjected in these discussions and then only to ask for clarification or to tie one stage of the discussion to another in order to identify whether participants saw a connection.

Individual interviews with focus group participants separately after the two sessions sought clarification and elaboration of choices. The two managers participating in the study were asked individually to place themselves in a teacher's position and perform the 'as is' task (see below). They were also interviewed in a clarification / elaboration stage. These data were analysed and discussed in comparison with the data reported by teacher groups in order to identify gaps or connections between formal leadership and the experience of teachers. Similarities and discrepancies are discussed in terms of relevant literature to build a picture of the participant's experiences as team members and as members of the institute. Schedules for individual interviews were not fixed, but dictated by statements of individual participants (see section 3.4.3).

Data gathered in teacher focus groups at the 'as is' and 'ideal' stages (see section 3.4.2) are inter-related and in discussion of analysis are combined, but identified. Within discussions during both sessions groups moved between the two regularly to highlight

and explicate the ideas and events they were describing. As shown in table 3.2 Q-sort statements were designed to elicit discussion addressing areas tied to the four research questions. Much of the discussions within the groups was wide ranging and manifested a synthesis of issues related to CoPs, learning organisations and participants' relationship to power (see chapter 4). Rather than acting to diffuse focus, this provided for open discussion that tied to issues relevant to the synthesised approach to organisational learning presented in chapter 2.

The use of focus groups as a means of accessing participants' views was chosen in order to allow the participants to discuss together, as a working group, the issues and questions the Q-sort instrument presented. One strength of the focus group in this research lies in its ability to allow participants' views to emerge and evolve in discussion in a focussed manner (Cohen, et al., 2004). The "contrived" nature of the focus group is seen as both a strength and a weakness in that the discussion is focussed, however the setting is "unnatural" (p. 288). In this case the grouping of working groups together to discuss their work and orientation to the ITU as groups means that while the focus group setting may be contrived in that it brings them together outside of their normal daily interactions, they are not strangers to each other and are discussing issues which they face as a group. Thus the task and forced focus on specific issues may be unnatural, but the setting in terms of these particular groups of individuals discussing their work together is not.

Discussion of how focus group data was analysed follows in section 3.5 following

presentation of the Q-sort instrument as a tool for eliciting discussion and the individual

interview as a means of clarifying statements made by participants.

3.4.2 Q-Sort

The Q-sort technique is adapted to exploit its strength as an "exploratory" tool (Rugg &

McGeorge, 2005: 97). In discussing various card sorting techniques, the q-sort is

defined as being an exercise in which statements are given to participants who are then

asked to place them into a pre-determined special arrangement (Rugg & McGeorge,

2005: 96); the purpose being to gain insight into either the importance or relevance of

statements to participants' perceptions of themselves or their experiences. In this

research the tool is used to provide a structure to the focus group discussions. The Q-

sort asks them not only to consider the statements in a quasi-hierarchical frame of

relevance, but to negotiate that consideration as a group. The purpose is to generate

discussion which focuses the participants' on issues that directly relate to the research

questions and unearth individual and group perceptions of those issues.

Card sorts are "contrived" exercises that are noted as being effective in "eliciting"

"semi-tacit understanding of objects in the world" and their relationships to one another

(Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005: 90). In this research, the use of the q-sort as a group

exercise means that the negotiation needed for card placement allows some of the tacit

knowledge within groups to be made explicit as participants must justify and discuss

with the group their placement of cards. Fincher and Tenenberg additionally note the

"evidence" available which suggests that the placement of statements allows a reflection on the "internal mental representation" of concepts in the statements (p. 90). As a group exercise this reflection is tested further by the fact that discussion and negotiation take place in deciding where a statement sits in relation to others and the hierarchy imposed by the placement sheet.

Participants were asked to perform a q-sort activity (Brewerton and Millward, 2001: 78-79) that required them to organize 15 statements on a diamond pattern (see appendix D) discussing and negotiating their choices. The groups performed this twice in 'as is' and 'ideal' sessions in which they first discussed the statements in terms of their current perceptions and then in terms of their ideal work environment. These discussions were recorded. Within a diamond patterned sheet there is a midline above and below which there are 11 spaces, totalling 22. Groups were asked to organize the statements on the diamond pattern, the spaces above the midline being termed as 'more true of my experience', those below being 'less true of my experience'. The choice of a diamond allowing participants to place all or some of the cards above or below a middle line has two purposes. As an elicitation of discussion, the forcing a pyramidal pattern or straight line of strength / weakness of statements is intended to encourage the focus groups to negotiate and discuss card placement. Additionally, the pyramid allows for comparison and discussion of the 'as-is' and 'ideal' stages in terms of strength of response and character of any required negotiation amongst the group. The q-sort results of these recorded discussions were noted on record sheets (see appendices E1-8).

In an initial pilot performed, the 15 statements were used and one focus group used a pattern similar to the one proposed here and another used a pyramid with a base of 5 ascending to single space. The group using the pyramid reported feeling limited by the upward movement of the structure, whereas the group using the diamond felt freer in choice and thus discussion of the statements was seen to be less stifled. The use of 15 statements was time consuming. Immediately after the pilot the researcher considered reducing the number of statements to 11. In discussion/consultation with participants however, there was consensus that the statements represented a variety of points they felt were relevant and evocative enough to warrant their retention. After this pilot some statements were revised to increase clarity and focus.

Q-sort Statements:

Number	Related Research Question	Statement on Card
1	2	I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work
2	2	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments
3	1-3	I am asked to share my ideas about my work
4	1	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work
5	1-3	Leadership helps me do my job better
6	1-3	I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders
7	1-2	I get ideas about my work from my colleagues

8	2-3	The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
9	1-3	My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same
10	1-3	I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me
11	1-3	I am motivated by working with other teachers toward a goal
12	1-3	Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive
13	2-3	I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish
14	1-3	I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice
15	1-3	I am given independence in my teaching practice

Table3.2

Note: Research 4 relating to leaders' perceptions of how teachers see themselves and their working groups is discussed using the same ties between statements and research questions as above.

The statements are purposefully non-neutral and declarative. In the initial pilot disagreement provoked interesting discussion and the negotiation of statement placement is the key element in gathering the desired data. Nuances of understanding

and alignment, or lack thereof, of participants' responses were revealed in the negotiation and placement of statements.

The q-sort exercise presents several attractive aspects for gathering the type of data desired. Its flexibility in terms of gathering qualitative data in a structured manner and its ready applicability to focus group structures is valuable here (Brewerton & Millward, 2001). The structure of the q-sort lends the data a quasi-quantitative nature and allows for the identification of similarities or variances in response. However, as the data is perceptual and possibly reflective of attitudinal factors, the discussions and negotiations held the key to the unearthing of motivations, attitudes and perceptions. Recording the discussions around placement of cards provided the vital addition of data to the placement of cards themselves. Additionally this method of provoking discussion is enjoyable (if the statements are meaningful) and will allow for the writing of appropriate and relevant interview schedules (Brewerton & Millward, 2001: 78-9). The activity itself functions as a semi-structured group interview as the statements initiate discussion but do not narrowly confine the ways in which statement placement is negotiated.

Analysis of Q-sort data is discussed in section 3.5.2 below following discussion of individual interviews and supporting documents.

3.4.3 Individual Interviews

Interviews with individual participants were held to clarify and elicit elaboration on statements made during the focus groups sessions. These were held after focus group and initial examination of focus group data. An additional purpose of these interviews was to tease out the abovementioned distinction between what individuals found interesting as opposed to important. Schedules for these interviews were not rigidly structured. Questions were formed based on the researcher's evaluation of topics or statements that were unclear, required elaboration to place more fully in the context of group discussion and to identify issues that participants may have appeared to drop or concede to the group on, but seemed to have particular relevance to them individually.

In both the discussions of case studies and focus groups above, there is a common element which questions both the ability of the researcher to separate their own knowledge of the topics in question and the potential bias in analysis and inference this knowledge may carry into findings and conclusions of a study. The follow-up interviews were a tool for ameliorating in part this danger and to allow participants to highlight individual concerns or ideas they felt important. Morrison (in Briggs & Coleman, 2007) points to the phenomenon of "people's accounts of themselves" being "incomplete" in that they may speak of behaviour of perception without accounting for the "broader structures" around those perceptions and behaviours (p. 27). In research in which process, behaviour and perception are discussed in terms of the overarching structure of the context in which they occur, the need for clarification and identification of the importance of discussed dynamics is clear. The follow up interviews were an

opportunity not only for me to address questions I found necessary to ask, but for the participants to further flesh out the reflection on personal and group behaviours and organisational structure that rose out of the focus group sessions.

3.4.4 Supporting Documents

Corporate documents were used to define the organisational structure of the ITU and its stated aims and goals (see chapter 1). These include statements of mission, descriptions of a change initiative implemented two years prior to the conducting of the research, placement of the ITU within the larger corporate structure and size projected growth of the ITU.

3.5 Analysis

The output of the data collected is:

Snapshot of perceived work experience by team members
Snapshot of managers perceptions of team members' experiences
Elaborated data of the above (through interview)
A narrative of the agreement and disagreement within and across teams of their perceived work experiences
A narrative of the agreement and disagreement between leader's and team members' perceptions of team work experiences

Table 3.3

3.5.1 Qualitative Analysis

Data analysis began during the collection stages. As an iterative process, transcripts of both focus group events and follow-up interviews were read first to gain a general view of what was being said and identify descriptive data as tied to the main research questions. Cresswell (2003) discusses this process as moving from the macro to the micro in an iterative process that moves from building a "description of setting or individuals" to the identification of emerging themes (p. 191-3).

As transcripts were produced and a general impression of what was being said was formed, sections of transcripts that, on first sight, appeared to be addressing issues surrounding the research questions and the literature were collated. As will be discussed in chapter 4, this required making choices. Watling and James (2007) note that this imposes a "requirement" on making "justifiable choices" as to what is being included or excluded in the presentation and discussion of data (p. 355). That "researchers are entitled to make sense of the data they are handling" (p. 359) also means that they are required to show how that sense is made.

I was cautious to not over work the data during the collection phase to avoid the possibility that my own emerging understanding or thinking on what was being discussed by the groups may influence how the session proceeded. Aside from the cautious provision of explanation of the statements and process, I avoided participating in the discussions as far as I was able to. Examples of unanticipated choices on the part

of focus groups and leadership include the placing of statements outside the grid altogether due to strong disagreement and the clear statement of caveats to the placements of some statements (see appendices E1-8). Additionally, particularly during the 'ideal' q-sort sessions there were numerous instances where participants wished to place more items on a line of the placement sheet than there were allocated spaces. I felt it more valuable at these points to allow the groups to express themselves freely and discuss the reasons for their choices than to require that they follow rigid rules that would limit their discussion. As the type of case study presented here is concerned with interpreting discussion and making inferences based on that interpretation, latitude was given to participants with the caveat that choices be explained and negotiated.

Schedules for follow-up interviews were devised after all focus group session had concluded. In order to gain the clarification and elaboration desired, open-ended questions were asked based on statements made by participants or questions they asked colleagues during the process. For the individual interviews there were two main drivers behind the choice of questions. Firstly, was to allow participants to more fully discuss an issue that, based on the focus group transcripts, they appeared to not have expressed all they wished to. For example, when a negotiation ended and a statement was placed on the grid, there were several instances where it seemed that one or more participants had more to say or had conceded to group decision despite having concerns with the choice made. Secondly, these interviews allowed the researcher to sift through areas that seemed to hold significant importance to a participant to identify whether these were indeed important to them or if the conversation itself was interesting leading to a potential for the researcher to place more emphasis on a statement or idea than was in fact warranted.

As themes emerged, chunks of different transcripts were tied together and connected to research questions and the literature. This involved a process again of making choices and as I made these choices I noted the reasons for them in order to attempt to show not only my own rationale and process, but an involved engagement with the data and inferred themes as they emerged.

3.5.2 Q-Sort Analysis

As stated above the q–sort was chosen for its strength as a tool for exploring perceptions of specific issues and to provide a frame to elicit discussion. The analysis of placement sheets is intended to inform and, in part, justify choices made for both the identification of areas to follow up on in the individual interviews and in the identification of emerging themes. One of the purported strengths of the q-sort technique is that as the instrument is used the same way across individuals or groups, it allows a researcher to compare and contrast response in a comprehensible and structured manner (Brewerton & Millward, 2001: 79).

As the focus groups and session with leadership were performed the placements sheets were compared to determine emerging themes of agreement and disagreement and as a tool for focusing choices in organising transcript material.

Q-sort tools used as elicitation are essentially categorisation instruments (Fincher & Tenenberg, 2005: 89). One traditional means of analysing q-sort data is semantically through the interpretation of participants' voiced discussion of card placement (p.90). In

this study, the elicitation in a group setting is intended to allow for the interpretation and discussion of not only the emergent reasons and negotiated criteria for placing the cards, but additionally as a means of attempting to gain insight into how the group itself negotiates and make decision as a unit. Thus, in organising the data, emphasis was placed on both the specific discussions groups had around the statements on the cards and their placement. This speaks again to the aforementioned question of attempting to tease out the important from the interesting. The contributions of outspoken members of the working teams which formed the focus groups were balanced with those of members who may not have actually said as much, but indicated strong feeling or opinion in fewer words. This is also where follow-up interviews were used to try and clarify those feelings and opinions and divine their level of importance to the individual participants.

The "construct" (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005) of 'more true' and 'less true' combined with the requirement that participants' collectively discuss their choices of card placements allowed the groups themselves to develop "criteria" for their placement. Construct here being defined as "an attribute" to "describe something" and "criteria" being the expressed basis on which statements are related to the "construct (p. 95). In analysing the data, the criteria expressed by participants form a key element in the identification of themes and the formation of inference based in discussing those themes.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the theoretical rationale underlying the choices of paradigm and methodology used to design and prosecute this study. A case study analysed under the interpretive paradigm is discussed as a means of addressing the four research questions. Chapter 4 discusses the findings and analysis arising from the study design described here.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Purpose and Structure of Chapter

This chapter is an account of the data and emergent themes arising from the focus group sessions, their placement and discussion of the q-sort activities and follow-up interviews based on these sessions. The following sections are structured around the four research questions presented in the preceding chapter. Sections 4.2 ~ 4.5 are presentation and discussions of the data and emergent themes as they relate to the research questions.

Data is presented in the form of excerpts from transcripts of the focus group and follow-up sessions. Sub-headings emerge in relation to the research questions and the literature from discussions arising from the use of the two q-sort activities ('as is' and 'ideal': refer chapter 3; section 3.4.2) and follow-up interviews. Illustrative portions of the transcripts are in appendices F-I. A full representation of q-sort placements are found in appendices E1-8.

The research questions are found in sections 1.3 and 3.1.1 of this thesis. The first question relates to identifying and discussing the participant's perception of the absence or presence of elements of CoPs as described in the literature. The second question relates to the absence or presence of elements of a learning organisation as described in the literature. The third question relates to identifying where participants place themselves in relation to power and use of power within both their working groups and

the larger organisation. The final question asks where academic leaders believe teachers within the working groups would place themselves as in question three. Findings are accompanied by description, explanation and interpretation in line with methods discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

In this chapter, participant responses are identified as:

G1-1~4 (1-15)	Focus Group One- Participant Number (q-sort statement)
G2-1~5(1-15)	Focus Group Two- Participant Number(q-sort statement)
G3-1~5(1-15)	Focus Group Three- Participant Number(q-sort statement)
(as above); II	Used to Identify participants in Individual Interviews.
L1(1-15)	Department Head(q-sort statement)
L2(1-15)	Senior Academic Advisor(q-sort statement)
Mod	Moderator

table 4.1

Q-sort statements are listed by number in chapter 3; table 3.2 of this thesis.

An important note on discussion is that 'as is' and 'ideal' statements are identified as such in the presentation of data (see page 98 of this thesis). However, as noted in chapter 3, the focus groups discussed both current and desired dynamics and issues throughout both sessions. The interpretation of differences between aspirational statements and those referring to perceived current dynamics is woven into analysis. As will be shown, aspiration and perceptions of 'how things should be' are often presented in opposition to, or as complementary to, existing perceived dynamics.

Whilst initial data reduction involved examining the data of the 'as is' and 'ideal' activities separately, it became evident that they were intimately entwined and in order to fully represent perceptions expressed, it was necessary to place them together in a context of discussions of emerging themes, rather than present them as separate events. This allowed for a richer description of themes participants chose to discuss. The q-sort activity was a valuable tool for eliciting discussion and structuring focus group sessions. The data represented on the placement sheets is presented in appendices E1-8 of this thesis and was useful in showing trends in broad strokes. However, as mentioned above, discussion across the 'as is' and 'ideal' sessions represented perceptions that spanned these focal points of the two activities. In the discussions below, q-sort data is pointed to where these trends were indicated, but it was in the discussions that the richer stories were told.

Focus Group one is comprised of one working group, a team teaching a single subject within the foundation programme of the ITU (refer chapters 1 & 3). Focus Groups two and three are comprised of members of a second working group also teaching a single subject. The Senior Academic Advisor is responsible for all academic affairs within the ITU and was responsible for the conception and implementation of a significant change process implemented in the two years prior to this research being performed The Department Head is responsible for the administration of the foundation programme and as such is the line manager of the teaching participants (refer chapters 1& 3).

4.1.1 A Note on Participants and Site

In chapter 1 the research site was presented in some detail, and both in that chapter and in chapter 3, section 3.3.3, the sample is presented. Appendix B presents professional information for individual participants. For the reader these references are useful, however, in brief focus group one is comprised of all members of single teaching team, focus groups two and three are made up of all members of a second teaching team. The two teams work within the same department on different courses that were designed and implemented during a curricular development project complete prior to this study (refer chapter 1). The two leaders discussed in answer to Question 4 are the department head (L1) of the department in which the two teams work and the Senior Academic Advisor (L2) who is ultimately responsible for all academic issues and who conceived and implemented the aforementioned curricular development.

Statements made during the 'as is' and 'ideal' sessions (see page 98 of this thesis) are identified as such below each transcript quotation.

4.2 Research Question One: What elements of models of communities of practice, are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

This section presents and discusses the data as regards the first research question. The section is divided into elements identified in the literature review as evidence of the presence of a CoP.

4.2.1 Shared Practice and a Domain of Knowledge

As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, a shared practice and a domain of knowledge are evidence central to ascertaining the existence of a CoP (Wenger, 1998; Mittendorf et al., 2006: 304; 300). Emergent in the data was evidence of shared practice. However perceptions of the mechanisms for evolving that practice varied. Evidence of a domain of knowledge (refer chapter 2; section 2.2.3) was embedded in working teams' discussion of the location of shared practice and how sharing was accomplished.

In discussing the development of a shared practice:

> "When we started the program you know, we all had a hand, took part, participated in using the material, developing the material, selecting and using material."
>
> G1-1 (3) (as is)

A continued effort within the same team was indicated:

> "That goes back to the first question about cooperation. We do talk to each other about the students we have and what we are doing in the classroom and how far along we are, we do."
>
> G1-2 (3) (as is)

The development of material collectively forms a basis on which shared practice was evaluated. However, consistency in the sharing of ideas and technique emerged as uneven:

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"I don't think we ask each other about feedback. Only teaching techniques or how to be in the classroom."

G2-4 (4) (as is)

This was followed immediately by a colleague stating on his own initiative he pursued a shared practice:

"I do. I regularly observe classes of others and I ask others to observe my class."

G2-1 (4) (as is)

When new techniques or technologies were introduced into the teaching of his course one participant cited the need for developing a shared practice:

"I ask a bit more. Because I work with the computer. I want to find out how people use it."

G2-5 (4) (as is)

In the third focus group there was discussion of the ITU's role and responsibility in allowing shared practice to develop:

"The institute hasn't cultivated a proper avenue for that kind of interaction. They haven't tried to convene, you know, meetings or groups - or seminars or workshops where the departments develop that kind of mutual work."

G3-3 (4) (as is)

At first glance this seems more germane to discussion of organisational issues found further in this chapter; however for this participant it was cited as a block to developing shared practice. As a consequence of feeling there was little time for sharing practice the same participant felt at a loss as to whom to turn to for specific teaching problems:

> "The only time I ever ask anyone is when I know that someone can help me. The reality is that I don't know the teachers well enough in my department to know if they do things that can help me."
> G3-3 (4) (as is)

In contrast to statements about seeking ideas from colleagues, members of the same group unanimously agreed that colleagues were the primary source of ideas for teaching and sharing:

> "Definitely. I get a lot of ideas about how to develop things, about what I'm doing."
> G3-1(7) (as is)

> "Yeah, I tend to agree. Certainly the only way I am having new ideas is from my colleagues."
> G3-2(7) (as is)

"Yes I agree"

G3-5(7) (as is)

"Yes"

G3-4(7) (as is)

"I agree very much."

G3-3 (7) (as is)

Tension here was centred on the perception of participants that colleagues engaged in the same sphere of work were the source for developing a shared practice, but that there were prerequisite elements to this development. These include the time and space needed for colleagues to learn the habits, strengths and interests of one another in order to form the dynamics that aid the continued development of shared practice. As evidenced below in further discussion, this time and space was viewed as limited by some participants. The one formal opportunity to create time for developing shared work, a professional development day, was discussed below as having a limited impact for many participants (refer section 4.3.2 below).

The Q-sort placements referenced above were, for all three groups (G1, G2, G3) in the 'as is' sessions, centred in the two lines above and below the mid-point (see appendices E1-8). In the 'ideal' session the same statements, in aggregate, were placed only somewhat higher, however, in the discussions there was substantial evidence of aspiration for a higher level of shared practice and the acknowledged need for it:

"I think that's everyone's dream."

G3-4 (12) (ideal)

And:

"It's very important. To exchange ideas and experience through different

activities such as class observation."

G2-1 (7) (ideal)

The above is indicative of the high level of agreement running across the data that in the

ideal setting a shared practice and mechanisms for sharing practice was seen as

valuable.

That there was a domain of knowledge shared within each group was in part evidenced

by the acknowledgments above that there was perceived value in sharing practice

within individual teaching groups as participants' colleagues within their teams had the

relevant knowledge. One group noted:

"For example we totally ignore the content of the (name of course) or of the

(name of course). So that's why we find it difficult to substitute other teachers."

G2-4(1) (as is)

"So within a team you are interchangeable. But outside the team there is not

enough shared knowledge to be interchangeable."

Mod (1) (as is)

"Isn't that what happened with (name of course). Aren't we supposed to substitute only for each other? That's my understanding. If a (name of course) teacher is out, only another (name of course) teacher can substitute for him. This is a prime example of sharing."

G2-2(1) (as is)

Separate working groups operated with varied domains of knowledge:

"It depends on the skill you are teaching. For example (name of course), you have to be able to adjust your approach in the classroom. But in the (name of course) there's more structure."

G1-3 (15) (as is)

These varied domains resulted in different structures within the teams in which freedom to produce and share new practice, and the means of doing so, manifested. The structure and constraints presented by the curricula of the two courses taught by the groups were evidenced as having an impact on participants' perceptions of independence within their group. In discussing independence in teaching practice and the attendant opportunity to develop and share practice opposing perceptions emerged:

"There is no creativity. Everything that happens in the class you have to follow the structure."

G2-1 (15) (as is)

As opposed to:

"In (name of course) I would say yes, again because the nature of the program

(referring to course), but I wouldn't comment on any other course."

G3-1 (15) (as is)

The reference to levels of independence being dependent on the "nature" of the course

implies that separate working groups are working within domains of knowledge and

shared practices that are, to an extent, unique to their groups. Perceptions of how the

groups approach developing shared practice and maintaining the domain of knowledge

is discussed in the context of the opportunities and limitations defined by the courses

each group works with. The statements above indicate that the two courses offer

differing levels and definitions of independence. These approaches, in the apparent

absence of evidence, could indicate the "organic" character of the CoP which forms

around a shared task (Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003: 31). The findings indicate that

while there is shared practice and a domain of knowledge within the two groups,

perceptions of their development and utility vary amongst participants within the

groups.

4.2.2 Participation, Collaboration and Membership

The nature of collaboration is related to participation and a shared sense of

responsibility (Leonard & Leonard, 2001: 387-8) (refer page 38 of this thesis).

Evidence and discussion of participation in the practice and processes of the working

groups reflected highly varied levels of participation and the perceived need for collaboration. Individual collaborations emerged within the working groups, however, internally consistent group processes for collaboration and retaining developed practice was less evident.

During the focus group sessions centred on 'as is' perceptions, participation and collaboration emerged as manifesting differently within the two working groups. In both cases, however, collaborative behaviours were perceived as part of the daily work routine:

> "We often exchange ideas about what we are going to do; especially when you are a partner with somebody doing the same level."
> G3-1 (12) (as is)

And:

> "For some things you have daily conversations about what is happening. It helps, you know what is happening in other classrooms."
> G3-4 (4) (as is)

These sentiments were echoed in the other working group:

"I think it's an Intra-team thing. Definitely catch up on what other members of the team are doing and how their classes are going; especially early in the term like right now. And it helps, especially to get some feedback on individuals."

G1-4 (12) (as is)

As to asking for or about ideas for the classroom, the response of this team was clear:

"That's true."

G1-3(4) (as is)

"Definitely."

G1-1(4) (as is)

"Yes."

G1-3(4) (as is)

(all agree)

"Well there was no argument there."

Mod (4) (as is)

For all three focus groups, discussions during the 'ideal' q-sort sessions prompted further reflection on 'as is' perception. Within the second team there was a somewhat tempered perception of the perceived need for collaboration:

"Yes we do speak informally about things that are happening and that's good - things we can and cannot do and things like that. And also I'm motivated to get into the classroom and do the best I can without necessarily thinking of what other people are doing. It is an individual effort as well as a collaborative effort - it's both."

G3-2 (11) (ideal)

This balance additionally reflected some personal preferences dictating the areas of collaboration and participation that members were more or less enthusiastic about:

"I really don't enjoy sitting down with teachers and going through spreadsheets, even if I really have to do it. It doesn't motivate me in any way, even though we all have the same goal. I hate it. But if we're talking about if a kid is dyslexic or not then I will sit there and work on it for hours with everyone."

G3-3 (11) (ideal)

This may be evidence of the phenomenon of self-selection (Bate & Robert, 2002: 653) members undertake in defining their levels of participation in discussions of practice and thus the character of membership (refer page 24 of this thesis). The shared responsibility felt for what is perceived as mundane, here spreadsheets of scores, doesn't translate into participation of the same character as a meeting discussing a topic

of great interest to participants. If, as stated above, collaboration depends in part on feelings of shared responsibility, the lessened motivation the participant describes can potentially affect the level of engagement and interest with which the work is approached. Similar statements across the focus groups delineated areas where participation and collaborative efforts were entered into with more or less enthusiasm. Note the statement in the previous section (4.2.1) in which one teacher described creating peer observations on his own initiative, reflecting a relatively high level of enthusiasm and self selection to either solve a specific problem or share general practice.

Within the same team from which the previous statement was drawn, there was a clue as to the boundaries of membership and the organisational context dictating those boundaries. There was general support within the group when discussing the value they felt was placed on their ideas and their work for the following statement:

"That's the only thing we have here, fairly speaking."

G3-3 (10) (as is)

"That collegial support."

G3-1(10) (as is)

This was enhanced further by:

"Definitely. I get a lot of ideas about how to develop things and what I'm doing."

G3-1 (7) (as is)

"Yeah I tend to agree. Certainly the only way I have new ideas is from my colleagues."

G3-2 (7) (as is)

The corresponding Q-sort placements of the previous two exchanges are the highest possible, in contrast to statements that were directed toward topics of organisational function or extra-team interaction. Whether the implied sense of isolated practice here reflected a "submerged" (Richardson, 1995: 16) (refer page 24 of this thesis) tone for potentially defining a CoP will be addressed in the synthesis of this chapter. However, as regards to membership, the evidence implied that boundaries, as perceived by some members, were defined not only by shared practice, but by participants' feelings as to whom it was useful for them to collaborate with and where organisational barriers lie.

Evidence of the process by which new members enter these groups was explicitly evident in only one participant. This participant had been at the ITU for approximately three months prior to this research. In his first month he worked within both groups, covering a shortfall, and was subsequently placed in the group that is Focus Group 1. Reflections on his experience were:

"… I took over (G3-2's) class and the students were having to change from his style to my style.… so I had discussions with (G3-2) and to a lesser extent (G3-3) about how to manage the class as individuals how to manage them as a class, how to deal with them. I think from that point of view I was asked about how I managed and how I dealt with them and I tried to get information and then things began to get a little more smooth."

G1-4 (3) (as is)

As this was the only point in all sessions where new membership was discussed the researcher asked this participant to elaborate in an individual interview:

"Well, I started with (G1-2) and (G3-2), for both courses. I think it was more water cooler stuff, more of an informal approach and just sort of day by day support. People asking me how I was doing, how I was getting along. Perhaps I was lucky to have (G3-2) at the beginning. He was giving me daily updates, new materials and with him there was no problem, he let me search for material."

G1-4 (II)

He also discussed the openness with which his search for information was met:

"…and other colleagues were very helpful on a day-to-day basis because they were teaching the same levels. There was a dynamic manner, where you knew what you had to do and you just had to get on with it in a professional way, but

on a personal level when you're dealing with guys that who are friendly, affable and approachable it makes it a lot easier. I have worked in places where you feel as if you're going to the Snow Queen or the Court of the Crimson King to get information."

G1-4 (II)

And:

"I think I had the experience and they knew, not definitely the way things were, but the general details of what was happening and what to do. I think, I hope, I moved into it in a sort of seamless way."

G1-4 (II)

Whilst the perceptions of one individual cannot indicate generally the processes whereby membership is gained and negotiated, these statements taken with those reflecting boundaries and collegial attitudes indicated that beyond being assigned placement within a group, there were few if any formal means of becoming a member defined. In terms of Wenger's (1998) "old-timers" and the process of legitimate peripheral participation (refer page 25 of this thesis) this participant's experience would indicate that those who would act as gatekeepers were not perceived as barriers, rather they were described as helpful.

G1-4's statements also support a view that transmission of practice does not reside with one individual. He felt able and comfortable in approaching various members of each group in order to learn what was needed. His characterisation of the process implied that he took initiative to seek from colleagues what he needed and was met with willing collegial support. There is a potential implication here that for an individual less comfortable with taking that initiative, the informality of the process could have acted as a barrier and that perceived expectations on the part of "old-timers" (see above) would then have created obstructions to gaining a rich and collaborative membership.

4.2.3 Shared Values and Identity

The importance of shared values and identity run across both sets of literature discussed in chapter two. In identifying the existence of CoPs (Bowden, 1995; Wenger, 1998) and in their intentional construction (Busher, 2005) shared values and identities are noted as central. Huffman and Hipp (2003) emphasise the vital nature of shared values in building learning communities (refer chapter 2). The primary theme emergent in the data regarding both shared values and the construction of shared identity is that they took place within the working groups and in large part in tension with the larger organisation as is in part evidenced in the previous discussions of who participants' shared ideas with and when . Arising from discussions of goal alignment, dissonance emerges between working groups' perceptions of their goals as educators and the ITU's goals. This seems exacerbated by voiced confusion as to the ITU's goals and its ability to construct and pursue clear objectives.

A perception that the ITU's goal was unclear and may have been mainly focussed on graduating students rather than educating them emerged:

> "On paper it is something, but there is something else implied through verbal actions? Where are we going to start here? On passing the test? Do you have to pass the test or do you not have to pass the test? Is it important just to pass the test or retaining the information after you leave the institute? Is that the most important thing? Is that the focus now? We don't know."
> G2-5 (8) (as is)

A lack of clarity as to what was expected caused participants to begin bringing their own expectations of themselves into the conversation:

> "Aren't our goals in the context of who we are and what we are doing, to educate the students towards a greater competency in the language …. rather than trying to get them through a system to get them to work. There is a dichotomy here…I think it's certainly inferred by the fact that I am an educator. It might go unsaid, but the implication of the job we do as educators is to educate."
>
> G1-4 (8) (as is)

From G3 an acknowledgement that while ultimate goals may be similar, there was tension in understandings of how achieve them:

"…and even just having the students pass. We want the students to pass, the administration wants the students to pass, but the perception of what that entails can differ quite a lot."

G3-1 (9) (as is)

In discussion of working towards a goal as a motivating factor:

"If the goal is set I think that's a big part of it. If there is a goal, if we're not sure what the goal is then it's frustrating. In my perspective if there is a goal yes I would agree with that."

G2-2 (11) (as is)

The presence of trust between group members is evidenced in the unanimous agreement that participants felt their work and ideas were valued by the immediate peers (refer AppendicesE1-8). This was qualified by being noted that it was within the groups, and with groups close to them in the organisation that members felt valued:

"I think it's more in the yes side of the paper. If we are talking about people who are close to us, I mean people who are in the same team."

G2-4 (10) (as is)

And:

> "I would place it very high in terms of colleagues and perhaps lower for where
>
> admin. (sic) is concerned."

> G3-1 (10) (as is)

The statements above, taken with data regarding collaboration indicate that there are

functional collaborative processes within the groups. The lack of clarity in goal

indicates a disjunction between the perceived identities of teachers as professionals and

a perceived identity the organisation would wish them to develop. There is little in the

data which would evidence "values consensus" (Busher, 2006: 124) between the groups

and the organisation. However, given the positive weight placed on statements eliciting

discussion of internal group collaboration and goal alignment in the q-sort placements

(refer appendices E1-8), and pervasive themes in both 'as is' and 'ideal' discussions of

group solving problems there appears to be at the least a minimal level of this

consensus within the groups themselves (refer section 4.2.2 & 4.2.3).

Holliday's (1999) "Onion Skin"(refer page 53 of this thesis) of shared values manifests

less as a layering of alignment, than a dynamic forcing groups to construct identities

that accommodate both their own perceptions of professionalism and unclear or

dissonant criteria of identity transmitted from the larger organisation. Following

Holliday's (1999) distinction between "sub" and "small" cultures, the data indicated

that these groups were working in tension with the identity and goals of the ITU,

forming "sub" and not "small" cultures (refer page 53 of this thesis). That tension was itself part of a shared identity and coping with it created some of the values shared within groups. Contrasting voices were limited:

> "I think that compared to other places this is a stress-free atmosphere. I don't feel I'm being watched, this is very important. I think the affective filter is very low here….And I think the main point is that they treat this institute not as a teaching or education place but as a technical training place. That's very important. I think so."

> G2-4 (5) (as is)

This statement illustrates an understanding of the primary purpose of the ITU, technical training. However, the "stress free atmosphere" was also described as one which did not value the same things its teachers did. The feeling of freedom implied above in the context of other statements on teaching independence (refer section 4.2.1) seemed to translate in part to a freedom to create group identities that are internally consistent but are not aligned to other sections of the organisation.

That shared values existed was evident. There was an emphasis placed on collaboration and problem solving within the groups. The values of eliciting help, collegial development of ideas and trust of immediate colleagues emerged. There was strong evidence that a significant piece of a shared identity was a distrust of, or at least confusion about, the motives and goals of the larger organisation as they affected the working routines of the groups. Ideals of participants' views of what professionalism

and their individual identities as educators mean to them are strongly represented and often seemed to lie in tension with the ideals of the ITU as presented to them through what they viewed as conflicting and unclear messages from outside their groups. Another legitimate reading of this is that the organisation was clear in what it wanted. Students were to pass and move into work for the parent company. The external and internal political forces affecting how this was achieved meant that identities based on ideals of what it meant to be educators did not mesh with what was being asked of teachers. In either case, the tension between group identity and organisational identity was clearly voiced and was perceived as a fundamental dynamic affecting the work of teachers.

4.3 Research Question Two: What elements of models learning organisations, are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

This section addresses the second research question. The main theme emerging from participants' voiced perception indicates feelings of isolation from the larger organisation. In discussion of their 'as is' experiences perceptions that they were largely left to their own devices in terms of teaching but held to shifting and unclear expectations led to themes about disjunctions between individual/ group learning and processes of organisational learning. Perceptions of organisational desire and expectation did not evidence a wish to understand or make use of practice emerging from group experience and process.

4.3.1 Value, Vision and Goal

The perceived disjunction between the values of the organisation and those of the participants and groups on identity and CoP function is discussed in the previous section. This disjunction has an equal relevance in determining whether participants perceived the presence or absence of elements of a learning organisation. The "supportive conditions" of Huffman and Hipp's dimensions (2003: 6) would include the "democratic" setting that manifests as consistent and shared ethos and vision (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003:242) (refer page 20 of this thesis).

The way in which participants described their initial experiences at the ITU illustrate some of the feelings of confusion they express as to the clarity of organisational goals, values and vision:

> "…My orientation just told me how many barrels of oil the company produces and how many students are in the classroom. The next thing I know I'm with my team leader and my team leader is telling me how to go about my business and what to do. My team leader gives me goals, daily goals and semester goals. But the company has never given me a goal."
>
> G3-3 (8) (as is)

This was amplified by another participant who also stated that it was colleagues who provided him with what information he was able to find:

> "I had no orientation they told me just to go and teach with the writing team. 'This is your seat' - finished. Whatever I know about the institute I found out

personally from just talking to the people around me. You know I don't know officially what our students are going to do after graduation. I try and find out things. Do you know what they get, is it a diploma, is it a certificate - what is it they get? Nobody's told me that on paper."

G3-5(8) (as is)

As teachers began to form ideas as to the goals and values of the ITU from interaction with their colleagues and experience, the tension discussed in the previous section emerged:

"The goal is to help them pass. Period. That's the goal. Then how do you achieve the goal? That's when it becomes…"

G2-2 (8) (as is)

And evolved as seen in the following exchange:

"Yes I carry out the instructions of the school"

G1-1(8) (as is)

"Whose are those? Sometimes the goals are just to pass these students."

G1-2(8) (as is)

As this exchange continued the identities and values participants arrive with and form together emerged:

> "Well that's right, and my goal as an individual is to raise their awareness of the education system. To try and improve their capacity and knowledge as human beings. And that might be too, what do they say, highfalutin'?"
>
> G1-4(8) (as is)
>
> "Idealist?"
>
> G1-2(8) (as is)
>
> "They might say that's fine, that's great. But we want them to just get through."
>
> G1-4(8) (as is)

The final statement above (G1-4) implied the widely evidenced perception that the ITU presented a face that was not concerned with the underlying methods or values as long as they met the goal of graduating students. Were this perception to be strictly true, then the working groups would have operated however they wished, flourishing as CoPs or not; however, the ITU's goal of graduating students did reside within a structure, even if it was seen as inconsistent and the effects were noted by participants:

> "They want to get the students through, that's consistency. But the means and

the methods they used to do that sometimes don't filter down as well as they should because of the way the institution is formed. We have to go to leader A, who has to go to leader B, who in turn has to go to leader C. And in an industrial or corporate situation the further up you go the less the person on the bottom understands what it is that is wanted."

G1-4 (13) (as is)

A recognition that organisational "objectives" that appeared inconsistent resulted in one participant voicing a wishing for simplified clarity:

"In some ways I'd have to say that the organization has set itself up with objectives that do not coincide very well. Things just don't match up, so that's one place where the inconsistencies come from. They're trying to be an education institute, they're trying to be a training institute, they are trying to teach work ethics. They have so many things that they want to do. But they don't give us a single unifying idea to tie that together."

G3-1 (13) (as is)

Frustration that in what was perceived as a complex structure above the teachers and the use of investment were in conflict with the values and processes of the ITU emerged here:

"Let's not forget that there are politics in academia also. In the sense that there are policies here, whatever these are, and the top management knows this. And a lot of investment has been put into the institute. Now, these people are not serious enough, somehow, to do things in the proper way; do what should have been done."

G3-3 (9) (as is)

The personal mastery and systems thinking of Senge's (1990) core processes of learning organisations are at odds with one another here (see section 2.3.1 of this thesis). Participants have expressed a wish to gain personal mastery in evolving their current expectations and identities with those of the organisation. However, they perceived that as impossible given the paucity and inconsistency of what was made available to them. The systems thinking that would allow recognition of cause and effect of changes in practice and new developments may have existed within the working groups but were not perceived as extending beyond the boundaries of the groups.

This difficulty perceived regarding the building of values that were shared between working groups and the larger organisation is evident. One interpretation of the data could be that during these exchanges frustrations and long-standing grudges emerged, putting more emphasis than was actually felt on the issues being discussed. To an extent this is almost certainly the case, however, the near unanimity of perceptions both in the

transcripts and in the q-sort placements describing the schism between trust levels amongst colleagues and those between groups and the larger organisation are clear.

Another reading that may lessen the vehemence of these statements is that these groups are working in a programme which had gone through a fundamental change process in the two years prior to this research (see chapter 1). As that process moved from their department to another, there may have well been feelings of loss or of not being the centre of focussed attention:

> "Certainly since the developmental focus has shifted to the technical program (L2's) leadership has become virtually zero."
>
> G3-2 (5) (as is)

If this loss engendered feelings akin to abandonment, it's possible that resentment resulting in the above statements developed. Again, however, many of the participants started after the major structural changes had been implemented and were not present for the main project (see chapter 1 and appendix B). Their experience of the ITU began after attention had shifted away for their department. Whilst these factors may ameliorate the strength of some of these conversations, the perceptions voiced above are valid and almost universal. In the final chapter of this thesis I will discuss the impact of this shift of focus further, however it must be noted here to balance the above.

4.3.2   Facilitation

Perceptions about the facilitation of dynamics that would evidence the existence of a learning organisation emerged as frustrated and rare. The importance of a facilitative environment as regards collaboration and the sharing of learning is highlighted when one notes that change happens when teachers are helped to change (Huffman & Hipp, 2003: 4) and that a "reflexive management" (Busher, 2006: 124) (see section 2.3.2.1 of this thesis) recognises and facilitates collaborative learning.

The focus groups expressed views indicating that this did not occur. Both time as a resource and structured opportunity as an avenue were cited:

> "I believe the setup of the system, doesn't encourage this kind of discussing between courses. Unless it comes up there's no reason to talk to teachers from other courses or other departments. There is no time set aside that says this is the time the teachers will sit down and talk to each other about what they're doing. There's nothing like that, we don't have any meetings. I want to make it clear that I'm talking about outside of the team."

> G3-3 (1) (as is)

And:

"There is a lack of coordination between the courses. Personally speaking for example, sometimes I talk with (non-participant colleague), but this is one on one and only when we want to have a chat. There is no opportunity for four or five teachers to sit down together and talk about what they're doing or how you can coordinate good practices. I've been here for three years and that's never happened. "

G3-5 (1) (as is)

The physical environment as well as the structure of time allocation was cited:

"Well it is hard. How will you have a conversation? Out here in the desert. (Everyone laughs) it would be easy if there was a place to congregate. But there is no place. I mean, if you have business you go over there. (another department) But who has business there?"

G2-5 (2) (as is)

The final question in the statement above was indicative of the perception that working groups within departments were isolated not only in terms of physical space but in goal. A clear example that emerged of collaboration between departments was noted as:

"I'll give you an example: I taught level 3 for three years. And you know there is a big portion of electrical engineering. And I used to meet with a man named

(name) who was an electrical engineer and ask him questions over cigarettes and exchange ideas. And I learnt a lot about electrical engineering. If you want to deliver something you have to understand it at first and then do it. I enjoyed it very much"

G3-1 (2) (ideal)

In this statement the level referenced is the last before students move from the foundation programme into the technical programmes (see chapter 1). Within these final level courses there are increasing connections between the content of the language classes and the content students will face in their subsequent studies. Here is a clear area where learning and practice sharing could benefit these groups of teachers, however, as the statement indicates, his own initiative allowed this to happen and the venue was a smoking area outside in a desert environment not conducive to long and substantive conversation. As a pair of non-smokers put it when discussing the frequency with which they spoke to people in other departments:

"That's just a nonstarter. We've covered that it just doesn't happen."

G3-1 (2) (as is)

"I don't even know any of their names."

G3-2 (2) (as is)

An example of an opportunity for separate departments to discuss the potential for shared work, the abovementioned change initiative (see chapter 1) was highlighted. The

lack of common understanding between a department that had implemented major structural change and one that was in the beginning of that process produced this reaction:

"Yes and if I am working with or talking to someone outside of my department regularly about work and he may want to ask me for ideas or give me some ideas I would hope that they have taken the time to understand what it is that I do. And that goes both ways. It goes back to that horrifying meeting that I had a while back, that I was talking about earlier, where they had not even spent a moment trying to understand what it is that I was doing. I was saying "everything is green" and they were saying "yes but everything has been blue for 20 years". "But it's green now" "but it's blue!"

"No it's not, it's been changed to green". That was the atmosphere, it was insane. If I'm sharing work with people who don't understand what I do but have the sophistication to at least try they may start giving me ideas."

G3-3 (1) (as is)

In the 'ideal' session with G3 this meeting was further discussed, laying perceived fault not at the feet of the instructors from the other department, but at the structure around the change initiative and the lack of opportunity for common learning:

"…But a few days later I was thinking you know they are probably ticked off. They've been here for a while. And you know L2 is here doing all this stuff with the foundation program and the technical program is left to flounder. They are dealing with students still swinging from the lights, literally, and we actually have rules about students being in class on time. And that's new! Maybe that made them angry, you know that their department was not the one to start with the change. And I was telling them how it is and they've been here for 20 years it was probably upsetting for them."

G3-3 (7) (ideal)

"Yes but 20 years without clear vision, it would absolutely upset them. For example if I am teaching a course for 20 years and I am teaching the same course but at the same time I am just using the previous planning. Although I'm in the field for 20 years if I'm using the same lesson plans I am teaching one year, not 20 years."

G3-4 (7) (ideal)

A further example of an attempt on the part of the organisation to provide opportunity for interaction between departments was a professional development event which took the form of a mini-conference. Instructors from all courses were invited to present workshops or discussions. The reactions to this event are illustrated here:

"Yes but perhaps the closest they came to it was last semester when they did that professional development workshop."

G3-1 (1) (as is)

"Yes the professional development."

G3-5 (1) (as is)

"That's the closest they've ever come to it here. Allowing teachers the space in an environment to work together."

G3-1 (1) (as is)

"Yes that was nice."

G3-5 (1) (as is)

"Excuse me, but that did not happen because they wanted to initiate a process. I don't think that happened because of wanting to develop the professionalism of the teachers. It was because we didn't have the students and they didn't want us to go on holiday."

G3-3 (1) (as is)

"You're right"

G3-1 (1) (as is)

"Absolutely."

G3-2 (1) (as is)

"But it did happen. And the fact that it did happen opened up an avenue."

G3-1 (1) (as is)

The negative reaction to this event is balanced with an acknowledgement that it was new and had some value. However, the feelings of isolation and working in tension with the organisation at large discussed in the previous sections have the effect of creating suspicion of the motives behind the one clear example of time being allocated to whole-organisation interaction. This echoes the work of Thessin and Starr (2011) as discussed in section 2.2.2 of this thesis. The expressed need for time to discuss seen in the light of the reaction to the example above resonates with the literature in stressing not only the importance of opportunity, but of shared values and support allow teachers to realise the potential value and benefit (Richardson, 1995; Busher, 2006; Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003) (see chapter 2).

4.3.3 Integration and Adaptation

Integration of group and individual learning into organisational practice is fundamental to the existence of a leaning organisation (Tomlinson, 2004) (refer section 2.3). Dimmock and Walker's (2005) "stable manifestations" of learning are predicated on the integration of learning from across an organisation (refer page 44of this thesis). Evidence that learning and practice development taking place within the focus groups is taken up, assessed and integrated by the larger organisation is non-existent in the data. Speaking again to the divide that is perceived both between departments and between

groups and organisational goals, the lack of evidence implies that formalised integration of practice between disparate groups does not take place:

> "… But if you're talking about teaching ideas or curriculum... I don't know. Some of that goes on."
>
> G2-5 (1) (as is)
>
> "Yes, because we totally ignore what's happening in other departments or other skills."
>
> G2-4 (1) (as is)
>
> "Yes. You are concerned with how students are performing in your class for example. Period."
>
> G2-5 (1) (as is)

Integration of learning and practice across group boundaries seemed limited. Following on from the comment referenced in the previous section in which a teacher discussed specific practice with a technical instructor over a cigarette the following statement illustrates several in the data where topics related to work but not teaching practice were discussed:

> "…also talking about policies and new things. The pay rise, things coming from the head office. We also talked to people from the technical program to see how they felt about them. So it's not all just academic."
>
> G1-2 (2) (as is)

The above is included to show that while there was interaction across departments related to the larger organisation it was not practice related and initiated by teachers and not the organisation. Frustration emerged in statements like those below and others in previous sections regarding not only the lack of opportunity to share, and thus begin the process of integration and adaptation of practice but in the perceived deafness of the organisation to the desire to share:

"…about the organization itself. If I'm expressing ideas about how to feel about the institution to someone above me that really doesn't happen much. I don't see much communication happening - I would place it below the line because it depends on what group we are talking about."

G2-5(12) (as is)

"Well, there's also the component of if we can share ideas, but does it go anywhere?"

G2-2(12) (as is)

Senge (1990) delineates three forms of feedback cycles which affect the flow of learning within an organisation (refer chapter 2; section 2.3.1). The third of these is termed "compensated" (p. 79), in which resistance to allow access to group learning can be created within groups in the face of unwelcome requests to do so. In this and the previous sections resistance emerges in reaction to feelings of apathy on the part of the ITU and a lack of common ground amongst separate departmental groups. The dynamic of compensated feedback appears to emerge but as a result of unclear expectations

rather than the clear but unwelcome requests Senge (1990) defines. In G2-2's final statement above, the frustration stemming from a distrust of might be done with shared information appeared to lead to feelings that sharing beyond his group was not worth the effort given his perceptions of the 'as is' environment. Regarding the integration and adaptation aspect of research question two, the data is silent as to how or if these take place. It is, however, rife with examples illustrating the reasons for this silence.

4.4 Research Question Three: Where do participants place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

In this section question three is discussed. The question focuses on perceptions that are bounded as 'within' and 'without' the working groups. That boundaries are potentially porous has been discussed (Roberts, 2006) (refer page 26 of this thesis). The data presents a complex narrative of where leadership and power lie. Both frameworks discussed in chapter 2stress the importance of some form of decision making power as placed in the hands of practitioners, although models vary as to the extent (Busher, 2006; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Hayes et al., 2004).

The boundaries that defined the 'within' and 'without' delineation emerged from the data. Participants clearly view team leaders (refer chapter 1) as within their working groups, department heads as bridging the boundary and all other leadership discussed as 'without' (refer section 4.2.1).

4.4.1 Within Working Groups

Evident in discussions of questions 1 and 2 above, was a perception that sharing practice, developing shared values and collaborative dynamics seen as functional were driven from within the groups. Discussions of independence in the classroom may point to a level of decision making ability as evidenced here:

> "That's an interesting question, because when you are going into the classroom we feel that we can do the lesson according to our style. But that might be just something we feel and not something that's actually true in our day-to-day practice. Because in certain situations you're given x-amount of worksheets and you have to get through them and any secondary pedagogy you may want to adopt to do that, well there may just not be time to do it."
>
> G1-4 (15) (as is)

This statement regarding the structure of the course limiting independence was strengthened by:

> "'I'm given independence in my teaching practice no, I think everything here is formulated."
>
> G2-1 (15) (as is)

Group 3 expressed their feelings:

"In (name of course) I would say yes, again because the nature of the program, but I wouldn't comment on any other course."

G3-1(15) (as is)

"We can choose the topics yes but the process of actually writing about the topics is very clear and laid out."

G3-5(15) (as is)

These statements would indicate the constraints imposed by course structure in terms of material and topic choice felt by the structure of course may limit independence in the classroom, and thus limit one arena of decision making. In discussing their ideal situations the groups showed a desire for structure of a specific nature:

"So it's very important to be given independence but this independence should be monitored."

G3-1 (15) (ideal)

"What would the ideal monitor look like?"

Mod (15) (ideal)

"Constructive monitoring. Positive monitoring. I don't mind anybody from the higher-ups watching me teach. So long as it is constructive and they are convincing and persuasive."

G3-1 (15) (ideal)

"They should comment on the approach you're following in the classroom, I don't think anybody could ask you to follow this approach or that approach."

G3-3 (15) (ideal)

"Horses for courses yes. It's funny I have two classes and the dynamic is very very different. And I have to change my strategies for one class as opposed to the other class."

G3-4 (15) (ideal)

A contrasting view showed a trust in collegiality and expertise allowing for more independence. A first reading of this is that leadership is not needed, however G3-2 was not making a distinction between conceptual leadership potentially arising within the team as having the power to decide pedagogical issues and external leadership which dictates these:

"I think in many ways the (course name) team has strong individuals with strong competencies. So there isn't a great deal of leadership. In ideas. It doesn't have anything to do with leadership, it's the basic competencies of my colleagues. Because it's (content of course) if you're good at (content of course)

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you've got your own way of packaging the course. And it works. You don't
have to have somebody giving direction. Depending on the nature of the
material there will be more or less sharing and the need for a direction."

G3-2 (6) (as is)

The balance expressed here between the desire for independence and the need for clear
monitoring echoes statements discussed in sections 4.2.3 and 4.3.1 regarding goals and
values. The participants' willingness, and desire, to have their practice examined and
"constructively" discussed could evidence a wish for guidance. Alternatively the final
comment in particular indicated that advantage was taken of the scope within the
structure of the course for variations of approach; validation and professional criticism
was what was asked for. Andrews and Crowther (2002) would term this "parallel
leadership" (p. 155) (refer page 31 of this thesis) and the desire expressed indicated that
a professional relationship between participants and leaders would have been welcome.
The exchange did not provide reasons for this desire. These were hinted at elsewhere by
members of groups 2 & 3:

"Independence is important, guidelines are also important."

G3-2 (15) (ideal)

And:

"There has to be a balance between independence and guidance."

G2-2 (15) (ideal)

"I keep thinking of the leadership as someone who can empathize with the teacher and really knows that setting very well so they're just not telling me what to do . There's a real openness and you can talk to them, for me that has always worked. It's important. I can tell you my problems. You can tell me how to work on things based on your experience."

G2-5 (15) (as is)

The guidelines participant G3-2 refers to above are in the context of teaching practice and expectations from leadership ranging from department heads upwards. The type of leadership participant G2-5 describes is an ideal that would facilitate practice development. Again, this points to a desire for devolved decision making powers that are not wholly independent and isolated but are set in a process of collegial alignment and refinement. These sentiments describe an environment containing elements of the "parallel leadership" above and the "collective" leadership where development of practice and skill benefit from the collaborative decision making structure present in models of distributed leadership (Harris, 2005) (refer page 33 of this thesis).Evidence that within this team, this guidance and collaborative decision making occurs is found in several exchanges:

"Okay, we have our own individual section leader right? You know, (G1-2) and writing, (G3-4) in (name of course), (team leader) in (name of course). And from my point of view I definitely think I've gotten some good guidance there.

And good feedback from (names) when I was doing two subjects. But then of course you can imply the bigger, higher up level."

G1-4 (5) (as is)

In seeking advice and guidance:

"If we're talking about the place where we, let's say, are residing in.. if you're talking about the big office. We all need explanations, illustrations, we ask our leads. That's okay, but if we're talking about the big picture?"

G1-1 (5) (as is)

A further example of decisions being negotiated between group members, in this case a teacher and a team leader, was:

"It is different for me. The information that I get has nothing to do with my teaching but it does help me going the other way. They tell me what they want, I tell them the best way to do it. Which is fair, that's not a negative thing at all."

G3-2 (6) (as is)

"If it's the team getting ideas from each other and the team leader then yes that's normally how we work."

G3-3 (6) (as is)

In the above the "information" referred to is course content and assessment of that content. The discussion G3-2 refers to is one in which decisions as to the pedagogy involved in delivering this content was discussed. G3-2 clearly felt comfortable and able to lay out his own ideas as to how to proceed.

Participant G1-1 not only expressed an ability to exert himself in terms of expressing ideas, he also felt that what his group was doing was in line with the needs of the organisation:

> "The people I have been working with are very very professional. We have a very positive interaction, we reciprocate ideas and I feel that we are a team working in the best interests of the organization."

> G1-1 (6) (as is)

Implicit in these exchanges is evidence of "relational" leadership (Coleman, 2001) (refer page 33-4 of this thesis) in that these group members feel themselves to be in relationships with their team leaders and department head that allows for the free expression of ideas. The limitations of this interpretation are that the expressed desire for guidance from further up the leadership hierarchy in terms of clarity of ultimate goals and aligned methods of reaching these goals are not met.

The data does not allow for an interpretation of functioning distributed leadership. Harris & Young (2000) are clear in their warning of labelling any devolved power as

such (refer page 31 of this thesis). The evidence in the data of limited devolved power in terms of negotiating day to day practice is not sufficient to label dynamics of individual decision making as distributed leadership.

4.4.2   Without Working Groups

The question of where participants place themselves in relation to external power and influence is discussed in this section. As discussed above there appears to be evidence of a limited level of devolved decision making power, however it is limited to practice and pedagogy. In section 4.3.2 feelings of isolation emerged stemming from a lack of access to power and a lack of clarity in goals, values and institutional expectation. In this section perceptions of isolation re-emerged and group members perceived themselves as residing in a sometimes arbitrary and apathetic environment.

In a discussion of leadership higher than department heads:

"They certainly don't help me."

G3-2 (1) (as is)

" I don't see anything negative coming from them but I also don't see anything positive coming from. L2 (sr. academic advisor) can sometimes be a good person to bounce ideas off of. But they don't seem to be actively engaged in the process of providing leadership. They're not actually in there saying how's it going? ..does this work? It feels as if they've been distanced from us."

G3-1 (1) (as is)

"Certainly since the developmental focus has shifted to the technical program
L2's leadership has become virtually zero."

G3-2 (1) (as is)

Referenced is an event that would seem to have had a significant impact on
participants' perceptions of leadership. The development programme mentioned (refer
chapter one for a full description) represented a dramatic overhaul of the foundation
programme. Only two of the participants were present at the ITU from the beginning of
this process, taken on to be a part of it. Continuity is vital to the survival of a
community (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003) (refer page 20 of this thesis). The direct
involvement with senior leadership in the form of the Senior Academic Advisor (L2)
gave these participants direct and real access to decision making powers. Among the
reasons for feelings of isolation groups expressed may be the abrupt severing of this
relationship when the project "concluded". Members of staff coming into the groups
after this point did so very quickly afterward and found themselves in a dynamic
environment where courses were new and memories and habits of use of power were
fresh in their colleagues' minds. Two years on, the momentum of this experience would
seem to have diminished. Rather than feeling central to decision making and in receipt
of substantial attention, the evidence in this and previous sections indicates that groups
are working with highly structured courses in a leadership environment, that above
department head level, does not engage with them.

The discussion continued to elaborate on the levels of attention participants had access to:

"Personally if you're going to use those two examples for how people can make your job better. I mean, L2 does still look out for us, if you have a problem you can speak to him. And he tries to influence things when he can. But the manager himself? I don't think he understands that some of the decisions he makes actually makes my job worse. I don't think he's intentionally doing anything negative, but I don't think he sees the connection between a and b necessarily."

G3-2 (5) (as is)

"They don't know what's happening. They don't know what we're going through and they never allow themselves to have time with us to just talk."

G3-3 (5) (as is)

"And how do you generally communicate with those people? It's a paper, it's one way."

G3-2 (5) (as is)

The "manager" referred to is the Manager of the ITU. As the highest placed leader on-site he was responsible for the running of the ITU and to the parent company and the operating companies that receive graduates as employees (refer chapter one). The

question of him allowing himself "the time" to "talk" is a difficult one. The expectation that he should do so was evidence both of what may be unreasonable expectations on the part of G3-3, and of the strength which he felt that decisions made at that level made it more difficult for him to do his work.

Within the same group session the following statement was made:

> "… but the institute is involved in more political things than I care to involve myself in; which go beyond my brief as an educator."
>
> G3-4 (9) (ideal)

The reference here is to the need for consistent goals. G3-4 was stating that consistent goals are vital but acknowledged that there are goals he need not be involved in pursuing. The tension between this and the above seems to lie in the balance participants perceived as desirable between being engaged in relevant leadership activities and protected from those deemed irrelevant. The theme which emerged indicated that they did not feel leadership at those levels make this distinction. Reinforcing evidence that there was not perceived malice on the part of leadership is in the following:

> "I think they are not thinking bad things about us. I think they want to get the best for us and from us. But on the practical day-to-day level I think it may not

be coming down in the way that we would like it to be, not being implemented as fast as we would want."

G1-4 (10) (as is)

The theme that rises from these exchanges is one in which apathy rather than force characterises participants' views of the leadership environment they reside in. These feelings were echoed in all three groups:

"So you're saying that there's more, while no not autonomy, what you're saying is that there's more of a hands-off approach that's more helpful. Whereas some would say a hands-off approach is not helpful. But no hands can be bad too…"

G2-2 (5) (as is)

"In the classroom for example, if we threaten the students or if we don't provide them with a friendly atmosphere. If we don't make them feel that it's a friendly place to them they won't produce and it's the same thing. It's the same thing for teachers."

G2-4 (5) (as is)

"Since they don't make it difficult for me they help me."

G2-1 (5) (as is)

"They" in this last statement referred to senior leadership. The attitudes implied above have potential to lead to disengagement from the wider picture (refer page 55 of this thesis). This disengagement was further exacerbated by the character of communication participants perceived from leadership:

> "When you look at how things happen and where things come from the teachers are the last to know often. The students learn things days before we do. There are certain policy issues that affect us that the administration knows but we don't know we aren't told. There are so many things they try to hide from us."
>
> G3-3 (13) (as is)

> "Rarely in educational institutions would you find that the students were higher up on the information chain in the teachers. That happens all the time here."
>
> G3-2 (13) (as is)

And further in the exchange:

> "There are people lower down who have a lot more power than the people above them. So some people are driving the bus from the back seat and the guy who's supposed to be driving the bus is not always in control of which way it's going."
>
> G3-2 (13) (as is)

The reference here to "power" is that which surrounds communication. Feelings of being left out of the flow of communication engendered a suspicion of motive. Taken with other statements however, this interpretation may be overstated. The general disengagement participants note on the part of leadership as equal a culprit as malice.

The environment participants described seemed to be one characterised by shifting levels of focus, apathy and lack of clarity in their relationship to leadership outside of their working groups. The "comprehension" of relationships between individuals and groups on the part of leadership that is "essential" to establishing CoPs (Huber, 2004) is not perceived by the groups (refer page 33 of this thesis). Coleman's (2011) "constitutive" leadership emphasising the importance of clear articulation of communications across an organisation is similarly not evident in the data (refer page 33-4 of this thesis). References to forced leadership causing undue damage to CoPs seem not to apply (Richardson, 1995) (refer page 15 of this thesis) as the main theme is not one of a leadership which actively damages or seeks to damage, group function. Rather the evidence would suggest that groups feel powerless outside of very narrow circles, and that access to more and more collaborative power would be welcome.

4.5 Research Question Four: Where would senior and middle managers believe staff members would place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

Question Four asks a Middle Manager who is the head of the department the groups work in, and the Senior Academic Advisor to work through the q-sort statements as they think participants would in their 'as is' sessions. Placing them in an empathetic relationship to the groups elicited both their own perceptions of several issues and the perceptions they believed prevalent amongst the groups. This section presents these sessions in the same format as the previous section. Subsections for each leader are place in the 'within' and 'without' categories used above.

4.6 L1: Department Head

4.6.1 Within Working Groups

The department head's placements and discussion acknowledged some of the issues discussed by participants in previous sections. The main theme that emerged is one in which access to leadership is somewhat less important to participants than the portrayal they gave. Within the groups he gives reasons as to why collaboration may be limited:

> " "I'm asked to share my ideas about my work. Asked? I think encouraged more than asked.

In some situations yes, like today we asked (teachers name) to check with his team about something in the (name of course) methodology. And *because we asked them, this would happen yes*. (my emphasis) And because we encourage people to do this, you know, team members should have a meeting at least once a week. The question is, this kind of office, isn't really conducive to having those kinds of regular meetings. Even though there's a meeting room here I don't see people using it. At the end of the day it boils down to people having enough to do and they don't really communicate. And … when people are working on the team for a while it sort of gets to be routine. …The level of discussion gets to be less and less."

L1 (3)

His assumption that discussion of methodology would take place because it was requested may be true, however, his perception indicated that in the absence of a request, these discussions would not have taken place. In the focus group data discussed above, more emphasis was placed on these interactions than he seemed to perceive. His reference to the meeting room belied expectations of formal interaction. He did note that there were other factors at play:

"Again this depends on the chemistry of the team. I don't know if the same good chemistry is in every team….So I would say yeah it's different from one team to another, I bet. Perhaps not every team member shares his ideas at the same level."

L1 (12)

And:

> "Some people are so good at this that they even did peer observations which we encouraged people to do, but we did not ask them to do it. So some people, like if this is (teacher's name) he would place it up here, but you know how other people feel about observations so they would just put it down here."
>
> L1 (4)

References to both relationships within a group and individual motivation resonate with the data from the groups. He restates the role he as a middle manager plays in the variation of collaboration from team to team:

> "Yes because as I said we encourage rather than ask people to do this. So it's different from one teacher to another."
>
> L1 (4)

Whether he sees requesting that interaction take place as facilitative or an imposition is unclear. That he sees his position as potentially having some role in instigating collaboration is evident. His acknowledgment that teachers are too busy to be asked to pursue developing professional development plans indicates that he is cautious in asking more of them:

"We, here in this office have professional development plans for people. But because we are still understaffed and people do more stuff than they should, we are not approaching any people about professional development."

L1 (9)

On balance, it seems that statements that his requests instigated collaborative discussion were not made at the expense of teachers. Rather, there was an acknowledgement that as teachers were busy they may not have engaged in these as often as they would have in other circumstances. The picture painted by the group participants does not support this perception. Evidence of regular discussion within a working group discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 is substantial.

"The goals of the school are clear, what I mean by this is our performance standards and our performance indicators. So they are clear, they are written, they are given to every teacher, so I think they are clear. And teachers should know exactly what to do. 'I am motivated', I doubt, I'm sure that once there is a common goal people enjoy working with other colleagues towards achieving this goal. What usually makes people frustrated is when there's no common destination. Like the wild wild West."

L1 (11)

The impact of perceptions of unclear goals and methods are clear in previous sections. The perception here that goals were clear and the implication that teachers were aligned to them is not only not supported by the data from the groups, the lack of "common destination" that he cited as frustrating was precisely articulated by the groups as a source of tension.

4.6.2   Without Working Groups

Following on from the discussion above L1 describes factors that may in part underlie the feelings of the groups:

> "The reason why I did not put it at the top here is that sometimes we get conflicting messages, some signals or some messages that might actually conflict with those indicators."

L1 (13)

"Where do the signals come from?"

Mod (13)

> "I'll give you an example. For example, we want students to be punctual, to be in the classroom the first thing, right? And you remember on the old campus, we asked teachers to lock the doors, once they are in the classroom. So that's good, this is a good example of when theory and practice go hand-in-hand. But when they came here, you know, this new three minute rule came from above. I

shouldn't mention any names. But, you know the Chairman of the Board of
Trustees said give the students three minutes. So, on the one hand this is really
against what we are trying to achieve at the ATI, but practically speaking we
have to accept it. So when an admin issue comes your way, you cannot change it
but it conflicts with what you are trying to do. So on the one hand, yes, the
standards are clear, but on the other hand some admin issues really work against
the standards and performance indicators."

L1 (13)

The political sphere indicated here was referred to by group 3 in section 4.4.2 as a layer
of leadership they did not wish to engage with. However, in that and other discussions
the effects decisions made at those levels on day to day routine are acknowledged. This
is the source of frustration voiced regarding lack of communication and the purpose
behind decisions that teachers perceive as arbitrary.

"We try to make them sure that we appreciate their work, but at the same time
when other admin issues happen and we can't really change them like when the
schedule is late. That's not good, it makes people's morale go down. We don't
have 100% control of this. Once students join the ITU, or at least graduate from
the foundation program, they can't join the technical program unless they meet
certain standards. There are VIPs who we can't refuse, but they don't join the
foundation program, they join the basic program until they can meet the
standards. Once they meet the standards they study in level 1. They can't be

absent for a certain number of hours. They can't take the exit tests unless they get 70% on their performance based assessment."

L1 (10)

In section 4.3.1 group participants discussed the need to pass students as an example of unclear and unaligned goals and a leadership that did not communicate clearly. The participants disputed the consistency with which pass rates were applied. L1 in this statement, whilst illustrating a further example of external politics affecting the ITU, defends the system created to ameliorate those affects. The tension between perceptions represents a lack of communication both on the part of teachers and leadership; Group participants citing limited access and opportunity and L1 citing politically driven decisions neither he nor the ITU management has control over.

The perceptions of L1 here presented a combination of agreement and dissonance with the data from focus groups. He acknowledged a lack of communication and discussed some reasons for this. He believed collaborative interactions took place, and acknowledged a potential role in facilitating them, albeit in terms that on first reading seem authoritarian. Busher (2005) emphasises the position of the middle leaders as facilitative and the importance of shared values that inform decision making (refer page 30 of this thesis). L1 drew attention to his potential role in facilitating collaboration and stated reasons for not doing so. He indicated where values may not have been clear or shared where they were behind decisions and action that affect teachers.

4.7   L2: Senior Academic Advisor

4.7.1 Within Working Groups

The Senior Academic Advisor (L2) was brought into the ITU to plan and implement a fundamental change initiative designed to improve the skill of graduates entering the parent company's operating companies (see chapter one). At the time of this research the foundation programme had gone through this implementation and had been operating under the new curricula and performance standards for two years. His direct involvement with the foundation was diminished and the project had moved into working with the technical programme (see chapter one).

L2 remained, however, directly responsible and accountable for the outcomes of the foundation programme and is the line manager for its department heads. His perceptions as to participants' views on the leadership and power environment they work within emerged as follows. The main theme was an understanding that with the project no longer actively implementing change, collaborative efforts may have diminished.

In discussing independence in teaching, L2 illustrated the expectations he has of department heads and teachers:

"I'm given independence in my teaching practice. That better be true. That was what the whole thing was about. In fact, and I know I'm being recorded, this whole issue of lesson planning that's come to the floor of late, I don't know if the teachers are aware of it yet. (describes incident in which a department head from outside the foundation programme wanted to require daily lesson plans to be submitted by all teachers- L1 was involved) And I said look L1 just tell (name) that the project was designed with the management philosophy that that we are not interfering with what the teachers are doing in the classroom unless there's a problem. Then you get involved. …leave them alone. Let them teach. Now, do they think that or not, that's the question. I know what I want. … And I would hope that the foundation instructors say yes, I would hope so. I would think they would. L1 is not intrusive at all."

L2 (15)

The independence L2 described as central to his ideas of management carry the implication that he expected this independence to include collaboration within groups.

Discussing where ideas emanated from in terms of levels of leadership, he saw teachers as perceiving a clear hierarchy or order:

"Okay, let's move up to the formal stages, what if that said team leaders? Yes if that said team leaders I would put it at the top. Well this will not have to be put over here. I would think, I could be wrong, but I think the department heads… I have seen the performance evaluation tool that they use and I would think that

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when they are meeting with the teachers post observation that they would be giving them ideas. I think they would be. But again, I don't know first-hand, I assume that they are."

L2 (6)

No statement was made as to leadership above department heads engaging in discussion of pedagogy or course planning. Nor was there discussion of how the "performance evaluation tool" was used. The potential of this formal instrument to evaluate performance to either help or hinder collaborative processes, value alignment or goal clarification was not discussed.

Discussion of statement 10 involving the perception of teachers as to whether or not their work is valued elicited the following:

"English teachers hate each other! They're all in competition. (Laughs) "I am a better teacher than you are. My students want me more than they want you'. …True, I think the teaching profession has this built-in competitiveness to it. And it isn't just here. Even when you share ideas there's always this sense of comparison. I remember there would be times when I didn't want to tell teachers things because I know that they would resent it- I'm not talking about where we have mutual goals or where we're trying to improve the curriculum together. I'm talking about teaching something, and something went really well. I wouldn't walk into the teacher's office and share that with the staff."

L2 (10)

These sentiments were not expressed by group members. Rather, there was a clear thread through the discussions in the previous sections that it was direct colleagues with whom participants had their most satisfying interactions and that feelings of professional respect and value at team level were present. When asked if he felt if this were true within the foundation programme's working teams he elaborated:

"I think that within the teams this would be ranked higher, but in a generic sense no. But that's where it comes back to the point made before, if there is a shared goal like a development initiative going on. You would be sharing everything because it's part of the process in the development of that curriculum or course. And there's a structure, the feedback is part of that process. …I can imagine a teacher in one class speaking to a teacher teaching the same subject talking about things that did or didn't work in the classroom. Again there's a common, shared goal. When you have that this will happen. When I first came here, teachers sat next to each other and no one spoke to one another. Everyone had their book, and everyone had the page numbers they were supposed to be on, and basically there was no sharing of ideas at all. That completely changed when we went through the curriculum development project."

L2 (10)

"Would you say that having some sort of goal helps accomplish not only the goal but also the development of collegiality."

Mod (10)

"For sure, for sure. I mean, all of these could be rearranged if you put it in the perspective or context of a curriculum development project. It's all related to the degree to which you need each other to accomplish something. In my example, in 2003, teachers didn't need each other for anything. They had their book, they had their page number. And the opposite of that would have been developing the curriculum, where you obviously need each other. Even if you're developing courses for different levels you need to know what's going on before and after what you're working on. That's the other end of the continuum, where there's an absolute necessity to share information."

L2 (10)

The dynamic described here is one in which collaboration occurred when a clear shared goal was present. In his description of teachers' behaviours prior to the change initiative he cited a lack of need as the main reason for teachers working in isolation. The group sessions evidenced that the perceived absence of clear organisational goal had created multiple, unclear goals. This affected not only their relationships to one another in terms of their need to create internal group goals but in their relationship to leadership. The relationship to leadership that teachers experienced prior to the change initiative was discussed in a follow-up individual interview:

"There are implications for how you deal with colleagues. Wanting to be liked.

Having to have some affinity with students, if they hate you they won't learn.

And here sometimes if students hate you here you can lose your job. The effect

of this is there was no discussion or collaboration prior to 2006. I asked staff

what they want to see changed first. One said "change job security " get rid of

arbitrary termination, now that was 5 years ago, there's a better sense of

assurance now, but it could happen to any of us. (relates a disagreement with a

visitor to the ITU)…He could have been anyone, and I could have been out of

this country."

L2 (II)

In the group sessions, fear of dismissal or reprisal for actions taken at work did not arise

as a factor in how participants viewed leadership. At several points it was

acknowledged that they felt no malice emanating from leadership (see section 4.4.2).

Leadership within groups was seen as largely supportive and internal, frustration arose

when discussing leadership beyond the group level.

4.7.2   Without Working Groups

In discussing perceptions of how groups viewed leadership outside of the working

groups L2 acknowledged the political environment that L1 discussed. His perception

was that teachers would not have wished to engage at the level of political action

described, but that it did affect them. Gauging perceptions of consistency the following emerged:

> "That one's a no-brainer. I mean that one's going to be true, and it's going to be up there very high (positive), because I know how the staff feel about it, that one's easy. I thought this was going to be hard."
>
> L2 (13)

And:

> "… 'my goals'. God, I simply don't know the extent to which the staff has bought into the mission. I mean that was the purpose of the project was to change the direction so that the staff had more support, was more in line with the objectives of the students. But the extent to which this has happened I don't know. I think that's true. There's no inconsistency in that, that hasn't changed. I'm going to go with stronger on this. I don't think that has changed and I think they would perceive consistency in that."
>
> L1 (9)

That he believed teachers saw no inconsistencies in mission prompted the researcher to ask where he thought inconsistency might have been present:

> "Well we want students to leave here as qualified entry-level technicians and operators. We want them to be qualified. But then what you see happening is we

promote - we have this policy that says we will conditionally promote a student who's failed one course. Now there is an informal policy decision there taken in order to meet some political objective. Which staff is not concerned about, they're not interested in the political side of this they're looking at it from what we want to accomplish. So they would see some inconsistency there. That would be the obvious one to me that jumps out. We say what we want to graduate qualified people but then we have this policy, but overall I would say that that is less true now."

L2 (13)

As to the goals of the ITU:

"I think they are at this one, very high. I think our teachers particularly in the foundation program, want the students to improve their English, reading writing etc. And I think the institute in the form of the manager and the operating companies also want the students to read well. I think they're the same."

L2 (9)

This is in tension with the perceptions of group members who acknowledged that improved skills were a clear goal. Their views also expressed frustration with both what they saw as inconsistent application of pass rates and little clarity as to the methodology expected of them. In the previous section, L2 stated that independence in teaching was paramount to his vision of the ITU. The lack of clear communication and consistent

structures seemed to disallow what he viewed as an empowering ideal and policy. The guidelines expressed as valuable by participants aren't present (see section 4.4.2).

4.8 Synthesis of Findings

This thesis seeks to discover the perceptions of two discrete working groups as to the presence or absence of communities of practice and a learning organisation in the institution they are situated. The aim of the research is this discovery and the presentation of the two frameworks in tandem as a means of evaluating the emergent dynamics and structures for their potential to intentionally construct communities of practice that reside within a functional learning organisation.

Throughout the study the primary themes emerged as aspirations for organisational alignment and clarity in goal, values, and processes. These aspirations were expressed both in discussions of ideal environments, and frustration at being largely lacking in the current environment. Clarity in communication and consistency in policy additionally emerged as themes the focus groups desired. Internal processes within groups were presented by members as manifesting some aspects of CoPs. Elements of a learning organisation as emergent in participants' views were absent or dysfunctional as present in the findings.

Consistent and clear goals that are aligned through a collaborative process which allows investment on the part of the practitioner are seen as vital to both the existence of CoPs

and the functioning of a learning organisation (Senge, 1990, Wenger, 1998, Huffman & Hipp, 2003) (refer chapter 2).

A perceived lack of consistency of goals and the expectations placed on participants as to their pursuit is evidenced in discussions of both research questions 1 and 2. The data indicates feelings of frustration, mistrust of organisational leadership and inertia towards conserving practice within working groups as results. The potential existence of CoPs in this environment indicates they would be "covert" (Richardson, 1995) and their internal leadership submerged and hidden from the organisation (refer page 24 of this thesis).

Implications for a potential learning organisation as a result of this are that lines of communication are closed or truncated and learning developed within working groups is inaccessible, thus rendering the organisation blind and blocked from benefit. Blackman and Henderson's (2005) caution that transformation of knowledge and learning to aid the functioning of the larger organisation is rendered impossible due to existing worldviews of members (refer page 41 of this thesis) is implicated here as the current worldviews of groups members include a perceived apathy on the part of the ITU towards their process and developed practice (evidenced in discussion of question 3).

The shared values that form a core element of both CoPs and learning organisations are not evident in the data. Perceptions evidenced in discussion of question 1 indicate that

working groups have a limited but significant level of shared value within their groups. That there is no "value consensus" (Busher, 2006) (refer page 52 of this thesis) between those of the groups and the organisation is evidenced in the findings. Without a base of values which are consistent and mutually constructed the formation of a functional learning organisation is difficult. In chapter five means of ameliorating this will be discussed.

The "institutionalised experienced" (Blackman & Henderson, 2005) (refer page 47 of this thesis) and the shared history and artefacts of practice (Wenger, 1998) (refer page 14 of this thesis) are evident within the working groups, but manifest in a manner that excludes participation and access by the organisation. The fault line drawn by the shared experience and function of the working groups implies that they are operating as "small" cultures (Holliday, 1999) (refer page 59 of this thesis) in tension with the larger culture in which they work.

The working groups evidence a shared practice and levels of participation (discussed in answer to question 1) that imply the core of a CoP (refer chapter 2; sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). However, in line with Bate & Robert (2002) levels of participation emerged as uneven implying that self-selection as members of a group that actively pursues learning and practice development was occurring (refer page 25 of this thesis). That there was a domain of knowledge (Wenger, 1998; Mittendorf et al., 2006: 304; 300) around which groups could coalesce was evidenced in section 4.2.1. This knowledge was limited to the goals of the group and did not extend in a consistent enough manner to be useful at the organisational level. Views of the participants regarding the low level of consistency with which the organisation presented its goals and values meant that a

domain of knowledge that extended into the organisational sphere was indefinable (refer section 4.2.1).

The access to decision making power and distribution of leadership (see section 2.2.3.3 of chapter two) that are vital to both the CoP and the learning organisation were evidenced as severely limited and confined to group practice (see section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). In this study, devolved leadership was evidenced as confined to practice within groups (refer sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Access to power and decision making opportunities above that level were limited by a lack of the clarity in vision and goal that would allow participants an inroad into organisational process. Access was further limited by a political function that filtered down to working groups as arbitrary decisions and inconsistent policy (refer section 4.4.1 and 4.4.2).

The narrative as a whole presents an environment in which working groups have internal freedoms and collegial, collaborative processes that carry the potential for the intentional construction of CoPs. The limitations on their growth stem from perceptions of apathetic leadership and a disengagement from the pursuit of clear goals. The potential for the development of a learning organisation emerges as more problematic. Issues of agency and perceptions of arbitrary decision-making make the creation of clear and unblocked communication difficult. The clear articulation of vision, policy and willingness to integrate learning produced by internal groups is currently not shown as present.

A note on the proceeding section:

The proceeding section (4.8.1) presents a model for understanding and discussing the marriage of the CoP and Learning Organisation models which form the basis of this research. In the centre of this model are four boxes; one representing the individual and three representing possible existing CoPs. A four pointed arrow amongst these boxes represents communication and porous boundaries between CoPs and their individual members. The right hand side of the model represents the umbrella of the overarching organisation. The left hand side of the model depicts three conceptual domains: Structured Freedom, Flow and Alignment, small internal arrows represent the interaction between them. These are discussed in depth in the proceeding sections and represent the blended elements of the CoP and Learning Organisation models. Two large arrows connect the organisation and these three domains and represent both the communication and interaction between their function and the larger organisational function and act as a graphic means of containing the individuals and CoPs within this interaction.

4.8.1 A Model for Understanding: Relationships of Individual, CoP, and

   Organisation

Structured Freedom

Flow

Alignment

CoPs

Individual

CoPs
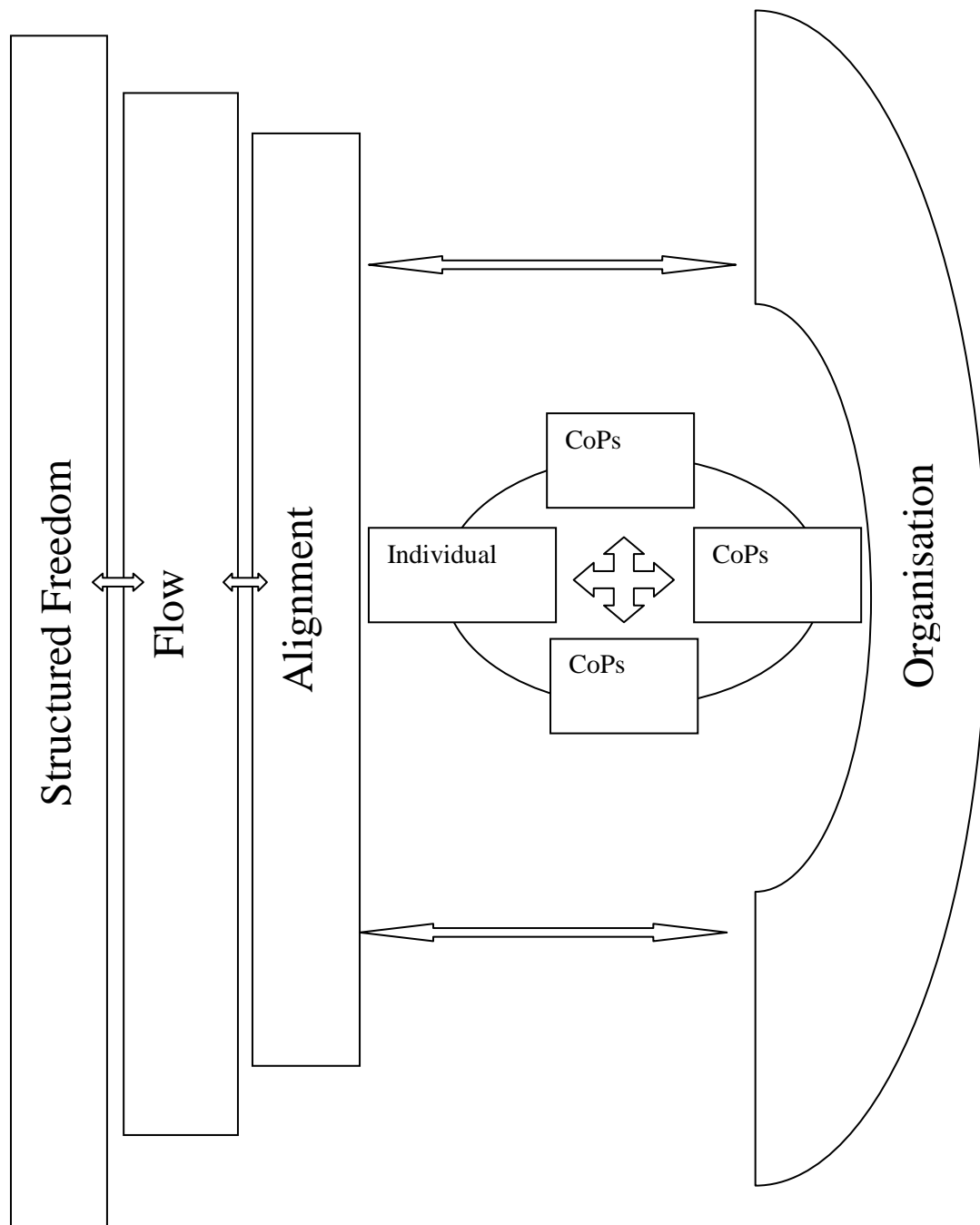
CoPs

Organisation

Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1 represents a model of relationships between individuals, the working groups

to which they belong, other working groups, and the whole organisation. The marriage

between models of CoPs and learning organisations is distilled to three overarching forces: Structured Freedom, Flow and Alignment. The model relates to theories found in both bodies of work. The findings of this study can be applied to the model for examining the presence, absence and potential for CoPs that work within, support, and are supported by, a learning organisation.

Discussed separately below, but intimately related, these three forces work in concert to allow individuals and CoPs to develop practice and new knowledge which is accessible to the organisation and in line with organisational goals and expectations. Structured freedom speaks to the nature of leadership required to allow development. Flow relates to the need for clear communication which is democratic and open. Alignment calls for the pursuit of new knowledge that is in line with clear and collaboratively developed goals informed by clear and collaboratively held values.

4.8.2 Structured Freedom

Structured freedom relates to the need for a leadership and power structure that allows individuals and CoPs latitude in decision making regarding specific practices and processes that are clearly defined. The literature indicates that expectation and need as articulated by the organisation to its constituent group and individual members must be unambiguous (refer chapter 2). However, models of both CoPs and learning organisations call for conceptual leadership where the generation, application and evaluation of new ideas and practices occur to be devolved to the groups and

individuals creating practice and thus knowledge for themselves and ultimately the organisation (refer chapter 2).

For CoPs, the balance between a leadership structure which provides both boundaries and allows access to aid in generative processes is vital (refer chapter 2; section 2.2.3.3). The "power over" and "power with" distinction made by Irwin & Farr is central to this idea (2004: 360). When CoPs, and the individual relationships within them, operate in concert ("power with") with leadership external to their group in terms of collaboratively setting and recognising boundaries in a manner which both clearly delineates organisational expectations and allows for individual and group decision making, new ideas and processes may be generated that are in line with expectations and thus more accessible to the larger organisation.

The integration and adaptation required to allow an organisation to learn from its internal practices becomes more possible in an environment that allows practice development that is transparent and in line with clear organisational goals and expectations (refer page 37 of this thesis). This transparency, as opposed to a "hidden" or "covert" (refer page 15 of this thesis) nature of development, allows the possibility of access to new learning and practice to adjacent CoPs and the organisation as whole. The weakness of the learning organisation model in its ability to clearly articulate the knowledge it seeks to pursue (refer page 16 of this thesis) is ameliorated when the CoP model elements of group driven practice development are included. The argument this aspect of figure 4.1 illustrates is that structured freedom allows those engaged in practice to identify what learning is necessary and pursue it within a context of clear

expectations and goals on the part of the organisation. The drive to identify needed learning should not be the purview of organisational leadership only, but is to be found in the relationship between clear organisational expectation and needs identified on the ground by CoPs.

In the findings of this study, this structured freedom appears dysfunctional. Participants' views on the goals of the organisation were that they were at times unclear. The lack of clarity was cited not in the ultimate goal of graduating students, but in the means and underlying philosophies of education required to meet that goal. The dissonance between L2's expectation that teachers would feel a great degree of freedom in their practice L1's views that his prompting was what drove collaboration, and the groups' varying views on the lack of clarity in expectation and goal would indicate that freedom is not structured in the way the model above calls for. The teaching team represented by groups 2 and 3 would seem more constrained by the structure of their course than would the team represented in group 1. However, members of both groups expressed, to varying degrees, frustration with or at least recognition of the fact that expectations of them as professionals and of their day to day practices were not clear. Nor were the levels of ability to make decisions clearly delineated for them by the ITU.

The findings show two teams that exhibit levels of decision making power and shared expectations within that were structured by course structure and work practices that could indicate the potential to create functioning CoPs. However, these were developed and exercised by the teams, almost in isolation to the ITU. The lack of clear roles in conceptual leadership and the perceived lack of willingness and enthusiasm for the ITU

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to access learning and share it across the organisation means that the structured freedom the model calls for is not present in a manner that would allow organisational learning to formally occur.

4.8.3 Flow

The term flow in the model refers to two areas of movement. Firstly; communication within and between CoPs and between these and the organisation. Secondly; the movement of ideas and practices across boundaries between CoPs and the organisation. The need for clear and unobstructed communication of expectations, goals and process is an element present in both CoP and learning organisation literature (refer chapter 2). Implicit in both bodies of work is the need for avenues where ideas and developed practices can be shared, evaluated and adapted across boundaries (refer chapter 2). Communication may be impeded by multiple obstacles. Feelings of disenfranchisement by members of CoPs and perceptions of organisational apathy or malice by members may constrain communications to the interiors of these groups (refer chapter 2). Equally, a lack of clarity in role, professional expectation, values and goals carries the potential to confuse both individuals, CoPs as units and organisational leadership as to what should be communicated and by what means.

In the findings of this study there was substantial evidence that on an individual level, members of the working groups shared ideas within the groups and were comfortable with both the avenues of communication open to them and their expectations that their

ideas would be received in a professionally collegial manner (refer sections 4.2.2-3). Evidence from the two leaders indicated that this was expected and both leaders indicated that they thought this happened at a productive level. In terms of communication facilitating organisational learning, there was little evidence that this occurred and was productive. Several participants in the working groups described feelings of apathy on the part of the organisation. Additionally, there was a perceived lack of ability; opportunity and purpose in the sharing of ideas and communicating of values between CoPs both within the department the sample was drawn from and other departments of the ITU (refer sections 4.2.3-4.3.3).

In the absence of a perceived organisational desire that teachers communicate ideas and information across organisational boundaries and the perceived lack of opportunities to do so, development of work practices and the production of knowledge was characterised by participants as staying within their working teams (refer sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.3 of this chapter). For the integration and adaptation required for a learning organisation to function (refer chapter 2, section 2.3.1) to occur, this practice and knowledge is fundamental. The evidence present in the findings that would indicate this sharing is scant, confined to one professional development event (refer page 145 of this thesis), informal conversations had in a smoking area (refer page 141-2) and a meeting in which participant G3-3 unsuccessfully attempted to share work with another department (refer pages 143-4 of this thesis). The data held no other examples of practice being communicated across organisational boundaries.

Flow also refers to the means whereby goals, values, and identities can be collaboratively developed across boundaries. Individuals within CoPs may find opportunities to develop these within their working groups. Organisational expectation may be present in documents or edicts. However, the collaboratively held visions of goals, values and identities called for in both models of CoPs and learning organisations (refer chapter 2) occurs in the interplay between individual, group, and organisational processes. If shared values and identities are to lead to collaborative pursuit of shared goals, the flow of communications as to the nature and meaning of these must cross boundaries and occur in an environment where ideas are valued and negotiation is possible (refer chapter 2).

4.8.4 Alignment

In figure 4.1 alignment lies at the heart of a model in which a structured freedom in conceptual leadership and a clear flow of communication and ideas leads to an organisation comprised of functional CoPs that are facilitated to share their learning and where that learning is valued and utilised where appropriate by the organisation across internal boundaries. Alignment is the fulcrum on which the balance between individual and group learning and organisational capacity to facilitate and access that learning is struck.

In the findings there was little evidence that goals were aligned, nor were the processes and expectations that would allow this cited as present to any significant extent. Within

the working groups, discrete goals in terms of delivering courses seemed to be shared (refer section 4.2.1). There was evidence that professionalism and collegiality were values that were shared and openly discussed (refer sections 4.2-3). That alignment, or the means to develop it, existed between working groups, or between groups and the larger ITU was noted as not present. The references in the previous section to incidents of sharing across boundaries show minimal opportunity for discussion of an organisationally held set of values, goals and identities.

Opportunities for alignment to be explicitly discussed made by the ITU would require support in terms of the ITU's expectations and in the processes by which alignment of shared values, goals and identities can be arrived at. Discussion in chapter 2 pointed to the "confusion" felt by members of a staff given time but no guidance to create new structures for learning and sharing learning (Thessin & Starr, 2011: 49). This is one area where the forces of structured freedom and flow in the model above join to create the capacity for alignment. Clear communication of need and expectation on the part of the ITU combined with a structured and clearly bounded allowance for freedom in decision making would have to be supported by a facilitative process that helped teachers and leaders comprehend the project at hand and potential means for pursuing it.

4.9 Summary

The model in figure 4.1 brings together elements of both models of CoPs and learning organisations in a manner that establishes intimate relationships between the processes

of the organisation and those of its internal CoPs. It also represents an argument that neither model alone is sufficient to achieve organisational learning that genuinely values and supports those responsible for creating the learning. The contributions of CoPs are limited by the boundaries around them. The literature contains models whereby groups of CoPs may complement and communicate with one another (Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Saint-Onge & Wallace, 2003;Barton & Tusting, 2005), but there is little in CoP literature explicitly discussing the use of group learning by the larger organisation in a formal manner.

Models of learning organisations discuss the complexity that lies in the relationship between individual and organisational learning (refer section 2.3). What the models seem to lack is a balanced approach to facilitating and accessing individual learning. Emphasis is placed more firmly on individual learning (Senge, 1990) than on that learning which occurs in groups pursuing a shared task.

Approaching the development of organisational learning which balances the needs and processes of the organisation with those of the groups within creating new learning and practice requires a model which combines the substantial bodies of work discussing the two sides of the equation. The model presented above and the application of a combined framework to the research site is an attempt to show how this balance might be pursued.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Purpose and Structure of Chapter

The purpose of this Chapter is to present a summary of the study, the findings and its significance and limitations. The Chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and reflections. Section 5.2 provides a brief overview of the study. Section 5.3 presents a review and summary of finding organised by research questions. Sections 5.4 and 5.5 present the significance and limitation of the study respectively. Reflections on what I think I have learnt from this project conclude the Chapter in section 5.6.

5.2   Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study as discussed in Chapter 1 was to discover and analyse the perceived presence or absence of CoPs and a learning organisation by teaching groups at the Industrial Training Unit where the study was performed. A full discussion of the context of this study is found in Chapter 1. These perceptions form a basis around which recommendations in this Chapter can be formulated for the potential combined construction of these two models within the ITU.

Four research questions were devised to achieve this; they are listed in Chapters 1 and 3 and are used to organise a summary of findings below. The rationale behind this study stemmed from an interest in organisational change that recognised the discrete

operations and contributions of working groups within an organisation. In order to make the study possible in terms of both time scale and access the scope was limited to teachers, a representative of middle management and of senior management. Focus was placed on teachers' perceptions as individuals and as members of working groups. Managers were asked to discuss their perceptions of how the teachers view their place as members of working groups, within the larger organisation and their relationships to power and influence structures within the ITU.

To approach institutional improvement through the intentional construction of collaborative, communication and decision making structures that benefit from learning and practice developed by working groups, a fundamental premise within this study is that an understanding of the lie of the land must be gained. The rationale is that a deeper comprehension of the collaborative dynamics, relationships, values, and orientation toward leadership allows change to be conceived and implemented in manner which leverages strengths; supports new practice where needed and ameliorates suspicion through the alignment of goals and values.

Chapter 2 presents the broad span of literature surrounding the two frameworks of the CoP and the learning organisation. A synthesis of this literature formed a framework through which an interrogation of data was performed. This was an interpretive study of data representing the perceptions of participants that emerged to encompass their feelings as members of working groups, members of a larger organisation, values they held as professionals and their relationships to structures of power and influence surrounding them. Chapter 4 presents these findings and they are reviewed in the following section.

5.3   Review of Findings

5.3.1   What elements of models of Communities of Practice are perceived as present / absent by the participants?

Findings in answer to this question were presented as emerging themes connected to the literature. The shared practice and domain of knowledge that form the core around which CoPs are able to form (Mittendorf et al., 2006:300) emerged as present within the working groups, bounded strongly by the nature of the courses participants were involved with and the limitations imposed by the departmental and organisational structures around them. A shared practice was evidenced through statements describing members of the working groups in regular discussion of both specific teaching issues and questions of approach to course (refer section 4.2.1). The nature of this shared practice was different enough between the two courses represented that its place as an element of a CoP in each group varied. One group described a curricular environment that was substantially more structured than the other. The effect on shared practice here was discussed in terms of scope of freedom to make pedagogical choices, which in turn affects the tenor and type of sharing of practice. An additional finding was that the active sharing of practice varied significantly between members of the groups, this is addressed further in discussion of participation and collaboration below.

That the groups operated within a discrete domain of knowledge was additionally evident (refer section 4.2.1). This domain was bounded for each by the content and curriculum of the course taught and the expectations within the groups as how the course was to be delivered. The shared values and goals as discussed in section 4.2.4

and 4.3.1, affect this domain of knowledge in that they inform to an extent the character of the knowledge required to deliver courses as a group.

Issues of collaboration, participation and membership were discussed in section 4.2.2. Within the groups there was significant evidence of collaboration evidenced through statement of frequency and character of interaction specifically targeted to teaching practice and course development (refer section 4.2.2). Again however this varied amongst participants and the main interpretation of this was based around self-selection (Bate & Robert 2002: 653) where individual members pursued collaboration through personal choice and in pursuit of specific interests. There was evidence that some members felt more comfortable with higher levels of isolation and independence than others (refer section 4.4.1). All participants show evidence of identifying themselves as members of their working group and participating in group practice and development to varying degrees.

Evidence of shared identity and values within the groups was more uneven. Members did identify themselves as such, and showed signs that a professional identity aligned with other members of their groups was present, however this presence was uneven and highly dependent on their perceptions of need for engagement and participation (refer section 4.2.4). Shared values emerged as centred mainly on two elements, the shared practice and its pursuit and the groups' relationships to the ITU at large. Discussed below, feelings that an apathetic and arbitrary power structure beyond them informed their values as regards membership within the ITU as a whole and the need to protect what they viewed as their own practice.

5.3.2 What elements of models of learning organisations are perceived as present /absent by the participants?

Findings for the second question emerged largely around issues of organisational values, vision and goals and facilitation. Evidence integration of knowledge and organisational adaptation as a result of integration was sought but was not found.

Evidence of aligned and shared values at an organisational level indicated that there were few and those that were expressed were dysfunctional. A major theme in the discussions was the value of education. Participants acknowledged that the ITU saw itself as providing education but there was dissonance in the definition, expectations and pursuit of education (refer section 4.3.1). Individual perceptions varied slightly, but there was significant agreement that the ITU has a clear goal of graduating students able to perform as needed by the parent company. Values and goals that addressed how this was to be accomplished and the definitions of underlying assumptions were viewed as extremely unclear and inconsistent by participants. The lack of clarity emerged a source of frustration for participants. For some this frustration emerged as anger and a desire to pursue solutions, for others the evidence indicates that they felt frustration but were resigned to the context being unchangeable. For all, there were diminished feelings of agency in terms of their ability to build aligned goals and values at an organisation wide level as compared to their powers to do this within their groups.

Evidence of the integration of, and adaptation to, internal learning by the ITU that is central to the construction of a learning organisation (Tomlinson, 2004; Blackman & Henderson, 2005: 185; 42) (refer section 2.5.1) is not found in the data. The

interpretation of the data concludes that reasons for this include a perceived disinterest in the learning of working groups and severely unclear lines of communication that disallow the engagement between departments that would allow processes for these to be constructed. The main theme here merged as perceptions that there was little attention paid to the department the participants' worked in and when there was, it manifested as unclear and contradictory messages (refer section 4.3.2).

5.3.3 Where do participants place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

Question 3 sought to discover how participants viewed the internal structures of power and influence within and without their working groups. Within the working groups there was evidence that participants had relevant but limited decision making power and independence in teaching practice (refer section 4.4.1). Participants expressed a willingness, and to varying degree, desire, to have their practice observed and discussed by peers and middle managers. The implication was that they saw this as useful and not threatening. Comfort levels in their trust and ability to share ideas and practices were high, indicating that power within the groups was not coercive or authoritative. Statements indicating recognition of peers' skills and competence indicated that participants were willing to exercise, and recognise, power in decision making amongst themselves as regarded their teaching practices. This echoes Andrews and Crowther's (2002) notion of "parallel leadership" (p. 155) where alignment of pedagogical practice to good practice identified collaboratively with leadership occurs. However, the middle manager represents the highest level of management that group members engage with in exploring practice.

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The perceptions evidenced surrounding participants' placement in relationship to leadership and power outside of their working groups emerged in themes of apathy, distrust and feelings of disengagement. Participants' noted their feelings that malice or authoritative dictates were not part of their perceptions (refer section 4.4.2). Rather, there was a sense that above the middle-manager level there was apathy and disengagement on the part of ITU leadership. This apathy was expressed as tempered by uneven application of learning standards and pass rates and unclear communication both in goal and expectation. This combination was seen to engender feelings of mistrust of leadership, not of motive, but of consistency in its approach to participants as employees and as teachers.

5.3.4 Where would senior and middle managers believe staff members would place themselves in a structure of power and influence within and without the working team they are members of?

Question 4 sought the views of two leaders regarding how they envisioned the perceptions of working group members in answer to question three. In regards to power and leadership within the groups (refer sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.3) both leaders suggested that group members had expansive powers to make decisions regarding the internal practices of the groups. The middle manager acknowledged the limitations placed on this by the curricular structures of the courses. Additionally he acknowledged a role in his ability to prompt collaborative interaction and dynamics that would result in participants' exercising of this power.

The senior leader was emphatic that independence in teaching practice was of paramount importance to his vision and that the groups understood and felt this. Evidence of how he perceived group members as working collaboratively to make decisions and define their practice indicated that he perceived both the loss of leadership attention and focussed goal that came with the conclusion of a change process and the inherent competition he feels present in teaching profession posed limitations on collaboration. His perceptions and those evidenced by group members were aligned as to the former but not on the latter.

In sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.4 the relationship to the larger organisation was discussed. Both leaders acknowledged that political dynamics present in the parent company's relationship to the ITU had potential to affect group members' feelings of trust and clarity in the organisational leadership. That group members understood that this was unavoidable was a sentiment they ascribed to participants. The senior leader acknowledged that understanding the reasons for events may not ameliorate the negative feelings they engender.

A tension emerged between leaders' perceptions of goal alignment and that expressed by group members. Both leaders evidenced belief that ultimate goals were clear and understood by all, and they expressed faith in the vehicles with which these goals were articulated; performance standards, pass rates, and graduation requirements. The senior leader acknowledged not that there was a lack of clarity in goal causing frustration, but drew attention to the lack of focussed and discrete goals that were present during the

previous change process as being a source for feelings of unclear direction and unaligned goals within the working groups.

5.3.5   Implications for Change

In planning for and implementing a change process, the literature is clear on the importance of an understanding of context (Dimmock & Walker, 2004; Hayes et al., 2004; Heaney, 2004; Schmoker, 2004; Chapman & Harris, 2004). Awareness of the needs and variation of internal dynamics of an individual context are necessary elements institutions wishing to implement change must arm itself with (Heaney, 2004). The intentional construction of structures reliant on collaboration, participation and professional investment such as the CoP and the learning organisation requires an understanding of the placement of decision making power, the nature of extant collaborative dynamics and the manner in which existing channels of communication allow facilitate or block collaboration.

The participants of this study are shown to manifest collaborative practices. Within the groups there is a level of value and goal alignment, albeit limited. Leadership exhibited an understanding of the issues and boundaries that teachers may feel and articulated reason for these. Within the ITU, the study's findings support a view that there is energy and expertise that would allow the pursuit of more highly developed structures of group learning, practice development and cross-institutional collaboration.

The framework used in this study to examine perceptions revealed detailed and substantive data on the beliefs of teachers and their orientation to both their working groups and the larger organisation. As discussed in section 2.4.1 attempts on the part of leadership to build change without knowledge of these endangers the project. This study has shown that a framework which accounts for both the internal dynamics of working groups and the need for clarity and communication at the organisational level reveals perceptions targeted to the elements that must be understood. Further development of the framework and its application to all areas of the ITU would unearth the narratives required to understand, plan for change, or enhance existing structures of group and organisational learning. Developing maps for change is difficult. Leadership wishing to map change need the guidance that an understanding of context provides.

5.4   Limitations of the Study

The study has specific limitations. It is not designed to reveal data and conclusions that are transferable. The conclusions of this study are specific to the ITU in question. Other environments may benefit from the application of the framework, however the structure of the exercises and focusing of discussions could vary as targeted data would vary from one context to another. For example, the recent change in curriculum and programme structure was shown to have an effect on the expectations of participants. In an environment where no such project had taken place, these effects would not be evident, or if so, the history and reasons behind them would be different.

Another limitation of the study lies in its scope. In order to fully draw the narrative of the organisation that would reveal all the elements needed to map change of the kind discussed here, all areas of the ITU would need to be represented in the sample.

Access presents a final limitation. The participants were current and former colleagues. All approached agreed to participate in the study; some explicitly cited their relationship with me as a reason for agreeing. Leadership was clear in their restrictions (refer Chapter 1) in terms of identifying participants and the institution. An outside researcher would likely have experienced significant difficulty in gaining access. The candour and willingness shown to discuss sensitive issues may also have been diminished.

5.5   The Significance of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The significance of this study and its contribution to knowledge lies in the combined framework of the two bodies of literature and the model shown in figure 4.1. Section 4.8.1 in the previous chapter discusses this significance. This study argues for and demonstrates an approach to diagnosing organisational function and learning that balance the organisation as a whole with the internal groups of individuals creating learning. As discussed above, searching for CoPs alone or looking to define the requirements of the organisation to access internal learning alone does not address the whole landscape. The danger of focusing on one side over another is that vital elements

that either require development or are able to facilitate the project are missed or misrepresented through the lens of an unbalanced agenda.

The findings of this study raise a number of additional questions and avenues of research. To construct a fully informed change map for the ITU, all departments and levels of the organisation would need to be consulted. Statements for discussion during the q-sort focus group exercises may require altering to better target the required topics. For example the technical programme was undergoing the change in curricula and delivery that the foundation programme had completed at the time of this research. A basic programme had been created to serve incoming students not able to pass entrance requirements. These parts of the organisation perform discrete functions and were undergoing fundamental curricular change and initial development respectively.

An additional question that would be interesting to pursue would be to more discretely target specific characteristics teachers expect to find in a satisfactorily communicative leadership. This could provide valuable evidence for the construction of a functionally collaborative environment. Findings evidenced valuable data on how teachers perceived the communications around them. A separate question targeted specifically at the nature of communication they would desire would now be useful to ask.

Finally, the application of the framework to other contexts such as a government run school environment or corporate-owned institution with a substantively different training remit would provide a document to which the efficacy of the approach as applied in this study could be compared. The potential insight gained in examining the

data from another environment could illuminate underlying causes for some of the dynamics discussed in this study.

5.6   Reflections

Despite the advantages of access and contextual understanding; my position as an insider researcher was of great concern to me when I began this process. Foremost among these concerns was if participants would speak candidly with one another in my presence. Having moved from teaching into a position that was centred on handling data (see Chapter 1) I was no longer a part of one the working groups. This had the advantage of allowing me to look with fresh eyes at the work they were doing, but I feared that they would view me as no longer 'one of them' and as such unable to understand their concerns. As the focus group sessions progressed it became evident that my fears were unfounded and the potentially sensitive topics were discussed in detail without need for intervention on my part.

Interrogating the data was also a source of concern, the danger of subjectivity inherent in an interpretive style caused me to continually ask myself 'am I telling *their* stories?'. As I began the process of reducing the data and comparing the transcripts of different participant groups I posed competing and contrary interpretations to those that were emerging. The process was fascinating and allowed me to gain a deeper insight that illustrated complexity rather than sets of characteristics. A hidden strength of being an insider researcher was that my efforts to counteract its potential disadvantage created a

process that was interesting to engage with and ultimately resulted in valuable interpretations.

Having worked with and around these teachers and leaders I had respect for their professionalism and willingness to engage with one another before beginning this research. Through learning more about how they viewed the environment around them and the challenges they saw from within and without, my respect for them has grown. Their willingness to sit and discuss potentially damaging topics with and around me was a privilege. Their candour and open questioning of the processes they work with made completing this study possible.

Finally, in the time between the research being conducted and the production of this thesis I have moved country and changed profession. Still in education, my role is now centrally concerned with the quality and practices of staff in a residential school for children with complex additional support needs. This study, and my experience of it, has been of immense value to me. I believe the respect and admiration I have for the staff I work with at present in working with them to reflect upon and improve their work stems in part from my experience in pursuing this thesis.

5.7   Conclusion

The results of this study evidence the presence, to varying extents, of several fundamental aspects of the two frameworks. That these were evidenced through a process informed by the marriage of the two frameworks aids the process of defining need for designing change. The absent or minimally present elements need not be constructed at the expense of currently functioning productive dynamics. Applying the framework to the rest of the ITU would build a narrative that encompassed all staff groups and levels of leadership. This narrative would provide invaluable insight into how to begin the process of constructing communities of practice that resided within and nourished a learning organisation.

The shared experience of discussing personal perceptions in a manner which required some negotiation as to the meaning of those perceptions in and of itself begins the process of aligning values and beliefs. The study as experienced by participants was cited as being valuable, particularly to the working groups. Several examples of new collaborations and searching for alignment and clarity with the organisation were related to me and were characterised as being a result of participants' participation in this study.

Through the combined use of the two frameworks to elicit and interpret perceptions, this study has shown that diagnosing for organisational change can target varying levels of organisational dynamic at once. The findings of this study show an educational

institute that has some capacity to become one that evaluates and refines its internal learning for global benefit. Dynamics of productive collaborative processes have been highlighted that could be nurtured for the growth of intentional CoPs. Organisational processes that both hinder organisational learning and contain potential for the development of learning have emerged. In line with the model presented in figure 4.1, the study has shown areas of the ITU that could be developed to more fully make productive use of good practices occurring within working groups and aid the transmission of these practices and their underlying dynamics to the rest of the organisation.

The study has successfully shown that an applied framework combining the two underlying models is capable of unearthing useful information as to the dynamics of shared learning and alignment of values and goals within an organisation. Whilst the results and discussions here are centred on the case study site in question, as discussed above the models and instruments contained in this thesis are useful tools in a variety of organisational contexts and represent a new way of approaching organisational diagnosis and examination.

Appendix A: Organisational Structure of ITU

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                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                          │ National Oil Company │
                          │         CEO          │
                          └──────────────────────┘
                                     │
                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                          │  Board of Trustees of│
                          │         ITU          │
                          └──────────────────────┘
                                     │
    ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
    │   HSE Unit   │──────│     ITU Manager      │──────│     Advisor Unit     │
    └──────────────┘      └──────────────────────┘      │ (Senior Academic     │
                                     │                   │      Advisor)        │
                                     │                   └──────────────────────┘
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Academic Studies	Technical Studies	Student Affairs	Admin. & Finance	Shared Services
English Unit	Process Operations	Counselling Unit	HR Unit	Curriculum & Testing
Math & Sciences Unit	Engineering	Records	Finance Unit	Testing Centre
	Arabic Unit	Academic Studies		IT Unit

Appendix B: Sample Population

(all Male)

Participant ID	Educational Level	Years in Field (prior to study)	Time in ITU prior to study (months)
G1-1	MA	22	22
G1-2	MA	9	37
G1-3	MA	18	22
G1-4	MA	11	4
G2-1	MA	20	21
G2-2	MA	7	22
G2-3	MA	23	9
G2-4	MA	14	22
G2-5	MA	12	22
G3-1	MA	15	9
G3-2	MA	11	8
G3-3	MA	13	37
G3-4	MA	10	18
G3-5	MA	24	22
L1	MA	16	37
L2	MA	26	40

Appendix C: Sample Participant Permission Letter (instructor version)

Dear Colleague,   (Instructor Form)

The research I have asked you to participate in will ask you to discuss your attitudes and feelings about your work. This includes discussion of your feelings about the institution and your feelings about the nature of your work with your colleagues. The purpose of this research is to diagnose the working teams you are members of and the institute as Communities of Practice and as part of a Learning Organization. Briefly, a Community of Practice is a model for thinking about and discussing a group of people who work together on a shared task (example; the reading or writing teams). The Learning Organization is a model for discussing and thinking about how an organization learns from the work of its members and how that learning is used. I will be discuss these two ideas further with you prior to the discussion sessions.

You will be asked to participate in two focus group exercises. The first will be a guided discussion with your colleagues of your attitudes and feelings about your work as it is. This will be followed by a session in which you are asked to discuss your work as you wish it would be, or, the ideal. You may be asked to participate in individual interviews after the group sessions in which I may ask you to clarify statements you made both to check my own understanding and to give you an opportunity to elaborate. It is important that you understand that part of this research will involve you discussing with your colleagues feelings and attitudes and that some disagreement is possible.

The focus groups will take place in a closed room. They will also be recorded. In the final reporting of the research you will be referred to as working in "teaching team a" or "b" and you will not be named. You will be referred to as "participant #". The institute will not be named but referred to as a technical training institute owned and operated by the national oil company.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. The institute is not involved and will not be given raw data in any form, although the final thesis may be provided to the senior academic advisor. This is private research I am performing in pursuit of a Doctorate of Education Degree with the University of Leicester in the UK. If you agree to participate you may choose to stop participating at any point in the process. In this event you may ask that any previous statements made in focus groups or interview be stricken from my records.

Yours Faithfully

Chris Mangham

I agree to participate in the above described project.   Name:

                                                                          Signature:

                                                                        Date:

Appendix D: Q-sort Placement Sheet

Instructions:

With your group, discuss the statements on the cards.

Place the cards on the sheet in a space agreed to by the group.

You may place the 15 cards anywhere on grid.

More true of my experience

(empty placement grid)

Less true of my experience

Appendix E: Q-sort placements

Appendix E1

Q-Sort Placement   Group: 1   Session: 1 "as is'

	More true of my experience
4	I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
3	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive
2	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work Leadership helps me do my job better I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders
1	I am asked to share my ideas about my work I am motivated by working with other teachers I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish
mid	
1	I am asked to share my ideas about my work I am given independence in my teaching practice My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same
2	I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work
3	
4	
	Less true of my experience

Placed outside of Grid:

I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me (Above grid See transcript)

Appendix E2

Q-sort Placement   Group: 2   Session: 1 "as is'

	More true of my experience
4	I am motivated by working with other teachers
3	I get ideas about my work from my colleagues
	I feel my ideas and work are values by the people around me
2	I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice
	I am asked to share my ideas about my work
1	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work
mid	Leadership helps me do my job better (forced addition)
1	Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive
2	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments
	I am given independence in my teaching practice
3	I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work
	My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same
4	I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish
	The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
	Less true of my experience

Placed outside of Grid:

I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders (see transcript)

Appendix E3

Q-sort Placement   Group: 3   Session: 1 "as is'

	More true of my experience
4	I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me I get ideas about my work from my colleagues I am given independence in my teaching practice
3	I am motivated by working with other teachers
2	I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders
1	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive
mid	
1	
2	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments I am asked to share my ideas about my work
3	My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same I get ideas about my work from my colleagues The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
4	Leadership helps me do my job better (forced addition) I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish
	Less true of my experience

Appendix E4

Q-sort Placement   Group: 1   Session: 2 "ideal'

	More true of my experience
4	Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive Leadership helps me do my job better
3	I am motivated by working with other teachers I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice
2	I am asked to share my ideas about my work I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me
1	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments I am given independence in my teaching practice My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work
mid	
1	I get ideas about my work from my colleagues I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
2	I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish
3	
4	
	Less true of my experience

Appendix E5

Q-sort Placement   Group: 2   Session: 2 "ideal'

	More true of my experience
4	I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish (Forced Addition)
	I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders
	Leadership helps me do my job better
3	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work
	I get ideas about my work from my colleagues
	I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work (forced addition)
	I am motivated by working with other teachers
2	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments
	I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice
	The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
1	I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me (forced addition)
	Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive
	I am asked to share my ideas about my work
	My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same
	I am given independence in my teaching practice
mid	
1	
2	
3	
4	
	Less true of my experience

Appendix E6

Q-sort Placement   Group: 3   Session: 2 "ideal'

	More true of my experience
4	I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive Forced Additions: I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same Leadership helps me do my job better I am asked to share my ideas about my work The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
3	I get ideas about my work from my colleagues I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work
2	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments
1	
mid	I am given independence in my teaching practice I am motivated by working with other teachers
1	
2	
3	
4	
	Less true of my experience

Appendix E7

Q-sort Placement   Leadership 1

	More true of my experience
4	I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do
3	I am motivated by working with other teachers I get ideas about my work from my colleagues
2	I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me I am given independence in my teaching practice
1	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work I am asked to share my ideas about my work Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments Leadership helps me do my job better (place to side of line and described as moveable but above midpoint)
mid	
1	
2	
3	
4	I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work
	Less true of my experience

Placed outside of grid: (see Transcript)

I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice

My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same

Appendix E8

Q-sort Placement   Leadership 2

	More true of my experience
4	The goals of the school are clear and part of what I am asked to do My goals and the Institute's goals for the students are the same
3	I am given independence in my teaching practice I am motivated by working with other teachers
2	Leadership helps me do my job better I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice (forced addition)
1	I am asked to share my ideas about my work I get ideas about my work from my colleagues Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive
mid	I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me (forced addition)
1	
2	I ask others in my department for their ideas about our work
3	
4	I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments I regularly speak to people from other departments/courses about my work
	Less true of my experience

1   **Focus Group One. Session One: 'As Is'Q-sort and Discussion**

2   **September 19, 2008**

3

4   **Present:**

5   **Moderator (Mod)**

6   **G1-1 (Group 1 – Participant 1)**

7   **G1-2**

8   **G1-3**

9   **G1-4**

10

11   G1-1

12   you want me to read them for example one at a time one A one B?

13   Mod

14   yes.

15   G1-1

16   serialized right?

17   One - sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive.

18   G1-2

19   could you repeat that?

20   G1-1

21   sure. Sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive.

22   G1-2

23   I would say we do that in (course name). I don't know about the other disciplines. But I would

24   say we do that in (course name) and it has been productive.

25   G1-3

26   yes in our team it happens...

27   G1-4

28   yes as G1-2 was implying I think it's an Inter-team thing. Definitely catch up on what you know

29   other members of the team are doing and how their classes are going. Especially early in the

30   term like right now. And it helps, especially you know to get some feedback on individuals.

31   G1-1:

32   actually you know this happens with the reading team especially with those who teach the same

33   level. They're some sort of coordination. It does happen but I don't know about writing. It

34   happens you know and it happens because it can help all the instructional staff on the reading

35   team to produce and coordinate better work. Let's see the second one. 1b.

36   Participant G1-2

37   sorry do we need to place this?

38   G1-1:

39   oh yes. Oh yes we need to place these one by one?

40   Mod

41   yes but you can move them later if you decide you want to put them in a new place.

42   G1-1

43   but here we are in conflict, how can we agree where to place the card?

44   Mod

45   well see if you can find a compromise in the strength on the page.

46   G1-1

47   so where do you propose it goes?

48   here at the top?

49   G1-2:

50   nono, that's to be negotiated.

51   G1-1:

52   what do you think about it?

53   G1-4:

54   Uh, Yeah but maybe not right at the top may be the second line.

55   G1-3

56   second or third...

57   G1-2

58   Yeahyeah.

59   G1-4

60   I think we're generally in the right place.

61   G1-3

62   would it go here or here?

63   G1-1

64   number four let's say?

65   G1-2

66   yeah that's fine. He did say we could move them later if we wanted to.

67   G1-1

68   okay, one b. I regularly speak to people from other departments or courses about my work.
69   (Repeated)

70   G1-3

71   okay, this is an individual question.

72   G1-1

73   what is meant by people here?

74   Mod

75   Ah. You should decide as a group what it means by other people. What do you think it means?

76   G1-4

77   my first reaction is colleagues but I see your point. Fellow teachers, I mean by colleagues.

78   G1-3

79   so fellow teachers in the same organization or in the same team.

80   Mod

81   it does say different departments.

82   G1-1

83   it's not specific here.

84   G1-3

85   yeah.

86   G1-2

87   well, if you're talking about technical then I would say no. But I don't consider another skill area

88   (within foundation) another department necessarily. So if you want to interpret this as talking to

89   technical colleagues, certainly not.

90   G1-1

91   no I'm talking about foundation. He did not say other instructors he said other people.

92   Mod

93   but what G1-2 is saying is that for technical instructors for him the answer is no what would

94   that be for you?

95   G1-3

96   you mean the organization in general.

97   Mod

98   okay so what would that be for you.

99   G1-3

100   this means actually that is a lack of communication in the organization in general.

101   G1-1

102   Yeah yeahyeah exactly.

103   G1-3

104   within the whole organization I mean the technical teams and the foundation teams they don't

105   talk.

106   Mod

107   OK So you do feel that…

108   G1-3

109   yes there's a problem.

110   G1-3

111   this rarely happens. This is the poorest area of the organization.

112   G1-1

113   if it is its very poor. Okay shall we place it here yes. Now let's move on. One C- I regularly

114   have casual conversations with people from other departments.

1   **Focus Group One Session Two: 'Ideal'Q-sort and discussion**

2   **October 7, 2008**

3

4   **Present:**

5   **Moderator (Mod)**

6   **G1-1**

7   **G1-2**

8   **G1-3**

9   **G1-4**

10

11   G1-4

12   sharing ideasabout our work happens often and is productive.

13   Mod

14   so in your ideal work environment how true would that be?

15   G1-2

16   for me very true.

17   G1-3

18   yes it is true.

19   G1-1

20   oh yes very true. We often exchange ideas about what we are going to do. Especially when you

21   are a partner with somebody doing the same level.

22   Mod

23   and that's what you would like to have happen.

24   G1-1

25   Yeah this is very very practical.

26   G1-3

27   let's put it number one. At the top.

28   G1-4

29   I feel my ideas and work are valued by the people around me.

30   G1-2

31   yes.

32   G1-1

33   yes we do.

34   Mod

35   so in your ideal work environment you would like that.

36   G1-1

37   you see, when you work hard and you see some of your colleagues or someone from higher up

38   compliminting you on your efforts it brings up your morale.

39   Mod

40   would you all agree with that?

41   G1-4

42   I am motivated by working with other teachers towards a goal.

43   Mod

44   (Long pause) is this a harder one?

45   G1-1

46   No it's a bit general. Do you mean teachers of other subjects.

47   Mod

48   perhaps. But you're working towards a single goal.

49   G1-3

50   so my team?

51   Mod

52   most likely. Basically are you happier knowing what you need to do and working alone, or

53   working with other people to get that done.

54   G1-1

55   now I understand. I feel happier when I am working with a team towards achieving a certain set

56   of objectives or goals.

57   G1-4

58   but there is a paradox here I think as teachers we are isolated by the fact that we are in a

59   classroom situation and we have specific students with specific needs. Therefore it is an ideal to

60   chat and catch up with what other teachers are doing but essentially it's very much down to the

61   individual teacher.

62   G1-1

63   I appreciate what you are saying (G1-4) but you're talking about the means of delivery. But I

64   don't think he means that. In the classroom you might have differences among students. Here

65   for example if we are all working for the same team, we set standards you see. We are for

66   example using the same novel or following the same plan. But each teacher applies his own

67   method.

68   Mod

69   what is the paradox?

70   G1-4

71   well the paradox is very much that the teacher in his job, the nature of this profession is

72   isolated. In the sense that we are on our own mostly in the classroom and we are dealing with a

73   class we are dealing with individuals. We have to look at those individuals and deal with them

74   on our own. I can't run to my team leader every five minutes and say this happened to ban this

75   happened here. It's kind of a reflection on my teaching. Although theoretically it's nice to share

76   one sometimes feels that one's colleagues has enough on their plate. We have enough to do.

77   You know it's kind of like the pioneer spirit. You have enough to do you get on with it and no

78   news is good news. But within that paradigm of course we share, watercooler stuff, meetings.

79   Just touching base on an informal basis.

80   Mod

81   but does that touching base served to a farm or motivate you at all? Would you be happier

82   just…

83   G1-4

84   No no. You know for example if the averages are very low and I mention it to someone and

85   they say oh yes I'm in the same boat then I feel hey it's not just me. It seems to be a common

86   pattern because of Ramadan or some other reason. And you know this way the team leaders get

87   informal feedback on how things are going.

88   G1-2

89   that's why I say yes and no. Yes we do speak informally about things that are happening and

90   that's good things we can and cannot do and things like that. And also unmotivated to get into

91   the classroom and do the best I can without necessarily thinking of what other people are doing.

92   It is an individual effort as well as a collaborative effort it's both.

93   G1-3

94   I think in the team the feedback we get from each other is quite motivating and very helpful.

95   And it will encourage us to do more in the classroom. It's a good reflection of what's happening

96   with the students and the other members of the team.

97   G1-1

98   this reflects some sort of standardization of an act. For example, if we agreed together that we

99   are going to confiscate any mobile that we see we are working towards a specific goal. If Brian

100   takes it easy and I ate and tough then it's a problem.

101   Mod

102   Ah yes that is important. So that's consistency?

103   G1-1

104   it is consistency.

105   Mod

106 if your colleagues are inconsistent about pursuing that kind of goal that can be demotivating

107 yes?

108 G1-1

109 it consolidates the spirit of the team. If a certain goal is met consistently.

110 G1-4

111 yes I think it goes high on the page yes.

112 I feel like the institute is consistent and what it wants to accomplish.

113 Mod

114 how important is that kind of consistency?

115 G1-4

116 there has to be an ethos in any establishment we would hope that it's an education ethos. But not

117 everyone is on that wavelength. Without looking at other institutions, one places wavelength

118 might be a quota system we have to get a certain number of students through. Another

119 wavelength would be, are we developing the students the best way we can. Theoretically

120 singing from the same hymn sheet but not with the same instruments.

121 G1-1

122 this is very brought you see. We are only one department.

123 Mod

124 yes but you are affected if the rules or expectations changed dramatically somewhere else in the

125 institute no?

126 G1-4

127   yes, if America gets a cold of the rest of the world sneezes. And maybe this is a microcosm of

128   that. A political decision somewhere will affect us.

129   G1-2

130   what was the question?

131   G1-4

132   Repeat

133   G1-3

134   it is very sensitive.

135   Mod

136   you can't just talk about it in terms of how important that is for you as a teacher.

137   G1-2

138   if the goal is for the students to learn and get an education then that's good. If that goal is not

139   consistent and that is a bad thing. If the pass mark is 66 and now it's 70 that's not consistent it's

140   a bad thing.

141   G1-1

142   it depends on the types of goals you mean.

143   G1-2

144   yes.

145   G1-3

146   the enforcement of certain goals is very important.

147   G1-2

148   absolutely.

149   G1-1

150   Yes

151   Mod

152   and that enforcement should be consistent?

153   G1-3

154   yes it should be. Because now the counsellors have their own strategy and the management has

155   their own strategy and the teachers have their own strategy.

156   G1-4

157   it's a soccer referee mentality. If referees make different calls in different games you see in five

158   or six weeks into the season the newspapers and the teams will start questioning how they are

159   doing their job. And if we apply that analogy to consistency, someone will say yes within the

160   nature of the philosophy or custom where fine. Consistency is important, but one on one

161   sometimes you have to be flexible. Therefore the inconsistencies can start within the

162   classroom. And I know, because I am guilty in that situation. I can't say everybody you must

163   do this and then one person comes in and I say okay.

164   Mod

165   okay where would we put that?

166   G1-1

167   it's important that the institute be consistent and what it wants to accomplish.

168   G1-3

169   but it is subtle. And there are some drawbacks.

170   G1-1

171   it all depends on the objectives which are clarified here.

172   G1-4

173   so let's put it down one line.

174   my goals in the institute's goals for the students are the same- this is very important, but my

175   initial reaction is no, I have a different agenda from the institution.

176   Mod

177   so as a teacher it is not important that they are the same?

178   G1-4

179   it is very important but the institute is involved in more political things than I care to involve

180   myself in. Which goes beyond my brief as an educator.

181   Mod

182   so your sphere is smaller and that's fine?

183   G1-4

184   my brief is lesser than to get myself involved in every single aspect of the school. That's why

185   we have departments.

186   G1-1

187   they should be the same.

188   G1-2

189   but they're not.

190   G1-1

191   simply because we are the tools which are supposed to implement and carry out those goals.

192   G1-3

193   so we should agree with the goals of the management.

194   Mod

195   so they should be the same but your responsibilities and the functions you perform to fulfil the

196   goals can be smaller than the big picture.

197   G1-1

198   yes that's what we've said.

199   G1-4

200   I regularly study things in the fields to develop my practice

201   Mod

202   how important is this to you as a professional?

203   G1-1

204   it is very important.

205   (Everyone says it's important)

206   Mod

207   Okay, now tell me why. Does it keep you motivated? Is it for advancement?

208   G1-1

209   it keeps you updated of innovations in the field and the latest theories. Like Theses and

210   presentations at conferences, it keeps you updated.

211   G1-4

212   or do you do it for a two day junkets to Cairo?

213   G1-3

214   it's important to improve your expertise in the field that you're working in and keep yourself up-

215   to-date. For job security is important.

216   Mod

217   so that I'm clear on it, it's less a matter of motivation than wanting to be up to date and not get

218   passed over or out of date or fired.

219   G1-1

220   but there is a psychological urge in every instructor to improve his performance. You know I

221   have always been a student I've been teaching for 30 years and I have always been researching

222   my job. It's the nature and type of the job and it changes all the time. Especially with

223   globalization of instructors

224   why do I feel I'm more focused this time than last time? (Everyone laughs)

225   G1-3

226   it depends on the issues. I think this is very important.

1   **Leadership Q-sort Activity**

2   **October 20, 2008**

3

4   **L2: Sr. Academic Advisor**

5   L2:

6   can I organize them first? Can I categorize them by myself first? Before I put them on

7   the paper?

8   Mod:

9   if you like. So what the teachers will have done is taken isn't talked about their

10   experience here at work. And then place the cards in spaces that they would've agreed

11   on.

12   L2:

13   you're using the word true here whereas what you told me was important.

14   Mod:

15   right, from your point of view what I'm asking you to do is think about how the

16   teachers would've placed these questions. Whether or not they believe these things

17   happen at the ATI and or how important they are to them.

18   L2:

19   right okay how many of these are there?

20   Mod:

21   15

22   L2:

23   (laughs) alright I like to conceptualize the task. Okay, I feel like the institute is

24   consistent in what it wants to accomplish. So to the point here is I need to determine the

25   extent to which the staff feels this is true. I feel my ideas and work are valued by the

26   people around me, around me, not the management. This one is management, the

27   Institute. But this one says the people around me, so does management create an

28   environment in which people can share ideas. And even if management doesn't - you

29   may have the kind of people who like to.

30   sharing ideas about our work happens often and is productive. The problem there is the

31   word often.

32   okay, I get ideas about my work from my assigned leaders. Team leaders, I would hope

33   that our system permits that. Sort of depends on the team, And the team leader. Yes that

34   was harder.

35   I ask others in my department for ideas about our work, I bet that doesn't happen very

36   often.

37   I regularly study things in my field to develop my practice. This is hard because some

38   do and some don't. I can think of some people, (teachers name) is doing this right now.

39   There are a number of people with B A's who are working on their… so it's hard to

40   generalize to the entire staff. I don't like this already (laughs).

41   Mod:

42   okay, well…

43   L2:

44   you're asking me to generalize these, so that means I have to make a determination to

45   the extent to which this is true.

46   Mod:

47   or important to people.Which again requires generalization.

48   L2:

49   yes, but this one here, I regularly study things... Come on, (teachers name) will never

50   study anything, and (teachers name) will not study anything. Now for me to make a

51   determination on is that 50% of the staff, more?Less? That's tough. And in order to

52   determine where this would fit I would have a, I'm going to have a hard time with this

53   one.

54   Mod:

55   okay.

56   L2:

57   some of these are easy, I feel like the institute is consistent... That one's a no-brainer. I

58   mean that one's going to be true, and it's going to be up there very high, because I know

59   how the staff feels about it, that one's easy. This was going to be hard.

60   my goals in the institute schools whose students are the same.My goals. God, I simply

61   don't know the extent to which the staff has bought into the mission. I mean that was

62   the purpose of the project was to change the direction so that the staff had more support,

63   was more in line with the objectives of the students. But the extent to which this has

64   happened I don't know.

65   leadership helps me do my job better. This is no longer I feel, I mean if I just look at

66   your syntax here. I think I want to classify these differently.

67   I regularly speak to people from other departments about my work. (Laughs) No! Not

68   true. Less true. That one's easy.

69   I've already got that one, I know we don't talk to each other! Okay that one was easy,

70   thank you.

71   I'm asked to share my ideas about my work.

72   I regularly have casual conversations with people from other departments. Casual,

73   unless you're talking about the bus. I don't think people even talk to each other on the

74   bus. I don't ride the bus. I'll put that one down here unfortunately.

75   I'm given independence in my teaching practice. That better be true.

76   Mod:

77   (laughs) Why is that?

78   L2:

79   well that was what the whole thing was about, we're not going to make teachers beyond

80   this page in this period. In fact, and I know I'm being recorded, this whole issue of

81   lesson planning that's come to the floor of late, I don't know if the teachers are aware of

82   it yet. But there's this huge battle between (two department heads: one is L1) about

83   having the teachers submit lesson plans. (L1) was just in my office the other day giving

84   you the latest update on it. (other department head) wants all the foundation teachers to

85   submit daily or weekly lesson plans. (L1) been battling it and I finally said to(L1)

86   yesterday okay let's try different tactics for why we don't want to do this. And I'm trying

87   to get (L1) to do it, not me because if I get involved directly then (other deparment

88   head) feels as if I'm interfering. So I said (L1) yesterday, management philosophy, those

89   are the two words you have to use with him. Management philosophy-and he's looking

90   at me really strange like. And I said look (L1) just tell (other department head) that the

91   project was designed with the management philosophy that that we are not interfering

92   with what the teachers are doing in the classroom unless there's a problem. Then you

93   get involved. And I said it's a (teachers name) situation, students were complaining…

94   and you got involved. But otherwise, leave them alone. Let them teach. Now, do they

95   think that or not that's the question. That's the damn question, I know what I want. I'm

96   going to say yes, God, this is the problem though, the basic program instructors would

97   probably say no. And I would hope that the foundation instructors say yes, I would

98   hope so. I would think they would. (L1) is not intrusive at all. Now we are talking about

99   the foundation program and not the technical program.

100 Mod:

101 that's right.

102 L2:

103   I didn't think about, I didn't conceptualize that. I'm going to take a shot at this thing

104 relatively true. So what I'm doing here is, the obvious ones are going and then I'm going

105 to fill this rest of it. The goals of the school are clear and part of what I'm asked to do.

106 the goals…

107 Mod:

108   so for example this one is more concerned with is their consistency in what people are

109   being asked to do whereas this one is asking if there's a clear connection between what

110   people are being asked to do and those goals.

111   L2:

112   okay. I am motivated to working with other teachers toward a goal. You know I'm

113   having a hard time with this because it's a little generalized. You know, when the task is

114   to look at how would teachers have placed these. You may have done this with

115   individual teachers, and then you're going to analyze their responses somehow. And

116   then try to come up with some generalizations about the period.. I assume you chose the

117   teachers at random. I'm not trying to figure out what you're up to here I just...

118   Mod:

119   well, that I can tell you. The focus here is working groups, some working specifically

120   with two teams. So individuals didn't do this groups did it as a conversation.

121   L2:

122   well then in all fairness you should tell me what the two teams are because I'm trying to

123   make judgments based on the entire staff. If I know the two teams then I have a

124   different way of looking at this. But you'd better think about your study here. I'm doing

125   what managers normally do, (laughs) I'm trying to figure it all out, I'm not trying to

126   change your... But it's disconcerting to me to try to generalize this, which is where I was

127   going initially when I know they're huge differences among the staff. Depending on the

128   team and depending on the program.

129   Mod:

130　　rather than me telling you which teams I'm working with, as you place them we can

131　　discuss them and give you a chance to talk about the concerns you might have in

132　　generalizing them. I would rather do that than tell you who I was working with.

133　　L2:

134　　okay. Do I have to fill in the entire page, either as many of these as there are cards?

135　　MOD:

136　　no there are more spaces than there are statements.

137　　L2:

138　　okay I looked at them all now so do I begin to put them on the board or?

139　　MOD:

140　　yes let's begin placing them but I want you to discuss each one as you're putting it on a

141　　sheet.

142　　L2:

143　　what I'm going to his group than here in the middle first. What is the line for?

144　　MOD:

145　　it represents a midpoint between more and less true of the experiences being discussed.

146　　It's simply there to break the two halves, because this is a way of discussing these ideas

147　　with you, the way you use the board is up to you as long as you tell me why you're

148　　making the choices you're making.

149　　L2:

150   is the sequencing of these important?

151   MOD:

152   do you mean the numbers on that slips? They're just for me to organize.

153   L2:

154   no I mean is there a relationship between all of these statements. If I put something here

155   and a connected statement below what do I have to justify the connection?

156   MOD:

157   some of them are related yes. But treat each one on its own and will discuss it. Our

158   discussion of this and your reasons is more important to me than the individual

159   placement

160   L2:

161   okay, I'll put this one ranked as the most true right from the beginning. I am given

162   independence in my teaching practice. I have a problem with that if it applies to the

163   basic program because I think they're given very little independence right now. But I'm

164   focusing on the foundation program. If I had to include everyone all of these statements

165   would end up in the middle of the page so I'll concentrate on the foundation program

166   and we can discuss that. And I would definitely place this very high.

167   I feel like the institute is consistent in what it wants to accomplish. Hmm. I have to be

168   careful here. Because it's not in my circle, you know, that the perception of the teachers

169   may be different. I kind of wonder how the teachers interpret this, I know you can't tell

170   me. But what does this means the teacher. I feel like the institute is consistent in what it

171   wants to accomplish. What does that mean to them? I guess it means, I don't know, I

172   mean if they think about in terms of the beginning of the semester they're told they're

173   going to get 50 students and then in the next semester, no the same semester, they're

174   told they're getting 75 students. If that's what they consider consistency…. I wonder…

175   are they looking at this from an overall goal? Because I don't think that's a problem, I

176   think teachers would realize that this Institute is trying to train young nationals to be

177   entry-level technicians and operators.

1   **Follow-Up Interview**

2   **October 28, 2008**

3   **Moderator= Mod**

4   **Participant G1-4**

5

6   Mod:

7   There were just a couple of things I thought I would follow up on. There were a lot of

8   interesting things. One of the things we were talking about was teaching independence, and you

9   had some interesting things to say about that. One of them was beyond curricular concerns we

10   might be constrained in our independence by custom or cultural background. I was wondering,

11   if you can recall what kind of culture you were referring to, school culture, the cultures of the

12   people represented and in terms of customs were you talking about customs of the school or

13   your group or that people brought in? If you'll remember, the discussion centred around how we

14   are all independence to a certain extent in how we approach individual groups of students but

15   that everybody agreed that sort of beyond that there were constraints put on you by curriculum

16   and guidance. And that these weren't necessarily bad- that these were probably good. And there

17   was some discussion about what kind of restraints were around you. But then you made this

18   particular comment, about culture being an aspect of that.

19   G1-4:

20   I think there might be two levels to it. I think that in our particular culture here, that we are

21   aware of the religious and cultural differences which would allow us to necessarily change our

22   approach slightly. I think that's at a general level, sort of a macro level. On the micro level, in

23   the individual classroom, perhaps you have to be aware of who you are teaching, maybe the age

24   group. There might be some restrictions, are you teaching female students, are you teaching

25   male students or are you teaching mixed gender classes? There might be some kind of rules

26   pertaining to your methods, but I think there's also inbuilt, like, antennas, that suit your

27   experience as a teacher picks up. But perhaps you can do this or that or say this and not say that.

28   And I think people like ourselves who have been in the Gulf for several years we perhaps have

29   kind of pick that up already. Areas where we might feel more comfortable, areas where we

30   wouldn't go, for example, are classroom approach.

31   Mod:

32   So it's about classroom approach really?

33   G1-4:

34   So it's probably getting to a more general level of education let's say. Back home in the UK

35   where you teaching mixed ability classes and your teaching mixed gender classes, and indeed

36   teaching mixed religion classes. You're teaching Islamic children, and Christian children

37   teaching Hindi children. And you have to, your skills, you have to get to a balance between

38   respecting them and also not restricting yourself. As to what you're actually teaching them,

39   sometimes that can be a little bit of a dilemma.

40   I suppose what I'm really saying is how homogeneous is the class? Perhaps the more

41   homogeneous than more rope you have, the more free reign you have. Where it's less

42   homogeneous, perhaps there's more control. From the outside, the rules of the college, or your

43   own internal antenna tells you this is not a safe place to go.

44   Mod:

45   That's interesting, so what you're saying is that in a heterogenous classroom there's more you

46   have to keep in mind, whereas the homogenate each year poses its own problems but also

47 makes a couple of things may be a little bit easier. Maybe! If your antenna attuned, there are

48 sometimes people whose antenna are not very sensitive.

49 G1-4:

50 Sure sure of course. And in my own example when I first arrived here there was a little bit of an

51 understanding gap between me and the class I took over. That's another area, you know because

52 teacher A has a style and they get used to that style, and then suddenly teacher B comes in and

53 he has his own method, his own style, his own way. I found that at least at first problematic. It's

54 moved on from that now you know, I've gotten the pulse- the beat of the place.

55 Mod:

56 Those first few weeks, taking over someone's classes always hard isn't it? You are either

57 walking into a functional or dysfunctional environment, but either way they have a schema

58 attached to the teacher they've been working with.

59 G1-4:

60 Well that's right. And when you're walking into a new situation the only thing you can do is

61 take an objective approach. And you don't know the students so you take a holistic approach. I

62 want this and this and this, and I want to buy tomorrow. And sometimes the students are "hey

63 you know'- there's no signals better. Whereas a few weeks later when you get to know the

64 individuals, what they're capable of, you know you can give some people some more time. You

65 can chain into the 25 individuals in the classroom. Whereas at first it is The Class. You're going

66 in there quite cold kind of in a way.

67 Mod:

68 yeah, yeah. Okay, I'm going to move on to a different topic, it's related sort of. There's a group

69 goal that is dictated by the curriculum and the course and how you're all agreeing to teach it-

70 and then there's the individual classroom like we've been talking about. And you had some

71 interesting things to say about how there's a danger of isolation maybe if you're leaning too far

72 over here for example, the individual classroom. My question to you is a very specific one. The

73 team that you're working with, how functional or effective are you as a group of people of

74 striking that balance with each other and with your classes? Being able to communicate to each

75 other your pursuit of shared goals versus how you are dealing with your own individual classes.

76 You could in a team-based environment have a situation where one team, either through very

77 strong personalities or the strong personality of the team leader have a situation where a lot of

78 things are dictated. Or you could have another situation where a teammate or simply says here's

79 the curriculum here are the numbers we are looking for, go away. The group you are working

80 with, where are you on that continuum?

81 G1-4:

82 When I first came here, from April up to the summer holidays I had one (name of course) group

83 and one (name of course) group. So there was maybe, you know, like, having two masters sort

84 of. One could find that there might have been a laissez-faire approach in one and a more step-

85 by-step approach in the other. I don't think it has as much to do with individuals as one might

86 think. I rather suspect that subject A would have more demands on it, not just vis-à-vis the

87 course, but vis-à-vis the numbers, the input, you know the deadline. Especially if it was on a

88 weekly basis. Whereas, on the other course there was not that demand, not that weekly demand.

89 It was more like there was a linguistic goal to meet every three or four weeks. So, so that

90 subject itself to a more laissez-faire approach, whereas the other subject may have more pushed

91 the boat out in a way saying that, you know, we have two get through. Especially when you see

92 piles of stuff you have to get through, you know whenever quizzes and homework seemed to

93 be…. at first I was, you know, a little bit overburdened with it. In the sense that I couldn't really

94 put myself, how do I say it, put myself into it. There was too much to do, whereas on the other

95 side, it lent itself more to… you know and then coming back into one subject after the holiday.

96   In one sense it's more difficult, you know, because I don't have that laissez-faire freedom. But

97   on the other hand it's easier because I'm dealing with the same lessons. And now I think I've

98   organised my time a little bit better. So it doesn't appear to be as demanding.

99   Mod:

100   What was the process of learning how to teach the course, how did that go for you? Did you

101   have a formal orientation where you sit down and it's all explained to you step-by-step or you

102   are given a mass of work to do and you have to find people to talk to?

103   G1-4:

104   Well, I started with (name of colleague) and (name of colleague), you know for both courses. I

105   think it was more water cooler stuff, more of an informal approach and just sort of day by day

106   support. People asking me how I was doing how I was getting along. Perhaps I was lucky to

107   have (name of colleague (teaching colleague of course 'A')) at the beginning. He was giving me

108   daily updates, new materials and with (name of colleague (team leader of course 'B')) there was

109   no problem, he let me search for material. I had to find a balance. For course'B'it was a bit

110   frustrating because I believe some things read more vocabulary, but I didn't have time to work

111   with them because we had to get through so many other things. Not enough time to concentrate

112   at the micro level, for lexical learning. They had these vocabulary quizzes at the end of each

113   week, and I said you know, we need more time. I think now I've contextualized it a little bit

114   more, I'm not sort of on my own rhubarb rhubarbstuff, I tend to go straight into the class,

115   straight into the lesson. I've had to change my usual style to suit the structure of that particular

116   subject.

117   If I had stayed on the other subject, obviously, it would've lent itself more to another style of

118   teaching, my old style of teaching.

119   Mod:

120   So you adapted to what was required of you?

121   G1-4:

122   I think I had the experience and you know, they knew, not definitely the way things were, but

123   the general details of what was happening and what to do. I think, I hope, I moved into it in a

124   sort of seamless way.

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