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## CHAPTER 6

# Activities for the development of leaders and managers

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

Introduction  
 Proposing an LMD policy  
 A typology of LMD activities  
 Specified activities for individuals  
 Emergent activities for individuals  
 Specified activities for collective leadership  
 Emergent activities for collective leadership  
 E-learning  
 Summary

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to understand, explain, analyse and evaluate:

- the importance of a written LMD policy
- different activities of LMD
- the possibilities for e-learning in LMD
- the difference between specified and emergent LMD activities
- the difference between individual and collective LMD

## INTRODUCTION

There has been an explosion in the amount of provision and the number of activities that purport to develop managers and leaders. The report by CEML (2002) found a large supply of LMD opportunities, but it suggested that such supply was 'mixed on quality' and presented a 'confusing plethora of options'

which was not 'sufficiently customised to meet the specific requirements of the organisation or of the individual' (p.4). This finding does not surprise us because the work of managers is contingent on contextual factors such as structure, culture, technology and the situation faced; it is therefore difficult to provide generalised statements about what managers should do. As Burgoyne *et al* (2004) argue, LMD 'works in different ways in different situations' (p.49), so any design for development needs to consider specific circumstances. A further issue relating to leadership is the recognition that there may have been an over-emphasis on individuals as leaders at the expense of the development of leadership capacity, taking a more distributed view of leadership (Bolden 2005). There is an important contrast and choice for any organisations considering LMD (Day 2001): there could be:

- emphasis on individual leaders enhancing an organisation's human capital in terms of developing particular skills, knowledge and attributes of those in formal roles,
- or
- there could be an emphasis on activities that build relationships and networks between leaders and others to enable a sharing of ideas and influence, enhancing an organisation's social capital.

A further choice relates to types of LMD activities, and most people normally understand this to mean those that are planned and deliberate, such as attending a course on interviewing or strategic thinking, doing an MBA or having a formal mentor. Such activities may be of value in themselves, but they also exclude many of the experiences that are particularly real for managers. The exclusion of those preponderant and powerful experiences leads to a diminished persuasiveness in talking to managers about LMD. As we argued in Chapter 1, much of LMD occurs informally or even accidentally, so there has to be a recognition of how such events can be recognised and used to best effect. Firstly, we will consider the importance of an LMD policy in organisations.

## PROPOSING AN LMD POLICY

In Chapter 2 it was suggested that LMD gains purpose by showing a link to organisational strategy and that LMD policy explicitly translates the requirements into activities: it is a central symbol and indicator of intentions. Managers may not agree with its contents, and like many policy statements in HRM, it may represent an espoused view rather than enacted practice (Purcell and Hutchinson 2007). Nevertheless, as noted by Thomson *et al* (2001), organisations which had formal policies were likely to provide more activities than those without. Mabey (2002), building on these findings, showed that policy contributed to a positive HR context that took both formal and informal LMD seriously. Some organisations will have an objective that all management appointments should be filled by people developed by the organisation itself. Others will have set some target figure for recruitment from outside, or will set different targets for

different jobs. With the onset of recession during 2008, many organisations were giving attention to their talent management systems, identifying individuals' high potential or roles which are of value to an organisation (CIPD 2009).

Formal LMD will normally include the following items:

- a statement of the purpose of LMD
- a statement about the processes to be used in identifying and developing managers and leaders.

Emphasis is usually given to performance management including appraisal processes, or a development needs analysis for individuals (see Chapters 3 and 4), the type of performance review/appraisal to be conducted, the philosophy behind it, and the way in which it should contribute to the identification and development needs may be set out. Variants such as 360-degree appraisal may be introduced. Where organisations separate appraisal and the identification of development needs (see Chapter 4), timetables will be set out for the achievement of these tasks. Training or guidebooks and DVDs about how to conduct these processes may well be provided, frequently via an organisation's intranet or *virtual learning environment* (VLE).

Guidance on the kind of learning activities which may be provided has progressed beyond the identification of training courses in an internal catalogue, to guidance on some of the processes centred on and around the job, such as mentoring and coaching and online guidance as part of a company intranet service.

Spackman (2010) provides an example of how a policy for LMD is derived from strategy in his organisation HML, a third-party mortgage administration company in the UK with 2,000 employees. He makes it clear that LMD and talent management are considered very much together, and policy development is aligned with organisation development, fearing that any policy will become meaningless unless implementation is evident. The policy outlines the company's leadership ideals of:

- leading self
- leading people
- leading the business.

The core principles that are used to design activities are

- individuals learn at their own pace and in differing ways
- individuals focus their development best by owning their learning
- individuals learn more quickly through real actions
- individuals learn in context to their environment
- individuals cannot develop leadership without developing followership
- individuals' learning takes them somewhere unique
- individuals' learning creates 'thinking performers'.

The design makes use of an integrated framework of activities for LMD based on a background consisting of competencies, performance management and 360-degree feedback. The activities include such formal programmes as:

- aspiring leaders – a structured 12-month programme for front-line employees who have leadership potential
- growing leaders – core elements for all new managers, consisting of coaching, performance improvement, recruitment and selection, and discipline and capability
- leadership development programme – for middle and senior managers, over 12 months consisting of action learning, modules in finance, lean processes of service provision, commercial awareness and coaching – led by senior managers and business experts
- talent development – for high potentials and rising stars, consisting of career goal-setting, business projects and mentoring.



### 6.1 REFLECT – CONCLUDE – PLAN

Should an organisation have a written LMD policy?

What is needed for it to operate effectively?

How could you ensure that the policy becomes enacted practice rather than merely espoused?



### WEB LINK

Find out about the leadership policy of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations at [http://www.acevo.org/index.cfm/display\\_page/Policy\\_leadership](http://www.acevo.org/index.cfm/display_page/Policy_leadership) and about their activities at their Third Sector leadership centre at <http://www.thirdsectorleadership.org>.

### A TYPOLOGY OF LMD ACTIVITIES

In Chapter 1 we suggested in our definitions of LMD that there ought to be a consideration of approaches which could be specified in advance in terms of models and skills to be learned and approaches which are concerned with recognising learning as they emerge in events. We presented this in Figure 1.2 as a dimension between contrasting views of LMD. We also indicated the overlap so that even in specified events where there is clarity about objectives, there would also be an emergent process occurring, usually informally between the participants. Similarly, informal learning that cannot be specified can be recognised and to a certain degree formalised. For example, we note in the example from HML above that coaching and mentoring are included in their

programme. Even in the most planned and organised system, there is a great deal of 'natural' LMD. Managers often talk about informal and unplanned experiences as 'explicit, powerful, relevant and realistic', and as the main source of their development. Davies (2008), for example, considers how managers were able to draw on experiences of 'exceptional events' as the source of significant learning. Yet the same experiences can also be fragmentary, inefficient, and subject to the winds of circumstance – that is, they are not recognised.

The dimension between specified and recognised LMD is one way of considering activities. Another angle to consider is who becomes the unit for consideration of provision of activities. There has been growing recognition of the importance of distributed leadership (Gronn 2000) and even some evidence that it works, particularly in educational settings (Leithwood *et al* 2008). Distributed leadership is concerned with the dispersal or sharing of influence in order to complete different tasks at work – for example, through teams or projects across and between organisations. This suggests that different people can be leaders at some time, although this may not always be recognised by those formally in leader positions. It could be argued that in professional or knowledge-based organisations, and in geographically dispersed organisations, it is a necessity for all leaders to understand distributed leadership (Ross *et al* 2005) as a dimension between a concentration on individual leaders and distribution and dispersal towards a more collective view. This is shown as Figure 6.1.

As can be seen, once the unit for attention changes from single individuals, other configurations from LMD come into view. For example, it is not difficult to recognise the need for leadership couples (Gronn and Hamilton 2004), extended perhaps to small teams of three or four that share responsibility. Further along the dimension, teams within and across organisations distribute leadership, becoming, according to Barry (1991, p.31), 'bossless' or self-managed. As a final step, but probably difficult to understand, requiring a different 'way of thinking about leadership' (Bennett *et al* 2003, p.2), is the idea that the whole organisation can be considered to be a collective endeavour with leadership shared among many as work is performed. For example, Lumby's (2003) studies in colleges revealed leadership as a 'community exercise' (p.292). The key task for those formally appointed leaders is to ensure alignment with purpose, because influence and power may be working against this (Harris 2008).

## 6.2 REFLECT – CONCLUDE – PLAN

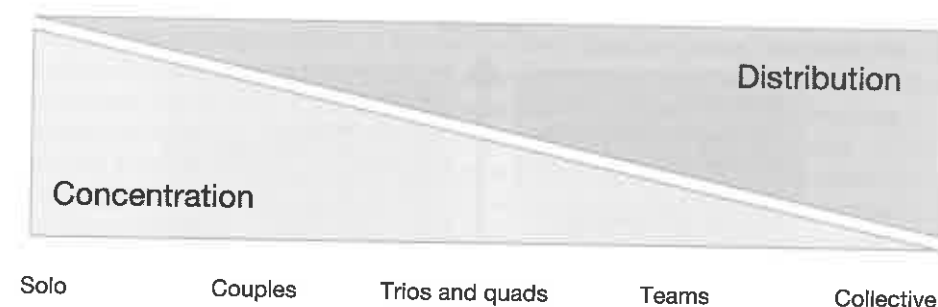
Consider the last time you worked in a team.

How did shared leadership occur?

Was shared leadership vital for success, or did it constrain individuals?

How could the team learn to share leadership better?

Figure 6.1 Concentration and distribution in LMD



Source: Ross *et al* (2005, p.131)



### WEB LINK

You might like to explore the Distributed Leadership Study at <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/dls/> which provides access to a collection of research projects that examine leadership practice in schools in Chicago.

If we now combine the two dimensions together, we are able to form a typology that attempts to portray conceptually the totality of LMD in an organisation and various activities that could be provided. This is shown as Figure 6.2.

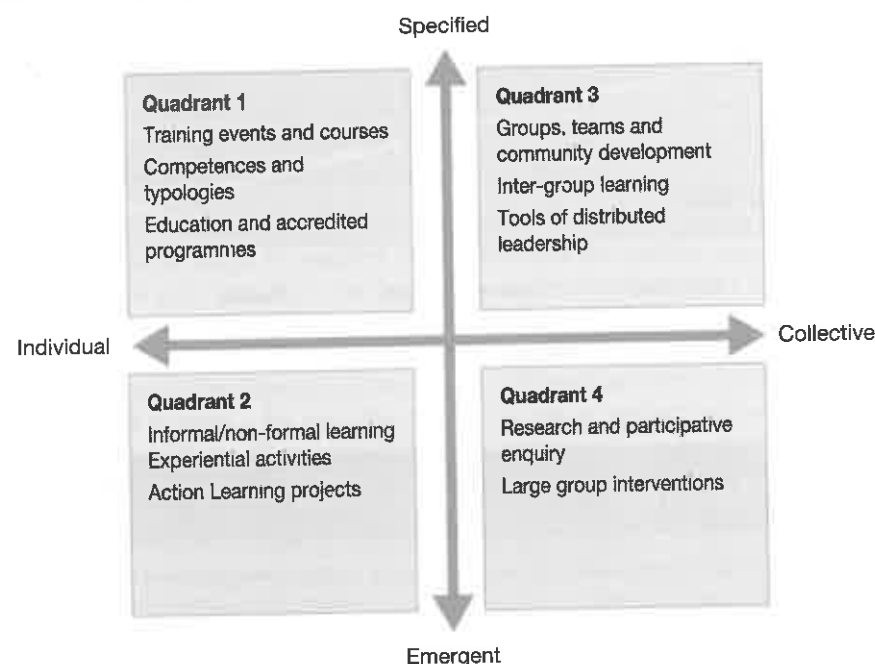
Working with Figure 6.2, we propose to explore the different quadrants to identify some of the activities available for LMD. We would emphasise that our coverage will inevitably be partial and broad in scope. The reason for this, as a short search on Google will demonstrate, is that there is a vast range of possible activities and methods that come under the heading of LMD. For example, Huczynski (2001) presents an 'encyclopaedia' of more than 700 methods. We might suggest that such is the mystery and vagueness surrounding management and, especially, leadership that it becomes possible to match many activities to LMD from different fields and disciplines.

## SPECIFIED ACTIVITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS

### TRAINING EVENTS AND COURSES

Activities in Quadrant 1 are concerned with the development of managers as individuals, even where they participate in teams, groups and projects. These will be concerned with the enhancement of an organisation's human capital basis. Activities in this quadrant – and such activities traditionally form the basis of most LMD programmes – are mainly based on an understood model

Figure 6.2 A typology of LMD activities



Source: adapted from Rodgers *et al* (2003)

of management, informed by 'best practice', so there is clarity about what will be learned in terms of skills, knowledge, attributes or competences. Delivery can occur either off-site or in-house as part of an organisation's own set of programmes for managers. Most LMD programmes focus on individuals, often using explicit or even implicit models of manager attributes, behaviours and skills composed of a mixture of competences, psychometric assessment of personality, emotional intelligence, team management profiles and training events around particular skills or issues. For effective provision, activities need to contain the key elements of manager-centred learning, which we regard as:

- managerial reality
- building on experience
- using familiar learning processes
- continued learning
- preferred approaches to learning.

The focus for activities ought to be reality, not only because it is real but because it engages the attention of managers. It is more sensible to build the design and content of specified LMD on the experience that managers have when they arrive on a course. It takes longer and may be less exciting for the tutor – but it is more effective. Although one of the great virtues of formal training and education is precisely that it focuses on learning rather than just managing and leading, the achieved learning will be small if the process is too different and

distant from what they usually do or need to do in the future. Since managers do not customarily spend their time listening to lectures, even brilliantly delivered lectures may not attract them. If they spend their time reviewing historical case studies of practices in other organisations, a learning process based on this starts with some major disadvantages. Perhaps most powerfully of all, if the learning process, of whatever nature, is seen as something that is likely to be useful only on a course, not in real life, learning will be limited. Further difficulties can arise when 'there is a difference between what an individual recognises as development needs and what the organisation defines as what managers need' (Antonacopoulou 1999).



#### WEB LINK

The Association of Management Education and Development (AMED) is a network for people interested in management and organisation development practice. The website is <http://www.amed.org.uk/>.

Research by Storey (2004) identified three interventions which fit into this quadrant and are frequently provided for leaders. These are:

- learning about leadership and organisations – mainly traditional ideas and theories, delivered in business schools and training workshops
- self-analysis, team analysis and leadership styles – completed by individuals to create understanding of current styles but these can also include psychometric tests that can link to feedback and coaching in Quadrant 2
- top-level strategy courses – often aimed at the higher-level leaders, delivered as executive courses or masterclasses. They can be very expensive, depending on where they are delivered and who delivers.

Similarly, recent research in Finland by Suutari and Viitala (2008) of 878 responses by managers to an Internet-based survey found that training programmes were the most common method of participation, both internally and outside the company. Most of this was short term, lasting between one and three days. Many training programmes for managers focus on what are referred to as 'soft skills' (Crosbie 2005), such as communication, collaboration, coaching, personal effectiveness, teamwork and, as considered below, emotional intelligence. In all cases, learning is not just a case of acquiring knowledge but also practising new behaviours and receiving feedback.

#### COMPETENCES AND TYPOLOGIES

Many organisations work with competency frameworks to provide the focus for activities. IDS (2003) reviewed programmes in five UK public and private organisations and found a recognition of the need for different competences for distinguishing between management and leadership. The frameworks formed the basis for individuals to identify their LMD needs. The research suggested

that change orientation, drive for excellence, impact and influence, strategic thinking and customer focus all featured strongly. In addition, there has been considerable interest in activities to help leaders and managers enhance their emotional intelligence (EI). For example, Rubin *et al* (2005) found that the ability to recognise emotion, maintain 'positive affect', and demonstrate agreeableness, positively predicted transformational leadership in a large biotechnology/agricultural company. Stein *et al* (2009) suggest that leaders need different EI skills for different areas of work. For managing others, the EI skills of optimism, self-regard and impulse control would be of most importance; for the task of managing organisation growth or performance, EI skills of problem-solving and flexibility become more prominent.

As well as competences, there are a variety of typologies of skills and attributes, often accompanied by a questionnaire, which allow managers to assess their own styles and preferences. Some of these are very well known, such as:

- Blake and Mouton's managerial grid (Blake and Mouton 1964)
- Hersey-Blanchard's situational leadership styles questionnaire (Hersey and Blanchard 1981)
- Bass and Avolio's Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass and Avolio 1997)
- the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2001)
- Belbin's Team Role Inventory (Belbin 1981).

Each of these is based on a theory, developed into a model, which is then tested to produce empirical support for the value of using the assessment in LMD. As we have suggested in Chapter 3, there are disputes about the claims for reliability and validity of such assessments (Aritzeta *et al* 2007). However, managers often like to complete questionnaires that reveal their style, preferred roles, and so on. There seems to be intuitive appeal and face validity for managers and leaders, despite doubts of researchers (Fisher *et al* 1996).

#### EDUCATION AND ACCREDITED PROGRAMMES

An important source of activities in Quadrant 1 are the large number of higher and further education institutions and others that offer programmes for LMD, usually but not always leading to accreditation. In the past, education has been defined as a broadly based and broadly directed process aimed at the whole person and total career, while training has been seen as the specific process of helping managers to learn things appropriate to particular circumstances, within specific organisations or industries. The distinction also broadly followed location: education was what happened in the further/higher education system, and training was what happened in management centres. The distinction, if ever true, seems now to have largely lost its meaning (Holman 2000). Although training centres probably tend to focus more on issues that are practical and specifically related to organisational needs, they also often see themselves as

educating a manager or leader for his or her total life. Similarly, education centres have increasingly taken on responsibility for developing managers who meet the specific needs of their particular organisations. The major business schools, when first set up, took a distinctly lofty and distant view about the desirability of doing in-company work (except as private ventures by senior faculty). Now many make a virtue of – and a great deal of money from – doing such work.

One distinctive characteristic of programmes leading to awards in higher education especially is the attention given to trying to inculcate knowledge rather than to develop skills, since the former is much easier to assess, and academic judgements about performance on knowledge are easier to justify than comments about levels of skill. A study carried out by CEML (2002a) suggested that there is little evidence that management qualifications improve organisational performance although there is likely to be a benefit to individual managers and their careers. At undergraduate level there is a good demand for business and management degrees and graduates become eminently employable, although such a degree is not a requirement for management work. MBA programmes receive disproportionate attention in discussion about management education because they are the longest and most ambitious attempt to develop managers by structured processes. In the UK most business schools now offer MBA qualifications, and demand for the MBA has grown, many UK-based students (80%) opting for a part-time or distance-learning approach (CEML 2002a). The MBA is presented as a high-quality qualification, with an approval process developed by the Association of MBAs (AMBA). However, there are continuing concerns about the application of theoretical teaching and the practice of managers (CEML 2002a). In the United States there have been major concerns about the actual results achieved by 100,000 MBA graduates a year, and this concern has been expressed not so much by concerned industrialists as by academic researchers like Behrman and Levin (1984). Henry Mintzberg (2004) and Pfeffer and Fong (2002) criticise MBA programmes as being too oriented towards skills of analysis rather than skills of implementation. Bennis and O'Toole (2005) claim that business schools, particularly represented in the MBA, have been too focused on 'scientific' research and analysis and less concerned with qualities such as judgement and abilities that can accommodate the complexities of organisational life. They point to the way that textbook models and cases used in MBA teaching are too abstract and removed from the real experience of managing and leading.

Further concerns come from those who take a more critical stance towards management education more generally (Grey 1996) – indeed, it is claimed that management education faces a 'crisis of confidence' (p.11). The key argument is that such education purports to provide managers with 'useful knowledge'; it should instead 'expand and challenge the intellectual world' of managers (p.14), including the complex moral and political dimensions of that world.



## WEB LINK

AMBA's website is located at <http://www.mbaworld.com/>. From there you can check their criteria for accrediting MBA programmes at [http://www.mbaworld.com/templates/mba/images/accreditation/pdf/MBA\\_criteria\\_o807.pdf](http://www.mbaworld.com/templates/mba/images/accreditation/pdf/MBA_criteria_o807.pdf).

If you would like to consider a free online management development programme with ten modules, try [http://www.managementhelp.org/fp\\_progs/org\\_dev.htm#anchor704607](http://www.managementhelp.org/fp_progs/org_dev.htm#anchor704607).

## THE JOB

Probably the most common form of LMD in organisations relates to a plan to use the job as the starting point. This may well start with the kind of appraisal and performance review discussed in Chapter 3, followed by a formal personal development plan (Chapter 4). Table 6.1 gives a large-scale view of opportunities in and around the job. Within each major opportunity there are a number of different learning activities involved. In this chapter we deal with the first two major opportunities – in Chapter 9 we look at issues around coaching and mentoring.

Table 6.1 Formally planned learning opportunities at work

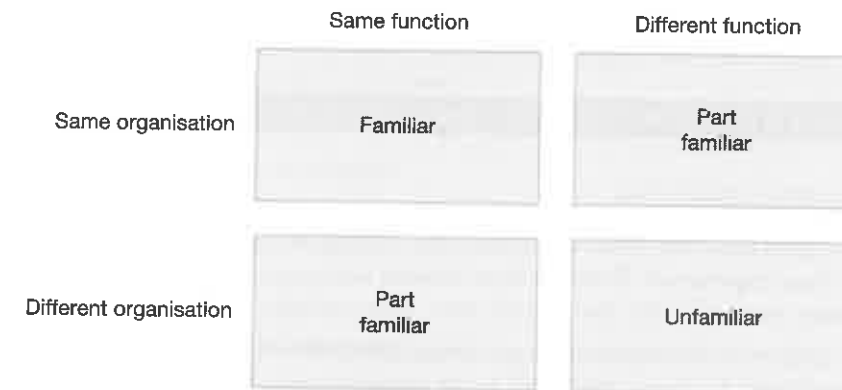
| Changes in the job                                                                                                                                                       | Changes in job content                                                                                                                                                                                               | Within the job                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promotion</li> <li>• doing the same job but with a different function or product: job rotation</li> <li>• secondment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stretching the boundaries of the job by extra responsibility and tasks</li> <li>• special projects</li> <li>• committees or task groups</li> <li>• junior boards</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being coached</li> <li>• being counselled</li> <li>• monitoring and direct feedback by manager</li> <li>• being mentored</li> </ul> |

Firstly, changes in the job. There are significant differences in the nature of the opportunities provided by different types of change, and in the nature of the difficulties involved in taking up the opportunities: Figure 6.3 shows some of the possibilities. Moving into a new job with an existing or new employer poses the same development issues. What is the new manager or leader to learn, at what pace, and through what processes? As Figure 6.3 indicates, the most difficult move of all – yet the one with the most potential for learning – is promotion into a new organisation. Some kind of induction programme will usually be arranged. The new manager will meet new colleagues and will probably be given a tour of working facilities. There may be arrangements to meet a range of customers, suppliers and other useful contacts. In essence the manager has to learn about the nature and purpose of the organisation – ‘getting to know the business’.

Then there is the need to find out about internal relationships: the politics of the business, the way in which people work together or avoid working together. Finally, there is the outside world, the people and organisations serviced.

There can be particular difficulties in areas of professional or knowledge-based work where experts in one form of work are promoted into management

Figure 6.3 Learning problems in job moves



positions. For example, Sambrook (2006) in a study of the movement from nursing roles into management positions in the NHS found some conflict between being a nurse and then a manager. This was partly the consequence of nurses' valuing their professional identities as nurses.

Secondment can be a useful LMD job move and can be recognised as part of an organisation's succession plan (Kur and Bunning 2002) or talent management strategy. A secondment may in certain instances have a dual learning objective. For example, secondment of a manager or leader from industry to work in the civil service normally has a double objective – the individual learns from exposure to a different culture, a different environment, a different way of doing things. At a secondary level the organisation sponsoring the secondees learns about how the civil service operates, and may therefore learn how to deal with it more effectively.

Changes in the job content ought to be formally recognised as LMD but too often opportunities are provided without any effective development taking place. Thus a manager may be given additional responsibilities or a greater weight of responsibility. This is stretching boundaries and acquiring new tasks. An example of this would be that of a sales director handing over to a sales manager the responsibility for a major national account previously handled by the director. Another would be delegating to a subordinate manager the task of producing a report, visiting an important customer or negotiating with a trade union. Crucial here, as highlighted by Davies and Easterby-Smith (1983), is that managers who have to face new situations and difficulties, where their existing behaviours are not adequate, will need to learn to cope. However, such learning must be recognised by senior managers in order to become 'legitimate' (p.181). Senior managers most frequently assign managers to special committees/working parties or task forces for purely managerial reasons. The senior manager wants a particular expert on the subject or a representative from a particular area in the business or somebody who is known to have the ear of somebody important. Managers can stay in their existing jobs but be given experience simulating the work of their board of directors through a 'junior board'. They may be given the

same information as the board on a particular issue, and/or be required to make recommendations to the board.

## EMERGENT ACTIVITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS

### INFORMAL LEARNING

When asked how they learn to do their jobs, managers frequently reply that they 'learn from experience'. There are clear reasons why managers often find informal processes more effective than formal ones. These include:

- the content of development programmes, especially courses, which is experienced as unreal, irrelevant to the manager's priorities or difficult to transfer from a course to work
- processes of learning that too often reflect the interest of course designers and tutors rather than those of participants
- processes that do not take into account different individual learning preferences.

Informal learning usually occurs by accident or incidentally, through everyday experience and practice (Marsick and Watkins 1990), although such experiences are not always recognised in LMD. With such activities, managers have not been encouraged and helped to go through the process of assessing and planning what to do about the learning experience, as suggested by Kolb's learning cycle (1984). They need to be encouraged to look at their experiences in those terms. Similarly, the 'situated learning' approach of Lave and Wenger (1991) supports the importance of natural learning within the context of practice and legitimacy received for learning through the social relations of a community of practitioners.

Informal learning is difficult to uncover – rather like the submerged part of an iceberg (Coffield 2002). Eraut (2000, p.12) prefers the term 'non-formal' learning to contrast with formal learning. He sets out three types of non-formal learning:

- *implicit learning* – learning that occurs without intention and awareness at the time it has taken place but becomes part of experience, used unconsciously in future events
- *reactive learning* – learning that occurs spontaneously in response to events: there might be awareness that learning has occurred but there is little time to consider it except through reflection
- *deliberative learning* – learning from events that is recognised through reviewing and reflecting on actions, and time is provided to allow this to happen.

Managers can be helped to make their learning deliberative, recognising some of the experienced processes at work and beyond as learning experiences that could be improved with a significant benefit to themselves and their organisation. Help can come from a variety of sources including coaches, mentors and others

through 360-degree feedback. Some of these sources are considered in more detail in Chapter 9.

Some typical informal learning opportunities for managers are listed below (adapted from Honey and Mumford 1995):

- analysing mistakes
- attending conferences or seminars
- being coached or counselled
- being mentored
- budgeting
- championing and/or managing changes
- covering for holidays
- dealings with colleagues and peers
- dealings with staff
- dealings with a boss
- domestic life
- familiar tasks
- giving a presentation
- interacting with social networking technologies
- interviewing
- job change in a new function
- job change within the same function
- job rotation
- making decisions
- meetings
- negotiating
- networking
- performance appraisals
- planning project work
- reading
- same job but with additional responsibilities
- secondments
- solving problems
- unfamiliar tasks/work
- working in groups/teams
- working with consultants

In Chapter 7 we propose ways by which such learning from informal opportunities can be transformed into more effective LMD.

### 6.3 REFLECT – CONCLUDE – PLAN

Identify a recent informal learning experience.

How did you learn from this opportunity?

Could your learning have been improved?

How can you ensure that you learn more effectively from such opportunities more regularly?

Any attention to informal learning must, however, be accompanied by a recognition of major deficiencies.

They include:

- *idealisation* – Attitudes and behaviours may predominate which say that past experience is so valued and appropriate that it is all that is necessary. Effective learning involves building successfully on properly understood past experience, not treating it as the only process of merit.
- *narrowness* – It is possible for work experience to be extremely narrow in terms of jobs, functions, kinds of organisation and sizes of organisation. While effective LMD is more likely to focus on the specific than the general, this does not mean that a manager in retail needs to know nothing about, for instance, production processes.
- *obsolescence* – Painful and perhaps carefully acquired experience of how to do work may well become out of date.

Of course, people develop skills from the 'natural' process of doing the job, and finding out whether the way they do it works. If it does, they understandably assume that they have a skill. However, the skill they have acquired may be either inappropriate or at an insufficiently high performance level. At worst it may even be the wrong kind of skill. One example is the process of interviewing. The skills that managers deploy in selection interviewing have often been acquired from the experience of being interviewed themselves, and then of interviewing others. Their level of skill is often, however, well below what they need to interview effectively. You might also recall the Power School of strategy that we mentioned in Chapter 2 and the structures of everyday experience where the most important message might be 'Learn not to learn!' (Salaman and Butler 1990). In a similar vein, informal learning always occurs in a context where politics, contests and tensions may exert inhibiting influences on managers (Garrick 1998).

### EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Learning informally from everyday opportunities and incidents probably represents the most prevalent form of LMD. It is emergent in the sense that it is unplanned and lacks the intention for learning, although it still has to be recognised for it to be valued as learning. Making learning from any experience more deliberate has been of considerable interest in LMD. For example, Antonacopoulou and Bento (2004) propose that those appointed as leaders need to accept a 'learning leadership' (p.82) approach to their development; this, we suggest, involves using experiences and seeking feedback, forming and trying new ideas and behaviour. What is understood as experience can vary along a range from the everyday lives of managers, which is ever-present, to the provision of activities by others which is meant to provide stimulation of some kind. To a certain extent, the latter can be planned and may even be specified in terms of learning objectives or outcomes, although the value of experiential learning is the emergent sense-making that depends on the response and interpretation of managers to whatever is selected as experience. However, such interpretations are never neutral and are subject to the cultural, social and political factors that provide part of the context for activity (Swan 2007).

According to Reynolds and Vince (2007), experiential learning can be used to stimulate the involvement of managers so that they can reflect on aspects of managing. It is argued that through active participation, managers can reveal a complex range of forces involved in their work, all part of the 'underground organisation' (p.6). Exposure to challenging activities allows emotions to be revealed and new possibilities for action to be considered as a critique of previous ways of working. Experiential learning may be less certain, especially where there are assumptions that specified outcomes can be achieved, but this is not seen as a drawback – it is a parallel to the lives or 'lived experience' of managers and leaders. This does pose difficulties for those that seek to use experiential learning within accredited programmes like MBAs. However, many academics have incorporated experiential activities within their LMD courses, even if this provides the potential for critique of the traditional curriculum for managers.

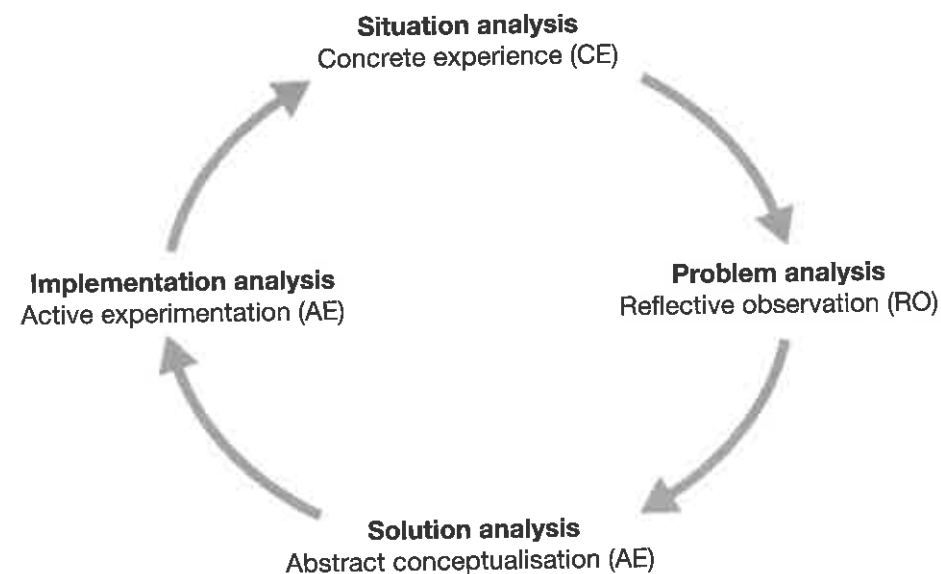
One well-known form of experiential activity for LMD is the use of the outdoors. Owing much to military approaches to training (Adair 2005), outdoor management development (OMD) has been used by many organisations although there are doubts about the transfer of learning from what is inevitably an off-site activity back to work (Ibbetson and Newell 1999) – but this is an issue that applies to all off-site LMD and one we consider more carefully in Chapter 8.

OMD can focus on personal development providing physical and psychological challenges for participants which, if completed successfully, result in a boost to self-confidence, and a willingness to undertake even greater challenges. In addition to this personal focus, OMD often is used to consider key management issues such as working in teams, leading and managing complex tasks such as cultural change using a mix of different activities such as problem-solving, abseiling, rafting, caving, and so on. Crucially – and this is always a tension – it is important to balance the doing of a task with the chance to discuss, analyse and

reflect on its completion and derive learning from it (Honey and Loblely 1986). A further tension is the extent to which OMD programmes are concerned with and designed around generalised understanding and awareness for individuals or specific issues related to the organisation (Burke and Collins 2004).

For many, OMD represents a powerful space for LMD which enables an explicit use of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle. Experience is used for reflection and discussion followed by working out what can be taken forward into the next task (Bank 1994). Badger *et al* (1997) point to the use of learning styles to help participants work on problems in OMD, and this allows managers to relate how they work on tasks to a model of problem management presented by Kolb (1982), shown as Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4 A problem management cycle



Source: adapted from Kolb (1982)

Managers can consider their relative learning preferences against effectiveness in managing problems presented as challenges during OMD. For example, difficult and ambiguous problems require more attention to problem-setting in the situation analysis stage but participants may avoid this because of preferences for action. The *LMD in Practice* opposite provides an example of one manager's experience of OMD.

An additional model that is well known in OMD focuses on the requirements for action by leaders with relevance to particular tasks in particular situations. This is Adair's (2005) action-centred leadership (ACL) model, shown as Figure 6.5.

The model puts a leader in a situation, working with a group that needs to achieve a recognised task. A group or team exists to work together towards

## MY EXPERIENCE OF OMD

Stratis Koutsoukos, *Leeds Business School*

I work as Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow of a European economic policy and business research and consultancy unit based at a university Business School. I lead the European branch of the unit, which requires me to win new research and consultancy contracts, respond to the client and their needs and manage what are often multi-disciplinary cross-faculty and university teams to deliver the contracts.

The Bavarian training was a team-based experience that was unique in many ways. Marketed as an outdoor leadership training programme, under different configurations it is in many ways a 'running experiment' for the university associated with the annual staff development festival.

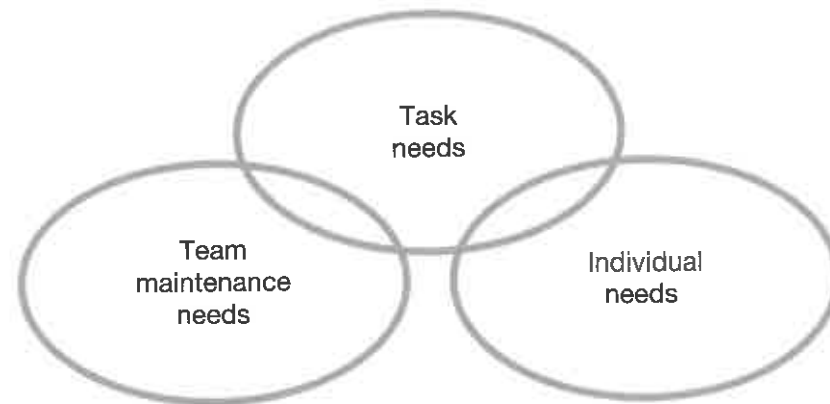
Working in a team-based environment was by no means new to me. A necessity in the occupation, I have both led teams and been part of them, and I feel that I have learnt to identify my role within such teams with ease. In the expedition in Bavaria, however, the basic rules upon which I have based the biggest part of my team and leadership experiences were altogether different. To start with, the knowledge area and the abilities relevant to the exercise were not as clearly defined and were much broader. For instance, is it about the technical knowledge of climbing and hiking, is it about basic fitness and human physiology, or is a knowledge of oneself and how one copes and reacts in adversity that is more important? Is it about an emergent model of leadership, or about map-reading skills? And if anything, what is the final desired outcome? Clearly,

the degree of complexity between choices and decisions made on behalf of others and the relative consequences are less contained than in the highly pressured yet better-defined environment of research and consultancy. Finally, the week was filled with many team-based 'new experiences' from snowshoe-walking to orienteering in the Alps – hiking, sledging, abseiling, winter survival skill education, and basic avalanche training. The evening team bonding, which again added a dimension of complexity, also created a basis on which most members of the group were at the same level with each other – all of us 'learners'.

I found overall the event a very humbling experience and an enjoyable one. Certainly, it allowed me to reflect on how I approach new knowledge and experiences, how I personally react to the initial fear of the unknown, and how I can harness the dynamic and support of a group situation to better overcome my personal fears and weaknesses. I question wholeheartedly the wisdom of calling such programmes overtly 'leadership' ones. Like so many other skills, I believe this is one that can only be cultivated at a very early stage in life and that too often concentrating on the iconic 'leader element' distracts us from the real substance of the argument which is about delivery within teams. Ultimately, I feel that the most significant skill and attribute for the expedition is not being a leader or extremely fit athletically, or a good fundraiser or ideas-generator, but instead it is about knowing oneself well and truly, and being prepared to acknowledge that this is an ongoing lifelong process.

some common objective relating to the task. As Adair recognises, however, there can be a disconnection between the need of the task and the life of the group, which like an 'iceberg' (p.14) is mostly hidden from view. This can cover the norms and values present derived from past experience and history.

Figure 6.5 Action-centred leadership



Source: Adair (2005, p.15)

Together these form the basis of a team maintenance need. Then there are the needs of individuals, which may or may not be in tune with the team or the needs of the task for all sorts of reasons. These three considerations must be taken together, each connecting to the other areas. The job or 'function' of the leader is to ensure that this occurs. For example, at the RAF College where ACL is used in leadership training, each area of need is broken into actions such as:

*Task* – defining the task, making a plan, adjusting the plan

*Team* – setting standards, building team spirit, appointing sub-leaders

*Individual* – attending to personal problems, encouraging individuals.

#### 6.4 REFLECT – CONCLUDE – PLAN

Could the ACL model be applied to any task you face?

What actions are required for each area of need?

What will you do to apply the ACL model to your next group task?



#### WEB LINK

Go to <http://www.johnadair.co.uk/> for more information on action-centred learning and links to papers by John Adair.

For some really interesting stories of managers' experiences of using the outdoors in LMD, go to [http://reviewing.co.uk/research/ple\\_sum.htm](http://reviewing.co.uk/research/ple_sum.htm).

While action and the outdoors would seem to complement each other, there is also recognition that escaping to somewhere peaceful and quiet – and a long way from the work context – can provide a space for personal reflection and personal awareness. Watson and Vasilieva (2007) describe an outdoor leadership programme where, instead of problem-solving activities, the space was used as a retreat to engage in 'wilderness thinking' (p.243). Rather than compete against the challenge of the outdoors, participants complete reflective exercises as individuals and in teams which promote personal awareness. Evaluation of 100 participants shows that, with the support of coaching after the retreat, the programme provided a 'catalyst for sustainable change' (p.243).

Viewing the outdoors as a retreat where managers can find time to reflect and reconsider their lives does seem to connect to religious ideas for spiritual growth. In recent years there has been a growth in providing workshops, seminars and training that seek to allow managers to get in touch with their inner selves so they can be more effective in the outer world of their work. This is referred to as 'spiritual management development' (SMD) (Bell and Taylor 2004). SMD programmes are based on the view that managers can achieve their goals through personal growth through a focus on the inner self through such techniques as meditation, hypnosis, visioning, therapeutic touch, yoga and walking on fire. Spiritual development enables a transcendence over the physical world, it is claimed, and allows a fulfilment of human potential which, as Bell and Taylor suggest, is 'implicitly religious' (p.461). Like OMD, SMD also faces the difficulty of disconnection from the organisation context and everyday life: it becomes the individual's responsibility to make something happen.

While OMD is an important source of LMD, over the last 20 years there have been attempts to use other kinds of provision from other arenas to provide a stimulus for learning. The crucial move is whether lessons from one facet of life can be applied in the world of organisations. One example is drama, and for many years the idea that an organisation is like a theatre with a stage, actors and audience – referred to as the 'dramaturgical metaphor' (Clark 2008) – has attracted interest. As an extension, this way of thinking has been applied to LMD. For example Olivier and Verity (2008) use 'mythodrama' in LMD as a way of providing insight into people and organisations. As they explain, *mytho-* is concerned with stories and insights into human nature from writers such as Shakespeare, and *-drama* is the method for delivery and making an impact. They use:

*Henry V* – as an inspirational leader

*Julius Caesar* – to understand power, politics and influence

*Macbeth* – to explore the danger of derailing behaviours

*The Tempest* – to understand the dynamics of leading change, and

*As You Like It* – for positive culture change.

Programmes are developed by theatre-trained facilitators who are able to work with the purpose and meaning of a play such as *Henry V*, making these relevant to participants, who also act out key features.

In addition to drama, LMD has been delivered by using ideas from music, comedy and the arts generally. There is also an attraction in using sport not only in terms of ideas but also as the source of experience. A search on Google will show a large variety of connections, for example, between golf and leadership development.

## PROJECTS

Projects can be a powerful development tool for managers (Smith and Dodds 1993). The manager in a new job can take up a major project as a development process – for example: ‘Find out why repeat orders have declined by 28% in the last six months.’ A secondment can include a project or, indeed, be totally dedicated to one. For example, ‘We are seconding you to charity X for six months. Your project is to review their management control systems, and produce a report for the chairman of their council.’ Projects can also be identified within the existing job: ‘We want you to do an investigation into the forecasts actually used by sales, marketing and production. Why do they have different forecasts, and what problems result?’

Projects can provide major potential developmental benefits. They often involve managers in looking at a wider range of issues, in greater depth, across a wider range of functions, than might otherwise be encountered. At their best, even within a formal development context, projects of the kind described here should be real rather than invented purely for development. In some cases they carry responsibility for implementation as well as recommendation, in which case they provide for the strongest form of development (see Chapter 7 on Action Learning). There is growing recognition of project-based learning for managers and others in organisations. Ayas and Zeniuk (2001) suggest that such learning provides a way of thinking beyond the short term, allowing for knowledge creation and sharing. However, and critically, such a process is not without difficulty and accounts for the emergent features of project-based learning. For example, Scarbrough *et al* (2004) argue that there are limits in how much learning from a project can be transferred to other parts of an organisation. They suggest that there is a ‘learning boundary’ (p.1583) between a project and the rest of the organisation which becomes particularly marked when changes in practice are the outcome of a project that need to be implemented elsewhere. So it is quite possible for learning to occur within a project which then becomes constrained if applied elsewhere. Managers who undertake projects as part of their development will need help to consider how the barriers to application can be overcome; they will also need to reflect critically on their approach to bringing change to organisations. (See Chapter 7 for a consideration of reflection and critical thinking.)

## SPECIFIED ACTIVITIES FOR COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Quadrant 3 embraces activities that view LMD as more than the development of human capital with a focus on individual skills. As Iles and Preece (2006) argue, it involves the development of:

- social capital – defined by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) as ‘the sum of actual and potential resources within, available through and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit’ (p.243)
- leadership capability – defined by Day (2001) as ‘expanding the collective capacity of organisational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes’ (p.582).

Spillane (2006) sees distributed leadership as a reciprocal process of interdependence and the work of multiple leaders although, as Gronn (2008) suggests, there are a variety of different practices that fall under the heading of leadership, so the term ‘distributed’ might be considered an ultimate position along the individual/collective dimension. Between the extremes of solo and distributed leadership are a ‘mix’ of leadership configurations such as couples, trios, groups and teams which Gronn sees as more accurately represented by the term ‘hybrid’ (p.152). From this perspective, we start to embrace activities that develop an understanding of combined patterns of leadership.

## GROUPS, TEAMS AND COMMUNITIES

Much of the research on distributed leadership has been gathered in schools where systematic reviews of the evidence on the impact of individual school leaders on pupil learning outcomes was found to be indirect, relying on the influence of staff and others for success (Bell *et al* 2002). Further work in schools highlights both the importance of traditional leadership from the top – the vertical processes – and the sharing of leadership based on interdependent work – the lateral processes (Harris 2008). Recent research by Leithwood *et al* (2007) points to the specification of working with groups and teams to allocate tasks in order to create alignment between them. While a group can be considered as any combination of two or more people who see themselves under the same heading or category, a team is characterised by recognised interdependence between those people who combine efforts in pursuit of a common goal (Stewart 1999).

Group and team development programmes, which may well make use of various typologies of roles (Quadrant 1) and experiential learning events such as OMD (Quadrant 2), seek to engender a climate for shared meanings and activity. Anderson and West’s (1994) Team Climate Inventory assesses team dynamics and shared perceptions for team practice, including:

- communication – how members interact, and the structure and style of team meetings
- participation – in decision-making and other activities
- safety – how safe people feel, and how much interpersonal trust there is
- cohesiveness – how cohesive the team perceives itself to be, and is perceived by others
- task style – how the team approaches tasks and pursues objectives

- vision – the team's vision or mission, and objectives and targets
- innovativeness – how creative the team is.

Group and team-building requires two key processes – a design process, and then an ongoing learning process. Tuckman (1965) has provided a well-known set of stages for group development consisting of:

- *forming* (characterised by dependence on the 'leader')
- *storming* (independence/counter-dependence)
- *norming* (interdependence)

and

- *performing* stages (interdependence).

Tuckman later added that teams also have an *adjourning/mourning* stage (exit, break-up, moving on).

Thus the first step is to bring a group of individuals together. Exactly who is involved is based on the purpose of the team and the tasks to be performed, so a key decision is a matching of individuals to the specialisms required (Edmondson *et al* 2001). This process raises one of the first points of tension in team-building which relates to the paradoxical and contradictory possibilities when individuals are brought together in a team. As pointed out by Donnellon (1996), a team needs differences between individuals in terms of their knowledge, skills and experiences but also the integration of such differences to fulfil the purpose of the team. This is not easy to do, and team-building requires recognition of the tensions that can arise. Donnellon identifies four manifestations of tensions in teams:

- individuality – individuals make contributions based on their skills and knowledge, but such contributions need to be accepted in the team
- identity – people develop as individuals, albeit in social contexts, but acquire a status based on qualifications, skills and membership of groups such as professional associations, but they are required to adopt a new identity when joining a team
- interdependence – a team must learn to depend on each other but also needs individuals to use their skills and understanding in team activity, thus maintaining a degree of independence
- trust – a key aspect of team-work is trust between members – but can others be trusted?

Recently, the idea of coaching has been applied to team development. While it is usually seen as a one-to-one LMD activity, as Clutterbuck (2007) argues it can also be applied to teams. Team coaching is defined (p.77) as:

Helping the team improve performance, and the processes by which performance is achieved, through reflection and dialogue.



## 6.5 REFLECT – CONCLUDE – PLAN

How far do Donnellon's tensions occur in any group or team that you are (or have been) a member of?

Share your findings with other members of this team.

How could an understanding of these tensions help you develop teams in the future?

Team coaching is inevitably more complex than individual coaching, with key dimensions relating to:

- confidentiality
- the scope of the relationship
- the speed of decision-making.

A team coach is likely to be 'inside' the team, where dialogue is more frequent and more intensive (Clutterbuck 2007).

In addition to groups and teams, some organisations seek to develop *communities of practice* to enhance the creation and sharing of knowledge. While such communities were originally recognised as the source of informal and improvised learning based on the practice of a group in a local context (Lave and Wenger 1991), with leadership very much in the hands of the group, recently there have been attempts made to create such communities and orient their efforts towards 'their companies' success' (Wenger and Snyder 2000, p.145).

## INTER-GROUP LEARNING

Although most team-building activities are aimed at single teams and the internal relationships within the team, increasingly it is important to recognise that there is value in considering relationships between teams within and between organisations. Iles and Auluck (1988), for example, show how a process of 'organisational mirroring' allows one team or department to receive feedback from other teams.

Particular challenges arise when collaborative working is required from at least two teams or members from those teams where each team has differing values, cultures and disciplines. In recent years, for example, different agencies involved in complex issues such as child safety are required by policies to work together to share knowledge, make decisions and co-ordinate actions for service delivery. Since each team can be seen as a figuration of shared leadership, inter-group work might be perceived as an example of what Victor and Boynton (1998, p.195) referred to as co-configuration. For Daniels (2004), the skills of debate and dialogue are regarded as important for co-configuration, as are the skills of learning from interactions with customers and service users. Joint training is considered to be an important means enabling inter-group activity (Tomlinson 2003).

## TOOLS OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

As the research on distributed leadership has progressed, there have appeared a number of suggested processes or techniques which can be prescribed to help people understand the way leadership is shared across an organisation or between groups. For example, the Distributed Leadership Study in the USA developed a number of instruments for school improvement. The study aimed to understand leadership as a practice to improve instruction and classroom work. One instrument, focusing on mathematics teaching in middle-school grades, was the School Staff Network Survey which allowed an examination of leadership that influenced teaching practice.

Distributed leadership and the various configurations of influence represent a challenge to orthodox notions of individualised management and leadership. Understanding how patterns of practice are contributing and aligned towards a common purpose requires an understanding of collective units such as teams, departments, or the whole organisation. Depending on the size of the unit, such an understanding will need to include the voice of many others who are active participants in the unit. Gronn (2000) advocated the use of Engeström's (1987) model of activity systems and cultural history activity theory. This considers the work of individuals and their interdependence with others within a context. As work is completed, individuals become entangled in a web of influences, all affected by the history and culture. It is within situations of work that leadership becomes distributed and influence is exerted to achieve outcomes that are successful or otherwise. How this occurs can be learned by the use of the model but also allows interaction with the understanding and voices of others involved in work. Learning distributed leadership can be both specified and emergent LMD (Gold *et al* 2007) but is essential for alignment of practices for positive organisation change and performance (Harris 2008).



### WEB LINK

For more information on the instruments from the Distributed Leadership Study, go to <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/dls/instruments/>. For details of cultural history activity theory, go to <http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/pages/chatanddwr/chat/>, the site of the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research.

## EMERGENT ACTIVITIES FOR COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

### RESEARCH AND PARTICIPATIVE ENQUIRY

Bennett *et al* (2003) suggest that distributed leadership is an 'emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise' (p.3). As a consequence, much of the influence that is exercised can be hidden from view or operate without the awareness of formally appointed managers and leaders. For example, one of the first studies of communities of

practice within organisations highlighted the way groups worked and learned according to local norms, values and stories about what works, and much of this was at variance with what managers believed (Brown and Duguid 1991). In schools, it was research seeking to identify successful leadership that revealed distribution through collaborative and joint working (Day *et al* 2000). If distributed leadership is a way of thinking about any organisation, particularly those aspects concerned with leading in practice at all levels, researching practice is a way of revealing emergent aspects (Spillane *et al* 2008). One activity is to use the tools of distributed leadership suggested in Quadrant 3. While these can be seen as specified activities, the findings are likely to be a surprise but they will allow managers to learn about local networks and communities which form the social capital of an organisation. Understanding how these operate allows the possibility of intervention to enhance organisation purpose and alignment.

Research and enquiry can be highly action-oriented and involve many others in a process, especially during times of change. For example, Action Research is concerned with researching to take action in relation to make improvements to a difficult problem. Managers play two roles: that of researcher and that of interventionist (Eden and Huxham 1996). Action Research becomes a participative enquiry when those under study become actively involved in the study throughout the process and are involved in the discussion of findings and the next actions. According to Whyte (1991), Participatory Action Research (PAR) has three important features:

- organisation or community members are active in the process of research and construction of meaning with researchers
- actions are jointly determined in a process of continuous learning
- the outcomes of the process, the learning, serve the interests of action-taking and research-making.

PAR gives particular attention to the ongoing and jointly determined process of collective meaning-making, so we can see its connections to distributed leadership.

A similar approach to participative research is found in Appreciative Enquiry (AE) (Reed 2007), which considers how people in an organisation view what works and what they value in what they do. This allows interesting and different ideas to emerge and show how different voices can exert an influence on an organisation's future. The focus is very much against failure and problems and for considering success. According to the work of Cooperrider *et al* (2000), AE considers the 'best in people, their organisations and the relevant world around them' (p.5). As a process, the whole organisation is considered for involvement in change, which moves with the process of inquiry. Four parts of a cycle – the 4-D Cycle – provide guidance:

- Discovery – conversations about possibilities
- Dreaming – ideas and stories for the future and what might be
- Designing – asserting the ambitions into plans for the future
- Delivery – action planning around specific activities, tasks and processes.

An example of the use of AE can be found at Keers (2007), where an inquiry into workplace culture was completed at O<sub>2</sub>, the mobile phone company. Staff were asked what they like about working at the company. A viral approach was used by working with 10 staff who approached 2,000 other staff informally over four months. Key positive themes emerged, such as Great Relationships and It's the Little Things That Count, which were then used as the basis for 100 interviews which resulted in changes. A noticeable improvement in staff satisfaction was recorded soon after change in practice and management behaviour became incorporated into the AE process.

### LARGE GROUP INTERVENTIONS

AE can employ a number of techniques, including methods for 'whole systems change' which bring everyone who has an interest in an issue together into an event to find possible changes. Such events can make use of large group interventions, of which the best-known are Open Space Technology and Future Search Conferences.

The aim of large group interventions is to provide a momentum for change based on the commitment of participants who have a key role in generating ideas and implementing actions to make change work. It also recognises that those closest to a problem are likely to have critical information that can enrich the change strategy. This avoids the top-down 'cascade' approaches that are often employed by managers but usually fail to gain commitment and are open to distortion.

The purpose of Open Space Technology (Owen 2008) is to allow discussion of a complex issue or question by those who have an interest so as to explore the possibility of collaborative action based on what emerges. The event can last from half a day to three days. For example, in 2009 an Open Space event in Barnsley which posed the question 'What kind of leadership do we need in Yorkshire?' attracted over 75 participants for a one-day event. Because the issue is complex, there are no single answers to the question. Instead, there is a chance for participants to set their own agenda based on what they want to offer as possible contributions. Open Space begins with a plenary of all participants who are able to make offers of contributions at particular times during the event. Space is provided to allow delivery of offers and choices are made, but then it is entirely up to the participants to decide what happens. As one of the key principles states, 'Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened.' Participants are also allowed to follow the 'law of two feet' which states:

If at any time you find yourself in any situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, use your two feet. Go to some other place where you may learn and contribute.

During the conference, a record of events is usually kept and this becomes the conference proceedings at the end, distributed among all participants. A key benefit of using Open Space is the opportunity for different voices to be heard

and allowing the formation of new networks of collaboration. These all enhance an organisation's or community's leadership capability. The *LMD in Practice* below considers one person's view of the Barnsley event.

### BARNSLEY OPEN SPACE

David Taylor, *The Edge Coaching* and *Wakefield College*

I was at the Open Space event held in Barnsley and run by the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network. At the event I set up a group to explore what kind of learning opportunities we need to create for leaders as we deal with the volatile climate in which we operate. The group was inspiring in its ability to create a meaningful conversation where people were able to contribute and be listened to rather than be argued against by people wanting to be 'right' about their particular views.

The themes that came through regarding learning that leaders need to do was interesting. It was all about being able to connect with people in an open way, communicate openly, be able to listen to 360-degree feedback, be able to coach and be able to access the intelligence of

emotion and feeling. There was also a theme around going outside our comfort zones and not just sticking to what and who we know.

I found this very heartening – people know what they need leaders to be like. They know that so often we don't create opportunities for enabling leaders to develop these skills. We are in an area that has nothing to do with Business degrees, MBAs, etc, etc. In many ways the best leadership development is in effective people and self-development skills. We need to develop the systems and structures in our businesses to facilitate this kind of development in our leaders. We need to do it at this time especially as our old ways are being so strongly challenged by what we have created financially and socially and spiritually.

In a similar way Future Search Conferences (Weisbord and Janoff 2000) attempt to bring about system-wide change based on the preferred futures of participants. Through conversations, common ground emerges for action and new approaches rather than resolving differences or reaching conflict resolution on every issue. Usually lasting two to three days with between 10 and 100 participants, Future Search Conferences are based on the following principles:

- 1 The 'whole system' is in the room, either directly present or represented. This might involve a single department or unit, the whole organisation, or the system of which the focal organisation is a part (eg customers, suppliers, distributors, etc).
- 2 Diversity enhances understanding and action.
- 3 There are no 'experts' but
  - people with information
  - people with resources/authority
  - people affected.

Participants who are close to issues and therefore have valuable knowledge and influence are able to explore their past and present to create conditions for

future action. All information and ideas are visible to everyone all the time, and self-managed discussions including action plans take place from individual, organisational and global perspectives. The conference tries to map the present in all its messy complexity – what participants are proud of, sorry for, and so on.

Warzynski (2004) reports on the use of Future Search at Cornell University within the Department of Population Medicine and Diagnostic Sciences. The purpose was to develop joint understanding to provide information for the strategic plan. Thirty-nine participants attended a one-day conference, preceded by an email survey of key questions relating to the future of the Department. The conference produced goals, strategies and action plans for the future which, as one participant reported (p.110), provided:

more meaningful results than I anticipated in a short time. It was a good and refreshing experience, meeting and working with others in the Department, identifying common issues to move the Department and the diagnostic lab into the future. There is more in common among colleagues than there are differences.



#### WEB LINK

Find out more about Open Space at <http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?AboutOpenSpace> and about Future Space Conferences at <http://www.futuresearch.net/method/whatis/index.cfm>. Other large group interventions include World Café at <http://www.theworldcafe.com/> and Syntegration at <http://www.syntegrity.com/>.

Large group interventions pose quite a challenge to individual managers and leaders. Firstly, they are quite difficult to organise in terms of timings and logistics. Open Space, for example, needs just that – space for activities to occur. Secondly, there can be no certainty of the outcome since the processes imply a strong degree of self-management and direction by the participants, but this is distributed leadership in action, so those with formal authority have to trust the process and appreciate what emerges. Thirdly, large group interventions create equality and democracy in terms of who is allowed to speak, participate and exert influence, and there also needs to be an acceptance that whatever emerges will become a contribution of value to an organisation or community. It is the minimum that can be expected if those in nominated leader positions are to deal with what we called the leader's conundrum in Chapter 1. We would also argue that in making such a response, both individual and organisation leadership capacity are enhanced.

#### E-LEARNING

The term 'e-learning' has a number of possible meanings. For example, Sambrook (2003) sees e-learning as any activity of learning that is supported by information and communication technologies (ICT). The CIPD (2004) would agree with this view but allocates more attention to 'connectivity' and the importance of the purpose of training in organisations. However, in the light of the different definitions of LMD in Chapter 1 which differentiated between planned and emergent approaches, we would suggest that given the current exposure of most managers to connected technologies and their use of it on a regular basis, we have to recognise the informal and unplanned possibilities of e-learning too.

We also have to recognise that it has long been possible for managers to learn at a distance, and, as argued by Stewart (2010), e-learning has to be linked to historical attempts to enable learning at a distance through correspondence courses, such as the CIPD's open learning route to qualifications and the Open University's MBA programme. According to Stewart, key features of such programmes are:

- The learner is not immediately or continuously in the presence of or supervised by a trainer or tutor.
- The learner does, though, benefit from the services of a training or tutoring organisation.
- Such services may include support from a distance provided by a trainer or tutor.
- Such services always include learning materials provided by the training or tutoring organisation.
- Such materials can be a variety of forms and media, and courses usually utilise a mix of these forms and media.

Distance-learning has offered flexibility and autonomy to learners, and it has continued with advances in ICT and, of course, connectivity via the Web. This has created new possibilities that extend distance-learning towards e-learning, including mixing approaches such as the idea of blended learning by which connected ICT can be matched with paper-based material or DVDs and audio. Early evaluation of the benefits of e-learning included the ability to learn 'just in time' at the learner's pace and convenience, and the provision of updatable materials with reductions in delivery costs (Pollard and Hillage 2001). Managers have thus been able to bypass a number of hurdles in accessing LMD materials and articles via the Internet, many of them freely available. Of course, a key skill for managers is learning how to search and choose from the vast amount of material now available. Such has been the generative power of ICT that there has been an explosion in the availability of new information and knowledge, with rapid dissemination. Some organisations such as Motorola, BAE and Heineken have responded to this growth by creating corporate universities (CUs), and so there has been some attempt to formalise the access of managers to such materials. Gibb (2008) suggests that the purpose of a CU is

to provide 'strategically relevant [learning] solutions for each job family within a corporation' (p.143). It has been argued that a CU reflects an organisation's strategic priority for learning, which aligns activities such as LMD across a widely dispersed global workforce (Paton *et al* 2005). The deliberate use of the word 'university' does seem to suggest an attempt to promote learning excellence and raise its status, although critics have been concerned that most CUs are simply re-badged training departments (Walton 2005). Leaders and managers are seen as critical to the success of formal e-learning programmes in organisations (McPherson and Nunes 2008).

The implied formality of LMD through CUs and the more recent extension in the provision of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) is both enhanced but also threatened by the emergence of Web 2.0 technology and social networking (CIPD 2008), which allows managers to join online groups and build their own networks, communities or even alternative identities in Second Life! In addition, and in combination, perhaps, we are increasingly able to access online information and link with communities or preferred individuals (eg Twitter) through mobile phones and wifi-enabled laptops. This form of mobile learning or m-learning (Sambrook 2003; Stewart 2010) cannot be formally controlled by an organisation but does enable managers to engage with others, any time and anywhere.

There is probably no limit to the amount of material that will be available to managers via various electronic or wifi connections. This is the stuff of e-learning (Rossett 2002) but it still has to be engaged with or 'stirred' in a process of LMD. Stewart (2010) recommends using a blended approach partly because e-learning alone has not yet been shown to be effective. He suggests that other methods such as coaching and mentoring can be used in combination with e-learning so that LMD is more focused on individual requirements and action can be considered for workplace application.



#### WEB LINK

Blended learning and e-learning both require some degree of moderation. A well-known model is Salmon's five-stage model at <http://www.atimod.com/e-moderating/5stage.shtml>.

#### SUMMARY

- An LMD policy is a symbol of an organisation's intentions and contributes to a positive HR context to support LMD.
- Many organisations are giving attention to their talent management systems, identifying individuals' high potential or roles which are of value to the organisation.
- LMD activities have to include both formal and informal learning processes, specified, emergent, individual and collective activities.

- Training programmes and courses, both internally and outside an organisation, are a common method of participation in LMD.
- Many organisations work with competency frameworks to provide the focus for activities.
- There are a large number of higher and further education institutions and others that offer programmes for LMD, usually leading to accreditation.
- The use of the job for LMD involves planned opportunities such as promotion and secondment.
- Leaders and managers often find informal processes more effective than formal ones.
- Experiential learning can be used to stimulate the involvement of managers so that they can reflect on aspects of managing and leading.
- Projects can be a powerful development tool for managers and leaders.
- Group and team development programmes seek to engender a climate for shared meanings and activity.
- There are a number of ideas and tools for learning distributed leadership.
- E-learning in LMD is more effective when blended with other methods.

#### QUESTIONS

##### For discussion

- 1 Why should an organisation develop a formally stated LMD policy?
- 2 How convinced are you that the balance between informal and formal development ought to be changed?
- 3 What is the value of e-learning in LMD?
- 4 Should a leader learn to understand distributed leadership?
- 5 What is the value of using the outdoors in LMD?
- 6 What LMD activities are needed for the creation of ethical leaders?

## GROUP ACTIVITY

Get together in a group of four to work on the following case study.

*You have been asked by the training director of a large chemical organisation to investigate the effectiveness of outdoor management development and then suggest how most value can be obtained from sending all managers on such a programme.*

Use the web to gather data.

- Go to <http://www.aee.org/> . This is home page of the Association for Experiential Education. It provides research findings on outdoor development and links to other pages.
- Also, [http://www.geocities.com/dr\\_adventure/activitypage.html](http://www.geocities.com/dr_adventure/activitypage.html) is a page of activities for the outdoors.
- A resource for reviewing outdoor management development can be found at <http://reviewing.co.uk/index.htm> .

Finally, prepare a presentation based on your findings.



## FURTHER READING

BOYATZIS, R., COWEN, S. and KOLB, D. (1995) *Innovation in Professional Education*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass

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MANN, T. (2007) *Facilitation: An art, science, skill – or all three? Build your expertise in facilitation*. Bradford: Resource Productions

WEISBORD, M. (2008) *Future Search: An action guide to finding common ground in organizations and communities*. Sydney: ReadHowYouWant.com