A CRITICAL STUDY OF MANAGERS IN PRACTICE AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION AND INFLUENCE ON THE OVERALL KNOWLEDGE AND BUSINESS IMPACT IN AN ORGANISATION

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas, and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted for Submission ID: 10092 by the Faculty Ethics Committee on the date of 21/02/2019.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 60,018 words.

Name: Elizabeth M. Blower

Signature:

Date: 10th May 2021

Dedications

To my parents Moyra and John, although you did not see the end of my journey, you are always with me.

To my family Paul, Susan, Keith, Karen, Bethany, James, Emily, Millie, Sophie, Kenny, Jen, and David thank you for your love, support and patience.

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Abstract

Line managers are faced with the challenge of developing their personal knowledge, management practice and 'people skills', in order to be able to effectively share their knowledge with others and support their learning and development. The opportunity to learn and develop these skills occurs constantly in the workplace, practice learning, and lifelong learning being embedded in continuing professional development.

The framework evolved in this study was used to help understand the individual and contextual variables that contribute to managers in practice contributing and influencing knowledge in an organisation. A qualitative methodology approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews to explore the richness of the line managers experience, identifying communication, trust, experience, and confidence as significant factors in the creation and sharing of their knowledge.

The results of the study indicated there was a link between management practice and experience, the development of people skills, the building of trust, growing in confidence and knowledge sharing. In addition, the results of the study confirmed that communication and the building of trust are essential if the line manager is to contribute to building knowledge in an organisation.

Keywords:

line manager; practice learning, lifelong learning; qualitative methodology approach; knowledge sharing; communication; trust; building knowledge.

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Abbreviations and Keywords

Abbreviations

HRM = Human Resource Management

ICT = information and communication technology

KMS = Knowledge Management Systems

JD-R model = Job-Demands-Resources model

Keywords

Front Line Managers

Line manager

Knowledge hoarding

Knowledge sharing

Employee engagement

Training and development

Self-Awareness

Self-Discipline

Self-Development

Self-Discovery

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 RATIONALE

1.1.1 Why the research is important

Line managers play an important role in organisations, increasingly involved not only in the operational side of the business but in Human Resource Management, aiming to successfully meet their organisations business aims and targets with the support of their teams. Organisations need to support the development of this first line of management so they in turn can support the development of their teams. In addition, organisations need to create a climate where learning is encouraged so all staff feel they are supported in their learning and are able to develop to fulfil their potential.

As the role of the line manager has become increasingly more stressful, within all sectors of industry, they find themselves under continuous pressure. With markets and trade becomes increasingly volatile there is an ever-increasing need to scrutinise and control costs, especially staffing costs, leading to a pressurised and stressful work environment. Whilst they take on extra responsibilities, they are expected to develop and manage not only themselves but their teams as well. Line managers typically manage people on a daily basis, whilst also acting as the link between employees and senior management, yet "many promotions into front-line management positions result in 'accidental managers' who are ill equipped to perform successfully in their new role" (Farnfield, 2017, p. 1), even though this is a pivotal role for the organisation.

Line managers that are promoted to become 'accidental managers' then form part of what should be an additional worrying issue for the organisation: "nearly 60% of front-line managers underperform during their first two years therefore driving performance gaps and employee turnover across the entire frontline" (Farnfield, 2017, p. 2). The impact on

any team being led by an inexperienced manager who is still learning not only the organisations policies but also the people skills they require, at the same time building trust between themselves and the team can result in both poor performance and low staff morale.

Lowe (1993) and Hales (2005, 2006) both accept that while there are issues related with entrusting human resource management to line managers it has been recognised that the role of line managers has become more about ‘administration and decision making’ because of additional responsibilities they now take on, particularly in the area of human resource management, and that this characterises them and makes the different to role of ‘supervisors’ (as cited in Evans, 2015). Whilst the additional responsibilities they take on may be decisions they are required to make on a daily basis and smaller in scope, such as scheduling staff or they may be larger in scope such as setting performance goals, they can still impact the organisations bottom line in a positive or negative way. Becoming more involved in administration and decision making may take them away from the role expected of them from the organisation, that of motivating and engaging with their teams to achieve the organisations goals.

Organisations need to understand how line managers influence employee engagement, how they can influence employee performance and how they contribute to knowledge sharing and knowledge development within their teams and the organisation. By reaching an understanding of this they can identify how this contributes to giving the organisation a competitive advantage. It should also be noted that people management can get in the way of employee engagement as much as drive it. It is easy for employers to assume that employees are inherently demotivated, and the solution is for management to inspire and lead them in an engaging way. It can equally be the case that employees are naturally motivated and only demotivated by factors such as a lack of support, poor line management or frustrating Human Resource Management systems. A minority of employees may not want to be engaged, so recruitment practices and performance

management are important tools. However, an engaged workforce is difficult to recruit and retain. What drives employee engagement varies to some extent depending on the context. What motivates or demotivates people, and the challenges and opportunities in fostering employee engagement, can be shaped by many factors, including individual differences (for example, personality), organisational culture, management structures and leadership.

How line managers share knowledge throughout their team impacts on all areas under their responsibility, from organisational policy, their people, and the perception of the organisation. It has been suggested that much of the power and influence of line managers comes from the ability they have to use their specific knowledge of the strategic plans of the organisation and how they introduce it into operation through knowledge sharing with their teams (Wai-Kwong, Priem and Cycota,2001). Again, this indicates that the sharing of knowledge by the line managers with their teams is pivotal to the success of the organisation. Tsoukas (1996) takes the view that "the key to achieving coordinated action does not so much depend on those 'higher up' collecting more and more knowledge, as of those 'lower down" finding more and more ways to get connected and interrelating the knowledge one has (p. 22). Line managers may need to act as facilitators for communication and collaboration amongst their team.

The importance of line managers' sharing their knowledge rather than hoarding it – by either refusing to share it or making it difficult to use –is that it contributes to their own and their teams development, their interaction with peers and subject experts, continuing training and developing, ultimately providing the organisation with the culture it needs to be successful. The benefits, as well as increasing trust and collaboration, include increased interaction, improved problem solving, gives easy access to information and means important knowledge remains in the organisation (Youngren, 2018). For employees to grow, develop and stay engaged the manager must be confident enough to share their knowledge. Creating a culture within the organisation that means employees

can make mistakes and learn from the experience, provides them with the chance to do things differently and improve their performance. This is vital for the manager too, as much of their learning will also be from the mistakes, they make rather than formal training. Having to 'think on their feet' to solve staff and customer issues on a daily basis adds to their knowledge base, which builds with experience.

Where the line manager has succeeded in creating a climate of trust and learning, there will be increased social interaction and cooperation among the team. Staff are more likely to share their knowledge and become involved in problem solving, increasing their performance~~,~~ and learning. Experienced staff can be used to mentor and support new staff to enhance their performance and speed their progress. A team where there is shared knowledge, effective communication and trust will function more effectively and deal with workload more efficiently. The importance of knowledge being shared is highlighted by Shuck (2010): "When employees feel they are growing and learning, self-confidence and self-achievement develop, resulting in confidence at work" (p. 314). The benefit to the organisation of having engaged employees, both in terms of customer service and productivity are evident.

Organisational culture plays an important role in employee engagement and retention, how they view the organisation will ultimately be shown by them either becoming an 'advocate' or a 'critic'. How business is conducted, how workload is managed, how people work and function as a team and the treatment of customers should all come together to provide an experience that showcases how the organisation functions, essentially what the organisation believes in being demonstrated to the outside world. Schein (2000) proposes that the difficulties that may occur with the knowledge management process among people are connected to the 'psychological climate' in the organisation, which in turn depends on organisation culture. If the knowledge management process is viewed as one whereby knowledge is created, shared, and put to practical use by means of social relationships and a supportive organisational culture, then there also needs to be the

knowledge of how to support an organisational culture that encourages employees to create, store, transfer and apply knowledge (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006).

Oliver and Kandadi (2006) state that “organisational culture plays a key role in developing knowledge culture” (p. 19). This makes the role of the line manager important as they perform a critical function in building the knowledge culture in organisations. They do this through dealing with immediate organisational problems, issues that often involve customer-facing contexts. The line manager serves as a conduit with the organisation linking the customer to the wider business. The line manager can be an important source of business intelligence, providing senior management with an insight into the performance of the organisation. Empowering line managers to communicate concerns relating to a problem is important if the business is to be responsive to customer needs and organisational failings.

Janz and Prasarnphanich (2003) argue that knowledge management is regarded as closely related to, and influential on organisational performance and stability. Athalekar (2017) states that information management is a fundamental part of the process within many organisations for the expertise and knowledge to be transferred to create value for the organisation. Retention of managers, staff and customers is vital for any industry or sector as the cost of attracting new ones is both costly and time consuming to the organisation. An additional cost is the loss of valuable knowledge and experience associated with staff turnover.

Tooman, Akinici and Davies (2016) advance this by arguing that knowledge is deeply rooted in the context in which action happens - “what is known, the one who knows it, and the context of action are bound together” (p. 19). Hislop, Boosua and Helms (2018) propose that knowing and knowledge grow through practice and that people’s knowledge will develop as they work through activities and gain further experience. Line managers are typically faced with dealing with conflicts, making decisions and managing people.

They typically have little training and support and are left to acquire the skills they need by trial and error, often referred to as being left to “sink or swim” (Petty, 2016). The management role from the practice knowledge perspective is to develop a culture where knowledge is shared, provide forums where people can socially interact with each other, implement a mentoring system where experienced and inexperienced team members are paired together to supply support and learning and to facilitate communication and collective problem solving amongst their team (Hislop et al., 2018).

The advancement of technology has seen new systems develop that increase the amount of knowledge available. Access has become quicker and easier to a larger number of people worldwide. Significant reductions in the financial cost of obtaining, processing, and communicating information are changing the way business is conducted. Most organisations observe their competitors use of information for sustainability and growth, and they recognise the need to become directly involved in developing their own competitive advantage. Zhang (2013) discusses how the interest in knowledge and the use of information and communication technology has taken on a growing importance in businesses. Whilst it may not provide more flexibility in terms of working hours or place of work in some sectors, especially in the retail and hospitality sectors, it does provide increased opportunities to share knowledge. It does not however mean that knowledge management will automatically improve or that the practices carried out in daily work will change. There is much knowledge available that will be stored, but never accessed or utilised.

1.1.2 The benefactors of the research

There is the potential for the employees and teams in the organisation, the line managers involved in the management of their teams and the organisation to all be benefactors of the study. The benefit to the employees and teams will be they will be given the knowledge they need to allow them to carry out their job role effectively and have the

chance to use the knowledge and experience gained to influence their career path. Having a line manager that is willing to act as a coach and mentor to their employees and teams provides personal involvement and the chance to build a relationship based on respect and trust.

Line managers need to have the opportunity to learn from their peers as well as through experience. Having a mentor to support them and learn from can give them the opportunity to understand how to become a better manager and how important to their success it is to be able to form a positive relationship with their team, providing a learning climate that means they and their teams can learn by making mistakes and their experience. Sharing their knowledge allows for the development of their teams and the building of trust providing the line managers time to delegate effectively, giving them the time, and thinking time needed to concentrate on the demands of their job role.

Newell, Robertson, Scarborough and Swan (2009) advocate that organisations that stimulate knowledge sharing benefit from greater employee engagement because it demonstrates to the employee that the organisation values them as employees and what they have to offer. Newell et al. (2009) then argue that employees who feel valued will engage more which results in higher quality work and have a stronger commitment to staying at the organisation. Consequently, this builds a more inclusive culture that amplifies the depth of knowledge throughout the work environment. If the line manager feels that there is support from the organisation in creating a learning environment where knowledge is shared and valued, they will see the benefits of creating the same environment for their team. Building an inclusive culture where knowledge is shared leads to creativity and innovation, leading to the creation of new knowledge for the organisation.

The organisation should benefit from having employees and line managers that are engaged and loyal to the organisation. If they create a culture of knowledge sharing, where collaboration among employees is encouraged, they will potentially have access to

the knowledge that individual employees have, and a way of transferring that knowledge throughout the workforce. By increasing engagement and loyalty the organisation may reap the benefit of being able to retain experienced staff, reduce recruitment and training costs and retain knowledge in the organisation.

1.1.3 Interest in the research

This topic is of interest as having been a line manager in the retail industry I became aware of how experience in the job role, practice knowledge, being mentored, building a team, and managing people contributed to my personal and professional development. Awareness of the problems that can arise when managing people and a team, the different motivations for working that individuals had and seeing the negative effects of not sharing knowledge led to an interest in management issues and development of employees and members of my team.

As I became more experienced, I gained both the confidence in the knowledge I had acquired to share it with others, and an awareness that other managers were asking questions with increasing frequency indicating that they trusted the knowledge I shared with them. The benefits of sharing my knowledge with my team became obvious as they became able to carry out their roles effectively ensuring the store ran smoothly, freeing me to be able to expand my knowledge in a variety of roles in retail.

Wai-Kwong et al (2001) argue that the distinctive nature of the line managers responsibility is that they fill a role between the strategic focus of the organisation and the operating implementation of the focus of the organisation and that their influence is drawn from having specific knowledge that enables them to influence both strategic and operational organisational priorities (as cited in MacNeil, 2003). This argument resonates with my experience in the workplace. Having been able to attend meetings at head offices, oversee visits from area managers, executives, and owners and take part in

forums for senior managers within cluster areas, the opportunity to use specific knowledge of product, customers, processes promotions and knowledge of the area working in was used by buyers and head office staff to influence some of their decisions. My store was used as a ‘centre of excellence’ due to sales and standards in the store, and one store was used to trial product before being launched into other stores depending on their reception.

1.2 RESEARCH TOPIC

1.2.1 Clarifying the topic

Wintersberger and Saunders (2020) discuss the formulating and clarifying of research questions from broad ideas that involve reviewing the theory and being self-reflective in the process of refining the research topic. Wintersberger and Saunders (2020) go on to further argue that it is important to analyse the context and types of theoretical contribution to be able to obtain a clearer theoretical contribution and more manageable research focus, with greater practical relevance. It became evident when formulating and clarifying the research questions that there has been limited research conducted into line managers as a group and specifically their role in knowledge sharing. Although they are considered to hold an important position in the organisation they work in and are expected to take on the role of trainer, mentor, and coach, they may receive little training themselves in how to perform their role and create high performing, engaged teams. Reflection on my own practice and experience resulted in the research focussing on ‘line managers’ experiences in the workplace.

The research aims to identify the impact that line managers have in relation to knowledge management and the development of their teams. It is anticipated that the research will gain an understanding into how line managers develop their own knowledge, how they successfully transfer knowledge to their teams, and what the benefits of these activities

are to the organisation. There will be a focus on the line managers willingness to share their knowledge, what effects there are if they do not share their knowledge, and the climate and culture in the organisation that needs to be created or exist to stimulate knowledge sharing.

The research plan will be implemented to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of line managers and how they influence employee engagement in organisations, with a specific focus on management effectiveness and practice/organisational knowledge. This project will therefore take a qualitative approach to exploring themes and trends in depth; giving participants scope to convey feelings, emotions, opinions, and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews will be used to increase understanding of the line managers involvement in developing and sharing knowledge. Template analysis will be used to provide a thematic analysis of the data gathered from the interviews. It also provides a flexible framework and the recognition of researcher insight required by the epistemological approach of interpretivism being taken.

The aim of this research is to understand how line managers contribute to knowledge sharing and knowledge development in organisations by promoting effective relationships at work, improving communication, increasing service value, decreasing conflict, resulting in increased collaboration and efficiency, creating an environment that inspires their teams to produce their best work.

There have been numerous frameworks proposed for knowledge management though, in general these recommended concentrating on knowledge itself rather than on the people who collaborate and share knowledge. In addition, these frameworks do not integrate knowledge management with collaboration. Cha, Kim, Park and Lee (2014) recognised the significance of bringing collaboration into the knowledge management framework and saw that it enhanced the framework as knowledge sharing increases

considerably as collaboration combines with technology tools to enhance knowledge transfer. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 1.

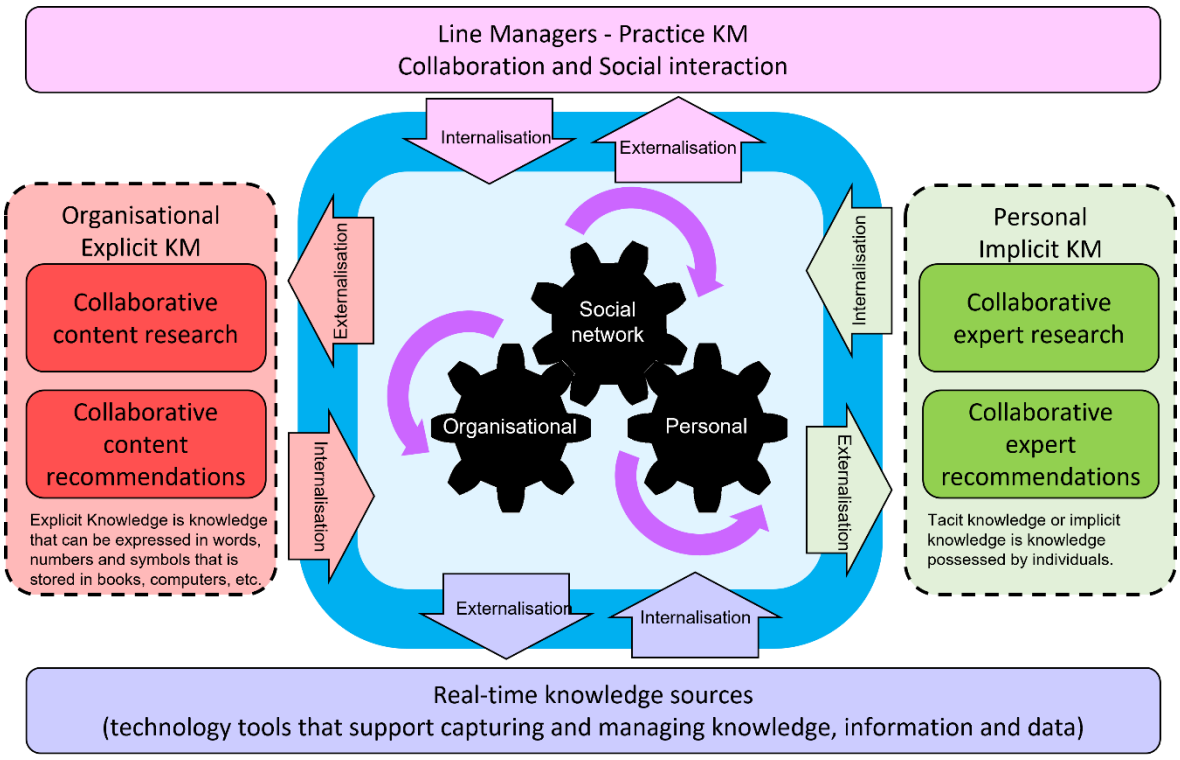


Figure 1: Modified Collaborative Knowledge Management Framework, source: Cha, Kim, Park, and Lee. (2014)

The importance of collaboration and social interaction in knowledge management and building practice knowledge, places social networking, organisational knowledge and personal knowledge at the centre of knowledge sharing in the organisation. The modified framework will be used as the basis of the research, exploring how line managers combine their personal and practice knowledge with their organisational knowledge to collaborate with internal and external networks to contribute to overall knowledge on their organisation.

1.2.2 Narrowing the topic

The research was narrowed to line managers working in industry with management experience, with first-hand experience of building and transferring knowledge in their

organisation. Exploring the richness of their individual subjective experience will provide insight into how the building and sharing of their knowledge can in turn impact the individual employee, the team they lead and the organisation they work for. At a time of instability and uncertainty in industries and organisations the role of the line manager not only in sharing knowledge but in maintaining employee morale and achieving business targets has increased their potential contribution to their teams, their customers, and their organisation.

The challenge faced by line managers is twofold – how to develop and build their own knowledge and how to develop and build employees and their teams' knowledge. Managing people and their different personalities and motivations can prove more difficult than following organisation policies and procedures. Building trust and relationships across the business can take time but are vital to the line managers success. Having the ability to communicate clearly and effectively, whether in sharing knowledge or delivering the organisations vision, is key to their success.

1.3 THE RESEARCH FOCUS, AIM, QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 The focus of the study being explored is

Knowledge as an Organisational Asset: How do Line Managers Contribute to this Key Resource.

1.3.2 The research question to be investigated has been identified as

What impact do Line Managers have in contributing to overall Knowledge in an Organisation?

1.3.3 Research Aim 1 and Objectives 1 to 4

Aim 1: To critically review and critically synthesise current literature with the aim of establishing Line Managers' contribution to Organisational Knowledge:

Objective 1: To explore the literature that establishes the theory of the impact Line Managers sharing their knowledge has on their contribution to Organisational Knowledge.

Objective 2: To study the literature to assess whether the theorists have identified a relationship between sharing knowledge, social interaction, collaboration and Line Managers contributing to knowledge in the organisation.

Objective 3: To investigate the relevant literature to identify the factors that may affect knowledge in an organisation.

Objective 4: To examine the influencers and contradictions in the literature on the relationship between the Line Managers and the development of knowledge in an organisation.

1.3.4 Research Aim 2 and Objectives 5 and 6

Aim 2: Use the proposed methodology to attempt to understand the reality of the job role and see how this effects developing and transferring knowledge:

Objective 5: To investigate how Line Managers contribute to knowledge in an organisation through semi structure interviews and thematic analysis (template methodology) to bridge the gap between current literature to answer the research question about knowledge in an organisation.

Objective 6: Analyse the data from the interviews to achieve an in depth understanding of the experiences of Line managers (the participant's) in developing themselves and their teams to identify the gap in knowledge and practice in current literature to answer the research question.

1.3.5 Research Aim 2 and Objectives 7 and 8

Aim 3: Framework for line managers to engage with the process of management learning:

Objective 7: Identify the determinants that encourage line managers to engage with and see the benefits of the process of management learning.

Objective 8: Develop a framework that enables line managers to become self-aware, identify gaps in their skills, stimulating self-development with the aim of creating a culture that enhances their capabilities through collaboration.

1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE – SYNOPSIS OF EACH CHAPTER

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This section will introduce the research topic and the context of the research in this study. The research focus and the researcher's interest in the research question will be outlined and the scope of the research specified. Attention will be paid to the relevance of the research and who will benefit from the findings. The research question will be defined, along with the aims and objectives of the investigation. The objectives will be explicitly linked to specific aims. Finally, there will be an overview of the chapter structure highlighting what will be discussed in each chapter.

Chapter 2 - The Literature Review

The Literature Review aims to contextualise the study of line managers and identify what role they have in knowledge contribution in the organisation, reviewing prior literature. Section one provides an overview, section two discusses the terms data, information, knowledge, and wisdom and section three examines the various types of knowledge. Sections four to eleven provides an insight into line managers, their role and influence on knowledge sharing. Sections twelve to twenty discusses the attributes and relationships between line manager and employees engagement. The penultimate sections from twenty-one to twenty-seven talks about training and development. The chapter finishes with conclusions and literature gaps.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology

The methodology chapter starts with an introduction section and a background section. Sections three to six discuss paradigms, research philosophies, ethics and the research design. Sections seven to thirteen discuss research methods, the method used, participants, a pilot study, the interviews and identifying themes.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

The findings section starts with an introduction, it then discusses the coding and process to recognise emergent themes identified.

The analysis of themes section starts with section one which is about the experience of the line managers in building their own knowledge. It then moves onto section two which is about employee training and support. Section three discusses the importance of an effective team. Section four explores the value of trust. Section five discusses the importance of communication. Section six reviews the building of engagement within the team. The penultimate section, section seven discusses the significance of organisational culture in knowledge sharing. Finally, the last section, section eight discusses the use of technology in transferring knowledge.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The conclusions section makes deductions on the findings and analysis and introduces the contribution to knowledge and the framework. It then discusses the originality of the research and the limitations of the study.

Contribution to Knowledge

This section discusses the contribution to knowledge from the literature review, it then examines the contribution to knowledge from the interviews and findings and concludes with the line managers knowledge contribution to the framework.

Recommendations

The recommendations section reviews the gaps still remaining from the literature review and then talks about the gaps still remaining from the interviews and findings, it then evaluates the limitations of the study and makes proposals for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 OVERVIEW

It can be argued that line managers play a crucial role to play both in the success of their individual teams and in the success of the organisation, making their contribution key, evidence suggesting they have a significant responsibility both in managing the bottom line and with their increasing involvement in people management (Townsend and Loudoun, 2015). The knowledge and skills they possess, their attitude to learning and developing their people, how they build their teams, the trust both that they display in their team and the team in them, amplifies the impact on team member (employee) satisfaction, productivity, and retention, in addition to the organisation's growth and profit.

Knowledge sharing is recognised as stimulating an organisation to develop the ability to innovate, build and sustain competitive advantage (Newell, et al., 2009, Bhatt, 2001). If employees across all levels of the organisation can be motivated to share knowledge, it could be possible to create a knowledge base that would help them find effective ways to counter their competitors' advantages (Foss, Husted and Michailova, 2010). Knowledge and knowledge management has been identified as a resource that is a critical factor for an organisation remaining competitive, therefore, making the acquisition and application of the line managers and hence employee's knowledge and skills a priority (Bollinger and Smith, 2001). Bartol and Srivastava (2002, p.65) defines knowledge sharing as "individuals sharing organisation relevant information, suggestions, and expertise with one another". For the knowledge to have an impact in an organisation, the knowledge belonging to the individual employees and the knowledge that resides in the organisation, needs to be disseminated throughout the workforce. Sondergaard, Kerr and Clegg (2007) consider that this is what makes knowledge sharing and collaboration a key area in knowledge management.

The existing literature identified that there are five main circumstances that influence effective knowledge sharing, including the connection between the knowledge source and knowledge recipient, the form and location of the knowledge, knowledge recipients' learning predisposition, knowledge sources' ability to share, and the environment in which knowledge sharing occurs (Cummings, 2003). Much of the knowledge shared in organisations needs to be shared either between the individual and the team, so the development of relationships and the creation of a culture where sharing knowledge is encouraged are important to this being successful, which may be difficult to achieve as there are individual conflicting perceptions of the advantages of sharing knowledge involved.

2.2 DATA, INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

The initial stage in knowledge management is to distinguish between the basic differences between data, information, and knowledge. Ackoff (1989) first introduced the concept, categorising the content of the human mind as a ‘hierarchy’ or pyramid of knowledge that consisted of data, information, knowledge and culminating with wisdom. Jennex and Bartczak (2013) produced a revised version of the knowledge pyramid, incorporating learning, filtering, and transformation processes and technologies to reflect their view that there are differences in the knowledge management knowledge pyramid.

Data on its own can be viewed as raw facts, a value, a measurement, and a descriptor. When presented by itself data has no meaning and has no connection to an individual. To acquire meaning data needs to be placed in some sort of context. Information is organised, structured data, becoming knowledge through cognitive processing, only then can it be thought of as ‘meaningful information’. (Bhatt, 2001, Cooper, 2016). Bhatt (2001) goes on to argue that the difference between knowledge and information is dependent on the individual’s perspective and interpretation.

Knowledge at a basic level changes data and information into meaningful information, with the capacity for it to be developed and transferred, making it available to the right people at the right time and place, enabling them to make effective decisions (Ahmad, Lodhi, Zaman and Naseem, 2017). Knowledge is knower dependent, created and consumed by people, generating new systems, products, and services (Satija, 2015).

Whilst there has been much discussion as to what constitutes knowledge, a definition is made difficult as it is subject to different meanings and interpretations as well as context dependant. Bolisani (2018) indicates this is a problem, “at least in the managerial sense, since knowledge, becoming a strategic organizational resource, needs to be defined as an operational concept adequate for a business environment and not as an abstract one for a transcendental world of ideas” (p. 7). Bolisani (2018) states that a good explanation of knowledge is that it is fundamental to working and social contexts in addition to the behaviours and influence of individuals.

Wisdom, Jashapara (2004) contends is a term even more difficult to define, being seen as an elusive concept. Yet Rowley (2006) identifies wisdom as being likely to have a “significant impact on success and impact at individual, organisational and community levels” (p.252). This impact could be because with wisdom comes the ability to operate in a critical or practical way in situations (Jashapara, 2004), brings together the moral, social and practical aspects of problem solving, and the ‘how’ that means these people are distinct (Hammer, 2002). A working definition of wisdom by Rowley (2006) drawing on the perspectives in literature is that it is “The capacity to put into action the most appropriate behaviour, taking into account what is known (knowledge) and what does the most good (ethical and social considerations)” (p. 257).

2.3 TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Bhatt (2001) presents knowledge as organised data that aligns with organisational procedures and operations acquired through experience and practice. Bollinger and Smith (2001) proposal is that knowledge is an understanding or insight that has been gained by means of study, observation, or experience. Both these definitions emphasise the importance experience, practice and observation play in the development of knowledge. Cook and Brown (1999) encapsulated knowledge work in organisational environment as being the ‘epistemology of practice’ and the ‘epistemology of possession’. Each views knowledge as something different, either knowledge is something people do, through processes and practice as in the epistemology of practice, or as something people have, a thing or an object as in the epistemology of possession.

The epistemology of practice views knowledge as being constructed and negotiated through social interaction, sharing, and creating ‘norms’ using stories, tools and symbols to achieve a link between knowledge and action or practice. The aim of knowledge management from this perspective is to provide an enabling context that allows people to do and say things differently that help them to improve. ‘Knowledge as practice’ is referred to as ‘knowing’ by some proponents, emphasising the blending of what people know, what they do, who they are and where they are, acknowledging the social nature of knowledge.

The proponents of knowledge management through the knowledge as practice lens consider knowledge to be formulated and agreed through social interaction, inherent to social situations and practices (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Gherardi, 2001; Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003 and Orlikowski, 2002). The studies they conducted showed that social groups did not learn by changing their tacit knowledge (the epistemology of possession) into explicit knowledge, which is then shared. It was in fact transferred by the means of creating norms, stories, tools, and symbols which connects the individual experience to

the knowledge of the broader community. They view knowledge as being performed by people, something that is intrinsic to their practices.

Newell et al (2009) view managing knowledge as ‘looking at the varied ways in which actors in particular social situations understand and make sense of where they are and what they are doing’ (p.6). This view of knowledge enables both the cognitive and social aspects to be explored. Knowledge is considered to be a social and organisational activity, the role of social networks is considered key, and knowledge is translated (by the group) not merely transferred. Orlikowski (2002) describing knowledge as “an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted as actors engage the world of practice” (p.249) concurs with the view of knowledge as being a social activity. The creation of ‘communities of practice’ are examples of groups of people in an enabling context, with the intention of achieving a specific task or purpose.

Alternatively, Newell et al, (2009) argue that the epistemology of possession views knowledge as a cognitive process, and therefore is a possession of the human mind. The knowledge is owned by the individual, who can then develop, apply and use their knowledge to improve effectiveness in the workplace. The aim of knowledge management from this perspective is to obtain knowledge from the individual and make it available to use as an organisational resource, changing it from practice (tacit) knowledge to explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994).

Hamilton, Coldwell-Neilson, and Craig, (2014) agree that knowledge management research provides a clear description between data, information and knowledge (as cited in Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Davenport and Prusak, 2000; Liyanage, Elhag, Ballal and Li, 2009). They then go on to suggest that “the term knowledge management appears to be an overall description of what is occurring. When the definitions of data, information and knowledge are examined more closely it is clear that the knowledge management process

is a combination of information management and knowledge translation" (p. 67). Figure 2 illustrates this thinking.

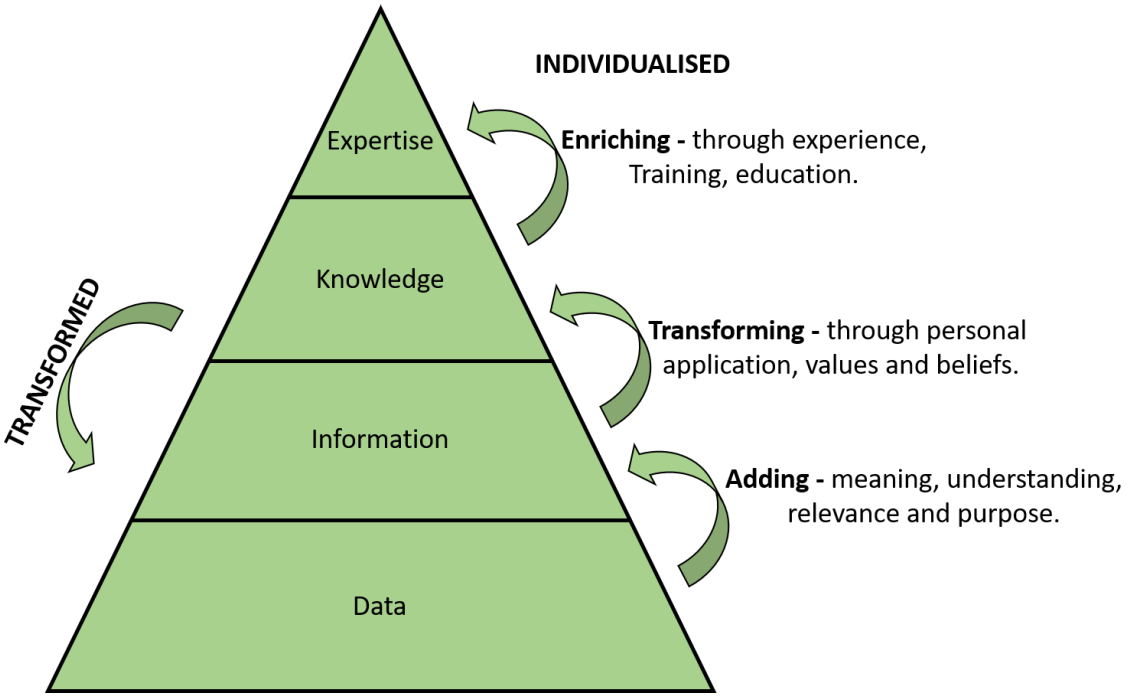


Figure 2: Knowledge hierarchy,

source: Hamilton, Coldwell-Neilson and Craig (2014).

2.3.1 Knowledge management

Dalkir (2013) states that "Knowledge management is the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organization's people, technology, processes, and organizational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation. This coordination is achieved through creating, sharing, and applying knowledge as well as through feeding the valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued organizational learning" (p. 21). Coming from an interdisciplinary approach, it has its roots in diverse disciplines such as strategy, human resource management, sociology, psychology, information science, computer science and management science (Jashapara, 2011).

However, there has been no agreement reached when defining and conceptualising knowledge management (Lloria, 2008), leading to two distinct approaches emerging in relation to how to manage knowledge - technology and the people centred approach. Whilst the technology approach focuses on the introduction and use of information and communication technologies, and so can appear to be nothing more than information management, the people centred approach focuses on managing knowledge through the management of the people who have and use knowledge, making it appear to be affiliated with human resource management. Holsapple (2005) however considers that knowledge management cannot now be separated from technology and so organisations need to combine both approaches when implementing their knowledge management. With the advent of smart phones, the growth of social media and the amount of information available via the internet, combining the two approaches has increased.

Knowledge management in broad terms leverages knowledge assets to enable the organisation to benefit (Alavi and Leidner, 2001) and improves the ability to adapt to the continuous changes that are present in the marketplace (Yahya and Goh, 2002). It is not just managing knowledge or a technical challenge, but includes organisational elements including culture, human resource management and leadership (Heisig, 2009). The way that knowledge management has developed has led to it now encompassing managing knowledge processes and work, not just knowledge itself (Newell, 2015). Four core knowledge processes have been identified, forming the knowledge management life cycle: create, store, share and apply (Heisig, 2009).

Two of the popular perspectives used when considering knowledge management are the objectivist and the practice-based perspectives. From the objectivist view knowledge is something that can be collected and stored, as it is a separate entity. Employees can search and access the knowledge as it is stored in repositories. As such it is a technical approach with the emphasis on knowledge management technologies.

The practice-based view is that knowledge is contained within humans and so the focus is on facilitating communication so that knowledge can be shared and actioned. The social world is understood through practices, activities and performance, knowledge being linked with action or practice. To enable this to happen the organisation must establish a culture that encourages people to share knowledge, and where managers understand the importance of knowledge and evaluate their employees, not only on their productivity but also on their contribution to knowledge management. It views knowledge as a social phenomenon that is shared with others (Bain and Mueller, 2016). Barnes (2001) defined practice as "socially recognized forms of activity, done on the basis of what members learn from others, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly" (p.19).

Practice does not concentrate just on words and thoughts; it involves the use of material and physical objects as well. They set the limits of what is actually achievable as well as being the tools that available to carry out the practice. The focus is on how human activity is interwoven with objects. This means that material objects can be both tools for knowledge management and the reason it does not progress. However, as Newell et al (2009) state "it is not a one-way relationship-the design of material objects...influence human activity but also result from it" (p. 17).

2.3.2 The role of technology in knowledge management

The creation of new knowledge that increases the knowledge of the organisation requires the interaction of people through media or instruments, with the focus on people, and the subsequent impact made by HRM on knowledge management practices (Yahya and Goh, 2002). Porter and Millar (1985) argue that the information and knowledge exchange is changing the business landscape and that no organisation can neglect these changes. Significant reductions in the financial cost of obtaining, processing, and communicating information are changing the way organisations do business. Most managers observe

their competitors use of information for sustainability and growth, and they recognise the need to become directly involved in developing their own competitive advantage.

Digital technology includes methods, systems, devices, and knowledge that use digital and computerised systems that are used to transmit data and deliver information. Advances in the use and availability of digital technology has driven changes in the workplace, including learning processes which uses technology to support workplace learning to enhance learning and job performance (Li and Herd, 2017). The increased affordability of diverse tools and equipment digital technology has given learners the opportunity to decide how they want to learn, given them access to learning opportunities, enhanced the learning experience through the creation of learning communities, and provided ‘just-in-time’ performance support through knowledge sharing in real time (Li and Herd, 2017). The ability to take immediate action through learning ‘just in time’ has led to learners using this approach in preference to using the more traditional linear curriculum or subject-based approach (Gilmore, 2010).

Zhang (2013) discusses how the interest in knowledge and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has taken on a growing importance in businesses. In some organisations it may provide flexibility in working hours as well as increasing the opportunities to share knowledge. It does not however mean that knowledge management will automatically improve the working patterns of employees or that the practices carried out in daily work will change.

The two systems often used by organisations to improve knowledge management are both based on an epistemology of possession. Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) are used for example typically to capture, store, and share information using organisational intranets or email (Alavi and Tiwana, 2002). The aim is to turn the knowledge people possess from practice (tacit knowledge) into knowledge that can easily transmitted to others and can be embedded into widely available routines (explicit

knowledge). ‘Platform’ and ‘channel’ technologies (McFee, 2006) are involved in the storage and transfer of knowledge. Channel technologies are used where a person or group require specific information from a particular person, and this is passed from a source such as email for example. Information and knowledge that may be required in the future will be stored using some sort of platform or repository technology, for example an organisational intranet. The information and knowledge can then be retrieved as it is needed.

Enterprise systems support and control work, standardising processes embedding ‘best practice’ into software packages. There is an assumption that this ‘best practice’ is identifiable and can be captured enabling it to be transferred across the organisation. This does not always succeed, as not all relevant information may be shared, it may be the same practice will be carried out differently by different teams, providing different results and there is the challenge to identify what ‘best practice’ looks like.

Most organisations use both of these systems, sharing knowledge and information via email, communication possible with other departments, senior managers and head office. Organisation knowledge is likely to be contained on intranets where information is contained in operations manuals, providing product knowledge and possibly employee workbooks. The problem remains that the information is only useful if it is retrieved and used. This may not happen due to the volume of information available, or because the information has not been updated.

‘Best practice’ often fails to have an impact on team performance because it is generic and may fail to take into consideration factors such as different team capabilities and experience. One overriding problem for all knowledge sharing is that as knowledge or knowing can be perceived as giving personal power to the person holding it, making them reluctant to share what they know. Newell et al (2009) suggest that the knowledge

available to or being held by organisations “may be trivial and unhelpful while the important knowledge continues to reside in everyday practice” (p. 155).

The epistemology of practice in contrast accepts that knowledge is socially constructed (Newell et al., 2009), rejecting ‘Knowledge Management Systems’ assertion that standard practices and ICT communication channels are what link people and groups. Relationships, sharing knowledge, shared understandings and how knowledge formation is viewed are highlighted as key from the knowledge as practice stance. ICT still offers opportunities for knowledge sharing with the development of the Web 2.0 and Enterprise 2.0 which allow interactions through sites such as Facebook, You Tube and LinkedIn.

McFee (2006) identifies Enterprise 2.0, within the organisations firewall that allows not only content to be shared but also allows the observation of the process of the knowledge production itself as who has added, deleted or amended content is transparent. McFee (2006) further suggests that this gives the intranet the potential to become a continually changing structure with the authors as they add, delete, or amend the content creating the structure. Organisations have been slow to make use of 2.0 technologies as there is not the same managerial control as some of the other methods, providing more opportunity for negativity expressed to be expressed which the organisation may not want to be available.

Lin (2007) found that their results pointed to a significant relationship between ICT use and knowledge collection and employees receiving knowledge, this contrasted with the discovery of no such significant relationship when it came to people donating their knowledge.

Syed-Ikhsan and Rowland (2004) hypothesise this may be because in organisations employees exhibit a mindset that views knowledge as power to be used for personal advantage rather than as a resource to share and be used as an organisational resource.

ICT and the investment organisations put into its development on its own may not prove to be sufficient to facilitate knowledge donating, proving more difficult to distribute knowledge on online databases and intranets. Thus, although ICT can give access to knowledge, it is how it is used and applied that is important, the sharing of knowledge therefore involves social and human communication and co-operation, not purely ICT usage.

Having a technological tool that is well designed and user-friendly will simplify the task and make the time needed to share ideas less. Appropriate training in using the tools can make the use of the systems more efficient and reduce cost (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2002). Information technology has become increasingly vital in facilitating knowledge flow in organisations, however where this sometimes fails is where inadequate attention is paid to human factors which play a critical role if new systems are to be introduced effectively (Cabrera, Cabrera, and Barajas, 2001). Where information technology is successful is where it has been specifically planned to improve human networks that already exist in the organisation. It is important that the technology the organisation chooses matches existing organisational culture (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001). Human resource managers should play an active role in the selection of information technology to ensure that the technology chosen builds upon or enhances, rather than clashes with, the existing knowledge-sharing networks within the firm.

Aljuwaiber (2016) however asserts that people rather than using codification knowledge-based management systems prefer face to face assistance and feedback. It may be that whilst technology is appropriate when explicit knowledge is being shared, implicit knowledge is more effectively shared by direct personal contact. Brown, Dennis, Burley, and Arling (2013) found during their study that people would, regardless of how effective the organisations computing systems were, seek the knowledge they required from people they knew out of preference. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002). found this was particularly evident in new employees where they were building upon their relationships.

Brown et al. (2013) underlined the importance of the individual social networks nature and structure as elements for knowledge-sharing practice in organisations, expecting knowledge would be shared on a person-to-person basis, allowing knowledge to be transferred outside a formal computing system. This however was not what they found, the results finding that codified knowledge did not significantly influence the computing systems in a person-to-person knowledge sharing process, particularly where people had experience in their job roles, having been in post a long time. Brown et al. (2013) considered that it may be the tasks complexity that leads to an increased interaction in person-to-person knowledge sharing, emphasising social networks role in the sharing process.

Whilst there may be some disparity between technology's effectiveness in transferring and sharing organisational knowledge, this disparity may occur because people may rely more on their social networks when acquiring knowledge and avoid relying on technology (Hansen and von Oetinger, 2001). Wenger (2004) argues that organisations do not use knowledge management unless they encourage the active use of knowledge in the process.

2.3.3 Knowledge sharing

"If we want people in our organisations to share what they have learned, it would be wise to create the conditions where sharing results in personal benefit to both parties" (Roth, 2003, p. 34). Creating a climate where employees want to share their knowledge with each other and feel happy to do so is of benefit to new employees, experienced employees, and the organisation itself. Sharing knowledge can improve personal learning and give the receiver the required knowledge to make better decisions. Nonaka and Krogh (2009) define knowledge sharing encompassing the exchange of experiences,

facts, knowledge, and skills, ensuring it is available to those in the organisation that require it.

Knowledge sharing is defined by Ipe (2003) as “the act of making knowledge available to others within the organisation” (p. 341). Knowledge sharing is the way in which people provide others with their knowledge and receive knowledge from other people (Davenport and Prusak, 2000). Knowledge sharing behaviour thus requires that knowledge is both donated or brought together and collected or received. Knowledge sharing in an organisation can also be an established culture which values social interaction, evidenced in people willingly sharing their knowledge, experiences and skills (Lin, 2007), and where they are willing to learn from others and translate the knowledge into improving practice. The shared knowledge is used to help employees learn new techniques and alternatives, enabling them to complete their jobs with increased efficiency and effectiveness (Holste and Fields, 2010). Similarly, Ardichvili, Page and Wentling (2003), observed that for knowledge to be shared there needs to be both the supply of and the demand for new knowledge.

Knowledge sharing is considered as vital for creativity, and there is a positive link to creativity performance. du Plessis (2007) and Gong, Cheung, Wang and Huang (2012), both highlight the significant role that knowledge sharing plays in creativity. It has been found that where there is a high degree of knowledge sharing, the creative skills of the individual will be stimulated (Gong et al., 2012). It is a common belief amongst scholars that individual employees who can access knowledge by communicating with those who have a range of expertise are the ones more likely to develop new, creative ideas (Gibson and Gibbs, 2006; Sosa, 2011).

2.3.4 Knowledge hoarding

Knowledge and knowledge sharing can be seen as an asset employees use in an attempt to raise their status in organisations, in other words they see knowledge as power. Davenport (1997) identified that where people have concerns regarding power, rational gain and distrust they may be inclined to hide or hoard knowledge. As unique knowledge and specific roles in the organisation are obtained by the employee, others in the organisation may become increasingly dependent on them. Job insecurity can also lead to employees attempting to make themselves indispensable by hoarding or hiding their knowledge.

Research has emphasised that resistance to sharing knowledge with others is formed by having a knowledge is power attitude. Aware that their knowledge is significant, there will be a hesitation to lose this strength by sharing. Favero (2015) considered that a barrier to knowledge sharing exists because if the assumption is that knowledge is power then when it is given away, certain benefits will be lost. When certain employees in an organisation hide knowledge, a reciprocal distrust loop is created making other co-workers unwilling in turn to share knowledge with them (Cerne, Nerstad, Dysvik and Skeralvaz, 2014). Employees may have more incentive to hide knowledge where organisations have a “performance climate”, where performance is believed to be enhanced by employees competing with each other (Brooks, 2014). People need strong personal motivation to share knowledge and would be concerned about what they may gain or lose before they give it away (Stenmark, 2002). Dixon (2009) suggests that finding a way for developing generous behaviours to encourage the sharing of knowledge would be worth pursuing rather than simply offering incentives.

2.3.5 Knowledge application

Knowledge application as defined by Lin and Lee (2005) are the processes that businesses use to ensure effective storage and retrieval mechanisms facilitating easy access to the firm's knowledge. The main problem with this definition is that just because knowledge is available does not guarantee the existing knowledge is applied correctly. Meaning, knowledge itself is not what produces value for the organisation, it is the implementation to create effective action that does. To use the knowledge effectively knowledge representation and distribution are essential. While these still do not guarantee the application of knowledge, there is a greater opportunity to use the available and distributed knowledge (Sun and Hao, 2006). Knowledge application requires the retrieved knowledge to be used in decision making, problem solving, developing competencies in people to ensure they are placed in jobs and teams where they can best enhance productivity, and providing people with training so they are brought up to speed quickly (Sagsan, 2006).

2.4 WHO ARE LINE MANAGERS

Cohen (2013) defines line managers as first-level managers, involved at both an operational level and a service level in an organisation. Tansky and Cohen (2001) indicate that line managers whose involvement with employees takes place daily, are well placed to facilitate their employee's development. Hirsh and Jackson (2004) further indicates that an organisations ability to successfully utilise their line managers to develop their staff will lead in turn to them being better able to engage and motivate their staff, ultimately increasing the business contribution they make. Although this may be true of some line managers there will be some who do not have the skill set to achieve this, either having insufficient training themselves, be inexperienced in developing staff or do not feel confident enough in their job role.

Hutchinson and Purcell (2003) propose line managers are managers of a group of employees, whilst themselves reporting to a higher level of management, often placed at the first level of the management hierarchy. Employees reporting to them typically will not have any management or supervisory responsibility themselves. According to Newstrom (2006) it is the role of the line managers to get their “line” employees to realise the plans and policies required by the higher levels of management. Coordinating the work done by others they often become ‘experts’ in their departments, what they do with this knowledge and how they share it with their teams can impact the organisations success. The category of line manager can include first line managers, supervisors, and managers. For the purposes of this study the line manager is someone who manages employees directly and is accountable for their administrative and functional management. Their responsibilities extend to include the development of their employees.

Mantarova and Toskov (2019) expect the line manager to be a leader who has a high level of expertise in their field, with responsibility for and the supervision of employees, engaged in manufacturing or delivering products, goods and/or services. The line managers responsibilities in regard to people strategy alignment means they may be involved in employee retention and engagement, the deployment of available resources in the workplace, employee relations, identifying talent and career management and learning and development. The line managers competencies are expected to include engagement skills, motivating their team members and creating a culture where they are dedicated and committed to the organisation’s values and goals. It is considered that where employees are engaged, they will deliver better results, showing high levels of performance and motivation.

2.4.1 Line managers in organisations

The business pressures within industries is forcing many to consider streamlining organisational structures, the introduction of flatter management layers, and the adoption

of tighter team-working processes. All of which adds pressure to the line managers role, with the organisation expecting them to be or become skilled in multiple areas in their job role: communication, mentoring, leadership, time management and conflict-resolution, problem solving and decision-making. However, whilst skills in all these areas take time to acquire, often these managers will be in their first management post with little experience in dealing with conflicts, making decisions, and managing people.

This is worrying given that front line managers' have a pivotal role to play as they are "the direct interface between the staff and organisational policy through their roles which is primarily aimed at operational responsibilities that make them accountable for people management, customer service and budget control" Evans (2015, p.460). According to Hutchinson & Purcell, (2007) line managers are critical conduits of learning; from induction, the organising of buddies, the design of jobs that stretch, the learning function of team working and problem solving, the provision of coaching (both for poor, or new, performers and the budding stars), to the assessment of development needs both formally in the annual performance management cycle and informally as necessary or opportune.

Wai-Kwong et al. (2001) argue that the influence of line managers comes from their ability to use the specific knowledge they possess from the strategic plans of the organisation and how they introduce it into operation through knowledge sharing with their teams. Nijman and Gelissen (2011) identify that the support line managers give to their employees is considered to have the most influence in supporting and assuring any developmental employee activities are effective, both in terms of learning and the transfer of learning whilst at work. Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2013) state that the employees perceptions of the amount to which line managers consider their contributions to be of value and how much they think they care about their personal and professional needs and well-being, is a crucial way employees can be helped to succeed by their line managers in today's business environment.

Cohen (2013) suggests that learning in the workplace is made easier when line managers engage, communicate and work with their teams, guiding them and sharing responsibilities during everyday work. According to Gill (2005), showing someone how things are done and then following this by practise is a successful way to learn. It often falls to the employee's line manager, especially when they are new, to show them how things are done, and importantly it is often the line manager who structures employees' actual experience of doing a job. Xu and Cooper Thomas (2011) study on employee engagement identified that line managers who are supportive and play a role in the development of their team members are rewarded with team members exhibiting higher levels of engagement. Coetzer (2007) proposed that the line managers contribution to employee learning can take the form of providing a "buddy", receiving guidance from another experienced employee who can provide "tricks of the trade" (Billett, 2001), something new employees are unlikely to identify quickly.

The line managers that prove to be successful facilitators are the ones who most effectively apply their own learning and communication skills to support learning opportunities in the workplace when they arise, provide space for learning to take place, and provide employees with enough headroom to decide what professional development they need (MacNeil, 2004). Whitworth (2007) suggested that to be effective the facilitator, in this case the line manager, should listen and draw out awareness rather than provide the answers to the employee. In this way they will achieve the 'buy-in' of the employee, and development is more likely to be successful. In the study conducted into line managers' beliefs, looking specifically at their role as a facilitator of learning, Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) found that line managers they studied perceived the two roles, as a line manager and of facilitator of learning as two distinct roles they undertook.

2.4.2 The role of the line manager in learning in the workplace

The importance of the line manager and their relationship with their employees if workplace learning is to take place is emphasised by Silverman (2003) who identified that the response of employees to a workplace that encourages learning, will to a large extent depend on the quality of relationship between and the perspectives of the employees and line manager. Jennings and Wargnier (2010) acknowledged that it is important once learning has taken place that line managers ensure that this new knowledge or skill is applied in practice. Ideally, line managers would assist employees when setting their priorities and linking them to development objectives and appraisals. The line manager will need to continue to monitor the application of this new knowledge and practice, mentoring where necessary. As these acquired skills and knowledge are shared by the employees, best practice can be identified, sharing encouraged and good performance rewarded. Line managers can continue engagement with the learning process, coaching employees and providing feedback providing feedback to reinforce to maximise understanding of the information or ideas.

Gibb (2003) identified a key role for line managers as becoming more proactive in employees learning and development. As the workplace has begun to change there needs to be a more positive attitude shown towards continuous and lifelong learning, embedding it as an integral feature. Learning and development is becoming increasingly important to get or retain a job or for career development. This applies equally to those who may have no qualifications or basic skills, to those with qualifications, but lack a balanced skill/knowledge base, and those who are highly trained and need to keep up with new knowledge and skills. It is important that those currently in the workforce see the benefit of lifelong learning.

Eraut (2007) asserts that the influence that line managers have on workplace learning and culture is far more extensive than what is in their job descriptions. Eraut's (2004) research

data suggested there was evidence that workplace learning can be facilitated or constrained by the organisation and how work is allocated and by relationships and the social climate nurtured within the workplace, with employees learning at work affected by factors such as the line managers personality, interpersonal skills and attitude to learning. Hay (2002) presents the argument that employees leave their jobs not because they are dissatisfied with the pay they receive, but because of dissatisfaction with how their skills and talents have been developed, making the line managers role central to employee retention.

Ellstrom (2012) observed four patterns emerging when investigating how line managers dealt with the issues concerning their co-workers' learning and development. These four patterns range from enabling patterns to constraining patterns of managerial work, dependant on the amount of time they spend in their role focusing on and dealing with staff developmental issues. At the high end of the enabling pattern, the line managers' work incorporating the developmental issues would be "embedded in" their everyday activities. Common to the enabling patterns of managerial practice was that line managers used regular meetings with the staff during which they could discuss problems and issues raised, encouraging discussions in order to solve these. However, it was noted that in a constraining pattern line manager found that although they were interested in development issues, the routine tasks took priority in practice. The most constraining pattern saw line managers showing little or no interest in learning and development, but rather concentrating on the operational and the day-to-day work.

Park et al (2008) identified seven subthemes that the line manager would take on in an organisation that was committed to learning, these included the line managers creating informal learning opportunities, serving as developers (coaching and mentoring), supporting and making space for learning, encouraging risk taking, emphasising the value of sharing knowledge and development of others, giving positive feedback and serving as role models.

2.4.3 The line manager as coach

With work environments becoming increasingly demanding, organisations are turning their focus on their line managers, looking develop their coaching skills with training to support them in delivering the organisations goals (Smith, 2019). Al-Nasser and Mohamed (2015) consider there needs to be a degree of competence and leadership ability shown for the benefits of coaching to be best leveraged, shaping an ideal environment where teams can effectively learn and work, social sharing is promoted in the team (Ni, Cui, Sang, L., Wang and Xia, (2018), and relationships are built (Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014), promoting the exchange of knowledge and work-based learning.

Coaching managers refers specifically to those managers coaching within a work context members of their teams. Hunt and Weintraub (2002) consider that effective coaching "is much more powerful and useful than merely providing feedback to someone with a performance problem" (p. 2). The successful coaching manager encourages the use of reflection and learning, fosters the importance of employees taking ownership, and furthers the development and engagement of the team members in the organisation. More formal coaching sessions may be used, or the coaching manager may use informal coaching on a day-to-day basis (Hunt and Weintraub 2002; Ellinger, Beattie and Hamlin 2010). Using managers in the workplace as coaches has become increasingly popular, indeed Clutterbuck (2009) reported finding that most organisations surveyed maintained that line managers had the propensity to become effective coaches. Bresser (2010) asserts that a component of a line managers leadership style will include coaching skills, and can contribute to an empowering style of leadership, however he does not see the line manager as acting as a formal coach. Baker-Finch (2011) conversely found that the managers in the survey she conducted were comfortable leading formal coaching sessions when they were well prepared but did not have the same confidence or feel they had enough time to use their coaching skills in day-to-day discussions with members of their team.

Whilst organisations may see the advantages of coaching managers, if they have no experience of being coached themselves the managers may be reluctant or sceptical to take on this role (Ladyshewsky, 2010). Whilst if their experience of being coached has been a positive one, they will be more inclined to encourage their team members to undertake coaching and to want to continue developing their coaching skills (Knights and Poppleton, 2007). Lindbom (2007) though warns that the organisational culture needs to be created so it can be supportive of coaching, thus ensuring that coaching skills will be applied and provide role modelling.

When coaching there is an expectation that the coach will practice authentic listening (Dubrin, 2005) which can lead to the relationship between the manager and team member strengthening, even where there is no formal coaching. Scoular (2010) surmises that trust and authenticity can be created through listening. For some coachees listening is the part of the coaching process they enjoy and value most, feeling that their ideas are heeded and valued (Arnold, 2009). Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) note that the issue under discussion and being listened to is not what is necessarily the most important thing taking place, it is that people feel included, cared for, engaged and interested. With organisations focussing increasingly on employee engagement, it has become important that managers are able to listen at a deep level. Hunt and Weintraub (2002) warn that where there has been a failure to listen, participants may become defensive, reducing their capacity to learn. In listening, the coachee receives the coaching manager's undivided time and attention, allowing a positive relationship to develop (Tyler, 2011).

Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2009) identify that in many coaching theories goal setting is a strong focus. This is a good fit with the manager who sets clear expectations in their job role (Yukl, 2010). The coaching manager is however more likely to focus on work related goals rather than on the coachees goals. Green and Grant (2003) assert that goals set by the manager have to integrate with the team members needs and values. In

practice, however, Garvey et al. (2009) found that goals set by internal coaches were likely to be restrained by the organisation. Although the coaching manager may be limited as to the goals they can set, they can help people understand what motives them, what their aspirations are and their commitment to change (Riddle and Ting, 2006). Coaching techniques can be used to help team members to recognise whether their personal goals align with organisational goals, to commit to the set goal, visualise the goal, achieve the goal after considering the options to do this, and provide feedback on their progression (McCarthy and Milner, 2013). Solution focused coaching is a useful approach for coaching managers to adopt, as it is clearly goal orientated (Ellinger et al. 2010). The approach can be one of the more directive coaching approaches, where the coach can share their mental models and may direct clients towards solutions (Cavanagh and Grant, 2010).

Hawkins (2011) however believes there are limitations when coaching people as to what can be achieved. Thornton (2010) promotes team coaching as being most effect when it comes to developing social intelligence. Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp and Gilson (2008) consider there can be a positive effect on self-management due to team coaching, as well as empowering the team and factors contributing to make the team effective but call for further research exploring whether team leaders are able to be effective team coaches. Shipper and Weer (2011) found in their study that managers coaching teams could enhance commitment and reduced tension in their teams, leading to increased effectiveness.

2.4.4 The line manager as mentor

Gisbert-Trejo, Landeta, Albizu and Fernández-FerrínIn (2019) identify a mentor in the business world as being an experienced senior manager that can help launch the careers of junior managers and young professionals, assisting them to grow both professionally and personally. In the mentoring relationship mentors provide advice and motivation and give constructive feedback (Germain, 2011, Savoie, Lapointe, Laroche and Brunet, 2008).

They also need to be role models (Poulsen, 2013), be able to listen without judging (Hamlin and Sage, 2011) and have the ability to ask the right questions (Hansford, Ehrich and Tennent, 2003).

Bell and Goldsmith (2013) accept that it is not possible for all line managers to be mentors but consider that the line managers who are shown to be most effective will act as mentors. Both the coaching and mentoring role concentrate on giving the employee the motivation to learn, guide the team member in developing their skills and career and meet the development needs of the person. Raabe and Beehr (2003) as a result of their study observed that the line manager may be in the best position to act as a mentor in the workplace as they are more likely to be closer in their working time to the mentees, and the organisation benefitted from the positive impact on the mentees' job satisfaction and employee retention.

2.4.5 The line manager as facilitator

Potnuru, Sahoo and Sharma (2018) suggest that organisations should take advantage of organisational learning capability through communicating how important managers and their attitudes are when effectively implementing learning conditions within the organisation. This would indicate that managers in the organisation are the facilitators of the learning culture (Real, Roldan and Leal, 2014). Employees with enhanced competencies in an organisation striving for improved organisational effectiveness are the most vital stakeholder group in the business process. Therefore, when aiming for processes that are effective and efficient managers should be putting their employees first (Skerlavaj, Song and Lee, 2010).

For a line manager to be effective as a facilitator encouraging informal learning opportunities, they will need to maximise their learning and interpersonal skills, be responsible for the provision of learning facilities, and allow employees room to decide

how they want to develop professionally (MacNeil, 2004). The facilitator will let the employee decide how they want to develop professionally, whereas in contrast the coach or mentor will stimulate the employee to develop professionally. Whitworth (2007) suggested that the facilitator is most effective by listening and drawing out insights rather than providing answers directly. Ellinger and Bostrom (2002) studied line managers' beliefs about their roles as facilitators of learning. The results indicate that line managers in this study perceive the roles of line manager and of facilitator of learning to be distinct from each other.

Real et al. (2014) view managers as the facilitators of a learning culture in their organisations, achieving this by the application of the learning organisation characteristics in such a way that learning orientation becomes the activation for learning.

2.4.6 Negative impacts line managers can have on employees and knowledge sharing

Riege (2005) sees three potential levels where barriers to knowledge can occur in an organisation. At the individual, employee level, these barriers are often related to the lack of communication skills, interpersonal skills, time and trust. The barriers encountered at the organisational level are linked to economic viability, the physical environment, the availability of resources and the lack of infrastructure.

Hirsh et al. (2004) found if the line manager failed to support employees there were severe consequences, neglecting development needs, blocking promotion, aggression and bullying and inconsistent support and feedback. Hirsh et al. (2004) study revealed this lack of development support can negatively affect the employee leading to reduced job satisfaction, demotivation, reduced commitment to the organisation, resulting in frustration or the decision to leave. Ladyshewsky (2010) whilst exploring the line manager as coach found if line managers were unsuccessful in this role, it would also lead to disengagement and demotivation of the staff.

Gibb (2003) argues that line managers should not be considered as more skilled developers of employees than learning and development specialists in the workplace, highlighting the result of by passing the specialists may involve less development across all employees. Gibb (2003) also questioned whether the relationship between line managers and employees is key to an employee's development, as the relationship between the two may involve a conflict of interest that the line manager is not in a place to rectify.

The study conducted by Amy (2008) found that managers who are unenthusiastic and not interested in communicating with their staff form obstacles to learning. The study also found that having an authoritarian or defensive attitude or being unsensitive to their employee's needs were considered as being obstructive, constraining behaviours. Sveiby (2007) found a similar theme emerging in their study, noting that there must be active encouragement by managers if knowledge sharing is going to take place. They further found that it was not enough for managers to convey they had a favourable attitude regarding knowledge sharing and was even resented by some participants and regarded as hypocrisy. People perceived that managers lack of activity, and apathetic attitude as being the major issues that prevented knowledge being shared.

2.5 LINE MANAGER ENGAGEMENT

Line manager engagement is observed in their work role through how much of their physical, cognitive, and emotional energy they invest (Kahn,1992). Their engagement is seen when they have become involved in tasks, are cognitively vigilant, focused, and attentive; and are connected to their work and to others emotionally (Kahn, 1990). When they are highly engaged line managers exceed in their job role, willing to adapt their behaviour to achieve expected organisational outcomes (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). In contrast, line managers who are highly disengaged in their work roles withhold their

physical, cognitive, and emotional energies, and this is reflected in task activity that is, at best, robotic, passive, and detached (Rich, LePine and Crawford,2010). Fleck and Inceoglu (2010) argued that when line managers are more engaged, they are in turn expected to perform more frequently a range of behaviours that are beneficial for the organisation.

2.5.1 Importance of communication

Communication according to Shakeri, Khalilzadeh, Raslanas and Zavadskas (2020) is the most valuable skill a manager possesses, helping to connect people to each other in organisations. Communication provides a verbal and non-verbal way for people to collaborate with others in the workplace (Robles, 2012) creating a complex dynamic network between people where their interpretations are negotiated, shared and need to be understood (Hackman and Johnson, 2013). Communication plays an important role in keeping the line of interaction open and implementing an open-door policy within a company helping in the reduction of potential misunderstandings or confusions (Robles, 2012). It is also the interaction between two or more parties where information or data is transferred (Hall and McCrorie, 2001; Hartman and McCambridge, 2011), in an organisation it is a process where information and thoughts are transferred between employees and departments (Khan & Khan, 2012).

Manager-employee communication involves exchanging information between both parties, how the information is interpreted and understood with the intention of producing business outcomes (Mazzei, 2014). For the manager communication is an interaction with the employee with the goal of creating meaning and influencing others not only through words or symbols but also through conveying actions, performances, and illustrations (Hackman and Johnson, 2013). For the employee communication involves the manager transferring information to them, which supplies them with the ability to cope with their surroundings, informing them of the organisation mission and vision, policies they need to

comply with and organisational plans or strategies needed to achieve results (Lee, 2010). Managers when communicating with employees use questions and constructive as well as negative feedback so they are able to identify the employees' strengths and weaknesses, guide them to improve their service, producing awareness among employees (Gilley, Gilley and McMillan, 2009). Focussing on communication between managers and employees can result in them developing the ability to solve problems, think critically, collaborate, promote motivation and inspiration, and ultimately lead to achieving excellence (Boyle, Mahoney, Carpenter and Grambo, 2014). To be able to achieve both high levels of commitment and strong communication there needs first to be a positive relationship fostered between managers and employees (Foley and McCann, 2013).

Balliet (2010) distinguished two main types of communication, a physical discussion or face-to-face communication, and the sending of written messages or computer-mediated communication. A comparison of the two types of communication has illustrated that many employees prefer to communicate face-to-face, finding this to be the most effective form of communication, managers and employees also being aware of each other's body language as well as what is being said, helping reduce misunderstandings and misinterpretations (Lee, 2010). Welsh (2012) found that using media to communicate can be harmful if either the employees or managers do not have the training necessary to use it or do not understand the format of the multi-media tools they are using. Further friction and conflict can be created if employees feel sensitive or confidential information has been shared by managers via email (Kupritz and Cowell, 2010). However, computer-mediated information is convenient, makes communication between people in distant places or in different time zones easy and a record of information sent from one party to another is provided (Lee, 2010).

Effective communication can give managers the opportunity to assist in contributing to improving employee engagement, enhancing workplace efficiency, and resolving internal

miscommunication or conflict caused by misunderstandings (Welch and Jackson, 2007). Effective communication between employees and their managers can result in an increase in levels of trust, compassion and understanding, particularly where communication has been face-to-face (Lin and Huang, 2013). Effective communication also provides employees a fair chance to be heard and to speak their mind, allowing them to express their feelings to their manager if they feel their intrinsic or extrinsic needs are not being met by the organisation, thereby promoting a healthy workplace (Dasgupta, Suar & Singh, 2012). Ultimately, effective communication can have a positive effect for the organisation, resulting in reducing staff turnover and promoting employee retention (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011).

2.5.2 Emotional intelligence

The first feature of emotional intelligence, self-awareness begins with individuals gaining an insight and understanding into their role, how they communicate, their abilities, feelings, mood and objectives. Once they have completed this assessment of themselves, they can begin leveraging their strengths, focussing on objectives, and identifying any prospective weaknesses in their communication that need to develop. The second feature, awareness of others focuses on the person receiving the communication and building rapport, tailoring the message to the audience to achieve desired outcomes and foresee potential problems (Nguyen, White, Hall, Bell & Ballentine, 2019). Empathy is required when showing awareness of others as well as consideration to visual cues, body language and environmental factors (George, 2000). The third factor, self-regulation needs the individual to understand their role, their expectation in the organisation and the control of personal actions, sometimes regarded as contradictory communication (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Achieving this feature of emotional intelligence may be the hardest to achieve particularly when the situation is a stressful one. This means in the workplace exercising self-restraint and fully assessing the situation may avoid undermining the effectiveness of the communication and how it is received.

The fourth factor, relationship management incorporates all the other features, building the relationship between managers and employees, achieving the desired outcome through the managerial communication. Goleman and Boyatzis (2017) identify that outcomes can include influencing, mentoring, motivating, inspiring, or resolving conflict. Bell (2012) discusses the importance of building trust in the relationship between the manager and the employees, which managers can do by delivering accurate information, explaining the decisions they have made and initiating open communication.

2.5.3 Emotional intelligence and managerial communication

The employee's perception of the manager as a leader contributes to the overall work environment and the team's bond. Emotional intelligence assists the manager in recognising and understanding both their own and others emotions and enables them to manage their behaviour and relationships using this awareness (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Where the manager lacks emotional intelligence there is the risk of conflict in the team which may have otherwise been avoidable. Using other people's emotions as a way to engage in conversation and make a connection with them provides the basis for the building of trust between managers and employees. The imitation of one another's emotions can be used to express support and caring and, at a basic level is a way to communicate with each other (Gladwell, 2002). Having empathy with their team and an understanding of their perspective does not however mean the manager has to change their expectations or goals, their teams are still accountable for outcomes and addressing inefficiency.

2.5.4 Team communication

The exchange of information between two or more members of a team, whether verbal or nonverbal means can be defined as team communication (Kessel, Kratzer and Schultz, 2012). Team communication can be measured in a variety of ways: how clear the teams

members felt the information received from team members was (Hoch and Kozlowski, 2014), how frequently there was interaction with other team members (Bunderson and Sutcliffe, 2003), the extent knowledge was shared among the team members (Kessel et al. 2012) or a combination of these measures. Characteristically communication is seen as enhancing team performance by means of the facilitation and improvement of vital team processes, including coordination and strategy formulation (Marks, Mathieu and Zaccaro, 2001). Fletcher and Major (2006) identifies it having the primary purpose of resolving disputes and conflict among team members, but also serves as a channel that team members can share information critical for other team members to have.

Tucker (2017) emphasised the key role played by line managers in the establishment of good communication practices and then the cultivation of these practices in their teams. They can achieve this by planning communications, being thorough and actively listening. Tucker (2017) further stresses the need for norms to be established for teams, including how and when to interface, boosting employee productivity and trust. Scheduling regular meetings bringing team members together to discuss and address topics where the manager gives their undivided attention, making sure there are no interruptions leads to employee engagement.

Line managers should communicate with employees about strategic and tactical issues, clearly outlining policies and expectations and explaining why something needs to happen, helping them to understand the organisations decisions and vision so they can see to the bigger picture. The line managers needs to decide if they are available enough for their team, considering the possibility and practicality of being able to set time aside during the day to answer questions and monitor how the team is progressing. Using body language to display active listening, managers need to pay attention to meanings and feelings behind what the employees are saying. The ultimate goal being to establish lines of communication, making any barriers to employee engagement evident to the line manager (Tucker, 2017).

MacMillan, Entin and Serfaty (2004) reason that communication is how team members receive the information that pertains to environment and situational factors that could impact the team's tasks. Salas, Sims and Burke (2005) argue that because communication to team members distributes critical, task relevant information it can be directly related to team performance. How important this process is, has been illustrated by poor outcomes where communication deficiencies exist within organisations, regardless of whether it is in a routine or high-risk environment (Moorman, 2007).

2.6 THE ROLE OF TEAMWORK IN KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Knowledge sharing has been found to be effective in producing desirable outcomes involving problem solving (Ipe, 2003). Gorry (2008) found that knowledge sharing, when used in a networking situation, will be used to promote problem solving and cooperation among employees. Jetz, McPherson and Gurainick (2012) also identified the need for teamwork and collegiality, as these have proved to be advantageous when trying to gain knowledge. Nickerson and Zenger (2004) argue that dealing with and solving problems improve an individual's knowledge and abilities.

Working in a team can be considered as a basic characteristic of modern organisations. Moshari (2013) notes that where organisations have staff that are team-oriented they are more successful when it comes to knowledge sharing than those driven by technology. Therefore, the promotion of a spirit of teamwork is seen as being a critical antecedent for knowledge sharing to be successfully implemented. Mehra, Smith, Dixon and Robertson (2006) and Mischen and Jackson (2008) affirm there are a number of either individual or organisational settings involving decision making practices, sending out consistent messages and setting up social links where social interaction can be effectively used.

Lyubovnikova, Legood, Turner and Mamakoukav (2015) demonstrated that leaders have the ability to influence team performance by selecting suitable team members and shaping their behaviours. The behaviours of the leader have been linked to team proactivity and responsiveness (Wu and Wang, 2015). Additionally, it has been claimed that the leader's emotional attributes positively affect the teams cohesion and performance during the process of organisational change (Neil, Wagstaff, Weller & Lewis, 2016). Even so it has been acknowledged widely that the team processes and performances may be deeply affected by the team members themselves (Salas, DiazGranados, Klein, Burke, Stagl, Goodwin and Halpin, 2008) The contributions they make in analysing current practices and participating in continuous redesign of business processes have been portrayed as being crucial to enhancing team performance (Fonti and Maoret, 2016).

Connelly and Kelloawy (2003) thought there was a probability that employees working in a team where there was a positive social interaction culture may be more likely to recognise it as a positive knowledge sharing culture. This suggests that there needs to be a shift away from viewing "knowledge as power", to one that views sharing knowledge positively, to a culture that enables employees can take advantage of the organisations knowledge assets (Dalkir, 2011).

2.6.1 Social exchange theory

Aryee, Budhwar and Chen (2002) define social exchange as "a long-term exchange of favours that precludes accounting and is based on a diffuse obligation to reciprocate the conceptual underpinnings of research on work attitudes and behaviours" (p. 267–8). Social exchange theory suggests that an expectation is created with the rendering of a favour leading to the receiver having an obligation (Yen, Tseng and Wang, 2014). Whist the perceived imbalance might improve the employee and leader relationship, it might cause the employee to display negative work behaviour (Lau, McLean, Lien, and Hsu,

2016). The leadership style most likely to increase a positive work outcome is one that creates a supportive culture, recognises effort and values teamwork (Yu, 2017). A unique aspect of social exchange theory is it offers an ‘interpretive filter’ of understanding, the employees being willing to reciprocate being based on how they perceive fairness based on their discussions and interactions with their line manager (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Any lack of fairness determined in the social exchange process has the potential to be redefined, the employee basing the exchange on their personal assessment (Heffernan, Harney, Cafferkey and Dundon, 2016). It can be suggested that a line manager who is supportive, is fair in interactions and earns the employee’s trust is able to create more positive work outcomes (Heffernan et al. 2016).

2.6.2 Job-demands-resources model

The Job-Demands-Resources model (JD-R model) focuses on explaining stress resulting from an imbalance between the demands of the job and the resources available (Kim and Christensen, 2017). Work engagement occurs for employees when there is a balance between their job demands and their resources. First introduced by Demerouti et al. (2001), and refined by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), both focused on burnout, the latter introducing work engagement to add a positive psychology dimension (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Schaufeli and Taris (2014, p. 43) explaining that “high resources lead to increased motivation and higher productivity (the motivational process)”.

Where strain is caused because the demands of the job have increased where resources have not, for example lack of staff to complete work tasks effectively the effect on the line manager may be stress, the inability to make decisions and working longer hours to try and complete any outstanding tasks. Demerouti et al (2001) speculate that demands on the line manager’s time reduce their engagement by causing burnout, leading to physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, whilst their engagement will increase when they have the resources available to them to carry out their job role. Thus, the line managers work

engagement decreases when working in a workplace where there is a lack of resources (Xanthopoulou et al, 2013).

Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) identify job demands as physical, social, psychological, or organisational aspects involved in the job resulting in costs that can be either physical, physiological or psychological. These can include time pressure, interaction with clients that are emotionally demanding, a high workload and a work environment that is unhealthy (Christensen et al., 2017), ambiguity of job role, performance demands and work conflict (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Job resources can act as a buffer, protecting from the strains caused by job demands (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). When the job demands are high, job resources have an influencing effect on motivation and work engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

The motivational process supposes that organisational commitment and work engagement will be achieved depending on the availability of job resources (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). These physical, psychological, social or organisational conditions related to the job can include autonomy, job security, opportunity for career advancement or professional development, feedback provided on performance, social support, optimism, self-efficacy, personal effectiveness, resilience (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007, Akkermans and Tims, 2017, Schaufeli and Taris, 2014).

In 2007 a new revision of the JD-R model came, explaining how job resources and job demands could interact and thereby affect the job strain and motivation (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Around the same time personal resources were discussed in relation to the JD-R model (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli, 2007), and a few years later the connection between personal resources and how they predict higher levels of engagement was further established (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009b). Xanthopoulou et al. (2009b) did additionally prove that the increased engagement improved future higher levels of job and personal resources.

Personal resources were proposed as part of the JD-R theory in a variety of ways (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014), linked to resilience and the individuals' sense that they can control and impact their environment. They have a function to play in the achievement of goals, stimulating personal growth and development (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli, 2009a). These could include being optimistic, having hope, intrinsic motivation, a sense of self-esteem within the organisation, innovativeness, self-efficacy, resilience and turnover intention (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014).

Hobfoll (2002) noted that where an employee possessed high levels of personal resources such as optimism and self-efficacy, they might prove to show a higher level of resistance to adverse conditions. Social support, performance feedback and autonomy have been found to be job resources that instigate the motivation leading to work related learning, engagement and organisation commitment (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) explained that support from the line manager or colleagues can be considered a job resource, affecting how work is organised and distributed or how the team environment feels. Torrente, Salanova, Llorens and Schaufeli (2012) demonstrated that teamwork engagement shows the relationship between the social resources at team level and how the team's performance is perceived by their line managers.

It is possible for the JD-R model to be used when examining connections relating to the work environment across a wide range of organisations (Kim and Christensen, 2017) As the model uses general definitions of job demands and job resources, it is a practical model for job-related settings, allowing for it to be tailored to meet an organisations specific needs (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Albrecht et al. (2015) summarise how the JD-R model can influence engagement at work, in turn influencing performance, creativity and financial returns, further suggesting there is evidence that employee engagement can provide the organisation with a competitive advantage. A predictor of work engagement is

often seen as an interest in professional development (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008), this would indicate the importance of the employee being given the opportunity to develop and learn in the workplace. which highlights the importance of providing employees with opportunities to develop and learn at work.

Schaufeli and Taris (2014) consider the Job -Demands Resources model to be a descriptive model that whilst specifying relations between classes of variables does not provide any psychological explanation. The model specifies the kinds of psychological states and outcomes are the result of what job and personal characteristics, however not the reason why this would be so.

2.6.3 Employee engagement

Wellins and Concelman (2004) suggest that employee engagement occurs when employees are motivated by circumstances to develop commitment, loyalty, productivity, and ownership resulting in a higher level of performance. Richman (2006) meanwhile considers employee engagement to be a commitment to the organisation, on both an emotional and intellectual level. Madan and Srivastava (2015) propose that employee engagement represents employee commitment and the need to ‘go above and beyond’ in achieving the organisation’s goals. Ghuman (2016) perceived employee engagement in terms of how willing and able the employee is to contribute to an organisation’s success, putting in extra effort voluntarily on an ongoing basis, representing the extent employees go to when putting optional effort into their work.

Disengaged employees according to Rastogi, Pati, Krishnan and Krishnan (2018) have low energy and in general deliver a poor work performance, this is also due to them displaying low levels of innovation and creativity (Krueger and Killham, 2007). Disengagement can cause increasing unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life, increasing depression, negative feelings, and health problems (Demerouti and Bakker, 2008).

Disengagement is often caused by the relationship between employees and employers. Where managers are open and respond positively to people's ideas and suggestions there is more evidence of engagement at work (Fast, Burris and Bartel, 2014).

Where employees do not trust their supervisors, engagement is shown to diminish, the supervisors being perceived as inefficient and ineffective in their position (Beech and Anderson, 2003). Where managers are trusted by employees, they show full commitment in their job, making more effort in their role than their job contract requires (Birkinshaw, 2010). The employee's happiness in their job may also be influenced by the quality of their relationship with their managers. Layard (2003) found in their study that employees, on average, whilst having to spend time with their managers when imposed on them, are not happy to spend time with them otherwise. All levels of an organisation are affected by happiness and organisational wellbeing and managers and managerial behaviours can also benefit (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade 2005). In turn, the manager employee relationship is reinforced with the improvement of managerial behaviours (Brower, Lester, Korsgaard & Dineen, 2009).

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (2012) identified several management behaviours that they consider to be core factors for sustainable employee engagement: managers should be seen to be consistent in their decisions, actions and treatment of team members, trustworthy, emotionally stable and take a constructive approach to interpersonal interactions. They should take a solution-focused approach to resolving employees' conflicts, taking on a mentor, coach or mediator role dependant on the circumstances. They should promote and encourage open and transparent communication and responsible decision-making. Relationships within the team should be developed which are based on respect and empathy and there should be promotion of continuous development, improving career aspirations and job progression.

2.6.4 The role of trust in knowledge sharing

In organisations trust has been identified as being an important factor, ranging from trust in management, line managers as well as co-workers and subordinates. Knowledge sharing in the workplace improves when employees exchange information, best practice, and lessons learned. According to Pervaiz (2016) one of the main factors that influences whether an employee decides to share knowledge is their trust in management. For there to be trust there has to be a readiness to accept that you will be vulnerable (Meyer et al. 2017), believing others will not take advantage of the situation to benefit themselves. Empirical research has found that the willingness of people to cooperate, which is an important part of knowledge sharing, occurs more often where the relationship is based on trust and the individual willingly provides the necessary knowledge (Nissen at al. 2014). Thus, an interpretation of trust would be the willingness to depend on individuals or groups. Additionally, for an employee to share their knowledge they have to trust not only that management will see it, but that they will also award them for it (Serenko et al. 2016), either individually or as a group award, ultimately improving group performance (Meyer et al. 2017), knowledge sharing being enhanced by trust in the management. Renzl (2008) identifies trust as created added value for organisations by enabling them to concentrate personnel where needed to carry out tasks.

Trust in fellow co-workers or team, as well in management leads to knowledge sharing. Rosendaal and Bijlsma-Frankema (2015) consider that knowledge sharing is promoted where someone desires to belong to a group or identifies with a group. Importantly, the study they conducted indicated it was not the desire itself that increased knowledge sharing, only trust within the group intensifies knowledge sharing and leads to it increasing (Pinjani and Palvia 2013). Chowdhury (2005) notes that whilst people's trust in others is one component of trust, their behaviour and how willing they are to use knowledge in their future actions are also important.

Renzl (2008) identifies two distinct forms of trust, knowledge-based trust dependent on the individuals thinking about trust in others, and effect-based trust, dependent on emotional connections between individuals formed by mutual caring. An essential precondition for people when considering if they will share their knowledge with others, and important in the development of interpersonal trust is their belief others will behave thoughtfully. Renzl (2008) further found evidence that the more employees trusted their managers the more positive their attitude would be in sharing knowledge with fellow co-workers. Holste and Fields (2010) also identified two types of trust that would be used when determining whether there was a willingness to share knowledge. Firstly affect-based trust which derives from personal relationships and the influence that has on personal feelings about the interaction. Secondly cognitive-based trust which is governed by how confident the person is over the knowledge shared and received. Meaning that the intent to share knowledge is shaped by both social interaction and the perception of the knowledge, making co-workers trust in management essential if the employees are going to be willing to both share and use knowledge.

Studies have reinforced the idea that the impact trust has on knowledge sharing can be reduced where an organisation effectively uses information technology in knowledge management, as the person-to-person element that causes trust is diminished. Technologies from an organisational standpoint are repositories of knowledge and the associated procedures on how knowledge is shared (Chi and Holsapple 2005). When a technology-centred approach is taken it is possible to create a higher level of trust and to enhance knowledge sharing (Canary and McPhee 2010). Knowledge sharing will be dependent on how employees in the organisation utilise the technologies available to share knowledge. Information systems and technology can be used to make it easier for people to share and access knowledge at the same time creating communities that are not restricted by either time or space in the context of knowledge management and gives increased speedy access to large amounts of knowledge (Ignatavičius et al. 2015). The trust in technologies for knowledge management is a white topic in contemporary

research literature where the most important elements are trust that the technology can function properly (Kuo 2013) and trust that technology is transparent (Stuermer et al. 2016).

Elaimi and Persaud (2014) identify that one of the main influences leading to a reduction of knowledge sharing in organisations is when employees' fear they will lose their value. The correlation between losing their unique value and knowledge sharing can result in the employee considering the result of sharing knowledge will be that they will lose their unique value whilst the others receiving the knowledge, will get it. Knowledge sharing can be regarded as from this viewpoint as decreasing the career opportunities of employee's career particularly in hierarchical organisations (Michailova and Husted 2003). Knowledge sharing in large organisations, for example those involved in the information technology, telecommunications, or military fields, can be influenced by suspicion, resulting in knowledge hording (ChinLoy and Mujtaba 2011; Friesl et al. 2011). Conversely organisations who have well-established accountability-inducing practices in place can cause the employees' fear that they will their value decrease. It has been identified that the practices including evaluation of performance evaluation reinforced by rewards (Wang et al. 2014) and personal safety, acceptance, and inclusion (Raes et al. 2015) can contribute to knowledge hording decreasing.

Trust when it exists in organisational culture leads to interpersonal relationships developing, the promotion of knowledge sharing, enables knowledge management processes to be developed within the organisation, and makes individuals feel valued not as a result of their knowledge, but as a result of the skills they have gained and the desire to share with others their knowledge. Trust helps to alleviate and could even eliminate the individuals fear of losing their value, and it can influence their expectations about the behaviour of their co-workers' in the future (Renzl 2008). Trust in management lessens the fear of the employee that they will be betrayed, cheated or can be easily replaced as well as their unique value being lost (Wasko and Faraj, 2005).

2.7 THE ROLE OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Effective team development is a fundamental component of any successful workplace or organisation. Team development contributes to improved productivity and teams that are productive normally achieve their objectives. While the process of team development has many benefits, the main aim is to enable team members to work together to create impact.

2.7.1 Training and development

Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Kouzmin (2003) put forward the argument that: ‘Knowledge management is not about managing knowledge but about changing entire business cultures and strategies of organisations to ones that value learning and sharing. Although some aspects of knowledge, such as culture, organisational structure, communication process and information can be managed, knowledge itself, arguably, cannot ... Hence, one can manage or support processes of learning rather than managing knowledge’. If this is the case, then the importance of line managers in supporting the training and development and development of their teams to improve self-efficiency levels is underlined.

By using training and development programmes it should become possible to increase the employees overall levels of self-efficacy, resulting in employees feeling assured of their abilities and more confident when exchanging their knowledge with others. Team-based training should be used to build relationships vital for transferring knowledge. Knowledge sharing among employees from different departments within an organisation can be facilitated by the use of cross-training with the creation of a common language, social ties being built and an increased awareness by employees of the demands of the various job roles.

Training within the organisation should emphasise the building of cooperation and relationships among employees so as to increase and encourage knowledge-sharing behaviours. To help and develop employees to allow for the effective exchange of information to take place there should be training provided in communication skills. The provision of detailed onboarding, formalised orientation and socialisation provision are all effective ways for employees to access the values, norms and shared cognitive schemata of an organisation (Kang, Park and Kim, 2003). As a result, not only will interactions be increased among employees, but there will also be a shared language, interpersonal ties will be closer, shared norms and the ability to identify with others. The trust resulting from the relationships formed during the socialisation process is necessary for the cooperation, exchange and reciprocation that have a positive effect on knowledge sharing.

2.7.2 Informal learning

The majority of learning in organisations takes place as a result of informal learning (Bear et al., 2008), this is important as informal learning not only provides the chance for activities and interactions with others but also gives individuals the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills by taking part in on-the-job, work-related tasks (Tannenbaum, Beard, McNail and Salas, 2010). Informal learning provides a way to learn that is both efficient and effective as the knowledge and skills needed are available ‘just-in-time’, leading to effective performance (Van Noy, James and Bedley, 2016). Training scholars emphasise that to ensure knowledge and skills are optimised learning needs to be extended beyond the formal classroom (Brown and Sitzmann, 2011).

Informal learning has been defined as including behaviours and activities including knowledge exchange, feedback, experimentation, reflection, innovating, and learning from mentors and supervisors (Bednall, Sanders and Runnhar, 2014; Nikolova, VanRuysseveldt, DeWitt and Syroit, 2014). Noe, Tews and Marand, (2013) definition of informal learning has shown that it includes self-focused and other-focused activities,

identifying three categories: learning from oneself, learning from others and learning from non-interpersonal sources.

The focus of informal, continuous and workplace learning is on the individual taking responsibility for their learning and anticipating their future needs (Orvis and Leffler, 2011). Informal learning is more continuous, and learner-driven than more formal training using instructors (Association for Talent Development, 2015). Typically, it is the learner that decides on the approach taken to the learning and the duration (Van Noy et al., 2016) and will decide whether the learning has been a success.

Cunningham and Hillier (2013) posit that the term informal learning is used frequently when describing learning that results outside of a structured learning environment, suggesting learning that informal learning is anything that is not formal learning. Informal learning can be described as “planned learning which occurs in a setting or situation without a formal workshop, lesson plan, instructor or examination” (Bell, 1977, p. 280), although this describes what form of learning is not included, the implication being that formal types of learning are a more effective way of learning than informal learning (Billett, 2002). However, there are outcomes from informal learning that are seen as beneficial to individual learners, providing them with practical and applied knowledge that can improve inter-personal skills and learning that the learner is able to apply immediately to their specific situation (Billett, 2002). Van Noy et al. (2016) also argued that informal learning provides the learner with an efficient and effective way to learn as the knowledge and skills they need to be productive and deliver an effective performance, acquiring them on a ‘just-in-time’ basis.

2.8 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Organisational culture can be defined as a structured body consisting of the organisations personnel’s shared values, beliefs, behaviour norms, meanings, and practices (Robbin,

2004). Ribiere and Sitar (2003) consider organisational culture to be the most important input into the effective management of knowledge in an organisation. Consequently, successful knowledge management can only effectively take place when organisational culture has been addressed. As a multi-level construct, three conceptual levels – artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions should be integrated into organisational culture (Schein, 2000).

An organisations culture can influence knowledge sharing firstly by creating an environment where strong social norms have been created emphasising the importance of sharing personal knowledge with others. De Long and Fahey (2000) consider that organisational culture has a fundamental role in knowledges creation, sharing and use, influencing knowledge management practices by the establishment of norms when sharing knowledge. Secondly by the creation of an environment of caring and trust, important when encouraging people to share their knowledge with others. An organisations culture is created and sustained by the use of socialisation processes, storytelling and rituals. If the organisation incorporates knowledge-sharing behaviours into these experiences they will be able to demonstrate how important they regard knowledge sharing to their employees. Employees who set an example to others in the organisation, especially if it is managers and line managers taking the time to share their knowledge, will send out a clear signal that there exists a knowledge-sharing norm. Peer pressure for others to participate in knowledge exchange also creates norms for sharing (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001). In addition to these norms, encouraging knowledge sharing to take place requires creating a 'culture of caring' or of trust and cooperation (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 2003). Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) identify that 'the most often cited people management practices believed to create this type of culture are open communication, egalitarianism, fairness in decision-making processes and perceived support from the organization, co-workers and/or one's supervisor' (p.4). These practices are expected to increase trust and cooperation among organisational members.

There have been many research studies exploring if there is a link between organisational culture and knowledge management. Zheng (2009), proposed a theoretical framework combining cultural antecedents, linked to knowledge, people and work that affect knowledge management. He concluded that each of the cultural antecedents impacted knowledge management in different ways associated with the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of knowledge management. For knowledge management initiatives to succeed a culture has to be created that places value on sharing of ideas (De Long and Fahey, 2000; Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000).

De Long and Fahey (2000) considered the ways that culture could impact behaviours that are seen as key to knowledge sharing taking place. First, it is an organisations culture that is responsible for creating the context for social interaction which determines how knowledge will be used in any given situation. Secondly, organisational culture is responsible for the processes which allow for new knowledge creation and its distributed throughout the organisation. Similarly, Lopez, Peon, and Ordás, (2004) examined how the culture of an organisation affects knowledge management. They demonstrated that to be effective initiatives in knowledge management have to consider the social contexts in which the sharing of knowledge is occurring. De Long and Fahey (2000) further make the observation that it is culture that shapes presumptions about what knowledge is considered significant and is able to create a context for social interactions. A supportive organisational culture for knowledge management can in turn deliver more effective accomplishments.

2.8.1 The artefacts level of organisational culture

Artefacts can be characterised as the evident definitions of culture, incorporating organisational features, for example structures, practices and processes, rituals, technology, manner of dress and language. Combined, these components of the organisation form the artefacts of its culture and encompass everything that can be seen,

heard, and felt by someone, not familiar with the culture, entering the organisation (Barrios, 2013). Although relatively easy to discover, their translation can remain awkward, subjective and unclear. This first level of organisational culture could indicate what people in an organisation are doing, but not the reason why they are doing it (Boggs, 2002). To understand what these artefacts mean, at the second level of culture, espoused beliefs and values needs to be understood.

2.8.2 The adopted beliefs and values level of organisations

At this second level, Schein (2000) indicates that there should be an attempt to find the reasons behind observed artefacts. For example, those adopted beliefs and values where creativity is favoured, and there is evidence of problem-solving and working as a team. However, whilst values are important constituents of organisational culture, it has been shown that organisations have manifest more variety when looking at practice than at values (Hofstede, 2001). Conversely this may be due in part to the values of the organisation not being directly visible to the workers. Core values are rarely communicated through the organisation's induction programme, more thorough how the experienced employees in the organisation act, speak and make sense of the organisation (McDermott and O'Dell, 2001). These adopted values do not dictate identical behaviour and working styles every single time, to understand the bigger picture, the deepest cultural layer, basic underlying assumptions needs to be explored.

2.8.3 The underlying assumptions level of organisational culture

Underlying assumptions, or the unconscious element of an organisations culture include assumptions that may be difficult to modify as they include elements personal to individuals, for example perceptions, thoughts and feelings (Schein, 2000), these assumptions are 'known', but not talked about, written anywhere, therefore difficult to find. This level of organisational culture is displayed in both general and theoretical statements

that convey specific ideas and truths about people. It is the most difficult level of culture to change as the assumptions are not talked about making the assumptions difficult to address or change.

2.8.4 Organisational learning

Bates and Khasawneh (2005) describe organisational learning as an experience that will "support the acquisition of information, the distribution and sharing of learning, and that reinforce and support continuous learning and its application to organizational improvement" (p. 99). Additionally, Salarian, Baharmpour, and Habibi (2015) regard organisational learning as a series of organisational activities including the acquisition of knowledge, the sharing and interpreting of information, exerting a conscious or unconscious influence on the creation of a positive organisational culture. Mehrabi, Jadidi, Haery, and Alemzadeh (2013) suggested that learning would ultimately produce for the organisation an important competitive advantage and is associated with organisational performance. Where there is a lack of emphasis on organisational learning, organisational performance decreases, resulting in a drop in efficiency and effectiveness, making recovery difficult to achieve (Usefi, Nazari, and Zargar, 2013). Ahmad and Marinah (2013) identify the two factors of developing into a learning organisation and increasing training programs are necessary for the development of learning, enhancement of knowledge management, improvement of both individual and organisation performance, and sustaining a competitive advantage. Ahmad and Marinah (2013) further found that the learning organisation and commitment to the organisation commitment were correlated. Wang (2007) confirmed that the creation and encouragement of an organisational learning culture is a fundamental tool in nurturing employee's job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation, ensuring that long term the workforce is healthy and stable. Thus, organisational learning can enhance employee organisational commitment and deliver positive work outcomes.

Support, whether it comes from the organisation, line manager or peers, has been identified as encouraging knowledge-sharing behaviours (Hislop, 2003; Oldham, 2003). The support of a supervisor or line manager and co-workers is critical in the workplace to allow for creative thinking and sharing (Oldham, 2003). Where the employees feel they are supported it becomes easier to create an organisational culture which is characterised by trust, respect and caring. It is considered that employees who work in this type of environment, with their contributions valued and where they are fairly treated, should show more willingness to share and cooperate (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005).

2.9 CONTRADICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE LINE MANAGER ROLE

Hales (2006) puts forward two issues when considering this topic. The first issue is functional: and highlights the organisational tensions and inconsistencies that are fundamental and influence the line managers role. This happens where everyday management has been extended with additional management responsibilities for business performance and customer service. It is how line managers personally understand and deal with these tensions that will build their identity and influence how they perform their role. Hales (2006) then argues that critical pragmatism and understanding are complementary and can be used at the same time to create collective explanations of different aspects of a problem.

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) argue that line managers position themselves and their work in terms of leadership hierarchy when they are employed in large knowledge-intensive organisations. They suggest that there is an importance in discussions surrounding leadership, management in practice and uncertainty when considering key elements of line management. They considered line-management in an organisation with regards to the three aspects of leadership: good, bad, and ugly leadership, suggesting that line-managers randomly move between these different stances with regards to line-management. They disagree with the view that in management, for example, the line-

manager can be thought of as a reliable entity, who is a focused person with a specific leaning to the job. They imply a less comfortable perspective of line-managers, one where they are seeking to adopt, but not succeeding in acquiring management distinctiveness and a reasoned vision of their role. The outcome being that esteem appears as broken and inconsistent.

2.10 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES DISCUSSION

The research objectives for the literature review were to critically review and critically synthesise current literature with the aim of establishing how Line Managers' contribute to Organisational Knowledge.

2.10.1 Objective (i) was to explore the literature that establishes the theory of the impact of Line Managers being the main contributor of Organisational Knowledge.

The literature found that line managers play an important role in the learning and development of their team, beginning with induction, organising of buddies to support them through the early stages of their learning, stretching and developing them in their role, building a team that can work together and solve problems, coaching and mentoring, and continually assessing development needs. Their ability to engage and keep their team engaged is a main contributor to retaining their staff and thus their knowledge and experience in the organisation.

2.10.2 Objective (i) was to study the literature to assess whether the theorists have identified a relationship between Knowledge in an Organisation and Line Managers being the main contributor.

The literature found that line managers contributed to the knowledge an organisation by creating informal opportunities where learning can take, including learning from mistakes,

developing staff by coaching and mentoring, taking a supporting role and making the space for learning, encouraging risk taking and creativity, placing emphasis on the value of sharing knowledge and the development of others, giving positive, timely feedback and by serving as a positive role model. The attitude taken by the line manager to learning, developing and sharing knowledge impacts the attitude, actions and motivations of employees to freely share knowledge with others.

2.10.3 Objective (iii) was to investigate whether the relevant literature identifies other factors that may affect Knowledge in an Organisation.

The literature found that organisational culture and organisational learning affect knowledge in the organisation. If the organisational norm is one where the sharing of knowledge is considered important and encouraged, and a culture of trust, caring and cooperation has been created, knowledge sharing can be fostered. Organisational culture also influences how knowledge is distributed through the organisation.

2.10.4 Objective (iv) was to examine the influencers in the literature on the relationship between the Line Managers being the main contributor and Knowledge in an Organisation.

The literature that will be used as a foundation for the methodology in the subsequent chapter examines knowledge through the lens of the epistemology of practice (Cook and Brown, 1999). Newell et al (2009) believe this view explores the cognitive and social aspects of knowledge, considering it to be a social and organisational activity. Line managers are considered by Evans (2015) to play a pivotal role in organisations, whilst Hutchinson and Purcell (2007) regard line managers as conduits of learning. Eraut (2007) suggests that line managers have a greater influence on workplace learning and culture that extends beyond their job descriptions. MacNeil (2204) identifies the line managers that most effectively support learning skills in the workplace as those who can most

successfully apply their own learning and communication skills to support learning opportunities.

2.11 CONCLUSIONS

The review of the literature has shown that the role of the line manager is an important one to the organisation, in terms of knowledge sharing, the learning environment they create in the workplace, employee engagement, and ultimately the retention of both employees and knowledge. As it is the line managers who have daily contact with employees, their role is essential in the development and engagement of the organisation's human resources. The sharing of the individual's knowledge is dependent on the line manager creating an environment where there is trust, open communication, support and engagement. This may not always be easily achieved as the line manager may be inexperienced in aspects of the job role, unwilling, unable or not confident enough to share their knowledge or not have the trust of their team.

The importance of communication and trust were common theme throughout the literature review, whether by the individual, the line manager, the team or the organisation. Communication, especially face to face communication transfers knowledge, builds trust and allows for conflict resolution. Communication is essential for coaching, mentoring, employee engagement and resolving conflict, keeping channels open between the line manager and their team. Trust leads to the development of interpersonal relationships, the promotion of knowledge sharing, enables the development of knowledge management processes in the organisation, and makes individuals feel valued as a result of the skills they have gained and the desire to share this with others.

The demands and stresses of the job and the resources made available by the organisation are an important influence of work engagement for both the line manager and members of their team. The context in which line managers work, such as

organisational culture and structures also has an effect on their engagement, influencing their ability, motivation and performance when completing tasks. As they are required to support their teams in their job roles, sharing knowledge to achieve their potential, so the organisation should have support and training in place for the development of their line managers.

2.11 LITERATURE GAPS

The literature review was conducted to review what has already taken place in previous studies, but also to identify potential gaps in the knowledge available to satisfy the objectives and answer the research question.

The gaps identified include gaining more knowledge and greater understanding of:

(1) The impact of lack of training on 'line managers' ability to successfully carry out their job role.
(2) How the line managers are expected to fill the gaps in their knowledge to successfully build and lead their teams.
(3) How a lack of soft skills affects the relationship between the line manager and their team.
(4) The difference experience and confidence have on the line managers performance.
(5) How the organisation can support line managers to make them more effective and engaged.
(6) The factors that encourage and deter line managers' sharing their knowledge and developing their employees.
(7) The impact of trust or the lack of it has in knowledge sharing between line managers and employees.

(8) What can be implemented to provide the tools a line manager needs to be successful in their role.

These eight gaps identified in the literature review will be investigated further in the data collection element of the methodology and with this investigation the planned semi-structured interviews. Semi-structure interviews are an effective method for data collection when the researcher wants: (1) to collect qualitative, open-ended data; (2) to explore participant thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a particular topic; and (3) to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues. These eight literature review gaps will be explored during the semi-structured interview process.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research investigation sets out to explore the impact that line managers have in knowledge management, whether this is by developing, sharing, or transferring their knowledge within their teams and how this can ultimately contribute to retaining and building organisational knowledge and success. The research aims specific focus is to attempt to gain an insight and understanding of the first-hand experiences of line managers building, sharing and transferring knowledge in their teams and organisation, exploring the richness of the individuals subjective experience. Throughout this chapter it is important to keep the research question in mind. The research question is “What is the impact of Line Managers being the main contributor on overall Knowledge in an Organisation?”.

This chapter sets presents the details of the research design and methodology and will include consideration of some of the decisions taken whilst developing the study. First the chapter will provide the researchers interest in the investigation before discussing the research design in relation to their ontology and epistemology, the research approach adopted and the ethical considerations. Moving on to consider the sample, the line managers to be included in the study will be identified and the reason for their selection explained. The specific data collection strategy will be discussed, followed by the techniques for analysing the data. Having decided to use template analysis, the rational for adopting it when analysing the data collected will be outlined, followed by the stages of the research, namely the pilot study, the main study and validation studies.

3.2 THE BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The interest in the topic chosen for the research originally arose from the researchers own professional experience as a line manager in the retail industry. Progressing from the 'shop floor' to a management position combined with a growing interest in both business and management practice caused me to consider studying to obtain formal qualifications to underpin my practical experience. This provided me the opportunity to improve and expand my own knowledge as well as providing a 'toolbox' to improve my practice, providing me with the opportunity to consider the development of the team, the impact of effective delegation, both on myself and the team and how mentoring impacts on performance.

As I gained experience and confidence as a line manager, the opportunity to develop professionally was provided by my area manager, sharing his knowledge and experience with me. Being involved in the implementation of policies, processes and people management gave an overview of the importance of all areas of the business to the success of the organisation. I became interested in developing the staff in my store and saw the advantages of implementing this when I was able to be away from the store for long periods of time without the performance being negatively affected. Staff were also motivated as they were learning and being involved in different aspects of the business and being prepared to progress into management positions in the future.

Being involved in the training and support of other members of management on the area, many of them in a management role for the first time, allowed me to observe other managers and witness the role experience and knowledge had on how line managers could influence and impact on their team, both positively and negatively. With very little formal training available much of the knowledge gained was through either mentoring or 'learning on the job'. The effects of this were evident in the operations in the stores, with inexperienced managers struggling with the problems associated with managing and

developing their staff, often a lack of trust (on both sides) illustrated by their problems with effective delegation and lack of communication.

3.3 PARADIGMS

3.3.1 What is a paradigm?

A paradigm is the set of ideas, key beliefs and assumptions that influence the method selection chosen by the researcher and are shaped by the activity of distinct scientific communities (Jackson, 2003). Kuhn (1962) initially used the word paradigm to describe thinking in a philosophical way, with Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) describing the term paradigm as the researcher's 'worldview'. This worldview provides the perspective, thinking, or shared beliefs, that go on to inform how the research is interpreted. These assumptions, concepts, practices and values establish for the group that shares them a way of viewing reality (McGregor and Murname, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) view paradigms as human constructions, dealing with first principles that indicate the researcher's point of view when they constructing meaning embedded in data. It is the paradigm that defines the philosophical orientation of the researcher philosophical orientation and impacts on the decisions made in the research process, including which methodology and methods are chosen (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe,2002), directing the meaning constructed from the collected data, based on the researcher's individual experiences.

A research paradigm typically needs to be adopted when carrying out research into human behaviour aiming to enhance the studies credibility and generalisability (Kankam, 2019). The research paradigm examines the interpretation and study of knowledge, there should also be a clear definition of the studies purpose, motivation, and desired outcome (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Further Babbie (2011) identified that "social scientists have developed several paradigms for understanding social behaviour" (p. 32). As well as

providing a belief system or world view, the research paradigm provides a “framework that influences research and practice in a field” (Willis, 2007, p.8).

The philosophical traditions and assumptions consist of three separate components: ontology, the stance taken by the researcher in relation to the nature of reality, epistemology, how the researcher knows what they know and methodology, what methods are used in the study (Creswell, 2007). The four main paradigms used by researchers have been identified as: positivism, post positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Crossan, 2003; Kim, 2003). Each of the paradigms are composed of the researchers’ ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions, and the role of values and ethics (Crotty, 1998; Geels, 2010; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010). Each of the paradigms implies distinctive assumptions for studying issues which, in turn, may require different methods.

Brown & Dueñas (2019) advocate that the research paradigm can be clearly communicated by following the building blocks, as shown in Figure 3, below.

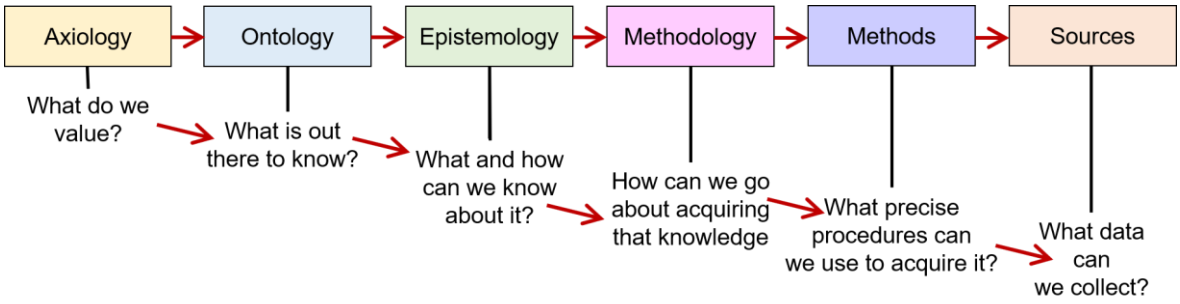


Figure 3: An overview of the building blocks for a research paradigm, adapted version of Grix’s paradigmatic building blocks by Brown & Dueñas (2019).

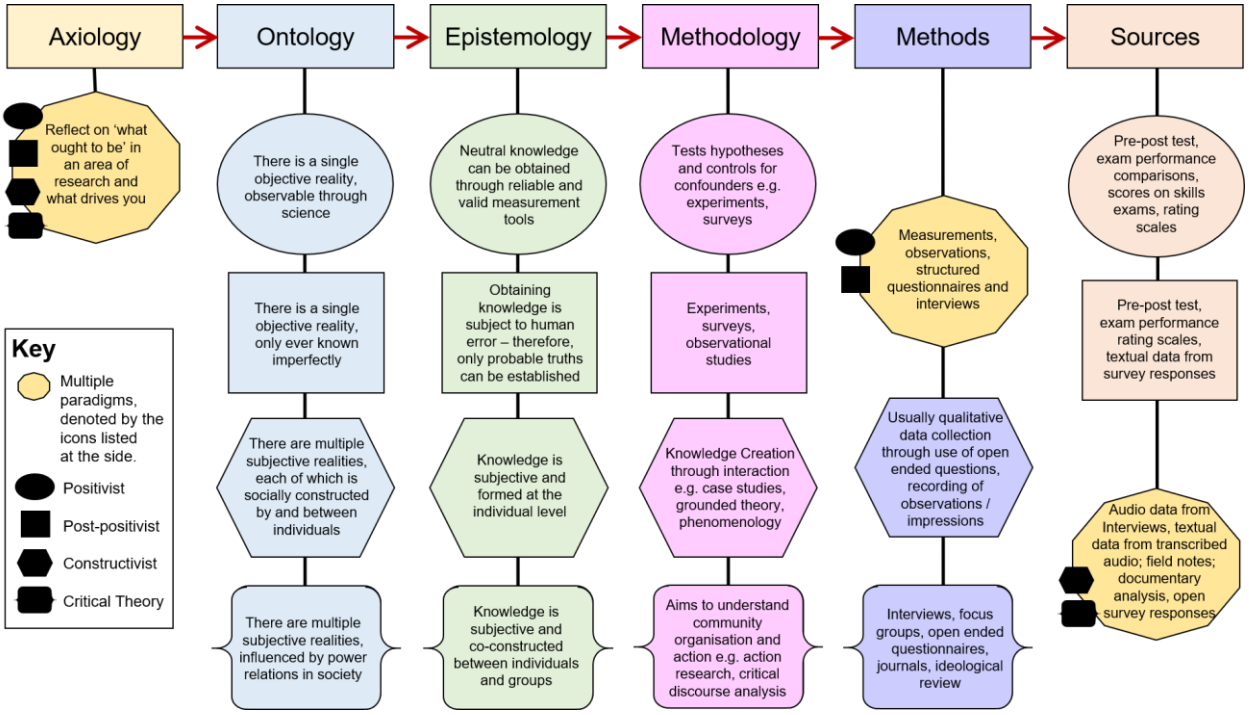


Figure 4: A detailed illustration of the building blocks for a research paradigm, adapted version of Grix's paradigmatic building blocks by Brown and Duenas (2019, p. 550).

3.4 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHIES

Philosophical and epistemological considerations need to be thought about when the research design of a study is being developed. Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2009) define research philosophies as being "over-arching terms relating to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge" (p.600). Epistemology refers to what we accept as knowledge and the assumptions we make, what knowledge constitutes of, making it acceptable, valid and legitimate, and the way in which we can communicate knowledge (Burrell and Morgan 2016). Although they are usually implicit in the research, philosophical backgrounds will affect the practice of research, influencing how a study is undertaken (Wahyuni, 2012).

Positivism and interpretivism – constructivism form the two broad epistemological positions. For positivists, scientific explanation is the basis of their research. Neuman (2003) contends that positivism considers social science as an organised method that can

be used combine deductive logic with specific empirical observations of an individual's personal behaviour with the aim of discovering and confirming a set of probabilistic causal laws which can then be applied to anticipate common patterns of human activity. For positivists social reality separates empirical facts from an individual's ideas or thoughts; is directed by cause and effect and social reality and its patterns are stable with knowledge of them added (Crotty, 1998; Neuman, 2003). One of the basic assumptions of the positivist paradigm is that the purpose of science is in developing the most objective methods it can, achieving the nearest estimation of reality possible (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2004). Researchers will use quantitative terms to explain the interaction of variables, how they shape events and what outcomes are created. Experimental studies are often used to develop and test their explanations. Using this framework to establish reliable knowledge is achieved by means of direct observation or manipulating natural phenomena using empirical techniques (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, 2005; Neuman, 2003).

From the interpretivist-constructivist perspective, which is used most commonly when undertaking qualitative research, the world is viewed as constructed, something that can be interpreted, and is something people experience experienced when interacting with other people and within wider social systems (Maxwell, 2006). This paradigm considers the nature of inquiry to be interpretive, with objective of the study being the understanding of a particular phenomenon (Farzanfar, 2005). Within the interpretivist paradigm real-world situations are allowed to unfold naturally, the aim for the researcher is not to manipulate, be obtrusive, or to control. Ulin, Robinson and Tolley (2004) found that qualitative research methodology often relies on there being personal contact between the researcher and the group they are studying, resulting in a partnership which can lead to deeper insights into the context being studied, resulting in richness and depth being added to the data. Qualitative methodologies are interested in discovery and process and are less concerned with generalisability, concentrating on developing a deeper understanding of the problem being researched and its context (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2004).

Rather than testing the laws governing human behaviour, the emphasis of interpretive researchers is for them to understand the world through first-hand experience, using truthful reporting and quotes from actual conversation to construct the perspectives of insiders (Bryman, 2001; Farzanfar, 2005), gathering data using methods that encourage the research participants to speak freely. This leads to interviews, focus groups and naturalistic observation being the widely used by researchers for gathering data using qualitative research methodology. Whilst the positivist researchers' emphasis is focussed on using measurable data, gathered using standardised tools such as questionnaires and psychological tests, where the questions are precisely worded.

Whilst for the positivist the key considerations when carrying out research are validity, reliability and objectivity, for the interpretivist paradigm it is the issues of trustworthiness and credibility. For positivists the rigor of quantitative studies is judged on whether the results are valid, reliable, objective, precise and generalisable, describing, predicting and verifying empirical relationships in relatively controlled settings. Qualitative research, with its aims of exploring, discovering, and understanding is not able to use the same criteria when judging research quality and outcomes (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2004).

3.4.1 Interpretivism

Of the four main paradigms: positivism, post positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Crossan, 2003; Kim, 2003), the epistemological position that the researcher identifies with the closest is that of interpretivism, where the view of what develops knowledge is composed of subjective meanings and social phenomena. The focal point of the research being the detail of what is happening and the reality behind it (Wahyuni, 2012). Interpretivist research is conducted with the aim of providing a new, richer understanding and interpretation of the social world and its context, looking at organisations from different groups perspectives, experiencing the workplace in different realities depending

on their role in the organisation. Interpretivism uses less rigid, more flexible frameworks for research (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, and Gronhaug, 2001), which are interested in recording meaning in human interaction (Black, 2006) and interpret what is perceived as reality (Carson et al., 2001). Focussing on lived experiences, including their own, the interpretivist researcher has insight into the research whilst remaining open to new knowledge, looking to understand motives, meanings and reasons (Neuman, 2000). It is suggested that the interpretive approach is additionally more applicable to qualitative research when there is less theory (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

Interpretivism asserts that direct observation is not the only way of finding out about the world around us, we can also use our perceptions and interpretations. People use what they perceive to interpret the signals their senses are telling them. Our knowledge of the world is formed by what we 'understand' which is based on reflection on occurrences not only on lived experiences (Ormston Spencer, Bernard and Snape, 2014). The interpretivism approach considers knowledge is a product of the exploration and understanding (not discovery of) of the social world of the people involved in the study, the focus being on their meaning and interpretations.

According to Thomas (2009): "The main point about interpretivism is that we are interested in people and the way that they interrelate - what they think and how they form ideas about the world; how their worlds are constructed…The key is understanding. What understandings do the people we are talking to have about the world, and how can we in turn understand these" (p.75).

When using interpretivism the researcher will construct meanings and interpretations built on those of their participant. Additionally, the research process is viewed as predominately 'inductive', the aim being that from the collected data there will be a theory generated rather than using data to test existing theory. Facts and values in the interpretivism approach influence the research as they cannot be distinct and totally objective, meaning

it is not possible to conduct value-free research. The researcher cannot disconnect themselves from the research they are conducting; it is likely they will become personally engaged, their findings affected by personal perception and values. Finally, methods for studying the natural sciences are inappropriate when studying the social world and social reality as they cannot, because of varying perceptions and understanding of reality be captured or portrayed accurately (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Ormston et al, 2014; Snape and Spencer, 2003).

It is essential to interpretivist philosophy that when conducting research an empathetic attitude is adopted by the researcher. The challenge faced by the interpretivist when entering the research participant's social world is to understand that world from the participants perspective. It has been argued that the interpretivist perspective is appropriate when undertaking business and management research, as business conditions can be unique and complex, especially in context. They demonstrate specific situations, conditions and interactions that involve individuals converging at a specific time (Saunders et al., 2009).

Pulla and Carter (2018) direct researchers to decide on which research method will be most appropriate to the study and the most likely to produce the desired outcomes. As this research is studying interactions and social relationships in the workplace with the aim of building an in-depth understanding of line manager and their role in knowledge sharing, the Interpretivist research paradigm was considered a suitable research method. The lens through which views of the self, other individuals and the world in general are viewed, can be impacted by variables including the researcher's life experiences, and the environment in which they live. It is accepted that these life experiences and the environment are subject to continual change.

Using an interpretivist view, the researcher can explore individuals and the society that they live in, interested in how other people make sense of the world, and building an

understanding of the behaviours of other people, or the interactions between other people (Sheppard, 2012; Rubin and Babbie, 2013). It is possible to see how individuals have actively constructed their view of actions and events, shaped and coloured by their experiences, their position and their perceptions of social relations in the society.

The interpretivist paradigm does have some limitations and disadvantages, one of these being that whilst intepretivists aim is to gain a deep understanding and knowledge of phenomena, this is done so in the complexity of the context instead of providing the ability to generalise their results to other people and contexts (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011), leaving a gap if using scientific procedures to be able to verify the validity and usefulness of research outcomes. Mack (2010) criticism of interpretivism is that the ontological view tends to be subjective, with the outcomes from the research being affected by the interpretation, belief system, way of thinking or cultural preferences of the researcher which many view as causing bias. Another limitation of interpretivism is that it does not address the political and ideological impact on knowledge and social reality, targeting understanding current phenomena rather than problems associated with the empowerment of individuals and societies, therefore implicitly neglecting the features of society caused by the issues of power and agency (Mack, 2010).

3.4.2 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with what constitutes reality and how we understand existence. “It considers what types of things there are in the world and what ‘parts’ or ‘substances’ the world can be divided into” (McQueen and McQueen 2010, p. 151). The researcher’s assumptions about the nature of both the world and reality are included in this and can determine the research objects, the phenomena focussed on and how they are viewed and approached. The two ontological positions, objectivism and constructivism hold contrasting views of reality. Objectivism on the one hand considers there to be an

independent reality, whilst constructionism on the other considers reality to be the product of social processes (Neuman, 2003).

The philosophical assumptions, concepts or propositions that are held by the researcher orientate their reasoning when it comes to the research problem, its significance, and what approaches will be taken contributing to its solution. Scott and Usher (2004) consider ontology as essential to a paradigm because it aids understanding of the things that make up the world, seeking to determine the real nature, or concepts which establish themes which can be analysed and used to make sense of research data. Ontology enables the researcher to examine their underlying belief system and philosophical assumptions, helping to orientate thinking about the research problem, how it is significant, the approach to be taken when answering the research question, understanding the problem under investigation and contributing to the solution.

3.4.3 Constructivism

The ontological position that is being taken in this research project is that of constructivism.

The constructivism philosophical paradigm is one that correlates with the approach to research taken by qualitative researchers. It is particularly appropriate in qualitative research as the paradigm endeavours to gain understanding of the phenomenon being studied from the experience or viewpoint of the participant from the collected data. One of the essential ways of being able to acquire and gain insight into, and an understanding of human perceptions from the constructivist approach is by the forming of a mutual ground where the communication between the research participants and the researcher results in the co-construction of meaning. In time this would result in theory being built, having been established by using the experiences of both the researcher and research participants (Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006).

The researcher is able to construct their own meanings from the phenomena being studied using both their own experiences and those of the participants. Additionally, both qualitative researchers and constructivists argue that because the perspectives of each participant are individual, multiple or varied, reality is subjective rather than objective. Further to this, it is through the interaction with others in both social and cultural contexts that the researcher extracts the meaning of events. Research which has its grounding within the constructivism philosophical paradigm will usually use open-ended inquiry as a starting point, through research questions. Interviewing, observing, reviewing documents and analysing visual data are the instruments that are usually associated with this philosophical paradigm (Kalender, 2007). Findings from the study are then used to construct either tentative or valid conclusions.

Traditionally qualitative research methods are used when following the constructivist paradigm, although the qualitative data may be supported by quantitative methods (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). The reliance of constructivist researcher on participants' viewpoints when investigating situations (Creswell, 2003) means most inductive research is based on interviews and interpretivist in nature. The justification for the use of interviews when collecting data in inductive research is the affinity they have with daily-life conversations and the negotiation of meaning that occurs between two parties using interactions and exchange (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), which correlates to the research approaches taken by constructivists. Each type of interviewing whether a semi-structured interview, group interview or a focus group interview has its own way of conducting the interviews and collecting the research data. The way the interview questions are formulated and the freedom the participant has to reply to the interview questions clearly show the differences between the different types of interview styles (Bryman 2012).

3.5 ETHICS

Axiology recognises the role values and ethics play in research and is concerned with how both the researcher manages their own and the participants values. A key axiological choices faced by a researcher is how they view their own values and beliefs as having a positive impact on their research, and how they will deal with the values they hold and those of the people they are researching (Saunders et al., 2009). The choice of topic shows that the researcher considers it important, and of more importance than others they have considered and could have chosen. Both the research philosophy and data collection technique also reflect the researcher's values. Saunders et al. (2009) suggestion is that where face-to-face interviews are conducted there is a greater importance placed on the responses and data collected through personal interaction with participants than those responses and views conveyed in an anonymous questionnaire.

Ethical research practice needs to be monitored throughout the data collection and analysis process (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2012) ensuring safety for the participant and the researcher and helping to anticipate any safety issues that may arise during the interviews. Subsequently all research was carried out in accordance with Northumbria University Ethical Guidelines.

Avoidance of harm is an important starting point in qualitative research, where even talking about sensitive issues might constitute harm to some participants. Caution was taken not to include questions of a sensitive nature and informed consent was gained not only for participation in the data collection, including recording and transcribing the interviews, but also for the likely outcomes of the analysis. Participants were made aware before any interviews took place that all participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were informed of the topics that would be covered, and the aims of the research, which was provided in the participants debrief sheet. Smith et al. (2012) argue that returning to the interview concerning consent with the aim to get particular verbal

consent for any developing unexpected delicate issues is good practice. The research conducted did not include participants under the age of eighteen or vulnerable adults and so was considered to be of medium risk.

Care was taken when forming the questions not to use language that would be considered offensive, discriminatory, or in any other way unacceptable by the participants. It was paramount that the dignity of the participant was respected by the researcher. There was no deception involved in either the collection of the data, or in the stated aims and objectives of the research. All communication that was undertaken was carried out in an honest and transparent way.

Data for use in this project was edited to ensure anonymity, with both the participants name and their organisations names excluded. It was not anticipated before the research took place that sensitive material would be shared with the researcher, however if this had taken place the researcher would have been to have allowed participants to review the data extracts from their own interviews that would have been appearing in a public domain document. Participants were given the right to withdraw from the process, any time during the data collection, which could be extended to when data analysis begins or up until publication takes place if necessary.

During the research hard copies of the data were stored in a locked filing cabinet and computer files were password protected. The only person with access to either the locked filing cabinet or the computer files was the researcher. Any data that if combined, for example the participants consent form and the collected data, which could lead to identification was stored independently to ensure anonymity. Throughout the research the aim was to maintain a high level of objectivity, whether this was during the research or analysis phase. Additionally, the use of misleading information, or the presentation in a biased way of the findings drawn from the primary data was avoided.

3.6 CREATING THE RESEARCH DESIGN

When creating the research design Sekaran (2009) states it is the investigators responsibility to decide upon the suitable choices to be made in the study design based on the problem description, the research objectives, the degree of precision preferred, and cost considerations. Occasionally, because of the time and costs concerned, an investigator might be limited to accept something that is not the perfect research design. Furthermore, the research design should provide a framework that should be used for planning the research and answering the research question. The decisions involved in the development of the research design include: the type of data needed, the location and timescale of the research, the participants and sources for the research, the variables in the research the methods for collecting and analysing data.

3.7 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are used to address research questions in an organised and systematic way and include techniques that are used when conducting research, including the tools used for carrying out data collection and analysis (Kothari, 2004). The data analysis and documenting the results from the analyses form the fundamental aspects of conducting research. The documenting of the analysis should provide an accurate, unbiased, complete report, providing insight into the analytic treatment of data. There are numerous approaches that provide analysis of data, and the researcher should ensure that the method used is appropriate to the research questions and the data collected. There are three general options when selecting research methods available to researchers when conducting empirical research (Niglas, 2010; van de Ven, 2007), qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

Qualitative research methods, which utilise narrative data sources and data analysis techniques and focusses on understanding and explaining the dynamics of social

relations. Maxwell (2013) additionally identifies motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes as being relevant to qualitative research which correlates to relationships, processes and phenomena which it is not possible to reduce to statistical methods. Research methods used include ethnography, action research, grounded theory and narrative inquiry. Typically attempting to obtain an individual and unique understanding of the problem the methods adopted are idealist, subjectivist, deductive, value-bound inquiry.

Quantitative research methods, where the data can be quantified involves numeric data sources and takes an analytical approach using mathematical and statistical methods. The samples are generally large, and treated as representative of the entire population, results regarded as providing a general comprehensive view (Martin and Bridgmon, 2012). Mathematics and statistics are fundamentally important when analysing data and generalising the results obtained. Maintaining focus on objectivity is especially relevant where the researcher aims from their sample of the population to collect quantifiable measures of variables and inferences. Structured procedures and formal instruments are adopted for data collection in quantitative research, with the aim of collecting the data objectively and systematically, and analysis performed through statistical procedures. The study of phenomena of interest are derived from realist, objectivist, inductive, value-free and nomothetic approaches.

Mixed research methods, which combines both the different research strategies and methodological aspects of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints research methods, adding breadth and depth to the study, enhancing both understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007). It is considered as an extension of quantitative and qualitative approaches to research rather than a replacement of them and draws upon the strengths of both approaches to minimise the weaknesses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

3.7.1 Selecting the research method.

The decision was taken to use qualitative research methods for the purpose of collecting data as the aim was to gain insight into the line managers and their experiences in the workplace of developing their own knowledge and of sharing their knowledge with their team. Using semi-structured interviews allowed the line managers to share their 'story' and Template Analysis was used to gain an understanding of the social relationships involved. Qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore and provide possible answers to the variety of questions faced by organisations in the business world and so is often used when analysing and evaluating business issues (Baskerville et al. 2010) where an in-depth study needs to be conducted to obtain detailed knowledge. Whilst carrying out research, it is usual for there to be a large amount of data generated, from a variety of sources including interviews and observations. The researcher is faced with the challenge of making sense of the data without being overwhelmed by its sheer volume (King and Brook, 2017) and faces the challenge of deciding what is appropriate for their study.

3.7.2 Research methodology: template analysis.

Template analysis has emerged from structured approaches to research methodology for example grounded theory and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). King (2004) acknowledges that whilst template analysis like grounded theory uses codes and the coding of data, grounded theory is more prescriptive in its use and tied to its realist methodology. It is possible to use template analysis in a range of epistemological positions not tied to one methodology, meaning a large number of researchers are able to use it, with Braun and Clarke (2006) claiming that it is particularly useful when using the method within either realist or constructionist paradigms, making it a suitable methodology for this study.

Template analysis whilst being “a systematic approach to coding qualitative data” (King and Brooks 2017, p.25), is also flexible enough to be tailored to the particular needs of the researcher and their study. In qualitative research interviews are the most popular form of collecting data, and template analysis the most popular form of analysing the data collected, as it is possible to use it with any written data (King and Brooks, 2017). Using the data to produce a list of codes or template that represents themes, some (or all) of which are a priori, the list is produced on theoretical deduction not on empirical data, that will be changed and added to as the interviews are interpreted (King and Brooks, 2012).

Waring and Wainwright (2008) highlight “one of the most problematic issues for researchers who conduct qualitative research using semi-structured…data collection methods is the analysis of large quantities of rich data” (p.85). With this in mind, the researcher decided to use template analysis as it provides a thematic analysis of the data gathered from the interviews and is able to handle larger data sets than Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and is less time consuming (King and Brooks, 2017). It provides the researcher with a flexible framework to use in the analysis of the data collected and the recognition of researcher insight with the use of a priori required by the epistemological approach of interpretivism being taken.

Template Analysis is used when analysing data to create a set of meaningful themes, thus during the research following King’s (2004) guidelines, codes were constructed in a hierarchical manner, with the meaningful themes identified encompassing the narrower and more specific second- and third-level codes. First-level codes are those found throughout the data and interpreted as having the most relevance to the research questions and codes or labels attached to the data. Both can be revised as necessary, meaning more than one rather than one theme or code can be considered at one time (Saunders, 2010).

3.7.3 Research participants

Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to identify and select participants who it is hoped will prove to be information-rich and can provide meaningful insight to the question under investigation whilst ensuring that the most effective use is made of the limited resources available (Patton, 2002; Patton, 1990). For purposeful sampling to be successful the individuals or groups are first identified as having knowledge about or experience with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Oppong, 2013). Additionally, it is important that the participants are available and willing to partake, and can communicate their experiences articulately, expressively and reflectively (Bernard, 2002).

Homogenous samples, which look at a particular subgroup in depth, will be used to research what the line manager's' contribution to knowledge is in their organisations. For this purpose, thirty-five line managers currently employed were recruited to take part from a cross section of industries to provide a range of experiences. The line managers were invited to take part via email initially to ensure they were willing to participate in the study and were drawn from students who are currently studying on a Master of Administration (MBA) programme.

The line managers identified all had a team of employees they were the directly responsible for, and who reported to them, with a range of experience from six months to over five years. They were given information about the research being undertaken and how the data was to be collected in advance of the study beginning. It was possible to conduct face to face interviews with the participants which were also recorded after gaining the permission of the participant and then transcribed verbatim after the interviews were completed. The identities of both the participants and their organisations were kept anonymous, and participants referred to by number.

3.7.4 Pilot study

A pilot study is a test conducted in advance of the main study and allows the researcher to establish that the methods they are using would work in practice (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002). The pilot study should be planned at the start of the proposed project and prior to the actual research (Perry, 2001). This allows time for any adjustments or revisions it is felt are needed to be made by the researcher at this early stage in the research and is a principal benefit of conducting a pilot study. It provides an indication to the researcher of the usefulness in collecting data that is relevant to the study. A pilot study can be effective when used to test the data collection method and a sample recruitment strategy and to evaluate the practicalities of the proposed research process (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002). Pilot studies can also be useful in self-evaluating whether you are ready, capable, and committed as a researcher (Beebe, 2007), although it will not be possible to provide the complete experience of conducting data collection due to the smaller number of participants. Therefore, pilot studies can be seen as a way of training qualitative researchers, providing them with the experience of designing interview questions and interviewing participants (Kilanowski, 2006) and as a way of enhancing the reliability of qualitative study (Padgett, 2008).

The pilot study can be further used to help uncover ethical and key practical issues, potentially providing the opportunity to resolve issues that may have hindered the main project if not identified at this early stage (Kelly, 2007). Qualitative researchers can use pilot studies to stay focussed on, expand, or narrow proposed research topics and clearly conceptualise the topic focus (Sampson, 2004). Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2002) argue that there is an ethical obligation on researchers to share the methodological and practical issues that have emerged from their studies allowing for knowledge to be further developed and constructed. Lanphear (2001) considers that the lessons learned from the pilot study and any issues encountered could be helpful for other researchers studying similar topics.

The pilot study conducted before the commencement of the research comprised of five interviews and was used to test not only the proposed questions and the effectiveness of semi-structured interviews but the data collection method as well. It was additionally used to become familiar with the use of template analysis to analyse the data collected and made it possible to gain an insight into where the main project could fail. This was useful as template analysis was a new way of analysing collected data. In the pilot study it was identified that there were questions which did not result in gathering meaningful data, either because they were not worded correctly or were not explicit enough. This helped refine and develop the questions that would be asked in the main study, those that would not be used and the structure of the interview, ensuring that the questions had been correctly formed, the order the questions had been placed in was logical, that the questions were not worded in an over complicated way so that they would provide sufficient and relevant data.

3.7.5 Main study – semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are positioned between unstructured interviews and in-depth interviews. When the data is gathered the semi-structured interviews will use the interviewees experience to produce ‘interview knowledge’ (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) allowing the researcher to interpret the answers. Semi-structures interviews have the advantage of a structured interview in that they use predetermined themes and questions, whilst having the additional benefit of flexibility to give the interviewee the freedom to talk about any issues highlighted during the interview. Semi structured interviews provide a flexible approach to gathering data which revolve around the interviewee’s experiences and their meanings while maintaining an understanding of the context surrounding the interview (Smith and Eatough, 2006).

The main aim of the interview is to provide a forum for the interviewee to share their individual perspectives, stories and experiences. The epistemology of practice supposes that one of the ways knowledge is shared is through the telling of stories, being described by Seidman (2013) as “a way of knowing”. The interviewees, who in the case of this study were line managers, are encouraged to pass their knowledge to the interviewer through the conversation elicited through the questioning (Boeije 2010).

It was essential to find somewhere that was private to conduct the interviews as the participants needed to feel they could share their experiences without being overheard by others, allowing them to speak freely. It was also necessary to have a quiet space to record the interviews without the interference of background noise. To ensure privacy a meeting room was booked in the university library where the interviews could take place undisturbed. As the MBA students knew each other from their programme it was possible to interview them consecutively if necessary. However, if anonymity of the participants had needed to be preserved then more planning would have needed. The interviews took place over a ten-day period, which was originally considered to be a reasonable amount of time to allocate to the activity. This proved in the end to be a tiring but manageable schedule, with some days involving more interviews than anticipated due to the MBA students changing plans.

Participants were asked questions that explored their experience of leading teams, the managers contribution to a successful team, how their own knowledge has developed, sharing knowledge with their teams, how knowledge was stored and accessed in the organisation and how this knowledge contributed to the organisation’s success.

The sample had a targeted age range of between twenty and fifty years of age, which it was anticipated would give a range of managerial experience. This in turn would provide information regarding the role that experience plays in knowledge management. The interviews with the line managers were used to gain an understanding of what they feel

their role is; what training (or lack of it) they have received; their relationship with their employees and teams; how much of their knowledge they are willing to share and how this affects and impacts on their knowledge management.

3.8 THE IDENTIFICATION OF THEMES

Transcripts where every word both by the interviewer and interviewee are transcribed are normal, as it is important for the researcher to be able to return to the data collected to underpin the themes constructed. Body language and tone of voice can also be noted if applicable as they can provide further information. The interviews were recorded as they were conducted and then transcribed using soft wear called Otter in the initial stages, when the initial themes were being identified. Otter provided a list of the most commonly used words during the interview and this was used to corroborate initial themes identified. However, to gain an in-depth knowledge of the interviews and themes, and to check the words had been accurately transcribed the researcher also listened to all the interviews and followed the relevant scripts, making amendments where necessary. As it is considered good practice throughout the analysis process to keep an audit trail to record how the analysis developed and any changes or analytical decisions made, the researcher has noted these accordingly. The dated versions with notes regarding the modifications should be kept and can include personal reflective statements on coding and development template evolution (King and Brooks, 2017).

Becoming familiar with the data collected (in this case interviews) by reading the transcripts is the first step in the process of identifying themes. Making initial notes is recommended (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) before beginning to draw up the initial codes. Each transcript was coded separately, with the words or text that appeared to be the most relevant to or that specifically addressed the research question highlighted. Working through the transcripts meant that new codes emerged and were added, and some existing ones modified. This was carried out by hand, using pens and highlighters to

work through the hardcopies. Initial codes were noted as identified, although they were not grouped at this stage.

This iterative process of determining the ‘Final Grouping Codes’ can vary immensely, and the number of iterations is not definitive, eventually after the iterations are complete ‘The Final Sequence of Coding Stages’ looks like Figure 5 but does not reflect the number of iterations that took place.

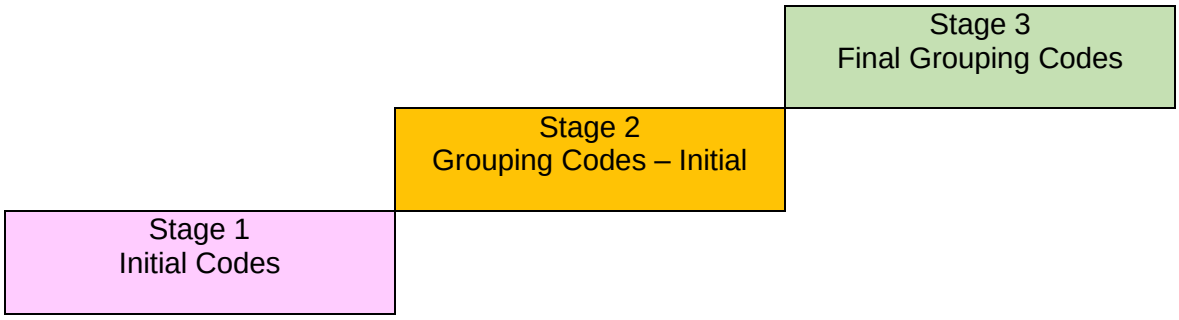
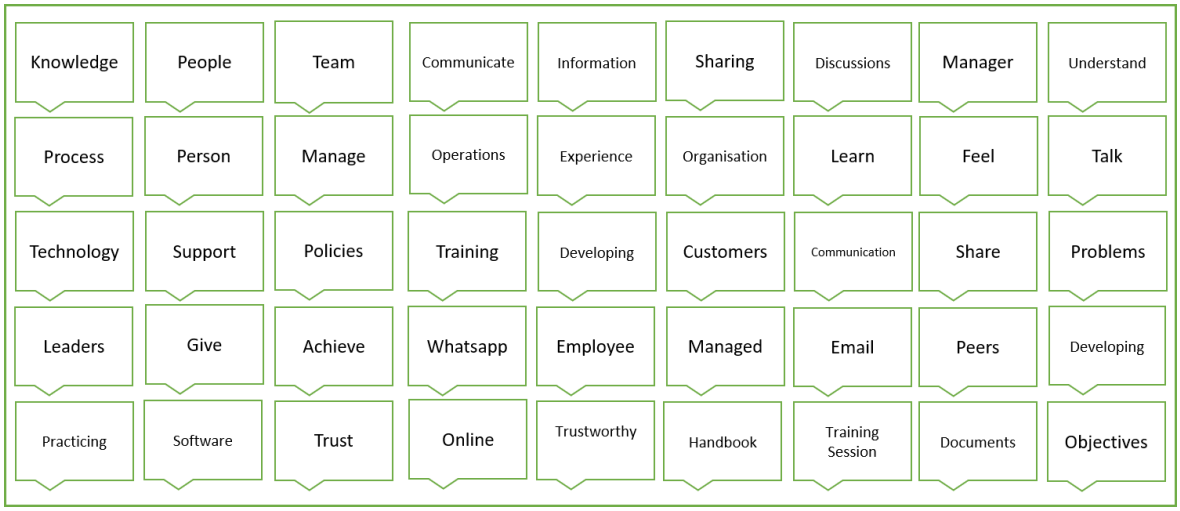


Figure 5: The Final Sequence of Coding Stages

Brooks and King (2012) advocate that template analysis highlights the use of sequential coding but balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing recorded data with the flexibility to change it to the needs of a particular study.

Fundamental to the technique is the development of a coding template, usually on the basis of a subset of data, which is then used to the remaining data, from then on it is reviewed and refined. This process is adaptable to the design and format of the template that has been created and is not similar to other thematic coding as it does not propose a set sequence of coding stages. The preference is to support the investigation to develop themes more comprehensively where the richest data is found relative to the research question and objectives set. In addition, template analysis does not require a clear difference between descriptive and interpretive themes, or a specific location for each theme in the structure.

Table 1: Initial Codes

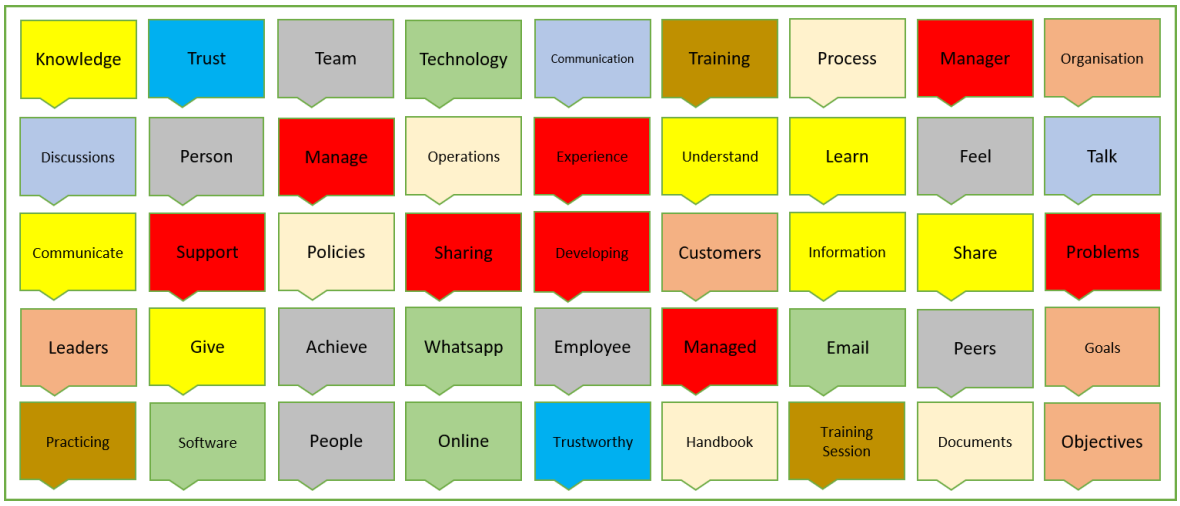


In this case along with notes made on the transcripts a mind map was drawn up to aid the researcher to organise the initial codes and group them into themes. Mind mapping can help when trying to organise thoughts and solve problems (Mattos, Mateus Junior and Merino, 2012), providing a visual representation of the codes and groups identified. Codes were written on sticky notes to make it easier to move codes around until the groupings were decided and finalised. The use of a mind map helps present data and themes in a way that is easier to analyse (Kotob, Styger and Richardson, 2016) and Gavrilova and Gladkova (2014) highlight how mind mapping can be used to present large amounts of data. Additionally, it helps when auditing the quality of the work, providing an audit trail and providing a base which makes it possible to conduct additional analysis (Kotob et al. 2016).

Template analysis allows the identification of a priori themes, allowing the researcher to use their experience of the problem being investigated and form some direction for the focus of the investigation prior to the research commencing. There were five themes identified a priori in relation to this investigation, forming the higher-order codes: the line managers and training, both their own and their involvement with their teams, the team and their relationship with the line manager, the role of the line manager in team development, communication and the role of trust in sharing knowledge. After an initial

analysis of the interviews, use of the mind map and completion of the literature review employee engagement, the role of organisational culture and the role of technology were added to form eight higher-order codes in total.

Table 2: Grouping Codes - Initial



Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017) considered sample size in relation to saturation in their study, distinguishing between where they identified no additional issues ('code saturation') and where there were no further insights gained ('meaning saturation'). Examining 25 transcripts of semi-structured interviews, they found when looking for code saturation, 53% were identified in the first interview they analysed, and 91% by the sixth interview. Meaning saturation was normally achieved by the 9th interview for codes representing concrete notions, those representing more conceptual taking up to the 24th interview. Being aware of the probable boundaries when reaching 'code saturation' and 'meaning saturation' meant expectations were managed when using a new method of analysing data.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter identified the researchers epistemological and ontological approach and discussed how this influenced the final choices of the research design, research method and methodology. Using qualitative research methods to collect and analyse the data

aligned with the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms identified with by the researcher. It also allowed the researcher to be able to use their own experiences of being a line manager as well as the participants to construct meanings from the phenomena, gaining insight line managers and their experiences in the workplace of developing their own knowledge and of sharing their knowledge.

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who were line managers with direct reports, ensuring that their responses would be information rich and provide an insight into the research question. Semi-structured interviews gave the line managers the opportunity to share their ‘story’. Otter was then used to produce initial transcripts of the interviews, also providing a list of words that most commonly appearing words.

However, care was taken to ensure that these transcripts were accurate, with the interviews played until the researcher was confident this was the case. The transcripts were then then read, with key words and phrases highlighted, allowing the researcher to become familiar with the collected data. Template Analysis was used to identify themes and codes resulting in a final template being produced the data to be analysed in a systematic way.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS

This chapter will discuss how the template was developed to identify the final codes to be used in the analysis of the data, the implementation of the research design as discussed in the previous chapter, and the findings from the data gathered from the line managers involved in the semi-structured interviews, enabling the researcher to achieve an insight into the experiences of line managers, the development of their own knowledge and experience in their job role, and how they feel that transferring their knowledge has impacted on their teams. The analysis of the interviews conducted will further be used to consider how the findings can be of practical use, both to line managers and the organisation, with recommendations provided in the final chapter.

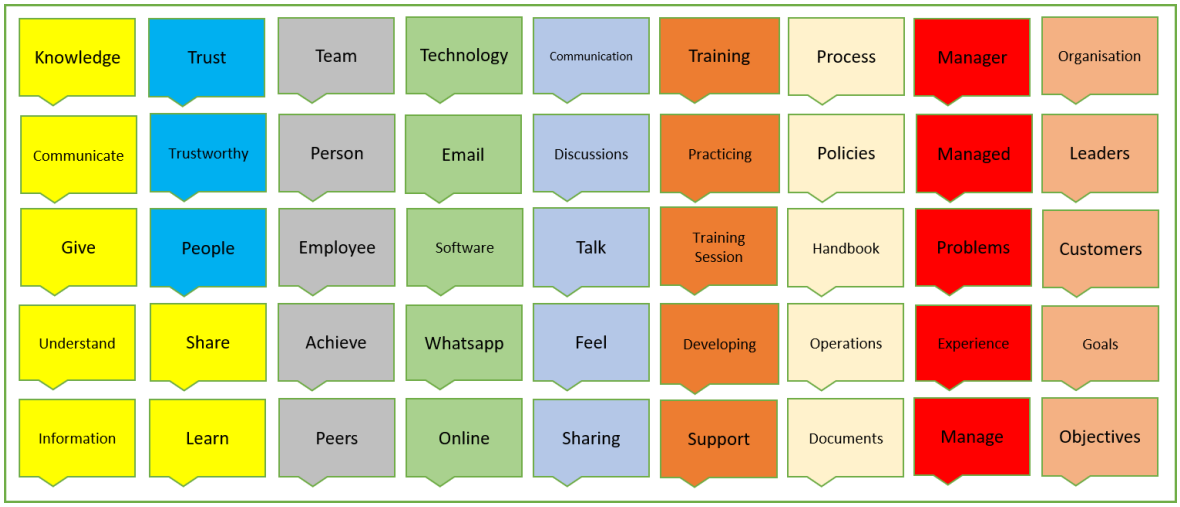
4.2 FINAL CODING

The template is utilised as a ‘working document’ and as such it is accepted that the themes may need to be modified as the study continues if the researcher finds that emerging new data does not ‘fit’ with themes already identified as they work through the interviews. New themes may need to be added whilst existing themes may need to be redefined or deleted where they do not seem relevant or will not be used in the analysis of the data set. Working through several interviews and noting possible revisions before constructing a new version of the template is considered to be more efficient than revising it after every interview (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley and King, 2015). This process can continue until the researcher feels they can provide a rich, comprehensive representation of the data. It is at this point that the template can then be applied to the full data set. Although it may not be possible to produce a definitive “final” version of the template, pragmatically the researcher will need to decide when the template meets the needs of

the research, taking into consideration the resources they have available to complete the research (Brooks et al., 2015).

After following this process, the researcher applied the template and produced the final themes and codes identified to analyse the data collected. These are illustrated in the table below.

Table 3: Final Grouping Codes



The a priori themes were identified from the researcher's personal experience as a line manager in the retail industry and from the literature review. As a priori themes are used, although not exclusively, in template analysis, it provided the researcher with an opportunity to reflect on their experience as a line manager and the role that experience, and personal development had played in building their practice knowledge. Included in these original themes and forming the basis of the semi-structured interviews were the line managers and training (both their personal experience of any training they had received as a line manager as well as their experience as the trainers of others), the role of the line manager in team development, the importance of communication and the role of trust in sharing knowledge. Added to these initial a priori themes were the themes that emerged from the data. Identified to be added to the final template were employee engagement, the role of organisational culture, processes, and the role of technology to form eight higher-order codes in total. It became clear from analysis of the initial

interviews as well as the entire data set that communication was the overarching theme, with the line managers interviewed citing communication, especially face to face communication, as the most important element in both their own development and the development of their teams.

4.3 THE FINAL HIGHER ORDER CODES AND NARROWER CODES WERE IDENTIFIED AS THE FOLLOWING THEMES

4.3.1. Experience of the line managers in building their own knowledge:

The role of practice knowledge; the role of formal training; the role of experience in line managers building their knowledge and the importance of having a good relationship at all levels of the organisation.

4.3.2. Employee Training and Support:

The line managers role in training their team; the line manager as trainer; the line manager as a coach and the role of regular feedback.

4.3.3. The Team:

The importance of a functioning team, the line managers role in the team, the line managers role in supporting the development of team members and building a successful team.

4.3.4. Trust:

The role of trust in knowledge sharing, the importance of building trust between the line manager and the team and the role of trust in sharing knowledge

4.3.5. Communication:

The importance of communication, the role of personal communication between the line manager and team members, communication within the team, communicating knowledge by the line manager to the team.

4.3.6. Building Engagement within the Team:

The importance of the line manager engaging with their team, contributing to employee satisfaction, empathy with team members and the role of personality and attitude.

4.3.7. Organisational Culture:

The significance of organisational culture in knowledge sharing, how organisational culture encourages knowledge sharing and the sharing of the organisations vision with the team.

4.3.8. The Role of Technology in Transferring Knowledge:

The use of technology in transferring knowledge, how technology is used in training and development, how technology is used in the transfer of knowledge and the use of technology to communicate.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES

4.4.1 THEME 1 - EXPERIENCE OF THE LINE MANAGERS IN BUILDING THEIR OWN KNOWLEDGE:

There were four lower-level coding categories used to examine how line managers build their knowledge. After examining the data and matching it to the codes identified the

lower-level coding of the line mangers perception of their training was removed as there was not enough data emerging from the interviews to warrant a separate code. The codes originally identified for this level of coding were reallocated to the lower-level coding examining the role of practice knowledge. Some of the initial experiences and key words and phrases of the line managers are included below.

Table 4: Experience of the line managers in building their own knowledge.

The role of practice knowledge	**The role of formal training**	**The role of experience in line managers building their knowledge**	**The importance of having a good relationship at all levels of the organisation**
Trial and error	No actual formal training from the organisation	On job training	Top to bottom communication
Experimental learning	Some training programmes	You learn from your mistakes	I have a good boss
I was learning the ropes during that period of time; it was a struggle	You go there and you listen, you don't really get anything out of it.	You need to understand that you're the manager	I have gathered knowledge from senior managers
We need to understand the job	Training sessions conducted by the main organisation	I asked and learnt by watching	Working with a director and CEOs and MDs directly
I think that is the best way actual practice.	At times they have training programmes for each aspect of our work	What I learned, I leant through working and working with my peers	Headquarters having a lot of knowledgeable people

The role of practice knowledge:

Being able to develop knowledge by 'learning on the job' is the way line managers in their first managerial position seemed to find the most effective way. However, they are often expected to 'hit the ground running' with no experience either of the management role or leading a team. Promotion from employee to manager can be one of the biggest and hardest steps when entering into management as the learning curve is a steep one, whilst you may go on further in your career to lead larger teams or become a more senior manager, experience, the learning of the job role, decision making and people management skills and learning from mistakes will be utilised in the new role, not learnt from the beginning.

Thus, the first theme to be explored was how line managers develop their own knowledge, with the questions concentrating on their experience of developing their knowledge of their role. This was an a priori code as having developed my own knowledge with limited formal training, and seeing other new managers do the same, it was interesting to explore other line managers responses and compare their experience with mine. Eraut (2010) identified that personal development in the workplace should include being able to learn from experience, the access to applicable knowledge and expertise and the propensity to learn and better one's practice. From analysis of the data collected it would appear that these were how the participants had developed in their practice.

The personal development, experience and practice knowledge of the line managers and their teams can be considered to be an important job resource; using the physical, social or organisational characteristics relating to the job with the aim of the achievement of goals or personal growth, as well as producing a reduction in job demands and related costs (Crawford, Rich, Buckman & Bergeron, 2014). The line managers perceptions of gaining 'practice' knowledge and 'learning on the job' as the way they had developed their

knowledge was considered to be more effective than more formal learning, typical participants quote is:

"But it isn't until we actually went and experienced it for ourselves that we got to know what we actually liked. And I think for me, actually, it is mostly not actually the formal training from the organisation, but what I learned through working and working with my peers that I got to know what I know now. So, when I don't know something, there's always someone around to help me". (Participant 20)

The 'struggles' and 'challenges' faced in their job role was raised in the interviews by 13 (37%) of the participants, incorporating other issues associated with practice learning: having to learn by trial and error, using experimental knowledge and learning and understanding the demands of the job. Some recalled how they felt at the beginning of their careers, others on the daily 'struggles' and 'challenges', typical participants quotes are:

"I was learning the ropes during that period of time; it was a struggle" (Participant 8)

"I had to learn everything on my own. So that was a bit difficult" (Participant 18)

"Everyday day we face a lot of challenges" (Participant 11)

Learning through both working alongside their peers, seen as a vital part of their development by 10 (30%) of the line managers, highlighting the importance of communication, questioning and checking their knowledge. That they included the importance of the support of their peers in their reflections aligns with literature where this

is identified as being important when encouraging knowledge-sharing behaviours (Hislop, 2003; Oldham, 2003). Ke and Wei (2008) similarly observed that a knowledge sharing culture is facilitated by asking questions, typical participants quotes are:

"I know like we are learning a lot of theoretical stuff, but when it comes to practical world, like we need to understand whether it's feasible or not, but it's in theory" (Participant 6)

"Basically, on the job we asked from our peers, that's how we learn. So, I think sharing knowledge among peers is quite important, rather than I mean, you know, very formal training" (Participant 20)

"If I don't know something I would ask" (Participant 14)

"That I asked and learn by watching" (Participant 23)

"When you share knowledge, it improves yourself as well. Because they ask questions and so many times, they have asked questions from me and I had not had an answer for that. So, then I need to go back to my superiors and get that clarified" (Participant 15)

Noe, Clarke and Klein (2014) estimated that around 75 per cent of learning in the workplace takes place informally. Similarly, Petty (2016) indicated that line managers may have to acquire the skills they need by trial and error, only one of the participants mentioned this explicitly, typical participants quote is:

"*I really didn't have a lot of knowledge on the particular organisation that I worked for. So, everything I was putting there as a manager, but I had to learn everything on my own" (Participant 10)*

This may be because there was a strong emphasis of learning and support from peers and more senior managers from other participants reducing the feeling of trial and error. Although there was mention made of allowing team members learning by trial and error, typical participants quote is:

> **"*I give them space, and I also think they will learn by trial and error and pick up some points" (Participant 5)***

The role of formal training:

The line managers interviewed placed a greater emphasis on practical training and learning they received rather than the more formal training and learning that was available. During the interviews 3 (8.5%) of the participants explicitly identified they had received no formal training at all from their organisation, Yeardley (2017) however suggests it is claimed that the figure is closer to 35 per cent of managers that do not get the chance of receiving any training. This may a large part in contributing to the struggles and challenges that line managers identify when they feel they are learning on their own as they go along.

However, 7 (20%) received some training and 7 (20%) revealed there was training regularly available, provided by either their organisation itself or by an outside provider. It is often the case in larger, more traditional organisations that learning, and training is delivered by the training department, a division that is separate from actual practice. Whilst they are involved in delivering courses, documenting organisation procedures and preparing manuals, they may not be as involved when it comes to engaging learners in what could be argued is the most valuable learning resource, practice itself (Tynjala, 2007). One of the participants expresses the frustration felt when this happens, typical participants quote is:

"You go there, and you listen, you don't really get anything out of it" (Participant 9)

Yeardley (2017) suggests that to be effective, where training is provided it should concentrate on intrapersonal skills, communication and teamwork and building interaction and intuition.

It is perhaps interesting that there was not a positive opinion expressed about formal training by any of the participants. Even where the line managers identify there is training available to them, typical participants quote is:

"*they try to develop our way of working" (Participant 10)*

This was the most positive observation made by the participants during the interviews. It may be that more formal training may be used to provide a deeper understanding of the policies and procedures of the organisation, providing a less interesting and practical subject matter such as product knowledge or human resource issues. The usefulness of formal training may depend on how relatable the line manager feels they are to their role in the workplace, frustrated at having to be on a training course rather than doing something practical towards their team objectives.

Becker and Bish (2017) in their study of management development experiences and expectations found participants were able to identify some formal learning provided by the organisation, however as with this study they too found there was limited evidence or discussion by the participants of training courses provided internally. The external learning opportunities mentioned were either the provision of short courses or higher education. Participants in the study observed that this gave them access to general information that was considered to be of limited value, as they were not customised to their organisation or

situation. In this study although all participants were studying for an MBA there was only one who referred to it as part of their development, typical participants quote is:

"And I'm reading and I'm now I'm following MBA course, because I want to improve myself. My leadership skills, my management skills" (Participant 12)

The role of experience in line managers building their knowledge:

If formal training does not influence the development of the line manager in the same way as practice knowledge, and they are to move from finding their role a 'struggle' at first then the next area of interest was whether experience played an important part in their development and confidence. One participant insight, typical participants quote is:

"*You need to understand that you're the manager"* (*Participant 8*)

This illustrates what is perhaps the hardest thing to learn, and why it has been estimated that on average new line managers underperform for the first two years as they struggle to deal with their new responsibilities and job role. Inexperienced in managing people and teams they may instead decide to focus on processes and procedures where they feel they have guidelines and a set way of dealing with the task.

Having more experienced managers as mentors or having the support of their peers was shown to be especially useful when addressing the problems with managing employees and achieving the best performance from the team. One of the issues that line managers stated caused them problems initially was effective delegation of tasks. Although they may be the person in charge of allocating the work, the temptation for a new line manager proved to be that they then went on to complete the tasks themselves, typical participant quote is:

"*I sometimes go and do the work myself. But I've got pulled up by my manager saying, you need to get them to do the work. So that's one of the biggest challenges and struggle that I had" (Participant 8)*

ACAS (2016) emphasise that effective delegation provides line managers with an essential tool allowing managers to allocate team members tasks that leave time for the line manager to focus on tasks they are responsible for, but the interviewees show this was not always easy, typical participants quotes are:

"So, the senior managers advised me a lot saying, get the maximum out of your team members rather than you do it yourself" (Participant 15)

"So sometimes I tend to do the work, when I didn't get the correct output" (Participant 15)

"And you need to make sure that they you give them the authority, then delegation to make the right decision at the right time, actually, is one of the problems I had, in the past few years where I had to get involved in each and every meeting where it was too much for me to handle as well" (15)

As well as learning from their peers, by watching and questioning as well as receiving feedback and advice the participants found that having experience working in different areas of the organisation also gave them chances to develop and grow their knowledge. Not only does it develop existing strengths, but it provides skills that may prove useful when considering career moves or applying for different roles. Working with different people with different skill sets can provide the opportunity to take on new skills and perspectives. Line managers as they became more experienced were looking to improve both their leadership skills as well as their management skills.

The importance of having a good relationship at all levels of the organisation:

It is important for the line manager to have good working relationships and open lines of communication not only with their team and employees below them, but also with those on the same level as them so they have people who can relate to their job role, have the same problems and be a sounding board for ideas and frustrations. At the same time a good relationship with senior managers provides an insight and better understanding into the organisations vision and builds trust and reputation within the organisation. The significance of good relationships in relation to sharing knowledge in the organisation was expressed as, typical participants quotes are:

> ***"I have gathered knowledge from my industry, working with the people … some senior managers, they have shared with their knowledge if I have a problem" (Participant 11)***

> ***"It's important that you gain experience as well as learn from your superiors because they have been in the industry for so many years more than I have. So, it's important that you get their advice and direction as well" (Participant 24)***

Saifi, Dillon and McQueen (2016) in their study found evidence to suggest that knowledge is able to flow both upwards and downwards in an organisation, enabling staff to make decisions regardless of their position. This corresponds with the research of Yesilbas and Lombard (2004), who suggested that collaborative decision making is improved where knowledge is shared. The expectations of leaders and the supportive behaviours they adopt are important in constructing the behavioural context where employees collaborate in decision making by sharing what they know.

4.4.2 Theme 2 - Employee training and support

The line managers role in training their team:

The line manager as trainer

Training the team to be an effective unit is essential if the team is going to succeed, employees develop, and the line manager given enough time to carry out the requirements of their job role. To be able to delegate tasks and responsibilities the team members must be trained and competent. Whether they decide to train employees themselves or 'buddy up' new team members with experienced staff, they need to enable learning to take place, typical participant quote is:

> **"*you know buddy discussions helps quite a lot" (Participant 6)***

The training although it can be formal is more likely to be incidental with knowledge shared among team members. Where training is successful the team can continue to function effectively without the line manager having to be always be there and paves the way for career progression, typical participant quote is:

> **"*I divided their responsibilities to my team leaders, and I show them how to do things they have to do to achieve that target. That way they can grow their careers I believe, then they become a success" (Participant 11)***

Ramirez and Li (2009) consider training as having a significant effect in an organisation, enhancing knowledge sharing, staff being able to gather and then distribute new knowledge. Therefore, managers in the organisation need to recognise this by enabling training, allowing the free flow of knowledge (Fong, Ooi, Tan, Lee and Ye, 2011), which in turn can be seen as an argument for securing a competitive advantage (Phan, 2008). A lack of direction from managers can alternately restrict knowledge sharing, as it is

something that needs to be undertaken voluntarily, and the person being trained may need not only training but also encouragement, it appears that a precondition of sharing knowledge successfully seems to be issuing clear instructions at all organisational levels (Ives, Torrey and Gordon, 2000).

The findings of Saifi, Dillon and McQueen (2016) suggested employees should be encouraged by their managers to document their work processes so their knowledge can be put into practice and easily accessed by work colleagues. One of the line managers encouraged his staff to do this, encouraging staff to make a book that not only he and they can use, typical participant quote is:

> **"*when the newcomers are coming in we are giving them this book to refer to" (Participant 12).***

Another line manager ensured practice knowledge stayed within the organisation in this way, typical participant quote is:

> ***"asking them maybe once a month, maybe three questions, and record the solutions they give. The technical solutions like this are key" (Participant 17)***

These are simple but effective ways of passing on knowledge to new employees and retaining knowledge in the organisation should an employee leave, typical participants quote are:

> ***"So I think that's quite important to understand who's good at what and to develop the people who are lacking in certain areas" (Participant 20)***

> ***"When you share knowledge, it improves yourself as well. Because they ask questions and so many times they have asked questions from me and I had***

not had an answer for that. So then I need to go back to my superiors and get that clarified" (Participant 15)

"Like I had an understudy In a previous appointment where I had to train this person, then I was the supervisor" (Participant 5)

The line manager as a coach

The line manager must be able to listen if they are going to use their coaching skills in the workplace with their teams. The other element of coaching that managers need to master is to allow the person they are coaching to provide their own solutions. The line manager may be tempted to offer suggestions and solutions, as this is part of their job role, but coaching will not be successful if they do this. Awareness of the privacy of the employee during and after the coaching session will help to build trust, essential if coaching sessions are to be successful.

The coaching manager is in the ideal situation to be able to observe their team members and give continuous feedback, motivating, challenging and developing them (Frisch, 2001). The relationship that is formed between the coach and the coachee is the critical success factor in coaching (Bluckert, 2005), the probability of success enhanced where a strong relationship exists. Coaching in turn provides the opportunity for the relationship between the coaching manager and their team members to be enhanced.

Smith (2019) suggests that with the growing awareness of how important individual employees are as team members the need for line managers to be competent in the use of coaching as a management aid has become a requirement, with enabling individuals in their teams as the outcome. Despite the growing expectation that managers will coach their teams only one of the line managers interviewed explicitly stated this was their aim: "*my main target is to coach my teams" (Participant 6).* Others demonstrated a coaching

style with their teams, although they may not have identified it as such, typical participant quote is:

> ***"be together with a team, listen to them, mostly listen, try to support them". (Participant 8)***

Sparks and Gentry (2008) indicate that the coaching behaviours desirable to have include the use of listening skills and communication that lead to the involvement of others, providing a clear expectation of performance, and the line managers self-awareness. Larsson and Vinberg (2010) add that employees (or subordinates) should be involved in regular conversation with their managers or coaches where there are discussions on individual and organisational goals, there should be constructive feedback provided and the managers should be able to reflect on their own practice.

By using regular coaching conversations, it is possible for the line manager to influence not only trust and awareness in their teams, but also responsibility and learning, positively impacting on employee engagement and performance. Thus, coaching has the potential to provide managers with a way to tackle many of the demands of their job roles and their leadership. To achieve this, line managers not only require training to utilise their coaching skills but need to understand how coaching can be used effectively in their role and organisation. Ongoing support that helps to embed a coaching culture such as individual, group or peer coaching, mentoring, supervision and/or communities of practice, and contributing to the developing of a supportive coaching culture, in turn facilitates the transitioning from training in skills to regularly applying and using these skills by managers (McCarthy & Milner, 2013), typical participants quotes are:

> ***"And giving them the freedom to make mistakes actually, because you learn from your mistakes" (Participant 15)***

"Make main contribution by guiding them, giving them the direction and also teaching training them on about the job roles so that they can take the learning now and implement it" (Participant 15)

The role of regular feedback:

For feedback to be useful it needs to be constructive, specific and detailed. The employee should not come away with a vague idea of what has been discussed and what actions have been agreed. It should be delivered in a professional manner, there should be no personal opinions involved, an objective overview should be maintained. When providing feedback is viewed in a positive way it makes it easier for the line manager to deliver, typical participant quote is:

"*I have to give them proper feedback to build constructive, constructive feedback to build them by themselves, it is a good training process for them" (Participant 12)*

Feedback should be given in a timely manner, the further away front the matter under discussion the less useful it may become. Even worse for a new line manager (or even an experienced one) is not to address issues at all, if you do not address it the first time then the employee will consider that behaviour as acceptable, leading to problems within the team. Bayer, Krupskyi and Bondarenko (2020) add the proviso that employees only value feedback as being positive where the feedback comes from a manager they perceive as being efficient.

Coaches that display empathy with their employees, are respectful and are looking to provide the employee with insights to improve their performance can build a culture where positive feedback results in an enhanced receptivity to feedback (London and Smither, 2002). Similarly, it was noted by Gregory and Levy (2012) that there was a positive

correlation with how feedback was accepted where there existed a good relationship between the supervisor and the employee. They considered that the perception of the usefulness of the feedback by the employee was influenced by the supervisor's investment in the relationship. So, managers should be trying to create an environment in the workplace that offers support, is caring and oriented towards learning to assure employees that the feedback they receive from their managers is useful (Hawass, 2017).

Workplace pressures can lead to people getting distracted from goals by seemingly urgent issues (Longenecker and Neubert, 2005). The use of ongoing coaching conversations are useful to help people be able to keep on track and are more effect than using performance reviews which may only take place annually or bi-annually. Managers need to deliver their managerial coaching feedback constructively for them to be useful. Folkman (2006) noted that coaching is often used to help people accept feedback, particularly where a gap exists where people see themselves and their differently to how others see them and their actions. Research on how much feedback affects performance has found that goal setting after being provided feedback through coaching delivers a marked improvement (McDowall and Millward,2010). A future focus or "feedforward" on performance provides managers with a useful way of highlighting team members strengths and indicating where they might develop in the future (McDowall and Millward, 2010).

4.4.3 Theme 3 - The Team

<u>The importance of an effective team:</u>

According to the Chartered Institute of Management (CMI) there are three key areas to focus on when building an effective team: leadership, ownership and relationships (CMI, 2020). The participants in the study identified the elements they considered to be important both in their role as line manager and their role in making their teams successful.

Table 5: The importance of an effective team

The line managers role in the team	**The line managers role in supporting the development of team members**	**The Line Managers Role in Building a successful team**
I believe the communication is very important	Proper feedback to build constructive feedback	I usually select very good people for my team
It is very important to understand the behaviours of each individual	Giving them the freedom to make mistakes actually, because you learn from your mistakes.	It's important to identify what each person can do in the team
Support them (the team)	Motivate them to take their own decisions	Manager should take the initiative
Listen to them (the team)	Share knowledge among the team members	We keep them and we train them
Managers should be knowledgeable about the subject	Quite important to understand who's good at what and to develop the people who are lacking in certain areas	Leadership is a really important factor in the success of a team
Give them direction	I'm training them to be successful team players	The manager should communicate the goals and objectives correctly to the team

<u>The line managers role in the team:</u>

Competent managers need to be able to build, lead and influence their teams so they can be become effective in the workplace. Their team members in their turn need to become competent in their job roles and the line manager needs to create a learning culture where this can happen, viewing their team members development as a positive outcome rather

than a threat to their position. As the line manager the team need to feel they can trust them to make decisions and solve problems where necessary, empower them to carry out their job role, clearly set out expectations and build a strong relationship with them. There are four distinct approaches, which it is possible to combine when building a team, that the line manager needs to utilise to build a functioning team. The four approaches have been identified as goal setting, the development of personal relationships, clarifying roles, and applying problem-solving techniques (Klein et al., 2009). Effective teams are able to co-construct meaning, reflect on outcomes and work processes, communicate effectively, analyse errors, give feedback, and innovate (Savelsbergh, Van Der Heijden, and Poell, 2009).

Parker (2008) further suggests that the specific characteristics of effective teams include having clarity of purpose and a clear understanding of roles, being informal and encouraging team members to participate, open communication, the ability to listen by members and discuss any disagreements civilly, shared leadership and a responsibility to evaluate its own performance*, typical participants quotes are:*

> ***"each of the team members has to understand the goals"*** **and** ***"I'm setting goals, as well as I'm asking them what we had to do, what we had to achieve" (Participant 29)***

> ***"we have spontaneous conversations"*** **and** ***"when there is a problem, it's all about escalating and informing the people so that everyone is well aware" (Participant 34)***

Another skill that the line managers discussed in the interviews as something they saw important within their role within the team was that of leadership, CMI (2020) seeing leadership traits illustrated by the ability to define goals, communicate information successfully, encourage communication within the team, listen effectively, recognising

individual strengths, encouraging the team to learn new skills, delegate, problem solve and ensuring the team is fully equipped. Communication was the trait considered most important with 26 (74.2%) participants including it in their responses, although listening was only mentioned by 6 (17.1%) of the participants. As listening is an important constituent of coaching this could prove to be a challenge to the participants of this study. The same number of participants, 6 (17.1%) referred to recognising the individual strengths of their team, although 16 (45.7%) indicated they encouraged their team to learn new skills or take advantage of training.

The formation of effective relationships throughout the team was seen as valuable to the functioning of the team as well as a clear understanding of the goals of the team, typical participant quote is:

> ***"Leadership is really important factor in the success of a team, any team and the bonding and because each of the each of them, each of the team members has to understand the goals and whatever the objectives because without knowing the objectives or the goals that they are going to be a failure" (Participant 15)***

The concepts of manager and leader are often used interchangeably (Johnson, 2009; Shaikh, 2019) and can be seen as compatible and mutually supporting (Ayoko and Chua, 2014; Gottlieb, 2017). Both leadership and management steer, influence and control a team of people sharing a common aim, towards attaining their ultimate goal (Sawie, 2015). Managers who display leadership in developing their teams can produce a team with the advantages of being flexible, creative, involved in collective decision-making and promote solidarity among co-workers (Mantarova and Toskov, 2019) . Management and leadership both look to build quality relationships with mutual standards and values (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Shaikh (2019) advances that leadership is a fundamental

function for managers and without leadership skills they will not be as effective. Typical participant quote is:

> ***"It's always important to have strong leaders at the top. The moment you have good leadership at the top, it's easy and things you know fall in place" (Participant 12)***

The line managers role in supporting the development of team members:

Developing team members is important in terms of employee engagement, career development, knowledge building, staff retention which contributes to the organisation by building experience and retaining knowledge in the organisation. Where the line manager views knowledge as power the team will not develop as not only will knowledge not be shared, but there will be a lack of communication and trust. Where a line manager has been supported in their own development, they will view this as a positive action to support their own team.

Communication and training were identified as the major contributors to developing team members. As previously noted 26 (74.2%) of participants identified communication as important when developing team members, with a further 16 (45.7%) identifying training and development as important. As well as training processes, more practical ways of development included spending time with the team, participants quotes are:

> **"*we have spontaneous conversations and I find different ways and sit with them to support as well" (Participant 8)***

sharing knowledge:

> **"*But it's always important to share whatever that you know, so that they can make the right judgement" (Participant 22)***

giving direction**:**

"*always when there is a problem, it's all about escalating and informing the people so that everyone is well aware" (Participant 15)*

feedback, monitoring:

"*We can't isolate the person. We have to always looking that person what they are doing and we are to monitor well, because we don't to harm them, but we have to understand these people have these skills and these views" (Participant 14)*

and identifying what members of the team can do and tailoring training accordingly.

"I think that the people will work at their best when they are given the freedom to work" (Participant 28)

"we always have cross functional team discussions" (Participant 6)

"each member is different. So how you tackle a person is different to how you tackle the other person" (Participant 15)

"So, I think that's quite important to understand who's good at what and to develop the people who are lacking in certain areas" (Participant 20)

<u>The Line Managers Role in Building a successful team:</u>

Team building contributes to the effectiveness of the team by concentrating on the relationships within the team and how they can be developed to improve communication through all levels, help with the resolution of conflict and lead to an increased ability to solve problems. A main contribution to team effectiveness is the improvement of

employee competencies, important both in terms of personal development as well as knowledge creation, typical participant quote is:

"as it's always good to have a, you know, a blended good, blended team" (Participant 5)

As part of a learning process team building attempted aim is to improve internal functions of groups, increasing the collaboration between team members, improving the quality of communication and reducing dysfunctional conflict (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2008). The focus of team building is the improvement of work group skills, the development of social relationships, and solving problems which could affect team performance and effectiveness. Team building focusses on solving problems in the team and developing solutions, additionally there is a focus on developing relationships between team members with the use of activities that are aimed at enhancing how the team operates and how the team members interpersonal relationships should work (Levi, 2001).

Effective team building in organisations enhances teamwork competencies and emotive consequences such as trust and team potential, at team level, the end results are coordination and effective communication (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas and Cohen, 2012). At organisation level, the team effort can contribute to organisational problems by resolving conflict, providing clarity in roles and assignments and stimulating innovation in solving problems, that increase organisational performance (Stone, 2010). One of the solutions offered as a way to build a successful team was:

"*we keep them and we train them. So likewise, I make my team, I usually select very good people for my team, as well as I'm training them to be successful team players" (Participant 12)*

"when people know more, so they are very confident to do things in correct way. So I feel like always we had to share the important the necessary information (Participant 12)

"I'm setting goals, as well as I'm asking them what we had to do what we had to achieve. And also they're giving me the feedback as well… We like a team always make decisions" (Participant 12)

"we go by other people's experience" (Participant 27)

"I think we should appreciate their good work" (Participant 9)

"first we need be understand who we are as the general purpose that what we have to do and we need to understand the job" (Participant 14)

"I think because of knowledge sharing, they collaborate together, and they analyse the situations and they tell what we need, and they explained what they need. So we compromise both together" (Participant 13)

4.4.4 Theme 4 – Trust

The role of trust in knowledge sharing:

The importance of building trust between the line manager and the team

In order to achieve organisational goals line managers, need to be able do to their jobs effectively. For this to be accomplished they need to trust the members of their team to complete the work and tasks they have been allocated. Trusting their teams is important as failure on the part of the members of their teams may impact negatively on the line manager's own performance (Werbel and Henriques, 2009). This importance of trust

amongst all members of the team was recognised by this line manager, typical participant quote is:

> ***"And trust is something that you need to have when you're working as a team. When you're a leader, if the members don't trust you, the entire team is going to collapse" (Participant 15)***

Managers who are open and responsive to their employee's propositions will find that they will be more engaged at work, regardless of hierarchy (Fast, Burris and Bartel, 2014). Additionally, when managers are trusted by their employees, they will show higher commitment to their job, often exceeding the requirements of their contract (Birkinshaw, 2010). On the other hand, where trust is not present engagement diminishes and their perception of their supervisors in their job role is that they are inefficient and ineffective (Beech and Anderson, 2003; Luthans and Peterson, 2002).

The problems new line managers face early in their careers in the early stages was described by one line manager, typical participant quote is:

> **"*when I started off my career, I was a supervisor, they don't want to trust me. But after that, when they felt that I was genuinely interested in them, in a sense for their development, then they started to listen to me" (Participant 8)***

Another described how they had built their relationship with their team by using their interpersonal skills, typical participant quote is:

> **"*I have built trust in my own way, because I am a social person, they can tell me anything, I can tell them anything" (Participant 14)***

Having trust in the managers in more senior positions has proven benefits for the organisation too, typical participants quotes are:

"It's something that it works again both ways. The juniors also need to display trust and reliability as well as the seniors, basically they need to give trust first and then they will receive it as well" (Participant 5)

"And I have a good boss as well. That's one of the reasons I have stayed here for a long time. That's the trust he has in me and I have in him" (Participant 8)

The role of trust in sharing knowledge

Where there is a low level of trust among employees the amount of knowledge shared will be limited, employees fearing others may draw off their skills or that the knowledge they share could be misused or copied, followed by them losing their worth within the organisation. Low trust level may also possibly reduce sharing their knowledge out of a fear that the knowledge shared could be exploited and subsequently be used to harm them (Laupase, 2003). This results in the employee hoarding knowledge rather than sharing it and it unlikely that they will voluntarily participate in knowledge-sharing activities (Lu, Leung and Koch., 2006).

On the other hand, high trust levels result when employees are able to demonstrate over time that they can competently use the knowledge shared. A high trust level will result in their willingness to share knowledge rising, confident that the knowledge shared with colleagues will not be misappropriated (Lucas, 2005), typical participant quote is:

"*When it comes to sharing knowledge, I think you find it easier to, you know, approach someone and ask them questions and share your knowledge if you trust them better" (Participant 20)*

If the source of the knowledge is trusted then the recipient is less likely to feel they have to verify the accuracy and truthfulness of what they are being told, meaning the recipient can use the knowledge they have received immediately, speeding up organizational learning, alertness and responsiveness (McEvily, Perrone and Zaheer, 2003). For the line managers this was noticeable in their practice, typical participants quotes are:

> ***"I have built up that trustworthiness because if I tell something to others, if they believe what I am telling them is real, they believe in me. It means I am not telling lies" (Participant 11)***

> ***"Trust is important because the other person should know that I'm giving the right advice or the direction" (Participant 32)***

4.4.5 Theme 5 - Communication

The importance of communication:

The role of personal communication between the line manager and team members

The importance of communication is an overarching theme running through all the other themes being investigated and it became obvious that it was a soft skill that line managers need to utilise effectively. Effective communication allows rapport and trust to be build, and for the exchange of information to occur effectively between the line manager and the team member or colleague.

Jha and Kumar (2016) observed that there appeared to be a link connecting continuous, trustful and transparent communication between line managers and their teams that helped to strengthen their relationships resulting in increased employee commitment. For the flow of information and knowledge to be effective line managers can use the formal organisation communication channels and information systems on the one hand, and a

creative atmosphere to encourage more effective informal communication. The line managers identified that communication, with the emphasis on face-to-face communication, was an important factor in their success with their teams, typical participants quotes are:

> ***"I think I am I am very successful with my teams, because of that good communication… I really believe one to one communication is very important" (Participant 11)***

> ***"mostly it's meeting them personally, talking to them" (Participant 8)***

The ability to communicate with all levels of the organisation means the line manager is able to form relationships that affect their ability to deliver the varying responsibilities their job role encompasses, typical participant quote is:

> ***"I believe the communication is very important from the top to bottom, communication should be there" (Participant 32[)***

Welch and Jackson (2007) suggest that line managers should be looking to build, sustain and drive the relationships using internal communication structures, in doing so being able to reach across all levels of the organisation. Communication between managers and line managers further facilitates the dialogue necessary to ensure that the organisations mission, vision and goals are well expressed, and employees have their needs met, helping them to achieve their own personal goals as well as organisational goals. Whilst poor communication can potentially have a negative impact on organisational effectiveness (Men, O'Neil, and Ewing, 2020; Van Vuuren et al., 2007).

Being able to articulate clearly to their teams the needs of the business, how these will be achieved, their expectations and dealing with problems as they appear develop the relationship between the line manager and their team, participants quotes are:

"Communication is important at the same time, like communication on both sides because you need to communicate" (Participant 5)

"I think I am I am very successful with my teams, because of that good communication" (Participant 11)

Communication within the team

Successful communication within the team can lead to work being coordinated more effectively and completed in a timely manner. Where expectations and explanations are clarified misunderstandings, including those arising from individual team members perceptions can be reduced. When looking to increase the effectiveness of communication within the team, managers have at their disposal a variety of options they can implement when meeting with their teams. Through such meetings, line managers can make their teams aware of the economic results and the organisations strategic objectives (Arnfalk et al. 2016), whilst making room for discussion with their teams at the meetings, allowing them to have a voice. Team meetings can be used to give all team members an opportunity to offer their ideas and opinions. As the team's familiarity is developed their ability to function cohesively grows. There is evidence that that it is the quality of the communication rather than its frequency that is important, participants quotes are:

"*it's mainly communication, you need to communicate well, and the members also need to communicate well, so that you know it achieves the end goal" (Participant 15)*

"we always have cross functional team discussions" (Participant 6)

"Communication is a big, big, big factor… first of all, I had to tell them what we have to achieve" (Participant 12)

Hislop (2002) maintains that employee's attitudes and behaviours to knowledge sharing and their willingness to share their knowledge, is a two-way reciprocal process. Where employees have had a positive experience from knowledge sharing, it can lead to a positive attitude towards the organisation's values. This could influence ultimately their willingness to remain with that organisation.

Communicating knowledge by the line manager to the team

For a line manager to share their knowledge with the team they need to have confidence in themselves and that what they are communicating is correct. For it to be effective the people receiving the knowledge also have to be confident that what they are being told is correct. Setting goals to achieve, whether it is through the day, weekly or longer term using organisational direction makes use of the knowledge in a practical way, participant quote is:

"*I think the goal setting and communication is very important I because I spend 50/ 60% of my time communicating" (Participant 28)*

If the line manager shares their knowledge, then the team will see it as a positive thing, where they too can develop in the organisation, and share their knowledge. This makes the use of a 'buddy system' more effective as the team members are used to being in an environment where knowledge is shared. Learning by mistakes is encouraged, again as a practical way to gain knowledge, participant quote is:

"*And what I expect from them is like, always communicate. It's okay to make mistakes, but always communicate" (Participant 15)*

Cunningham and Iles (2002) consider that when team members see and have communicated to them the line manager's own attitude to learning, there is a powerful impact on the motivation and willingness of the team members to share their own knowledge.

If the line manager makes the decision not to share their knowledge, due to lack of experience or feeling that the knowledge they have is a form of power then the team will not feel empowered, not develop and not attain their true potential, participants quotes are:

"we discuss how things are to be done, we share things we share knowledge" (Participant 27)

"I've the opportunity everyone equal opportunity to everyone to give their opinions" (Participant 6)

4.4.6 Theme 6 - Building engagement within the Team

<u>The importance of the line manager engaging with their team:</u>

<u>Engaging with the team</u>

There is evidence to suggest that the team leader's behaviour is important in terms of team outcomes (Ceri-Booms, Curseu and Oerlemans 2016; Neil, Wagstaff, Weller and Lewis, 2016). The team leader's ability to form interpersonal relations, manage emotions, both their own and members of their team and have the competencies needed to engage the entire team need to be considered (Humphrey, 2012; Metcalf and Benn, 2013;

Fleming, 2016). Knowing their team members well and forming relationships with them contribute to staff engagement. Being able to recognise team members individual skills is vital if the team is to achieve their goals, participant quote is:

> **"*we need to understand what this person can do, what are their skills and their strengths… we have to identify the strengths and weaknesses" (Participant 7)***

As found earlier, line managers when new to the role may find these relationships difficult to build with their teams initially, not becoming aware of this until they have more experience and confidence in their role, participant quote is:

> **"*I was only looking at the processes. And I felt it afterwards. But now I feel genuinely they come and talk to me" (Participant 8)***

The behaviours of leadership the line manager needs to consider when making decisions are the cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects (Metcalf and Benn, 2013), participant quotes are:

> ***"need to understand the situation we are facing and have to come up with very quick and also very flexible and creative solutions" (Participant 27)***

> ***"I engage with many of my colleagues and if I have some good experience with what I have successful, then I share with my colleagues" (Participant 11)***

Contributing to employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is essential for an organisation to succeed in business. If employees are satisfied with their line manager and work culture, their view of the organisation and its goals will be positive, resulting in them directing their efforts to make

the company successful. When they are dissatisfied and unhappy in their job, they will become demotivated, underperform and the bottom line will be impacted.

The line managers therefore have an important contribution to make ensuring employee satisfaction by creating a positive work environment. Many if the themes already identified and discussed once again come together when considering how line managers contribute to employee satisfaction. Communication and trust play have a major part to play, assisting in building relationships. The part played by line managers, its importance and the role of experience was recognised in the following way, participant quotes are:

> ***"employee's satisfaction is also kind of really important in this role" (Participant 8)***

> ***"by developing my relationship abilities, by experience, using my experience is more important" (Participant 25)***

Feedback, especially positive feedback can build trust, employee motivation, employee satisfaction and lead to a reduction in staff turnover, benefitting the organisation in terms of recruitment and onboarding costs and retaining knowledge in the organisation. Developing employee skills increases efficiency at work and boosts job satisfaction and helps demonstrate that the career development of the team is as important as personal career development. Identifying and evaluating employees needs in terms of training or development needs demonstrates good practice and helps prevent dissatisfaction. Finally, the line manager should set clear goals and objectives.

Empathy with team members

Bartz and Bartz (2017) contend that where managers effectively show empathy there are benefits for those to whom it is applied, contributes to making the work environment more productive, and cultivates a positive bond and social connection between the manager and their team and others they work with. Importantly for the organisation it should

produce a more effective working relationship resulting in enhanced productivity, participant quote is:

"good empathy with the staff is necessary" (Participant 12)

Empathy, which plays a part in emotional intelligence, gives the line manager the ability to recognise and relate to the feelings, thoughts, and general circumstances of staff and colleagues undergoing emotional difficulties and challenges, participant quote is:

"*you need to have the empathy or the knowledge or the feeling" (Participant 7)*

To be able to apply empathy effectively the line manager needs the skill to focus and pay close attention to the other persons feelings and the situations. Martinuzzi (2009a) believes empathy keeps relationships running smoothly, nurturing positive relationships between managers and staff.

To show empathy the manager does not have to agree with the perspective of the other person, but their thoughts, feelings, and concerns need to be acknowledged and attempted to be understood. Empathic managers must be able to sense and relate to the feelings, thoughts, and general perceptions of the person who is encountering emotional difficulties (Holt, Marques, Hu, and Wood, 2017).

According to Goleman (2017) there are three distinctive forms of empathy that are applicable to managers: cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and empathetic concern. Cognitive empathy requires managers to think about feelings, understanding the other persons perspectives, mental state, and feelings. The manager needs to be self-aware, to be able to understand their feelings in order to understand another's feelings. The manager needs to express their feelings about the situation to the other party in a

concerned way, creating a bond with the other person. Curiosity and interest support the effective use of curiosity (Bartz and Bartz, 2017).

When using emotional empathy, the manager responds with specific, appropriate emotions and feelings, recognising that they have also been affected by what the other person is undergoing. Managers can use emotional empathy effectively in their coaching and mentoring roles, and to help staff and colleagues who are going through challenging emotional times. Emotional empathy is reliant on the combination of two forms of focused attention: an awareness and considered concentration on the feelings and details of the situation of the other person and being conscious of their facial expressions, voice, and any additional indications of concern or distress (Goleman, 2017). Here the manager's skill ais identifying the persons needs and demonstrating compassion when responding to that person's suffering and difficulties.

Bloom (2016) endorses using compassion when showing concern and care of others, being motivated to improve the well-being of others. Compassion necessitates the personal connection of the manager to personally with the suffering and distress of the other person's suffering with genuine empathic concern, valuing the other person's well-being. There is the potential for managers to experience compassion fatigue if they are engaged in empathy concern for a lengthy period of time, affecting their ability to perform effectively. It is often through the observation of staff members or colleague's behaviour or emotional state at work that managers first become aware that they are experiencing difficulties and conclude there may be something wrong. When emotional issues affect a staff member's performance the managers initial response may be to be aggressive or angry, reiterating to the staff member what they see as acceptable and unacceptable performance. If this is the approach taken by the manager the staff members trust, loyalty, and motivation to work with them on a collaborative basis will be eroded. The best approach for the manager to take is a more compassionate and sincere approach, aiming to define the cause of the performance problem (Seppala, 2017). The purpose of the

manager employing empathy when used in this context is to assure a positive relationship with the staff member, identify the problem by effectively using the empathy process and improve the performance of the staff member.

The role of personality and attitude

Sharma and Bhatnagar (2016) found team-leader engaging behaviours to be: emotional agility, use of humour, effective delegation and quality of feedback, all of which led to team engagement. Emotional agility allows the line manager to face their negative feelings productively, improving performance and innovation (David and Congleton, 2013). Importantly it has been shown that the emotions shown by team leaders such as happiness or anger impact team processes (Thiel, Harvey, Courtright and Bradley, 2015). A team leader can leverage emotional intelligence when dealing with negative emotions at work (David and Congleton, 2013). A team where the leader makes aggressive, depreciative comments may exhibit low teamwork engagement; however, where the leader is energetic and enthusiastic the team may exhibit high teamwork engagement (Costa, Passos and Bakker, 2014). Chamine (2013) consider that for teams and individuals to realise their true potential, team leaders need to develop the team's positivity quotient, these positive emotions have been found to have a higher importance than the intelligence quotient. Emotional agility allows team leaders to motivate their teams by sharing positive experiences rather than using negative emotions (threat and fear for example) when achieving team goals.

Humour at work can be used in a positive way, maintaining balance and in stressful situations and facilitating relationships (Avtgis and Taber, 2006). Further humour can bring people in the group together and add a sense of belonging built on a shared understanding (Lynch, 2009). Workplace humour helps to connect managers and employees, identifying with each other when both laugh together, creating a pleasant atmosphere (Fox and Amichai-Hamburger, 2001). The employees use of humour is affected by how the supervisors uses humour (Lang and Lee, 2010) and their job

satisfaction (Roberts, Dun and Iun, 2016). Use of humour can help team leaders manage their negative emotions (David and Congleton, 2013) improving the team members' affect (Costa et al., 2014). Humour is able to create a positive climate where team members feel positive within their team, stimulating collective productivity (Roberts et al., 2016). The use of humour in their teams by team leaders helps them to engage their teams and enhance teams' cohesiveness (Yang, Kitchen and Bacouel-Jentjens, 2015), participants quotes are:

"confidence to work with them to face the issues" (Participant 25)

"it's I think it's the personality or the attitude matters a lot" (Participant 7)

4.4.7 Theme 7 - Organisational Culture

The significance of organisational culture in knowledge sharing:

How organisational culture encourages knowledge sharing

For learning and knowledge sharing to take place there needs to be an organisation culture that encourages its managers and employees to communicate openly, learn from their mistakes and feel involved in creating new knowledge, participants quotes are:

"in my organisation, I would say we always encourage learning. And we have an open-door policy as well" (Participant 15)

"we have a culture of problem solving as well" (Participant 6)

"we are building the kind of culture where people feel free to give you their opinions" (Participant 6)

The sharing of the organisations vision with the team

The line manager is key when communicating the organisations vision and goals to their team, placed as they are between the employees in their team and more senior managers who create the vision and goals. As the line manager is responsible for the implementation of the vision and delivery of the goals, they need to both understand the vision and be able to articulate it clearly to their team to achieve results, participant quotes are:

> ***"the leader should communicate the goals and objectives correctly to the team each member and if they need any clarity or clarification, he should do it" (Participant 28)***

> ***"always be able to share that because to achieve the objective of an organisation of an organization's that's very important thing" (Participant 12)***

Organisational vision can be described loosely as the organisations purpose, strategic intent and goals, and where the organisation sees itself and its position in the future (Kantabutra and Avery, 2010) while Carver (2011) considers it to be the organisations future image. O'Connell, Hickerson, and Pillutla (2011) stress that to be effective the organisations vision has to be communicated properly to all stakeholders, including employees and then accepted by stakeholders (Slack, Orife, and Anderson, 2010). The relationship between the organisations vision and the organisations performance is achieved by the creation of goals for employees, leading to improved employee effectiveness that in turn relates to increased customer satisfaction (Kantabutra and Avery, 2010), participant quotes are:

> ***"I would say are willing to help the youngsters and they believe that in the not youngsters need to be nurtured so that, you know, they can take the organisation to the next level" (Participant 15)***

"I have to know my company vision and my department vision, this information I have to be shared all among my department at that time, we can achieve our department mission. After that, finally we can achieve a company which at that time come communication from the top management went to the employer is very important" (Participant 11)

"one voice one company" (Participant 6)

"do they really understand where the organisation is heading" (Participant 8)

4.4.8 Theme 8 - The role of technology in transferring knowledge

The use of technology in transferring knowledge:

How technology is used in training and development

Organisations can now store training materials on internal intranets to give accessibility to all employees. It can be used to convey specific product information, specific training programmes and personal or career development programmes. Some may be connected to the organisations head office or HR department so there is a record of the training having taken place. In some organisations this may replace traditional training in a 'classroom' like setting and can be done when the employee has time rather than on a specified day and time.

The advantage of this was described by one line manager as, participant quote is:

"*And we also have a career portal where you have the option to go and have training programmes, we have career development programmes for skill development, so you can access through your career portal, so that you can*

do that in your leisure time, if you need to know more about your work" (Participant 20)

Being able to access training material in this way may mean employees carry on working at home after they have finished working but may provide them with the necessary time and space to absorb what they are learning, participants quotes are:

"we are training the people on the technology pieces" (Participant 6)

"we have online training systems, online systems, where they talk, emails, g-emails" (Participant 8)

How technology is used in the transfer of knowledge

Schafermeyer and Hoffman (2016) urge caution when using technology to transfer knowledge, pointing out that standard documents are generally weak when conveying genuine knowledge, proposing that essentially the process of "handing over" knowledge is very different to transferring knowledge. At no point is there the opportunity for dialog about what the document is about, its importance, or its context and relation to other documents between the person who leaves the knowledge behind and the person who receives it, participants quotes are:

"We have library, we have support system, we have learning online learning system as a lot" (Participant 8)

"everything in the base portal, so where people go and search the information" (Participant 6)

"Online… Every employee has access to read every policies and procedures" (Participant 9)

"there is one training centre one separate area Training Centre they have very procedures, if one easy to access everybody, easily accessible area… And once came a newcomer, they all view the knowledge about what are the procedures" (Participant 11)

"we do have manuals and the procedures policies, we have need written documents and hard copies as well" (Participant 27)

"each of the member has easy access to the soft copy because it's already been installed in the main documents in the site in the intranet, so no one can say that we don't have the documents, policies, procedures and circulars" (Participant 27)

"we have our own software as well as our servers" (Participant 5)

"We have hard Copy as well as because we have internet… in any PC I can log in, I can see that manual" (Participant 12)

"everything is in the internet. And so we are doing the cloud computing also… Everybody has access, basically in our cloud" (Participant 13)

The use of technology to communicate

With the increasing use of computers, smart phones and tablets the ability to communicate and transfer knowledge has become more accessible to more people and available as needed, making just in time access to knowledge the 'norm'. The use of apps such as Whatsapp to communicate either individually or between teams has grown in business, being able to communicate in 'real time' an advantage over emails. Workplace

collaboration platforms such as Skype, Teams and Zoom to be able to communicate without the need to travel to meet face to face have increased in popularity.

Braun, Bark, Kirchner, Stegmann and van Dick (2019) in their study found indications that face-to-face communication can at times be viewed as interrupting the workflow, whereas it is possible to retrieve an email once the current task is completed. Email communication also gives the employee the time to think about their response to problems and questions that are complicated or delicate problems, giving them the time to fashion the exact words to use in the situation. Braun et al (2019) also suggest that it may help that email communication can keep emotions from being visible. The email appearing to be impersonal and harsh in tone can be a downside of this, with face-to-face communication having the tone of voice and personal body language to add interpretation to the message.

However, the view of one of the line managers is still that although they use technology to communicate it is not the preferred method, participant quote is:

> **"*Basically, we use a lot of emails and you have WhatsApp groups. And personally, I would prefer to have face to face conversation because it helps a lot." (Participant 15)***

Kupritz and Cowell (2010) describe email as being perceived as convenient, quick and easy to use and with the facility to attach data files and overall as a method of communicating the least time-consuming. Problems can arise when there is not a distinction drawn between business and personal communication via email, participant quote is:

> ***"I'm using my personal use personal email address now, which is like very, very hectic for me because like, it's like I have been mixed with the***

professional things and the person things in my personal email" (Participant 19)

The growing use of Whatsapp was evident, participant quote is:

"*I use emails when I'm sharing my information… sometimes the social media site WhatsApp I'm using when I'm outside the country" (Participant 12)*

Whatsapp, which operates on most smartphones and tablets, and the speed with which messages can be transmitted has made it much easier for people to communicate with each other (Sutling, Mansor, Widyarto, Lecthmunan, and Arshad, 2015). It is said that Whatsapp 'handles more instant messages in a day than the entire global short messaging system industry' (Sutling et al., 2015, p. 225) and continues out of all the mobile messaging services available to be the most popular. Church and Oliveira (2013) discovering that WhatsApp is the preferred app due to cost, community, privacy, reliability and simplicity. Users can interact faster than if they were using email and they can communicate in groups making the exchange of information and feedback immediate and speeding up the management of tasks (Johnston et al., 2014). Online communicate on tools have the benefit of enabling real-time chat and of preserving a record of the communication (Herring and Androutsopoulos, 2015) where missed messages can be accessed by users and replied when they are able.

The literature suggests that technology has to be easy to use, or people well trained in its use to be useful in transferring knowledge. The differences between different generations and their use and views of technology was highlighted by some of the line managers, participants quotes are:

"*the young generation will bring new knowledge like about Instagram, Facebook, how to use these things, to advertising promotional work, where*

we don't know really have to work for print based media. At the same time, the senior people will have good knowledge about internal controls strategy, how to identify markets, things like that" (Participant 5)

and "we have this internal portal where we are not very comfortable with because it doesn't address the millennials" (Participant 8)

Stich, Farley, Cooper, and Tarafdar, (2015) taking a different view of the flow of communication, speculating that it results in frequent interruptions for the employee, followed by the compulsion to react to the received notifications. And even though a perceived positive aspect of e-mails is that they can be read anytime, the reaction time by the employee to an incoming e-mail has been found to be on average under 1 minute 44 seconds, and the majority in under six seconds (Jackson, Dawson and Wilson (2001). It has also become common to see most people, even when they are in important meetings and events looking at their screens (Usborne, 2016). Although there may be timely and needed information in some interruptions (Mano and Mesch, 2010), most serve to disrupt the task at hand, with the employee taking up to fifteen minutes after the interruptions to re-engage with what they are meant to be doing (Jackson et al., 2001). With employees' "attention" split among many different tasks at the same time and constantly flitting back and forth between different devices and tasks not only is it time consuming but has the knock on effect of reducing uninterrupted attention to one specific task (Addas and Pinsonneault, 2015), participant quotes are:

"inside we are using one to one communication, as well as sometimes we are having the mass scale meeting" (Participant 13)

"if you need to communicate our head office, we use VC video conference, Skype, and emails" (Participant 13)

"Easy for everybody communication and for answering messages and all the things, new technologies very easy … if you need to communicate with another person, we can do it through that system that is being installed in everyone's computer" (Participant 27)

"people are using the emails and everything to communicate" (Participant 6)

"We were sending emails, everything happened through the email, communications, even the Skype, Skype conferences and meetings, everything is online" (Participant 19)

4.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES DISCUSSION

The methodology employed by the researcher was used to gain an understanding of the reality of the job role and investigate the effects this could have developing and transferring knowledge. It was indicated that the ability of the line manger to develop their own knowledge and transfer the knowledge to others was influential in their own success, their teams success and ultimately the organisations success.

Objective (i) was to investigate Line Managers being the main contributor through semi structure interviews and thematic analysis (template methodology) to bridge the gap between current literature to answer the research question about Knowledge in an Organisation.

Objective (ii) was to analyse the data from the interviews to achieve a better understanding of the experiences and expectations of line managers (the participant's) and identify the gap in knowledge and practice in current literature to answer the research question.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The review of the interviews and findings has shown that the line managers interviewed perceived their formal training as far less effective in developing the skills they thought of being as essential than by learning from mentors, peers, practical ‘on the job’ training and through experience. Literature shows that new line managers are often left to ‘sink or swim’ (Petty, 2016) and that any training they receive is not relevant to give them the basic skills they need (Yeardley, 2017). The struggles and challenges identified as being present when they were inexperienced brought into focus the issues surrounding their relationships with teams and how these need to be developed to build the trust necessary to become successful.

Communication is considered a valuable skill for a manager to possess both in literature (Shakeri et al., 2020) and by the participants interviewed, enabling to the line manager to contribute to knowledge sharing in a number of ways. Participants identified face to face communication as the preferred way of communicating with their teams, concurring with the view of Lee (2010) that as managers and employees are able to see and read each other’s body language as well, misunderstandings are avoided. When using alternative forms of media when communicating Welsh (2012) found it could be harmful if either the employees or managers do not have the training or protocols in place to use them properly. This was borne out by some participants who recognised that whilst some younger members of their teams had grown up with technology and so were confident in using it, older members of the teams struggled and needed additional training.

4.7 INTERVIEWS AND FINDINGS GAPS

The data from the interviews and the analysis of that data was used to consider if the gaps that were identified on the completion of the Literature Review had been answered, either partially or completely.

(1) The impact of the lack of training on ‘line managers’ ability to successfully carry out their job role.

The data showed that the line managers felt they struggled in their job role and faced challenges they felt unable to deal with due to lack of training, specific problems that were highlighted were their inability to delegate tasks effectively to members of the team, difficulties with communicating effectively and confidently and focussing on tasks and procedures rather than building relationships and trust with their teams. This only happened as they became more experienced and confident in their role. It appears that whilst training in procedures and ‘hard skills’ was more likely to be the training line managers received, it was training in ‘soft skills’ and people management that they actually needed. However, lack of training in their own role did not reduce their belief in the value of training for members of their team, or the benefits they saw as a result of training their teams. The line managers did not see a paradox in this but may be an interesting line of inquiry for the future.

(2) How are line managers expected to fill the gaps in their knowledge to successfully build and lead their teams?

With the lack of formal training provided the line mangers interviewed identified learning from peers, mentors and senior managers as filling the gaps in their knowledge, building their practice knowledge by using resources available to them in the workplace, many regarding informal training in the workplace as a more relevant way of learning. Using practical methods of learning through watching and listening peers to provide everyday support and the mentoring from senior members of management to improve their skills, they saw these methods as a positive way to improve their management practice.

(3) How a lack of soft skills affects the relationship between the line manager and their team

A lack of self-awareness regarding what skills they need to perform their job role effectively, especially the ‘soft skills’ they require, puts the line manager at a disadvantage when building a relationship with their team.

(4) The difference experience and confidence have on the line managers performance

Analysis of the data clearly indicated that it was gaining experience in the job role that allowed the line mangers to begin to communicate confidently and start to build trust with their teams, allowing for knowledge to be more freely shared and accepted, their confidence to grow and their belief in themselves as a manager and leader to develop.

(5) How the organisation can support line managers to make them more effective and engaged

The majority of the respondents felt they were supported by their peers and senior members of management in their job role. They did though flag a lack of formal training or informal training they found relevant as being an issue, especially when early in their careers as line managers. The lack of training signposted from the previous responses may suggest that to be more effective the organisations should offer the line managers training at the start of their careers that provides them with the soft skills they need to be effective in their role. To engage the line managers when they feel the organisation is interested in them, regarding them as having an important role and making a real contribution. They also need to feel they are valued, have the opportunity to develop their careers and that the organisation is consistent in their treatment of them, like they are expected to be with their team members.

(6) The factors that encourage and deter line managers' sharing their knowledge and developing their employees

All the responses to questions around sharing knowledge intimated that knowledge was regularly shared with their peers, teams and organisation. This became easier as the line managers gained experience in their roles, developed trust in their teams, and their teams in them and learnt from others knowledge. Some did acknowledge that this did not happen when they started their role as they did not have the necessary communication skills, trust of their teams or confidence to do this. However, none of the participants intimated that they withheld knowledge, others had withheld knowledge from them or used knowledge as a form of power. This could demonstrate a lack of awareness, a lack of confidence or a lack of experience.

(7) The impact of trust or the lack of it has in knowledge sharing between line managers and employees

The participants observed in their interviews that when they concentrated on policies and processes rather than people there was no trust built. The impact on knowledge sharing is that it does not then take place as the line manager was not aware of the needs of their teams.

(8) What can be implemented to provide the tools a line manager needs to be successful in their role

Although the participants did not provide a direct response to the final gap in the literature when interviewed, from analysis of the data it was possible to identify what could be implemented to provide the tools a line manager would need to help them to be successful in their role. It was clear that training and development that would help develop their practice and self-awareness would be beneficial. Giving the line manager the time to

build their knowledge, gain experience and then the confidence to share their knowledge would precede tools for self-development where they would start to network, share knowledge and skills with peers and receive and give peer support.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

Over the past two decades there have been great changes in the workplace, these changes have been categorised into three groups: the characteristics of the workplace, the forces that operate on organisations, and management skills (Daft, 2008). The types of resources, work and employees is addressed in the first category. Traditional workplace resources were viewed to be physical assets, however in the new workplace these assets are characteristically “pieces” of information. Additionally, the nature of work has changed, developing to become more flexible and able to be carried out virtually. Lastly, the characteristics of employees have shifted, with growing freedom in employment and, the growth of knowledge workers (Davenport, 2013).

The forces that operate on the organisation, including technology, markets, workforce, and values are addressed in the second category. The workplace has evolved to become digital and business oriented, moving away from the manufacturing nature which was the basis of the traditional workplace. New technologies have now given employees the ability to share information regardless of where they are, along with access to knowledge repositories. However, Cabrera, Collins and Salgado (2006) stress that technology by itself does not guarantee that knowledge will be shared by employees.

Organisational values now place stronger emphasis on change and agility above stability, even though efficiency may suffer. Finally, there has been a change in the current organisational environment, making it more dynamic and complex. This can result in the workplace becoming a stressful environment for employees, and in particular managers, because their influence on organisational outcomes is diminished.

The last category, management skills, and the focus of this study, incorporates leadership, work methods, interpersonal relationships, and workplace strategy. Where the focus of old management previously was on profits, new management places the focus more on customer and employee relations (Daft, 2015). Now, organisations consider it is more productive and effective for work to be completed by teams rather than individuals, and relationships in the workplace collaborative than competitive. To achieve this organisations are required to restructure creating a culture that involves teamwork, the sharing of information, devolving decision making, and a looser hierarchy (Daft, 2015). The emphasis of the organisation has shifted from efficient performance to experimentation, learning, and development.

5.1.1 Deductions:

The literature review showed that line managers are faced with the challenge of being both employees and the managers of employees, which can make their position ambiguous and uncertain (Hales, 2005). In their job role they are expected to play a dual role, being both the voice of management and the champion of the interests of their team (Boxall and Purcell, 2016), which can result in there being a conflict of loyalties (Adler, Forbes and Willmott, 2007). Additionally, with organisations introducing flatter hierarchies it has led to a reduction in middle management posts resulting in work intensification, increasing workloads, growing responsibilities in the workplace, which often include people management and the closer monitoring of performance (Worrall, Parkes and Cooper, 2004).

The management, training and motivating of their teams requires the line manager to possess a wide range of skills which range from technical skills to soft skills, having to possess the ability to be able to motivate others, be able to coordinate teams and be in a position to negotiate where they have influence (Bozionelos and Baruch, 2015). The expectations of organisations may differ, especially where contexts are liable to change,

this means that expectations will differ, so while there will be some line managers who may be expected to empower employees, others may be expected to exercise high levels of control (Tengblad and Vie, 2015).

Building on knowledge and an interest of the role of the line manager, how they developed their teams their willingness to share their knowledge, the starting point of the study was to try and establish why line managers would acquire knowledge of the organisation, how they would acquire the knowledge and where they would be able to acquire it from. From there the study widened to what line managers contributed to the organisation's knowledge, how they contribute to organisational knowledge and where or to who they contribute their knowledge. By looking at these six areas from both the practical experience of working as a line manager and by interviewing other line managers about their experiences it was possible to develop an insight into line managers experiences of their job role. Although the line managers were involved in working in different industries from each other, and none were from the retail sector, it is interesting to note that their experiences were similar to each other's and to my own, making the study relevant to line managers as a homogenous group.

5.1.2 Why do line managers gain knowledge of an organisation?

Line managers in organisations will gather knowledge about the organisation as they progress in their job, learning from experience and mistakes, making them more effective in their role. Often passionate about their job and the organisation they work for, to be successful they must continue to learn, develop their skills and practice self-awareness and reflection, recognising the benefits of continuous self-development. Communication is a key competency for them to possess, as it effects all areas of their job role, whether this is on an individual level, team level or senior management level. They need to understand the organisations goals and vision and communicate this clearly and effectively to continue to attract loyal staff and customers. As part of their role, they need

to understand organisation policies and procedures, be able to implement them and understand their relevance.

5.1.3 How do line managers gain knowledge of an organisation?

There are opportunities for the line manager to gain knowledge, many of them in the form of practical learning opportunities rather than more formal learning. Foremost is the practical knowledge learnt ‘on the job’ as part of their ‘day to day’ activities. Other opportunities to gain knowledge of the organisation include asking questions, learning from peers, other employees and more senior managers and learning by being allowed to make mistakes. Taking part in projects if they are available, working in cross functional teams or in different departments all build the experience the line manager can draw on.

5.1.4 What do line managers gain from having knowledge of an organisation?

By building knowledge of the organisation, the line manager will know the preferred way for achieving goals and targets, completing tasks the correct way and obtain knowledge of policies and processes. By working in other departments or in cross functional teams it is possible to gain knowledge and experience of other job roles.

The ability to communicate downwards and upwards in the organisation provides the opportunity to share knowledge through the organisation as well as the opportunity to continue learning. This is important when understanding and communicating the organisation goals, vision and expectations. Developing product knowledge gives confidence when communicating with customers. Importantly the line manager will gain the ability to make better and faster decisions based on their knowledge and experience.

5.1.5 Where do line managers gain knowledge of an organisation?

There are both practical paths to gaining knowledge about the organisation and more formal ways. The ability to learn from their peers and other line managers gives them a practical way of gaining knowledge. They may have built the relationship during the training period or be allocated a more experienced senior manager as their mentor. As they gain experience it is still important for them to maintain the relationship with peers and mentors to develop their practice.

More formal training in organisations often takes the form of ‘in house’ training, although training departments are often the first casualty when there is an economic downturn. Meetings can be used to provide information and knowledge, especially if there are new policies or procedures being introduced. Policies and procedures are another source of information that should be available in organisation handbooks. Training manuals and product knowledge manuals may be available either in hard copy or on the organisation’s intranet, available both for self-development or as structured learning.

5.1.6 Why do line managers contribute to knowledge in an organisation?

One of the reasons line managers share their knowledge is because they enjoy helping others and developing them. If they have had a good experience with someone sharing their knowledge to assist them with their personal development and progression, they are more likely to see the advantages themselves. This contributes to knowledge in the organisation by sharing their knowledge, encouraging others to share their knowledge and avoid the hoarding of knowledge.

Realising the advantages of sharing their knowledge in both the development of individuals and the team increases the likelihood that the line manager will be able to delegate effectively, leading to the team and the organisation ultimately achieving their

targets and goals. As line managers want to be successful, they need to have the ability to motive both their teams and them. They may foster group identity to build a collegial atmosphere amongst the team and demonstrate empathy when dealing with team members. Where contributing knowledge is encouraged and recognised by the organisation there is more likely to be a culture of sharing. The line manager may achieve an enhanced individual status if they share their knowledge and become trusted within the organisation.

5.1.7 What do line managers contribute to knowledge in an organisation?

The line manager has the opportunity to contribute to knowledge in the organisation in several ways. As they become more experienced in their role, they will develop the ability to think critically and use this to enhance problem solving skills, which will enable them to make their best problem-solving experiences reusable to others. The delivery to customers both in terms of customer service and establishing relationships is a result of having knowledge of the organisation and the needs of the customer. Finally, staff and thus their knowledge and experience is more likely to be retained by the organisation if the line manager has shared their knowledge with individuals and their teams, communicated effectively with them, setting expectations and allowing them to develop. These contributions all help the organisation save time and money.

5.1.8 How do line managers contribute to knowledge in an organisation?

Communication is key to knowledge sharing and line managers need to be able to communicate at all levels of the organisation to facilitate this, whether it is on an individual, team or senior manager level. Initially they need to be able to build trust within individuals and their teams that the knowledge they are sharing is correct and can be used. How they communicate can be crucial too, with many employees preferring face to

face communication. Providing coaching, mentoring and training builds both relationships and trust between line managers and individuals and their team.

They also contribute to knowledge in the organisation by creating an environment in the workplace where learning and sharing knowledge is encouraged. The line manager can be supported in this by the organisation also creating a culture of knowledge sharing. By creating this environment, it is possible to encourage team members to share their knowledge when training and developing a new member of the team, building knowledge within the team and empower others in their job roles.

5.1.9 Where do line managers contribute to knowledge in an organisation?

From the organisation perspective the line managers have to build relationships with individuals, peers, senior managers and customers in their job role. To do this they need to develop and utilise their interpersonal skills to effectively interact and communicate with these different groups, including communication, conflict management, empathy, leadership, listening, negotiation, a positive attitude and teamwork. They need to possess or gain the confidence and experience to be able to forward plan and problem solve.

5.1.10 Originality and contribution

Reflecting on the experiences of line managers, both at the beginning of their career and as they develop their knowledge skills, it is evident that training is relevant and necessary for managers. Yeardley (2017) identified an issue with the training they may receive from organisations, where the training is not pitched at the correct level, resulting in them not receiving the basic non-technical skills they need. Hassan (2011) advocates that without these basic skills the line manager, conceivably the most important rung of managerial hierarchy will not be able to fulfil their job role with confidence as they lack the soft skill capabilities they require. Yeardley (2017) suggests that because organisations cannot always see the financial benefits of line managers being highly skilled and better trained

as they think they will leave; many will progress through their careers without the basic training they need. This goes against the advice of Kahn and Heaphy (2014) who urge organisations to select, train and monitor line managers so they demonstrate motivational leadership, coaching behaviours and supporting behaviour.

The findings of this research have been used to develop a framework that can be used by line managers as a self-development tool to improve their practice and can also be used by human resource development teams to develop line managers in the organisation. The identification of the stages in a line managers development, starting from personal knowledge through to sharing knowledge was made using the data collected and analysed, and from the literature review carried out. Initially an easy-to-use training and development checklist was designed that draws on developing personal awareness and management practice, addressing the criticism of Yeardley (2017) that training for line managers does not give them the basic skills they need. The framework allows the line manager to identify training and development needs, focussing on self-awareness, self-discipline, self-development and self-discovery.

This contribution to practice has been made by identifying the role of management experience, communication, confidence, and soft skills in knowledge sharing in the workplace. It builds on previous research adding to understanding the impact on 'line managers' when they do not receive appropriate training at the appropriate level for their experience and competency level. The research stresses the need to concentrate on the development of intrapersonal skills, communication, and teamwork. As it was indicated that face to face communication was still the preferred way of communicating there should be training provided that builds interaction and intuition. The use of technology in organisations has expanded rapidly, but this may have been at the cost of not having the skills to build personal relationships and contribute to team building and knowledge sharing.

5.2 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

5.2.1 Contribution to knowledge from the literature review

Social Exchange Theory

In the workplace individual work relationships form part of a wider socialisation process, with employees communicating with each other to share information that makes a positive contribution to both their performance and job satisfaction, as well as providing social support and networking. This can encourage them to build positive relationships with colleagues and within the organisation. This process, however, does not take place in isolation but in a dynamic and unpredictable work environment, presenting challenges (Leana and Barry, 2000).

The social exchange theory lens was used to investigate know an individual's knowledge sharing behaviour affected the line managers ability to develop their team. Davenport and Prusak (1998) saw perceived benefits resulting from knowledge-sharing behaviour as including the future exchange of knowledge, increased status, improved job security, and enhanced prospects of advancement in the organisation. This viewpoint presumes that share knowledge is positively influenced where there the expectation exists that the individual will gain some future benefit through reciprocation (Cabrera et al., 2005). Kankanhalli, Tan and Wei (2005) understood this perceived benefit to be a major factor that influenced employees to contribute their knowledge to virtual knowledge repositories. Ma (2007) suggested that the amount individuals are willing to contribute knowledge to virtual repositories is dependent on the amount of satisfaction they obtain as members of the community. Chiu, Hsu and Wang (2006) studied the effect of social interaction, trust, and norm of reciprocity on knowledge-sharing, whilst Watson and Hewett (2006) studied the consequences of improved contribution of knowledge within the organisation.

Job-Demands-Resources Model

Job demands are defined as the “physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). These may include pressures made on time, conflict of roles, or an increased workload. Crawford, LePine, and Rich (2010) differentiated between what they consider to be hindering and challenging job demands. Whilst challenging job demands are perceived as supporting personal growth and providing the opportunity to learn, hindering job demands are perceived as impeding personal growth, creating constraints or barriers (Crawford et al., 2010). Job resources on the other hand are the “physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may … be functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and its related costs, or stimulate personal growth and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). This can be in the form of being given autonomy in the job role, or the provision of support from the organisation or supervisor/ line manager.

Schaufeli (2017) argues that the JD-R models function may be as the main source for an organisational development process which targets improving work engagement and avoids fatigue. The model is well prepared for this function since it is all embracing, as it comprises both a positive inspiration element as well as a negative anxiety element. This balanced approach is an essential strength to promote the model to organisations because it incorporates an occupational health approach (reducing job anxiety and work fatigue) with an HR-approach (increasing work inspiration and commitment).

Communities of Practice

Thinking together is part of learning in Communities of Practice (CoPs), with practitioners considering real-life problems or topics. Pyrko, Dorfler and Eden (2017) describes how this leads to members being able to draw on each other’s performance in practice as signals for action, sharing and redeveloping knowledge. Thinking together allows practitioners to agree on the three elements essential to CoPs: mutual engagement, joint

enterprise and shared repertoire, each CoP having their own unique elements (Iverson and McPhee, 2008). Membership of the community is achieved by engaging with other members, the level of membership dependent on the amount of meaningful interaction with other members and the investment of identity (Iverson, 2011). This produces a layered membership, determined by people's different needs, abilities, and the amount of time they are willing to invest.

Research shows that CoPs can stimulate benefits, reduce barriers and create success factors within the communities, increasingly using virtual tools to share knowledge. Gannon-Leary and Fontainha (2007) put forward that a virtual CoP can be defined as a group of individuals who share a subject area of interest about which they connect and discuss online. They suggest that these interactions normally result in the sharing of the knowledge of each contributor in the community and impacts on everyone's understanding and influences the enhancement of the knowledge within the subject area. These forms of CoPs are becoming widespread thanks to technological developments which facilitate improvements with regular interactive discussion amongst group members. This widespread usage is because they offer the ability for geographically isolated groups of individuals to participate in global knowledge sharing. Gannon-Leary and Fontainha (2007) however argue that whilst there are obvious benefits to be derived from knowledge sharing and understanding, there are barriers that exist in virtual CoPs. It is easy to appreciate the immense potential for the development of CoPs through e-mail conversation lists and discussion boards but there are difficulties in finding a relevant group of likeminded enthusiasts and/or in initiating such a community.

Lee, Reinicke, Sarkar, and Anderson (2015) suggest that communities of practice are a possible means of improving knowledge sharing when managers are involved in working on projects, whether within the organisation or collaboration between organisations. They argue that this is based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and Lee et al. (2015) put forward the notion that participation in communities of practice can result in individual

benefits for the manager involved in the project, as well as in more far-reaching organisational benefits. CoPs with their fluid, evolving boundaries, are considered to play a big role in increasing problem-solving capacity at the individual and organizational level (Bolisani and Scarso, 2014) and reduce bureaucratic rigidities by enabling individual learning and knowledge exchange. CoPs are risk-free loosely coupled entities with their own culture, fostering cross-functional learning and collaboration internally and externally (Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Wenger, 2010).

Discussion

The fundamental implication of ‘social exchange theory’ is that participants make decisions by consciously or unconsciously assessing the knowledge sharing input (give) and output (receive) of a relationship or action, ultimately seeking to maximise the output (receive element). Although the elements of trust and social interaction have been explored in regard to social exchange theory, there is an expectation that when the participant feels they are contributing more knowledge than they are receiving or not satisfied as the member of the community, the relationship is liable to break down. A large part of the ‘social exchange theory’ in the workplace is that it focuses on the importance of employees voicing their thoughts. Similar to delivering upon the benefits promised, managers are also viewed highly when they actively listen to their employees.

Using the ‘JD-R Model’ to analyse and improve employee well-being, addresses the problem by giving your team what they need to keep them happy, healthy, and thriving at work. When employees are working either in a high-pressure role or under workload pressure and are rarely stressed or upset, instead showing signs that they are in thriving, the reason is often that the line manager if it is the employee, or senior managers if it is the line manager, and the organisation are supportive. For this to happen they need to provide a comfortable working environment, frequent mentoring and development opportunities, and regular constructive feedback. Employees also need to be encouraged to build relationships with their colleagues.

Research demonstrates that CoPs are a key element in the building of a knowledge management framework for line managers. This study is showing that there are five key benefits and that these are:

1. CoPs help connect line managers in organisations that are focused on productivity.
2. CoPs can support line managers to build capability, reduce the duplication of work and build better practices.
3. A mature CoPs community will benefit Line Managers as members and the organisation as a whole.
4. CoPs take time and determination to create and become effective.
5. A CoPs goes through a number of stages as it develops, and a resilient group of line mangers is vital for continued existence.

From Literature Review it can be seen that the role of the line manager, although central to the success of the organisation is often overlooked in terms of providing adequate training that would enable them to confidently take on the job role. The soft skills they need to be successful may not be developed if they have been promoted due to procedure, policy and organisation knowledge. Without communication skills they cannot build relationships, trust or share their knowledge with others, affecting employee engagement and retention, and so the retention of experience and knowledge in the organisation. The literature emphasised the importance of communication, trust and confidence as the building blocks to develop teamworking, creativity, problem solving and the willingness to share knowledge.

5.2.2 Contribution to practice from the interviews and findings

From the interviews conducted and the analysis of the data, it has become evident that the flow of knowledge from the line managers to their teams relies on their ability to not only develop their own knowledge but also their ability to communicate clearly and effectively and cultivate relationships. These two factors need to combine with growing

experience and confidence in their job role, management skills and ‘people’ skills to give them the key to successfully share their knowledge with their teams, peers and senior managers to contribute to the organisation’s knowledge base and success.

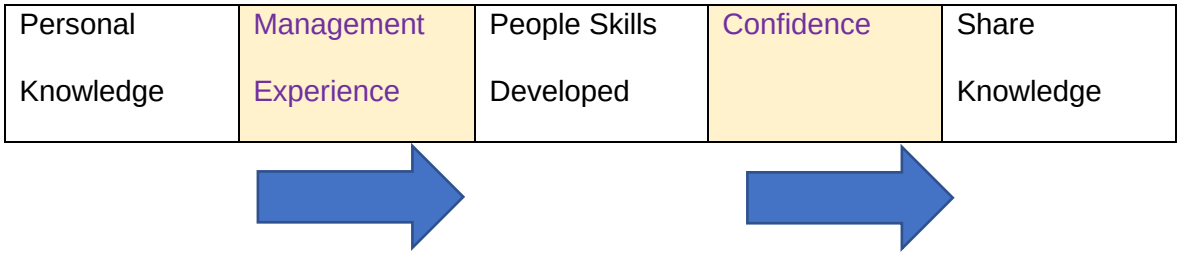


Figure 6: Flow of knowledge from the line managers to their teams

Without developing their management practice, learning how to approach and solve the problems they face and gaining confidence in their ability to inspire and lead a team they will not be able to effectively share their knowledge and experience. If they do not become confident in their job role and their ability to grow and lead a team effectively, they are more likely to hoard their knowledge than to share it, not only because they will not recognise the benefits of sharing it and developing their team, but also because it will be where they will feel they have power and control.

From the analysis of the interviews there was clear evidence that trust also needed to be present in the relationship between the line manager and their team if knowledge was to be both shared and accepted. The participants felt that trust was built with a combination of communication and building relationships with their team. This was something they recognised as being built over time as the relationship between the line manager and the team developed. The participants identified that trust was not present in the early stages of their careers, some acknowledging that they concentrated on policies and procedures rather than the relationship they had with their team. The ability to build trust therefore needs to be included as essential if the line manager is going to be able to share their knowledge.

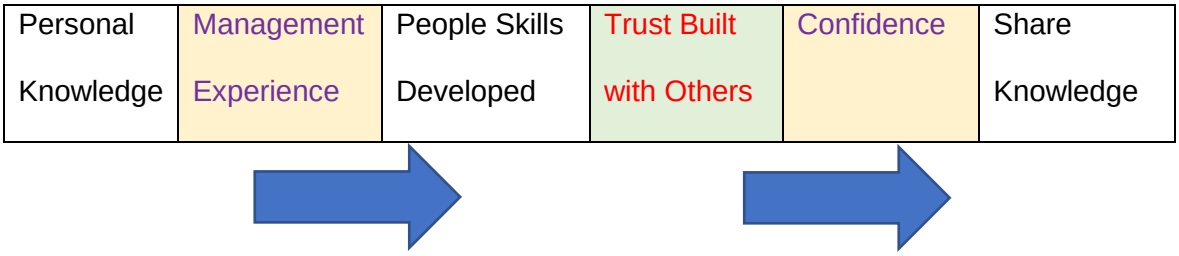


Figure 7: Enhanced flow of knowledge from the line managers to their teams.

5.2.3 Line managers knowledge contribution framework

From a personal knowledge, policies, and procedures perspective to carry out their job role, a line managers growing management experience and practice enables them to develop their people skills which leads to their ability to build trust and confidence which results in knowledge sharing. The progression of the line manager's experience, through stages of development results in positive outcomes, for example, increased knowledge sharing across the team and organisation as shown in the figure below:

Table 6: The progression of the line manager through the development stages and the outcome for the team and the organisation.

Personal Knowledge	Management Experience	People Skills	Trust	Confidence	Share Knowledge
Personal Development	Communication	Communication	Open Communication	Open Communication	Two Way Communication
Managing Self	Managing Others	Developing Relationship with Team	Teamwork	Teamwork	Teamwork
Knowledge of Organisation	Planning	People Development	Staff Engagement	Staff Engagement	Staff Progression
Knowledge of Policies	Organising	Coaching / Mentoring	Delegation	Influencing	Retention of Staff
Knowledge of Procedures	Problem Solving	Emotional Intelligence	Begin to Share Knowledge	Knowledge Sharing	Retention of Knowledge in the Organisation

From this identification of the progression of the line manager through the different stages, what they achieve at each of the stages and the competencies they need to develop to share their knowledge with others successfully, and by using the analysis of the data, a

checklist for personal development was refined (see figure below). This checklist aims to enable self-awareness and self-discipline, creating a structure for the line manager to be able to use for self-development, building on the competencies that were identified from the data as being vital to being successful in the job role. The aim is therefore to highlight the value of training and development, ensuring the line manager has the tools necessary for them to create a culture where knowledge is shared, therefore increasing employee engagement, organisational knowledge and enhancing personal self-discovery.

The aim of this personal development checklist is to focus line managers on taking control of their careers, enabling them to be more aware of the areas they need to develop to be more effective, making them aware of the importance of personal knowledge, management experience, possessing people skills, trust, confidence and sharing knowledge. The checklist provides a clear indication of the areas that need to be developed, along with easy-to-use tools to help them manage their own learning and growth throughout their career. It is important that they continue to learn and develop to keep their knowledge and skills up to date, develop competencies and to ensure they continue to work effectively with a focus on employee engagement and organisational performance.

Yeardley (2017) identifies the problems associated with the training and development of line managers, especially those with little experience as:

> *"the training is pitched at concepts and skills which are too advanced… missing out on the basic non-technical skills. Without this fundamental introduction, it is teaching… Line Managers to run before they can walk" (p.245).*

With all this in mind, the checklist has been designed to cover the basic non-technical skills needed, enabling line managers to develop the skills they need right from the start of their careers, using it in the workplace themselves or as the means to explore areas for development with a coach or mentor. Being able to see the purpose and intended

outcomes from using the checklist makes it a useful tool for the line manager to utilise to develop both their personal awareness and management practice.

5.2.4 Training and Development checklist for the framework

Table 7: The line managers training and development checklist.

Timeline (Left to Right)	Self-Awareness	Self-Discipline	Self-Development	Self-Discovery
Tools	SWOT Analysis	Time Management	Career Planning	Implementation Management
Knowledge training and development				
Personal knowledge: • Managing self and personal skills • Personal Development • Knowledge of organisation • Knowledge of policies and procedures				
Management Experience: • Communication • Managing others • Planning and organising • Problem solving				
People skills: • Communication • Developing relationships with the team • Developing people • Coaching • Mentoring • Listening • Empathy				
Trust: • Open communication • Teamwork • Staff engagement • Delegation				
Confidence: • Open communication • People development • Problem solving • Decision making • Influencing				
Share knowledge: • Two-way communication • Teamwork • People development • Staff progression • Training				

Knowledge Management Framework for Line Managers

Bolisani and Scarso (2014) argue that “many studies analyse single aspects of CoPs without a general interpretative model, which undermines the value and generalisation of findings, even for practitioners” (p. 366). It was therefore deemed to be important to a establish the theory for a knowledge management framework for line managers that ensures that the framework adds value to the focus and impact of this study. The value of training and development was highlighted through a checklist for personal development and a framework for professional development. The development of the knowledge management framework will provide a contribution to practice by providing the line manager with tools that will support them in becoming more self-aware, building confidence and becoming more competent through training and development which focuses on continuous improvement and best practice.

The knowledge management framework created for line managers involves four stages: Stage 1 begins with the development of their self-awareness which is capturing and making sense of the knowledge. At this stage of the framework the line manager would be building their own knowledge and experience. They would be reliant on training and development provided by the organisation, and on peer support, coaching and mentoring. Using the checklist created they would carry out a SWOT analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses, using this to enable them to become self-aware of where their development needs are and map out their career plan. By taking a reflective view of their training and development they begin the process of continuous learning.

Stage 2 moves to developing self-discipline, using time management alongside training to begin to build, retain and reuse knowledge assets. At this stage the line manager would begin to access knowledge assets and plan to build on their knowledge, not only of policies and processes vital to the day to day running of the organisation but also of the soft skills needed to develop their relationships with their teams. Working with peers and

receiving feedback would enable them to build their knowledge and begin to grow in confidence and understand the benefits of sharing knowledge with their peers and teams.

At Stage 3, self-development, the line manager would be adding to their practice knowledge having gained some experience in their job role. Growing confidence in their ability to develop themselves and their teams, and share their knowledge enables them to look to widen their network by joining a Community of Practice, sharing a common interest that enables them to collaborate with other practitioners, peers, and subject specialists, receiving leadership support. Within the Community of Practice, they are encouraged to share their knowledge and experience with others.

Stage 4, self-discovery, uses enabling technology to connect using collaboration and communication tools. At this stage the line manager is confident in using and communicating their experience and knowledge to a wider audience. Establishing their expertise enables them to utilise all tools available to them to collaborate effectively across their team, the organisation, and the wider Community of Practice.

Figure 8 has been developed combining the data that emerged from the findings of this study, underpinning theories and best practice taken from the workplace to create the Knowledge Management Framework for Line Managers, enabling them to build the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

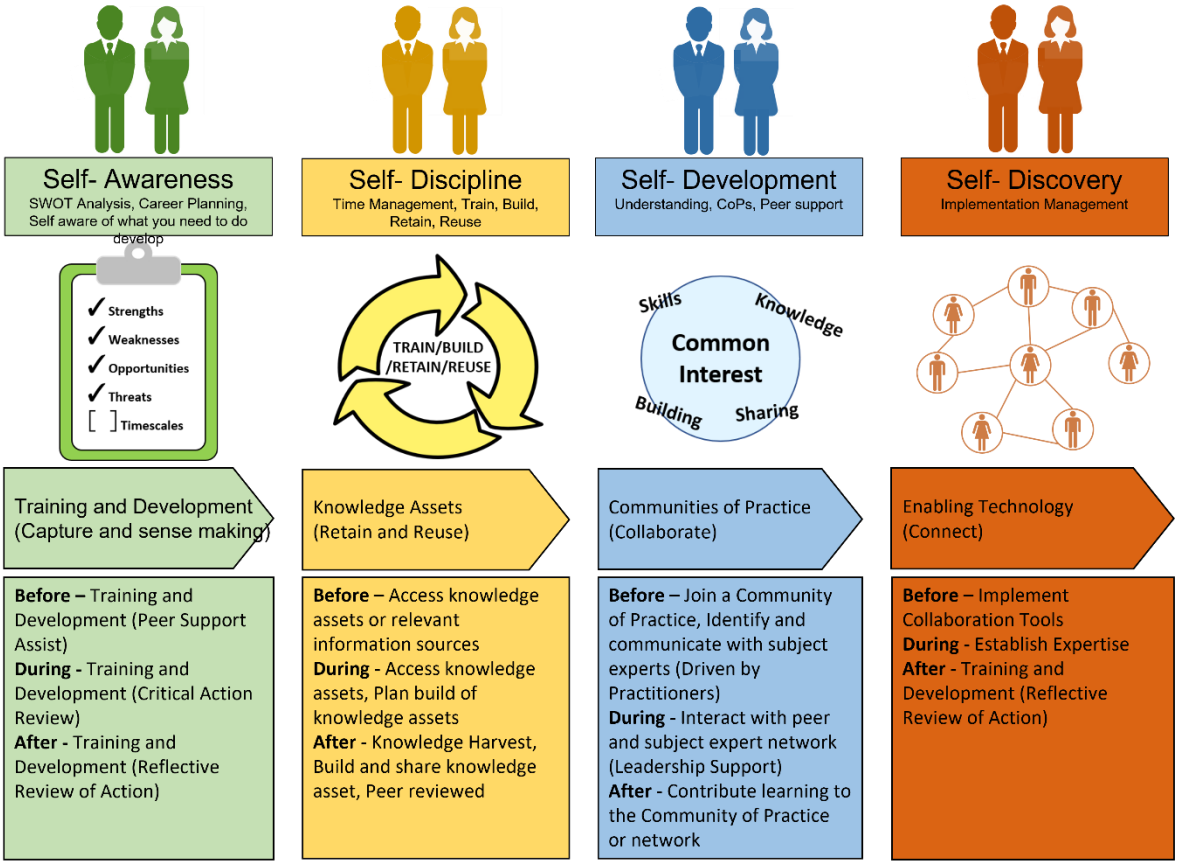


Figure 8: Line Managers Knowledge Contribution Management Framework

The initial stage of the knowledge management framework specifically concentrates on the line manager and their ability to become self-aware, utilising the check list to identify their strengths and the areas they need to develop. Training and development are used to provide peer support alongside more formal training, enabling the line manger to build their practice knowledge, beginning to build on their knowledge of organisation processes and policies.

In the next stage of the process gaps in the line managers knowledge begin to be develop through building their knowledge, gaining in experience, developing ‘soft skills’ such as communication and trust with the confidence to share their knowledge. Collaborating with others who share a common interest, integrating themselves into a network where they can draw on expert knowledge and be in a position to contribute to others learning completes the third stage of the framework. In the final stage technology and collaboration tools are used to establish expertise and reflect on and review the training and

development that has taken place and its effectiveness. The framework can then begin again.

Throughout the process it is the line manager that is placed at the centre of the knowledge management framework and life cycle, using experience to create, use and refine their own knowledge, before transferring it by sharing with others. Collaboration with peers and experts provides the tools and confidence the line manager needs to be able to develop their team ensuring that they too enter into the knowledge management life cycle. The storing of the knowledge created and shared will be influenced by the organisation, but the study has indicated that the creation, use and refinement of the knowledge will be influenced by the line manager, making their ability to contribute to knowledge in the organisation significant.

The knowledge management life cycle for this framework will start at create, move to store and then onto a cycle of use and refine, it then moves to transfer, with the complete cycle being illustrated in the figure below.

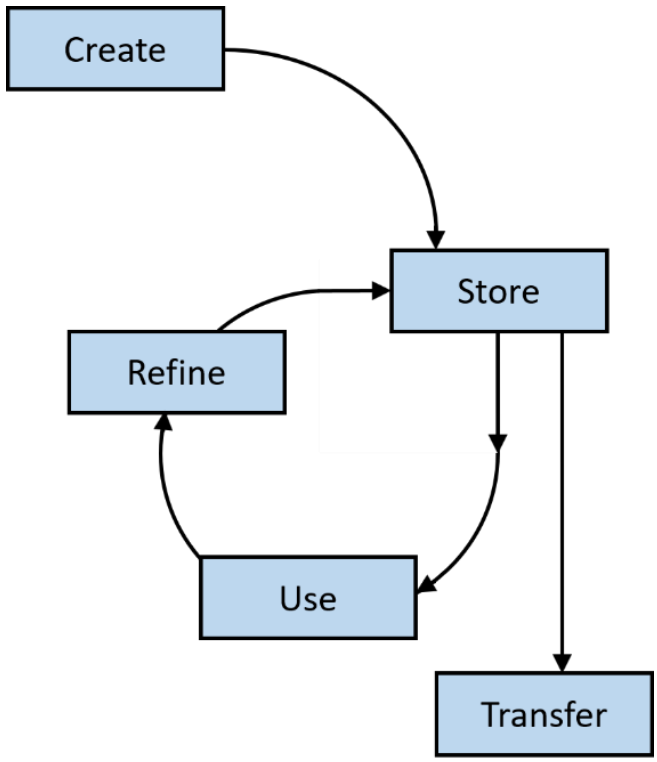


Figure 9: The knowledge management life cycle for the framework for Line Managers

Knowledge Management drivers for Line Managers

Knowledge management drivers should contribute to the line managers ability to impact the organisation by contributing to the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency, retain knowledge, improve innovation and organisation growth and deliver improved customer service. This aids the identification of the main knowledge management drivers for line managers and the organisation shown in the table below,

Table 8: Knowledge Management drivers for Line Managers

Classification	Driving force
Knowledge based drivers	• Enhanced business process performance through the integration of company knowledge processes.
Technology based drivers	• Improvement of organisation performance through the adapting and use of updated new technologies. • Information management and technology.
Organisation culture	• Identification of positioning gaps and how to fill them.
Human resource management	• Sharing and creating knowledge in cross functioning teams. • Collaboration to transfer knowledge. • Flexibility in the workforce.
Work Process	• Ability to anticipate forces that shapes the market in field of operation • Ability to apply knowledge at the right time by having proper structure and processes in place.
Economic Drivers	• Create increased returns by added value through knowledge. • Create product and service differentiation.
External	• Globalised business competition. • World- class customers. • Competitors and suppliers.
Internal	• Bottleneck in enterprise effectiveness. • Technological capabilities. • Understanding human cognitive functions.
On-going developments	• Innovative ideas. • Information management and technology. • Cognitive science. • Shift in bottleneck. • Customisation requirement for customers and competitors.

Improvements through Knowledge Management for Line Managers

Having identified the main knowledge management drivers for the line manager, the typical improvements that line managers can achieve through effective use of knowledge sharing is shown in the table below. The top priority of sharing knowledge should be the development of staff, leading to staff satisfaction and increasing the quality of staff in the organisation, building experience and the retention of both staff and their knowledge in the organisation. Building staff skills gives added confidence to them in carrying out their job role, reducing the skills gap and widening the talent pool available.

The significance of developing staff is that it results in the ability of the team to collaborate, resulting in an improvement in the exchange of information enables them to share their workloads and facilitates quick thinking and decision making. Transparency of structure and processes enables employees to feel secure in the organisation.

From knowledge sharing arises the improvement in processes and quality, ultimately leading to an increase in productivity, and the resulting savings in time and cost, increasing profits for the organisation. Improved customer focus will lead to increased satisfaction, resulting customer loyalty and success in the marketplace.

Table 9: Improvements through Knowledge Management for Line Managers

Rank	Improvement
1	Cost/time reduction increase in productivity
2	Process improvement
3	Improvement in the exchange of information
4	Customer orientation and satisfaction
5	Transparency of structure and processes
6	Facilitation of decisions and predictions
7	Quality improvement
8	Staff quality and satisfaction
9	Success, market leadership

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Limitations

There are some potential limitations to the findings of this study which are noted below:

Firstly, initially there was limited access to data as the research was intended to be carried out in the retail industry where the researcher had worked. Thus, the decision was taken to carry out the study into line mangers as a homogenous group, carrying out interviews with students on an MBA Programme, who were also line managers. The results from the study still remain valid and of use as line managers face the same issues with training and skills development issues, impacting on their ability to build teams and share knowledge.

Secondly, the sample size was small and limited to line managers who were already interested in their self-development as they were enrolled on an MBA Programme. This could have implications for the findings as not all line managers may be as engaged and reflective when considering developing both themselves and their teams.

Thirdly, there was the bias to consider as the researcher had previous experience of the line manager role and the problems encountered, especially when initially promoted to a management position. It was important to address this bias and allow the participants to relate their experience without influencing their responses. That being the case semi structured interviews and a priori themes were used to acknowledge both the researchers individual experience and the participants personal perspective of the job role.

Fourthly, due to time constraints there was not the opportunity to interview the participants after the initial interview or explore the original themes identified using a focus group, which would have potentially provided a greater understanding of the role training and experience play in the development of confidence in the job role in general and in the implementation of knowledge sharing in particular.

Fifth, there may be limitations as the questions in the interviews were developed in a Western context, meaning there may not have been sufficient sensitivity when framing them, and so may not have taken account of cultural sensitivities, which may mean the generalisability of the study is limited in other countries.

Sixth, the study did not consider the possible impact of the pandemic on line managers and how they communicate with their teams. The research was conducted with the participants before the start of the pandemic, emphasising face to face communication, whilst the pandemic has led to increased use of virtual platforms in businesses globally and changed the way line managers manage, communicate and share knowledge with their teams.

Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations of the study can also be used to recommend areas for future research.

The investigation involved practitioners from the workplace who were studying an MBA part time who are therefore active in their personal development and already actively building their knowledge. Future studies should incorporate a wider range of line managers with a range of capabilities to give a more accurate picture.

Focus on ‘line managers’ new to the role and their training would allow for the checklist and framework to be tested in the ‘real world’ allowing for the development of bespoke, ‘just in time’ directed guidance. The willingness and ability of the organisation to provide or have access to the necessary resources to enable this may be limited, making the need to be able to prove the effectiveness of the checklist and framework vital.

Interviewing members of the team as well as the line managers would provide another perspective to the role of the line manager in knowledge sharing. They see the day-to-day

consequences of the line managers behaviours regarding communication, trust and team building.

The impact of the pandemic on ‘line managers’, communication, trust and sharing knowledge with their teams should be studied, and advantages and disadvantages of the ‘new way of working’ evaluated.

Future research could assess the usefulness of both the checklist and the framework for line managers in their roles and as part of their continuing professional and personal development. Comparing the development of new line managers who used the framework and those who did not would indicate if the framework could be implemented successfully and highlight areas that may need to be included.

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