DEVELOPING A NEW APPROACH TO CHANGE AND LEARNING IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the Author been registered for any other University award.

I confirm this is my own work.

Signed ........................................
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Executive Summary

This PhD study is undertaken within a Local Authority Social Services Department. The study concentrates on the Children's Services section. This research examines change within a public sector organisation. In doing so it will use organisation development techniques and interventions, firstly those which are established and accepted methodologies and secondly through the exploration of a new model of diagnosis and intervention. This study uses learning as its primary conduit and as such acknowledges the close interrelationship between change and learning. This learning will be within an organisational context. Chapter 1 presents the context within which the organisation operates and within which this PhD study developed.

The analysis of organisation learning and learning theories emphasises the complexity of this specialist area. Chapter 2 records the key academic thinking in respect of firstly individual, then group and finally organisational learning. Learning, from an individual perspective, will reference particularly Stimuli-Response Theory, Cognitive Styles Theory and Learning Styles Theory leading to an understanding of adult learning theory. Group learning is a key component in organisation learning and this social aspect will be reflected in consideration of Social Learning Theories. Organisation learning processes are examined in an attempt to understand the sophisticated relationship between the individual and his or her learning and then the collective with the overall aim of converting singular knowledge into the enhanced knowledge of a shared experience. This conversion may seem a simple process of accumulated learning but the impact of resistances, rejection or denial of learning impacts on any organisational process. The aim then of detecting and correcting the mismatch of intended behaviour from actual behaviour can be hard to identify and consequently address. This leads to the importance of understanding motivation, defences, the different nature of knowledge and its transfer and the societal framework within which such organisational learning can be achieved.

The theoretical base for organisation learning offers little advice to the operational leaders as to how to manage this aspect. Chapter 3 attempts to translate the almost tacit nature of organisational learning into an explicit understanding of the practicalities of what a Learning Organisation may 'look like'. McKinsey's (1982) Seven 'S' Audit is used as a framework for structuring this analysis and highlights not only the managerial advice to create a Learning Organisation but also the academic thinking which has developed over a period of time. Chapter 3 outlines the common themes agreed by most writers and the chapter concludes with a reflection on the more complex debate around knowledge
management and intellectual capacity which goes beyond the basic features of a Learning Organisation.

When considering an organisational study with an organisational learning orientation, the theoretical basis for this study leads to consideration of organisation development methodologies. This PhD is fundamentally about the development and change of an organisation which focuses on learning as the vehicle by which that can be successfully achieved. The attraction of an organisation development methodology in this organisational context is the similarity between the methodology and the professional basis of the public organisation. The rooting of this in the behavioural sciences and in particular the psycho-sociological dimensions gives a congruence to the study which is helpful.

This study has researched different approaches under the broad umbrella of organisation development techniques and interventions. This research has led to the view that there needs to be new ways and approaches to accommodate the requirements of the changing world of the public sector. To this end Ferris' Eight 'E's Model is presented as a diagnostic, planning and implementation tool which can be applied to organisations and which can assist the whole organisation in the enhancement of organisational learning and ultimately in the creation of an insightful knowledge management system.

This PhD will focus on the need, within public sector organisations, to manage learning. It is argued here that the public sector has particular conditions within which it operates which create defensive patterns and make learning difficult and possibly dysfunctional. Chapter 4 explains how this situation has arisen and how the public sector employer and employee have moved out of a staid, bureaucratic, slow moving modus operandi to a dynamic, reactive and responsive organisation in a fast moving and increasingly controlling environment. The argument is presented that public sector organisations cannot merely put on the ill fitting clothes of their private sector cousins but that they need to shape and style techniques which suit their special circumstances. Ferris' Eight 'E's Model contains categories which particularly examine the different sources of influence on an individual which in turn support or undermine his or her openness to learning.

Chapter 5 will explore academically the validity of the Eight 'E's as sources of influence and the primary research in Chapter 7 will then test out the applicability and usefulness of this model within an organisation setting.

This PhD has initially considered traditional techniques to assess and improve organisational learning and to enable the creation of a Learning Organisation. The
identified gap in those techniques has led to the creation of a new model which can be added to the range of organisation development tools. This model can draw managers to those issues which influence and impact on their staff. Academically these influences are significant and if mismanaged or unmanaged can establish dysfunctional learning patterns. This research confirms the usefulness of a model which can be used for team building either at executive level to determine strategic direction regarding learning or as an audit and balancing tool for the make up of teams. The contribution this makes to the theoretical perspective is to concentrate on the individual adult learning processes, to analyse personal influences and then to investigate how these are co-ordinated in a group context. In turn the organisational direction setting and profiling can identify mismatch and purposefully address these. This comprehensive and holistic approach, whilst not disregarding structural and systemic issues, does not place the same level of emphasis on them. This study encourages the accurate assessment of the human resource element including staff and skills, through the Eight 'E's which impact on the organisation. Inevitably flowing from this can be a learning strategy, examination of structure, the effectiveness of systems, the creation of shared values and the consequent impact on style. This PhD is about new thinking, a new perspective and a positive framework to add and contribute to organisational behavioural sciences.
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Chapter 1

Context and Overview

Introduction

This study is an in-depth analysis of a public sector organisation aimed at addressing the central question, how can the public sector survive, develop, grow and learn within its organisational context and what aspects in this organisational framework can be identified and harnessed to assist in such development and growth? This study will concentrate on the aspect of learning in an organisation and the creation of organisational learning. Learning here is defined as how individuals acquire new skills, change and alter existing behaviour and in doing so interact with others. In organisational terms learning is about how all members can use their existing knowledge to full capacity, how that can be shared with others and how existing behaviour can be altered and changed within the organisational system – the aim being to allow the transformation and development of the whole organisation.

The concentration on learning in this study is because of the fundamental link between learning and survival. The current environmental context within which public organisations operate, is arguably so volatile and the pace of change so intense that in order to progress, public sectors will benefit from considering the intellectual and knowledge base resource available to them internally and how to manage this. This study will ultimately offer a model by which this could be assessed and addressed.

In retrospect, it may seem somewhat surprising that learning, in an organisational context was not more widely accepted until relatively recently. In many ways, it is such a reasonable contention that if learning is so central to our personal survival then it must also have importance for organisational survival. This is especially so in organisations which have an intensive human resource profile. Learning in organisations seems such simple, common sense! The chapters that follow will explain that it is certainly not simple, rarely common and not always sensibly or easily approached.

This is a study into a Social Service Department of a Local Authority County Council. It is longitudinal in nature having begun in 1995 and developed into this PhD study. 1995 was an investigation into the organisation using tried and tested techniques. The results left the author to consider there was a gap in thinking and so developed a new approach which was then explored and tested out in 2000. This introductory chapter has three functions, firstly to introduce the debate about learning and organisations leading to the explanation of the rationale for the how this PhD study is presented. Secondly the
chapter will introduce, in descriptive terms, the organisation under research, thus giving an immediate picture of the detail to follow. Thirdly to present the synopsis of the research held in 1995 and from which the 2000 study evolved.

**Research Questions**

This PhD study addresses a number of research questions. Firstly how, within the turbulent political environment, with societal mistrust and in a climate of risk aversion and a right first time requirement, is it possible to identify factors that can be managed and how they can be managed in order to enable increased learning capacity. Secondly what is the change within this public sector organisation over the period of this study. Thirdly the central linkage between the individual and change and further, the linkage between change and learning, is emphasised by academics. The framework by which to assess and manage this is however absent. What framework could have utility within a public sector organisation which could assist managers in firstly identifying sources of learning on the individual and then managing those. How further, as an organisational development technique, could a framework be used within a group and organisational context. Therefore within a public sector organisation is there a model which has demonstrable utility which can, irrespective of the rate and pace of change, aid the development and effectiveness of this setting.

This public sector organisation was first studied in 1995 and out of this grew the exploration of this department in the 2000 study using new methods and a more informed perspective. This PhD firstly records that foundation of the 1995 work. It contains an extensive literature review to consider the key factors which impact on this study. These are issues in relation to the learning organisation, organisational learning and the public sector. The research design was informed by the review of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The primary research, detailed in Chapter 7 tests out the research hypothesis and the result from the basis for the conclusions which are drawn.

**The Debate**

Easterby-Smith & Araujo (1999) introduce their analysis of organisational learning and learning organisations by highlighting how the debate in regard to learning in organisations has been interpreted variously by a number of different and disparate disciplines. This has, in essence, resulted in a mélange of approaches each reflecting the respective disciplinary backgrounds. They argue that this has led to fragmentation in being clear conceptually. Certainly in 1995, there appeared to be an almost interchangeable use of learning organisations and organisational learning and such
usage only added to the confusion rather than the clarity. Two of the disciplines which have claimed learning, in an organisational context, as their own, are sociology and psychology. The former often reflecting the central importance of social, environmental and contextual settings, the latter concerned with cognitive and, in the widest terms, the individual processing associated with learning, preference of style, approach etc.

These different approaches in many ways reflect the differences between learning organisation and organisational learning terminology. The former is often described in more practical descriptive terms. Here theorists place a shape or 'template' which other organisations can replicate. Easterby-Smith & Araujo (1999:2) note that the learning organisation literature is more action-orientated and is “geared towards using specific diagnostic and evaluative methodological tools.....” Organisational learning on the other hand is orientated towards the processing of learning between the individual and the organisation.

Tsang (1997:75) agrees that there is a difference between organisational learning and learning organisations, the former a description of “certain types of activity that take place in an organisation”, those processes and activities within an organisation which allows it to learn. The latter about the “type of organisation in or of itself”. Tsang (1997) separates out the descriptive approaches and predictive approaches to learning organisations and organisational learning respectively. They first consider how does the organisation learn, the second, how should it. These two concepts are clearly interrelated and mutually reliant.

This separation of descriptive and prescriptive is of interest in this study. In 1995 the literature was open to interpretation and it was evident that separating out the practicalities of learning organisations from that of the complexity of organisational learning theory might assist in understanding the distinctions between the two. This separation is also interesting when referring back to the sociological and psychological disciplines. The organisation under study here is the Social Services Department of a County Council. Here the professional backgrounds and training of staff are rooted in either or both of these two academic areas. This in reality makes the sociological/environmental/contextual issues strongly related to the descriptive learning organisation end of the continuum whilst the psychological, cognitive and behavioural approaches can be integrated into the organisational learning perspective.

Easterby-Smith (1997) underlines that the 'community' which orientates towards a learning organisation's approach consists mostly of practitioners and therefore seeks possibly more concrete answers. Organisational learning on the other hand is often
associated with an academic source. Maybe in simple terms the difference is how the organisation looks from the perspective of 'insider' or 'outsider'. Possibly the more descriptive, pragmatic elements are more attractive to managers whereas the outsider academic may be more focussed on the complexity of organisational learning.

The separation here of these two concepts is to try realistically to manage the whole arena of organisations and their learning. It does so to put structure into the analysis but also does not ignore the fact that the different terminologies, although not interchangeable, are however interconnected and interdependent.

**Overview of PhD Structure**

This study operates on the assumption that learning in organisations positively adds value to the organisations’ capacity. This assumption begs two main questions – what is organisational learning and secondly why is learning important to organisations and what practical steps have, and can, be taken to achieve a learning organisation.

Chapter 2 considers in depth organisational learning. It is commonly agreed by academics that organisational learning is about the processes which exist both internally to the individual and then internally between the individual and the collective. This chapter serves to highlight the complexity of organisational learning.

Harvey & Denton (1999) note that organisational learning has three distinct groupings of advocates which has allowed it to ‘come of age’ in organisational theory terms – these are the strategists, the human resource cluster and those in research and development. These three groupings concurrently have reached a clear understanding of the importance of organisational learning. They may of course view it from different perspectives but nevertheless such differences only serve to strengthen the argument for management consideration. Indeed Harvey & Denton (1999:898) suggest organisational learning is a "binding integrated force" between different organisational hierarchies and facets. Senge (1990) supports this by describing organisations which excel as those that can ‘tap’ individuals’ commitment and learning regardless of where they are placed in the organisation.

Harvey & Denton (1999) put forward the following model in Figure 1:1 as an explanation for the acceptance of organisational learning in both managerial and academic circles. The influences are obviously sparked by the changing environment and the responses of these sections to that change.
Organisational learning has some obvious foundations in psychological theory. Here learning is seen from a very individual perspective. As Probst & Büchel (1997) explain the psychological classical conditioning and behaviourist approach promote learning as the acquiring of reactions which become entrenched and embedded over time. Cognitive theorists however view learning as where mental processing and cognitive interactions between the individual and their environment establish for the individual their own mental maps and representations of their environment. These are based on beliefs and experience.

Learning in an individual context is of course multi-influenced. Each individual has their own personality traits, motivational issues, intellectual capability, let alone learning performance, style and memory capacity. Individuals are further influenced by events and errors and how these are dealt with in turn impacts on their subsequent behaviour.

Organisational Learning however has the additional complexity that it is always a vicarious activity. By that is meant that it is via its members. Organisations on their own cannot learn, only by utilising individual learning can the organisation become, in itself, learning. This of course means that if the organisational players change then learning
input and capacity also change. Hedberg (1981) explains that organisations however have characteristics which enable such organisational learning to be facilitated. Organisations have vast information and knowledge storage systems where memory is evidenced via documentation, procedures etc. Even within the period of this study this ability to store has increased many fold because of the nature and capacity of technology. Indeed, unlike individuals, such memory systems in organisations are often retained in an unemotional way and have a constant traceable quality.

The place of group learning in this process is explained in Chapter 2. Referred to by Lave & Wenger (1991) as communities-of-practice, these social networks transfer the psychological aspects of learning into the social arena. Here the sum of individuals' knowledge does not equate to that of organisational knowledge. It can indeed be either greater or smaller. This may seem curious and of course it is. Organisational knowledge can be enhanced by sharing of experiences and learning thus increasing each individual sole learning to the multiple. On the other hand if learning has occurred which creates negative or confining behaviour such knowledge may not be shared, because of say embarrassment, and so learning becomes restricted and distorted.

Of course it is accepted that individuals in sharing knowledge have reasons to do so, and this is either based on intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Osterlok & Frey (2000) underline the importance of considering motivation when addressing the issue of knowledge transfer. Extrinsic motivation is the direct incentive for an action, in organisational terms this is generally pay or some other visible reward. Intrinsic motivation on the other hand is an action carried out which, for its own sake, gives reward. In organisational terms this might be job satisfaction and managers can build this into work content, job design etc. The encouragement to transfer knowledge for either its own sake or because of reward is clearly a factor which will determine the quality and extent of sharing information. It is, in many organisational structures, a real effort just to ensure information is shared – managers and individuals must perceive a benefit from such knowledge transfer, for example the avoidance of repeating error or by gaining status for the repetition of positive actions.

Intrinsic motivation is very powerful and there is no doubt that to harness this positively can be a real advantage to the organisation. To avoid such a challenge can make extrinsic motivational techniques have only a partial effect and secondly once intrinsic motivational patterns are set they are hard to change and remotivate.

Such analysis of motivation is necessary when considering the two different dimensions of explicit and tacit knowledge. The former is easily identified and codified and therefore
transferable. The second is much more complicated – this is as Polanyi (1966:136) states the fact that “we can know more than we can tell”. Explicit knowledge in an organisation is, as Cohen & Bacdayan (1994) note, placed in routines, procedures and is part of the organisational memory. The tacit dimension however as Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) emphasise either can or cannot be tapped. Here the ‘know-how’, held by the individual is often difficult to describe, as actions occur that are almost automatic in nature and so its sources are hard to identify and define. In the popular television programme “Who wants to be a Millionaire” the host often asks the contestant, when they give an answer, ‘how do you know that’ – only to be (regularly) told – ‘I don’t know – I just do!’. Such tacit knowledge has a voluntary nature to its sharing and of course ‘knowledge is power’ makes many either retain their ‘know-how’ or partially share it.

Davenport, De Long & Beers (1998:43) explain “knowledge is information combined with experience, context, interpretation and reflection”. Such reflection leads in turn to the possible changing or altering of behaviour and action. Here Argyris’ & Schön’s (1978) analysis of learning in organisations is described in terms of adaptive or single-loop learning, reconstructive or double-loop learning and, what Probst & Büchel (1997) term as process learning. This is the development of not only error correction in an individual but fundamental consideration and questioning of the organisation’s norms and values and ultimately reflection on the real meaning, and then learning, of the organisation. When this learning to learn occurs, the whole systems and their interrelationships are transformed.

Writers in this field tend to fall into two broad categories. Easterby-Smith & Araujo (1999) summarise these as technical and social. The processing and interpretation which are associated with the former can also be found in the psychological analysis. The social on the other hand is about the transfer of that learning into explicit knowledge. The danger is that the former can be taken over by those from a technological background. Thus the information age can be seen in terms of computer developments rather than human resource management. This development is worrying because confusion can arise when observing a very ‘savvy’ organisation in technology terms but a poor learner in the true sense of the word. The social aspect then becomes an important balance to ensure the technical does not become misinterpreted.

The innate complexity of individual and then collective/organisational learning only serves to underline the sophistication needed to understand and manage such multi-layered dimensions.
Gherardi's (2000:1058) description of organisational learning as a "web of knowledge transmission, acquisition, creation, play and subversion" and Levitt & March (1988) highlighting of the organisation's struggle to manage not only the 'trial and error' but the history, experience, interpretive process, conflict and power that exists within any organisational setting leads to Chapter 3 which addresses the practical approach to the control and rationalisation of such complexity. Chapter 3 describes how managerial theorists have, in accepting the importance of organisational learning, tried to 'make it happen' within organisational practice.

Chapter 3 considers the formation of learning organisation theory, its analysis and how such an organisation may, in 'design', be progressed. Elkjaer's (1999:73) suggestion that "the learning organisation" is "just another" organisational methodology put forward by academics and chosen by managers as an answer, is somewhat simplistic and indeed limited in the understanding of learning organisation theory. Organisational development, change management, human resource theory, motivational theory etc all fit within the same spectrum as learning organisations. This is understandable when the one real given to all organisations is that in order to survive they must change and respond to new and developing demands. Here then learning and change are often synonymous and indeed for companies the real competitive advantage is the organisation that can change most rapidly, that is adaptive, organic, alive and energetic to the challenges.

The learning organisation is seen by Finger & Bürgin Brand (1999) as an ideal, an aspirational organisational state. It is a strategic objective and according to Senge (1990) a wide systems approach which considers the organisation as an internal 'learning system'. Finger & Bürgen Brand (1999) encourage consideration of the learning organisation, especially in the public sector, as a process of organisational change which will include an analysis of structure, culture and systems. The linkage between the individual and the collective, in order that learning in an organisation can occur, needs also to be addressed in relation to skills, attitude and readiness. Finger & Bürgen Brand (1999) however, also promote the importance of seeing the learning organisation in terms of the organisation's relationship with its environment. Here the strategy of the organisation is important.

In 1995 the literature in respect of the learning organisation was helpful, if limited. The growth of understanding of the importance of learning, in the intervening years has been marked and extensive, especially in professional associated magazines such as Management Learning, Journal of Management Studies etc. Along with this growth has been a noticeable change and development in language and understanding. Terminologies such as 'knowledge management', 'intellectual capital' etc abound.
central concept however remains, that is, the importance of structuring and using to the full potential, the intellectual capacity of the organisation.

Chapter 3 shows this development from learning organisation to the development of the knowledge era. According to Bertels & Savage (1998) this is but the start of the transition to a knowledge-based economy. The aim is to use resources smartly, to get more out of fewer people but these individuals will be at the real cutting edge of intellectual capacity and view knowledge as a commodity and so are a precious asset. Indeed Wikstrom & Norman (1994) suggest organisations should be seen in terms of knowledge systems with their activities noted in terms of knowledge use including transfer and change. For example being responsive to new information possibly disrupts existing skills and requires a new action-orientated approach.

Magalhaes (1998) notes the confusion that exists around the concept of learning organisation and knowledge management and suggests this may reflect the academic/managerial split. The intellectual understanding of these issues versus the 'real world' incompatibility may reflect the difference between researcher and reality. Here is one of the challenges for this PhD. How does one make 'real' and practical the complexity of such issues as knowledge management. It is all perfectly well detailing the 'why' in relation to the importance of these issues but the 'how' is equally necessary in contributing to the usefulness to the organisation and the manager. To this end Chapter 3 considers what learning organisations or knowledge creating companies may 'look like' in structural, strategic and staffing terms.

Chapter 4 reviews the key issues in relation to a public sector organisation. The analysis of learning organisations and organisational learning has been dominated from the private sector perspective. Indeed in 1995 there were few texts that even acknowledged learning in these settings. This has to some extent been balanced especially by Ranson & Stewart's (1994) extensive work but in reality the concentration has remained on the developments within non-public organisations.

Finger & Bürgin Brand (1999) contest that in essence there is not a great deal of difference between the public and private settings. The defining difference is the environment within which the public sector operates and this environment serves to make management in these settings even more complicated.

It is obvious that the public services, by their very nature are 'public', the primary stakeholder is society itself. Secondly these provide 'services' where the expectation from the stakeholders relates to the output that should be achieved. The public sector,
according to Alford (2001), is similar in many ways to the private sector but is more diverse in content spanning a wide and varied portfolio with often disconnected service areas. Take a Local Authority where Social Services and Education may have similar client groups but are divorced from the Fire Service, Trading Standards or Transport. Secondly Alford notes that similar to the private manager they must produce the most effective outcome from available resources, however there is additionally in public services a 'public value' element which is a collective social asset as well as an individual one.

This link with customers and service users is so close that in organisational learning terms, Ranson & Stewart (1994) believe, societal learning influences that of organisational learning and makes these organisations intrinsically political. The complexity of learning in these settings is increased as they respond, often to uninformed, social requirements and attitudes.

The public sector and its relationship with its political leaders dominates most debates. The mutually dependent link between officer and politicians' survival makes for powerful interrelationships. The fact that survival of each is dependent on the other makes learning and change in this context dependent on additional variables. The key for politicians is that of the performance of its 'employees' and to this end the extraordinary levels of control on behaviour is evident.

Rouse's (1993) analysis of performance management in the public sector underlines how difficult performance management is because of the often conflicting goals and objectives of different stakeholders of the public sector. Here for example the additional performance however which makes public sectors unique, is the avoidance of embarrassing national disasters. The dilemma becomes evident. How can learning from past mistakes occur in an open way to prevent recurrences. This is particularly testing in an acrimonious conflictual environment often scrutinised by a hostile media because the very politicians are so linked with their public servants and their success or more interestingly their failures.

Within this highly political environment, of course internal conditions are demanded to change and here the "New Public Managerialism" is well documented. Dawson & Dargie (2002) explain its influence in the Health Service in the UK and Exworthy & Halford's (1999) introduction explains the change internally in the public sector. Firstly the move away from the bureaucratic model, often praised for its consistency and equity but criticised for its inability to quickly react or change. Secondly the professional/managerial link established where often those within professions were tempted up the managerial
ladder to positions of control, the aim being to reduce conflict between clinical and resource allocation. The new public management is a real shift to, as Hughes (1998) explains, achieving expectations and results as laid down by others.

The Social Service Department is the organisation under study here. It is a sad reality that there is little written in organisational terms about this very difficult setting. Social Services as an organisation is similar to many public sector departments – under-staffed and under-pressure. Personnel and managers are exposed to massive change especially since the election of the Labour government in 1997. In these conditions the question arises how do these managers even begin to tackle the real necessity of learning in their organisations? It would be naive to think these are organisations which have the luxury of extensive, external consultancy programmes which assist in formulating answers. No these are managers, like in many organisations, who need help, a technique, a shape by which to address at least some of these questions.

In 1995 the organisation was studied with the concentration on the organisational design and processes. It was however evident that there was an area unexplored. Eccles & Nohria (1992) already note that within this last decade there is a "desperate quest" for new approaches. This according to Hamel & Prahalad (1994) is because of dissatisfaction with existing managerial approaches. Although in private companies this may be because of technological and economic changes, in the public sector this also includes social change and political intervention.

According to Starkey (1998) the turbulent unpredictable future, the importance of capturing imagination and the inevitability of change, forces us to consider learning in new ways from new perspectives. It was with this in mind that from its first embryonic proposals in 1995, a new model which focuses on the sources of learning was developed. Chapter 5 explores this new model and considers whether it does have a contribution to make to the learning debate especially within the public services.

Etheredge & Short (1983) argue that in order to say learning has occurred there should be some level of personal development with increased capacity of analysis and reflection and ultimately behavioural change. This academic view is not only understandable but uncontroversial. The question remains ‘how’ does this happen and what influences the development of these inputs which affect the individual and in turn affect the organisation and can they be managed. Fox (2000) explains that focussing on the practicalities and detailed activities can help to translate the organisational learning discourse into reality. Easterby-Smith (1999:791) suggests that “understanding how learning happens in the workplace may help devise new ways of sustaining and fostering learning processes”. It
is this very point that has led to the development of the Eight ‘E’s Sources of Learning devised by the author. Indeed this model considers not only internal influences but recognises the web around an organisation which impacts on the individual and the community.

The Eight ‘E’s model began with considering traditional and accepted methods by which learning and then the change of behaviour occurs. These were namely Education, as seen by Ranson (1994) as having a multi layered impact on the individual and society; Experience noted by Kolb (1984) as a cyclical process of experience, reflections, formation of new approaches and altering of behaviour; Evaluation as Scrivens (1991) explains the collection and scrutiny of data having placed some value on it and made judgements about it and Experimentation described by Deese (1972) as the basis of an inductive learning process where there is a search of information to draw conclusions and inform behaviour. Further study however and work undertaken by Ferris (1995) also indicated an additional set of influences which also should be acknowledged and explored. These were Experts, those identified by Mildred (1982) as having special knowledge and where according to French & Revans (1986) such personnel can, in organisational terms, hold considerable power and influence. Secondly Error differentiated from experience because of its significant impact on individuals’ behaviour and organisational defences as outlined by Argyris (1990). Thirdly Evidence-Based encouraged by Sheldon & Chilvers (2000) in a social care setting in order to enhance professionals’ actions and impact on service users. The necessary skills of critical analysis of research in order to differentiate between the good and the inadequate is encouraged by Dawes (1999) in order that appropriate learning can occur vicariously through others’ work. Finally the significance within a public sector especially, of those expectations prescribed or Enforced on individuals and organisations is recognised by Dawson & Dargie (2002) especially in the debate on new managerialism in the public sector.

These eight aspects form the basis of the model presented in Chapter 5 where each of these aspects will be explored in detail. Chapter 7 will then test out in primary research whether these eight sources have utility and what conclusions could be drawn.

The influences on individuals may not therefore be singular but Streufert & Nogami (1989) suggest that different levels of educational input, intelligence and experiences are not enough to explain why individuals act in certain ways. Possibly the influence of a multiplicity of different sources is a more reasonable contention.
Chapter 5 examines the basis of this model, explaining in detail the validity for each source to be accepted as an influence. Further it offers the model as an assessment and action tool for managers. Chapter 6 explores the range of methodologies to use when undertaking research in an organisational setting of this nature and complexity.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe’s (2002) analysis on management research is a refreshing and practical approach to research design and to the debate about the philosophical roots of such research. They centre their analysis on the real world of management and organisations reminding the reader of how much internal expertise exists, negating the need to always consider an external viewpoint and secondly emphasising the multiplicity of agendas that are ordinarily present in such complex systems. The latter of course can lead to possible managerial influence and constraint on any research project.

It is of course important to note the organisational consequences of delving into the very soul of an organisation and the wariness with which this could be met. Further canny managers should fairly accurately know what’s going on, otherwise how do they succeed, predict, avoid, enable? Management research therefore may best be sold as having ‘added value’ and bringing a better level of understanding than would usually be available. By virtue then of this desire to have greater depth of comprehension about an organisation Easterby-Smith et al (2002) are very clear in their view that different techniques and methods give a richer flavour to the information as long as researchers don’t merely use a range of techniques for their own sake. They advocate quantitative or qualitative data methods of collecting the ‘facts’ and balancing this with the ‘interpretive’ – the ‘whys’.

Management research as a particular discipline, is discussed by Easterby-Smith et al (2002:7) who clearly support its “distinctiveness”. They claim that three factors lead them to this conclusion as these are indeed relevant. Firstly the ‘eclectic’ nature of management: most organisations will span the range of disciplines – the organisation under study here for example has a sociological base but will demand knowledge of statistics, psychology, economics etc. Secondly the managerial power system and of course ultimate survival instinct will mean careful, if any, support of research in the organisation. Finally the need for a purpose, an action, an output is important, otherwise research for its own sake is potentially pointless.

It is important also to note that these writers emphasise the political content of management research. In essence, allowing research to be carried out within an organisation is the first hurdle. Easterby-Smith et al (2002) consider that organisational
leaders will not put themselves in a position of exposure and so may wish some control in this. This may be a perspective within commercial or private organisations however in public organisations there is so much exposure of the organisation through a rash of auditors and inspections that this may, in this setting, be less evident. However it would be naive not to consider that both power and politics may be operating if not obviously then at least at a subliminal level.

Qualitative and Quantitative approaches are analysed and this analysis will also support some of the debate in Chapter 5 especially in relation to evidence-based practice and experimentation. Organisational theory and the use of ethnographic intervention is detailed. The main purpose is not only to address research style but to answer the unsettling but necessary question of whether an internal organisational player can undertake such research.

The concentration on research techniques has been helpful in clarifying some of the issues around researching organisational learning. The very experience of the research in itself, of course, as an experience, changes behaviour, actions and possibly attitudes. Almost inevitably when considering organisation research then organisational development methodologies are of note. Here the whole systems' approach based in the behavioural sciences and with an action research modus operandi will be examined. The range of organisation development techniques will be considered as will be the role and involvement of an organisation development consultant. The importance of a research design which supports the whole ethos of organisational learning and the objective of achieving the state of a learning organisation is central. It was also vital that the research design was, in itself, valuable and whatever resources were used in the data gathering were efficient and useful.

This study has spanned a six year period in a single organisation. This in itself makes it somewhat unusual, organisational researchers more typically do not have, for various reasons, this longevity of intervention in one organisation. Secondly organisations themselves may not permit such diagnosis and analysis and finally within the organisation development field such research is time consuming and the volume of work so extensive that it is often prohibitive. Ferris (1995) first researched learning in a public sector organisation and this chapter will contain synopsis of that research. This research was based within the broad field of organisation development and used McKinsey's (1982) Seven 'S' Audit as a diagnostic framework. This was an unusual use of the Seven 'S' Audit as it attempted to overlay and focus on the issue of learning within a technique which was more traditionally used in a wider capacity. Ferris (1995) used both qualitative and quantitative techniques within that research design. There was considerable work in
relation to individual learning styles and cognitive styles and how they in turn may affect organisation structure, systems compliance, strategic, holistic preference of organisational members and how the 'soft' elements of staffing, style, shared values and skills were implicated. Ferris' (1995) diagnosis and analysis led to recommendations for change which were focussed on increasing the organisational capacity to learn. They were, within the organisation development profile, primarily structural and task orientated and did have more than partial success. Within the overall organisation development awareness raising through the research enabled the foundations to be set for the necessity of change.

The advantages of starting this research in 1995 have been quite significant. It has allowed for a historical record of the extent of change demanded both internally and externally. It has also noted the progress of the organisation and its levels of adaptability and has in many ways emphasised the need for learning. Above this 'baselining' from which the organisation has moved and the placing of the organisation in an accurate 'real timeframe', questions that it raise were also fundamental. Was there a different way, were there aspects not diagnosed, did the research need to examine a different level which built up from the individual, through group, to an organisational level?

This provoked a real interest in continuing to strive for a deeper understanding of these important issues. Out of this has arisen the Eight 'E's Model. The academic support for these 'E's is laid out in Chapter 5. These Eight 'E's however needed to be tested out via the research process. Chapter 7 contains this primary research which, although having three elements, has a clear concentration on the examination and exploration of the Eight 'E's.

Chapter 7 firstly presents an analysis of staff profiles which has been useful when cross-referenced with the second phase which was the assessment and analysis of the Eight 'E's through the Knowledge Influences Audit designed by the author. The third phase was the interview and focus group intervention which assisted in the interpretative detail of staff perception of critical issues.

The research in 2000 demonstrated the usefulness of the model and supported the contention that there was a new way to consider organisational learning from a different perspective. Chapter 8 considers the contribution this makes to the organisation development theory and organisational learning in particular.

This PhD study highlights the complexity of public sector organisations. This very complexity may, by necessity, require of organisation leaders that they consider that
aspect of their human resource management which is the intellectual capital and motivation of individuals and the collective. This longitudinal study not only emphasises that necessity, regardless of the unique constraints of the public sector, but offers a solution to that complexity.

In order to 'set the scene' for this study the organisation will now be described. This is in preparation for what follows.

The Organisation in Context

This analysis will show the environmental conditions in which this very public organisation operates. It will reflect the change within the period 1995 to 2001. The organisation under study is the Children's Services section of the Social Service Department which is a discrete department within the County Council. This is an organisation steeped in the tradition of a public body and this analysis will demonstrate how it has been faced with significant organisational change, resulting primarily from the impact of political direction.

The County Council in 1995 was made up of a variety of autonomous departments. The County Council's functions are diverse and often unrelated. These functions ranged from such service areas as Planning, Libraries, Transportation and Estates, Education, Trading Standards and Social Services. At that time there was little common ground between some of these functional areas, however they operated within a similar environmental context and decision makers i.e. the political leaders, were often the same. Each department advocated and pursued as large a share as possible of a single overall budget. There was at this time therefore not only a level of competition between the departments but a level of protection in pursuit of each segment's best interest. Offices were supported in this advocacy via County Council Members who were allocated to the controlling committee.

In 1997 the Labour Government came into power and in 1998 produced a White Paper 'Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People' (CM4014:5). The clear message in the White Paper was the Labour agenda to reform and to modernise local government. The tone of the foreword by John Prescott, Deputy Labour Leader, was one of criticism and challenge. Mr Prescott underlined the need for working in partnership to achieve improved aims for people's quality of life whilst also challenging councils to "break free from old fashioned practices and attitudes". He wrote in terms of "the fundamental shift of culture throughout local government" with a clear "demanding agenda for change".

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In this change agenda the strategy outlined was to place local people more in touch with those who provide services and that those councils, which used this opportunity to modernise, would be rewarded with incentives. The White Paper details the move away from the 'old culture and old framework' i.e. members and officers often taking a paternalistic view of services provided to communities and where the interests of the public were described as coming a poor second. Instead the Labour government sought to create modern councils where they 'put people first' and where the council's priorities are led by local communities. The framework of change sought to promote openness and accountability, and although acknowledging that diversity amongst councils reflected local needs, there was clearly a political agenda that people receive equitable, quality services across local authority areas.

The White Paper saw the best councils as being driven by performance standards and where "inefficiency and failure are not acceptable and must be tackled" (CM4014:13). There was a commitment to "fair treatment of well-motivated people and well-trained staff" to offer such services (CM4014:6).

In order to do this the White Paper suggested new political structures, the aim of these were to create efficiency, transparency and accountability. The political structure therefore in 1995 is quite different to that seen in 2000/2001. In local terms this has meant the creation of a scrutiny committee with a lead councillor who is responsible not only for parts of the Social Service Department but straddles into other service areas such as Education. The intention of course was to strengthen the scrutiny role and the political balance and to decentralise decision making structures. In reality, it is questionable whether this political structure has in fact established openness and accountability. Internal officers rarely have access to committee documents, which previously was common practice and there is significantly reduced contact at certain levels with county councillors.

Along with the changes in political structure the White Paper also established new enforcement and disciplinary arrangements. This 'new ethical framework' aimed at establishing high standards for councillors and council employees with strict codes of conduct. The new Standards Board was established as an independent body within a regional structure. Under the new ethical framework the conduct of council staff was particularly highlighted establishing an employee code, statutory protection against dismissal and emphasising the government's requirements for openness through a whistleblowing policy.
The White Paper further considered improving local services through the Best Value programme. In 1995 the regime was that of Compulsory Competitive Tendering where councils had to pursue the most economically efficient service provider to offer public services, rather than those who may be in essence providing 'best value'. The Best Value Review is dominated by Fundamental Performance Reviews encapsulating challenge, comparison, consultation and competition with detailed local performance plans reviewed by the District Audit on each section or services. New audit arrangements were established under the Best Value approach with "rigorous external checks on the information provided by authorities in their local performance plans and in the management systems that underpin them" (CM4014:74). Best Value was an additional inspectorial framework to national bodies such as OFSTED, the Social Services Inspectorate and other inspectorial mechanisms.

In 1999 the government produced 'Local Leadership and Local Choice', a document to supplement the modernisation agenda as laid out in the White Paper. The intention was to have local choice reflected, via the political structures, in the operational services that are provided by the County Council. The modernisation document however with its dominance for performance measurement and accountability has in many ways confined its own ability to encourage local choice and local development. The over emphasis on such an accountability framework has led to arguably the stifling of flexibility and initiative and indeed in a 5 Live Radio interview on 8th January 2002 Ruth Lee from the Institute of Directors sympathised with the public sector when she explained that there was too much imposed on public sectors to allow flexibility and creativity.

Social Services

The Social Service Department offers a range of services to the public which are provided primarily to those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, in need of protection or have special needs. The Department is ultimately accountable to political leaders through the Chief Officer, the Director of Social Services. In 1995 the department was divided into two internal sections. Firstly the Strategic Core and secondly Service Provision. The Strategic Core agreed and maintained all standards, created contracts and 'purchased' services for the department from whatever source and had no client interface. Service Provision on the other hand offered all direct services to the client. It was divided into two departments, Adult Services and Children's Services. Adults' range of activities included those who needed elder care, who were physically disabled, had a learning disability and those who had a mental health difficulty. Children and their families were the responsibility of the Children's Service.
In the intervening years there have been significant changes in the structures of the Children's Service and the Adults Service. By 2000/2001 the Department is separated into two relatively independent sections namely the Children's Services and Community Care Services. All strategic issues are contained within each sector.

Community Care Department

The Community Care Department has moved forward in dramatic ways in its partnership with other agencies, particularly Health. Indeed the creation of the Primary Care Trust's has seen a move to joint management of the elder care service with social work managers aligning their geographical areas to the Primary Care Trust geographical areas where staff work out of GP surgeries. Further the Mental Health Service has amalgamated with its NHS counterpart and this amalgamated team will now be offering services to those who have psychiatric difficulties.

The Community Care section has a large unqualified staff group who offer a mechanistic and practical service to those who need physical help. The Home Help Service, the Respite Care Service, Occupational Therapy etc are managed via budgetary control and performance targets such as the number of visits completed in a day. It is generally accepted that their work has low complexity but high bulk and they are dealing with not only the majority of the budget allocation to Social Services but the vast number of service referrals received for the adult population.

This section therefore does not retain the same features of Mintzberg's (1979) professional bureaucracy. The organisation has a flat managerial structure very near the service delivery interface. Managers have high discretion and the task area is in reality simple and direct.

The result of the changes has been to reduce joint identity under the Social Service umbrella and indeed rivalry is often evidenced in interchanges between the two sectors.

The Children's Services

The Children's Service, the section under study here, retains many features of a professional bureaucracy. The Children's Services continue to deal with high level of complexity in the nature of its tasks and although, unlike its Community Care colleagues, it deals with smaller numbers, the complexity of intervention is significant. There is within the section a defined hierarchy. It is highly proceduralised in its activities and there is recognised position power. These features tend to have been retained because of the
risk nature of the activity and because of the levels of accountability within such a service area. Service provision however endeavours to give a flexible client driven service which can meet individuals’ needs rather than previously 'pigeon-holing' and categorisation which is often associated with the professional bureaucracy. The Department has moved away from heavily prescribed activities, fitting clients to the organisation's predetermined categories. This flexibility however is within the realities of a confined resource profile.

The Children's Department Description

The Children's Department in 1995 shaped its services to meet the legislative requirements through five specialist areas. These were child protection, adolescent services (including residential), children looked after by the local authority, resources (including childminders, foster carers etc) and adoption.

In 1995 the dominance of the child protection system swamped almost every other area of practice. This was primarily to do with its high risk nature and the perceived need then to dedicate most of the resources into this area of practice.

By 2000/2001 these services have been significantly rebalanced and refocused. This to some extent has been underpinned by both research and authorised by the Department of Health. Those children who are looked after by the Local Authority have become much more significant in the balance of the service provision. Therefore children who are either in foster care or in residential care have now become much more central to the service delivery. This has been reinforced by a government initiative called Quality Protects where the management and performance output in relation to this section of children has been implemented. Further the political dominance of adoption, with the Prime Minister taking a very clear personal lead, has led practitioners to completely reconsider their working practices in relation to children in care.

The additional development in service delivery is around that of children's care. Two features have arisen in this period which are of particular significance. Firstly the extent of destructive and difficult behaviour experienced by those who are significantly younger such as 10+ has become much more evident. This shift reflects societal change and concern in relation to children with highly disruptive and often criminalised behaviour. Secondly there has been a significant shift to a more multi-agency approach in relation to child care, not only child protection. It is recognised that as a county as a whole there is approximately £5 million spent on a small number of children in out of county care because their level of disturbance is so high. A real multi-agency shift has occurred to
consider whether these children should be reintegrated into the county and the £5 million reinvested locally.

With approximately 550 children in care and 350 children on the child protection register, let alone the other myriad of tasks, the importance of 'getting it right' first time is enormous, not only in organisational terms but in societal terms.

Children's Services Audit and Analysis

The following analysis of the Children's Services has been completed with a comparison of events between 1995 and 2000/2001. This analysis has been written and then checked by other managers to ensure balance and appropriate interpretation. This analysis will show some of the significant shifts of balance within this 5 year period and particularly will note those aspects which the organisation has particularly had to face and react to.

Stakeholders and Modifiers

Johnson & Scholes (1993:173) recognised that local "government is an example of how a variety of stakeholder groups with differing expectations attempt to influence the formulation of strategy" of the organisation. The organisation in turn has to balance the needs of these stakeholders. The relative power of these stakeholders' impact on the organisation. It will balance and assess their power, or coalitions of power, in determining their own actions and activities. As Thompson (1993:20) explains "these stakeholder requirements represent key success factors". This is why it has been particularly important to note any shifts in expectation and power between 1995 and 2000/2001. Table 1:1 offers an analysis of stakeholders' influence and the shift that has occurred in this period. The italics show those changes and new expectations present in 2000. The very fact of the numerous, sometimes conflicting, range of stakeholders with high or very high power indicates the public service dilemma and the necessity in such context to manage this mêlée of expectations. Further the usual expectation is that where one power balance has decreased, another increases. The very complexity of this organisation is demonstrated by increased power over a range of bodies without the corresponding reduction elsewhere. So many interests and so many powerful stakeholders each with their own demands does highlight the type of management needed in this organisational environment. The following analysis has been verified by two senior managers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAKEHOLDER</th>
<th>EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>POWER 1995</th>
<th>POWER 2000</th>
<th>SOURCE OF POWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Politicians</td>
<td>• Compliance • Performance</td>
<td>Medium to High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>• Political • Legislative • Decision Making</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers &amp; Local Politicians</td>
<td>• Client Care • Efficient use of Resources • Staff care • Quality, safe service • Performance Targets met</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>• Expertise • Status • Personal</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>• Client Care • Safe Service • Support • Reliance to meet targets</td>
<td>Medium (depends on conditions)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• On individual basis • Professional opinion • Service delivery • Necessary to meet targets</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>• Quality Caring service • Fair treatment • &quot;Best Chance&quot; • Safe Service • Equitable Service • Individual low • HIGH with advocate</td>
<td>High in groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The &quot;reason for being&quot; • Public expectation • Consultation and voice</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>• Safe service • Always get it right • Reduce Scandals</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High in conjunction with government</td>
<td>• Public influence • Pressure on Government</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulators</td>
<td>• Quality Service • Client information • &quot;Getting it right&quot; • Fair and sympathetic service • Performance Targets</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• Position • Inspection role • Legislator • Accountable</td>
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<td>SSI DOH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit Commission</td>
<td>• Economy, efficiency and effectiveness • Best Value</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• As agents of Government and legislation • With local politicians</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Party</td>
<td>• As per party line</td>
<td>Dependent on political balance</td>
<td>Currently high with party majority</td>
<td>• Status • Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Organisations</td>
<td>• Financial support • As suppliers of service • Increased &quot;market share&quot; • Controllers and managers of initiatives as consultate body</td>
<td>Low/medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• Through legislation and competitive philosophy • Government support • Perception of Expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts</td>
<td>• Quality service • No delay in service delivery</td>
<td>High - accountability</td>
<td>Very High - addition of Human Rights Legislation</td>
<td>• As judicial body • Through Order (case to case basis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1:1 Stakeholder Analysis

Environmental Audit

Dobson & Starkey (1993:19) agree that "the formulation of strategy is concerned with matching the capabilities of the organisation with its environment". This is equally important in the formulation of a learning strategy and how it matches overall aims.

The environment within which this organisation operates is dynamic, fast moving and demanding massive change capacities. The department and wider organisation is undergoing 'imposed transformation' where competition is present, where accountability to external bodies such as the Audit Commission, the SSI, the Department of Health etc exists and where there is no longer a 'right of passage' for the local authority to exist. A PEST analysis shows current issues of significance which potentially affects the capacity of the organisation to learn and on the other hand the very necessity that it does. It is evident from this analysis that there has been a shifting balance within the environment between the 1995 and 2000/2001.

Political Influence

The political influences are dominated by two aspects, the local and national political context and secondly the legislative framework.

In 1995 the move towards accountability of the public services had rapidly engulfed the practices of Children’s Services’ officers and indeed local authorities as a whole. The
enabling, empowering and enhancing of clients' rights was seen as positive however the advocacy that came along with those rights had become so fierce and challenging that 'the right of the matter' had to a large extent become swamped by the principle of winning and losing. Mostly such challenges were centred around case to case matters with an increasingly contentious and acrimonious approach from legal advocates in a case matter. Children's legislation embodied the correctness of clients' rights but sadly in the hands of these vigorous advocates has to a large extent merely become a method by which to say the local authority is often 'on trial'. When trying to protect a child the real issue can succumb to the theatre of the moment especially in the court setting. Increasingly if a case for a family is 'weak' the usual tactic was to dissect every action of the social worker, and the process, thus deflecting from the main issues and consequently also affecting the psychological wellbeing of the social worker. The result of course understandably could be a defended and defensive reaction where a consequence was potentially 'closed' in regard to learning from such difficult and acrimonious events. By 2000/2001 such examination has only become more magnified by, what some see as, the additional 'lawyers charters' of the Human Rights Act. This has merely served to further make social workers feel attacks are personal and not merely part of the process.

In 1995 the Local Government Review, the Citizens Charter Initiative and the Conservative government's move towards a 'business philosophy' were the beginnings of a move to at least a quasi-business arena. Resistance from traditionalists, who saw such practices as anathema, was present.

The election of the Labour government in 1997 brought with it those changes which have already been acknowledged particularly around the modernisation of local government and the increased accountability which was placed on public services. This accountability did not primarily rest on a case to case basis via the court process but now was via a range of performance indicators and measurements which were inspected and audited by a variety of 'independent' bodies reporting to the Department of Health. The crucial relationship between the politician and the public officer cemented by political success and public sector performance becoming inseparable.

This interrelationship between the public sector, the public and the political leaders is an interesting and complex one. On the one hand the public's dissatisfaction with its officers within the public sector has influenced political leaders in their approach to those who are in essence their employee. The tone of their rhetoric has often been confrontational and challenging to the public sector representatives such as the Unions. The tone however in 2001 has begun to change subtly as different sectors of the public sector move from
being weary of the endless criticism, to seeking from their political leader's positive strokes and supportive messages which emphasise the understanding of the political leaders of the important job that public sectors do. Teachers, Police, Health Workers all want recognition and reward.

The political change between 1995 and 2000/2001 may in practice reflect more on the leadership style of key political figures such as the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. The Labour government's approach of accountability at local political level, has in many ways been undermined by its own actions of such centralised control particularly around issues of improvement and the authorisation of such things as Health Improvement Plans, Social Services Business Plans, Community Safety Strategy Plans etc.

The political influences have not only changed over the period but have become much more powerful and inflexible. This coupled with a legislative framework which is based on conflict rather than consensus has resulted in public sector workers and those in Children's Services having to account for every action. To the public of course this is a perfectly reasonable and acceptable state with a clear demand for transparency. To those within the public services from the perspective of employees and officers working on frontline services this level of accountability however can potentially create a fear of acknowledging mistakes and may create underperformance.

**Economic Influences**

In 1995 the Social Service Department as a whole was going through significant retrenchment with a reduction of £5 million in the 1995-1997 budgets. This bold fact had far reaching effects on a small local authority. Retrenching meant targeting statutory services, reducing staff numbers and clearly confining out of county work etc. This in turn affected the time to reflect and develop and to learn in formal settings. The economic requirement at that time squeezed out flexibility within the social services as those who remained within employment took on additional tasks over and above those that they were already carrying out. It also affected the shape of learning and development in what was previously seen as the sole preserve of the training department. This economic influence pressed on a tight budget the restriction of training events but internally had the benefit of being much more imaginative about the use of existing staff.

In 1997 the new Labour government brought with it significant funding. Funding came in two forms. Firstly additional finance for the statutory services and secondly finance for 'initiative growth'.

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In relation to the public services as a whole, funding for Health Care, Police and Education has clearly been well recorded and acknowledged particularly via the media. Specifically in relation to Children’s Services the Quality Protects initiative allowed for approximately £4 million growth over a 5 year period targeted at establishing better quality care for those children who were looked after. In economic terms this was welcome but after a significant period of retrenchment when there were staff losses through redundancy, this change of tack did create some difficulty particularly for middle managers who had recently been through selection processes. The finance through the Quality Protects’ money, however, was closely monitored and tightly associated with performance management. Therefore a number of central government objectives had to be met, finance had to be targeted to those objectives and measurable outcomes achieved. Failure to do so meant that the inspectorate would be closely following those who were in essence “failing authorities”.

The second economic influence was that of the growth of initiatives such as Sure Start, On Track, Children’s Fund etc. At one point there were more than 50 of these initiatives within the local authority area which is under study, with approximately £20 million injected, time limited and targeted with the aim that the statutory services would sustain these projects long term.

In political terms, the growth of such initiatives has given them something of an untouchable air. The statutory services therefore have found themselves faced with the sustainability of projects that may in fact deflect from some of the primary statutory tasks for which they are responsible. The second consequence of such economic input has been their required capacity to manage such a large amount of money in such short timescales. This for a county which is relatively isolated, has meant that many of the statutory workers have left with the result of depleting some of the main statutory services. The consequence then being lower numbers to undertake the performance expected centrally by the government in relation to those statutory services.

Economic growth has been welcome both at a national and local level but without the managerial and support structures to deal with this growth the potential for that additional finance can be undermined and limited. In order for the organisation to learn, middle and senior managers must be able to facilitate and create such opportunities for their staff but, without capacity at that level, this is difficult. In the period from 1995 to 2000/2001 there was no managerial growth or indeed replacement after the retrenchment, even though there is an increase in social work personnel.
Social Influences

The functions of any Children's Department often expose the failings of the wider society. Child abuse, juveniles who commit crime and dysfunctional families are those areas of society's conscience that on the one hand society does not want to face and on the other wishes to have somebody to account and be responsible to 'sort it out'. Social work is often seen as the 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' profession. National child care events have always overshadowed the successful work carried out by the majority of local children's departments. Confidentiality ties the hands of the organisation to do extended public relations work. Consequently the professional body is arguably paranoid about making a mistake because of reactions to such child abuse events as Cleveland, Orkney and currently the Victoria Climbie enquiry. In situations such as these arguably the media and the public want a scapegoat and a sensational story rather than a proper analysis and a proper solution.

It is a sad reality that there are a number of national scandals which continually undermine the trust of the public in their public servants. In this interim period this has grown rather than diminished with such examples as the Alderhay scandal within the Health Department.

In this intervening time however the tone has changed from the individual event to the disillusionment about the repetition of mistakes. The public and their most vocal representatives, the media, have such headlines as 'Why Again?' 'Will They Never Learn?' highlighting that it is not only the disaster which has caused concern but the repeated nature of these events where in enquiry after enquiry the same themes emerge which never appear to be put right.

Alan Milburn the Health Secretary Labour government in 2000 was obviously concerned that on the one hand the public sought some level of accountability or retribution and on the other hand there was an encouragement for openness within the public sector to own up to mistakes or to whistleblow. In a Radio 4 presentation, he explained that society had to start accepting that mistakes did occur and that it was positive to be open about them.

The other key social influence over this period, has been the demand to consult with the public and respond to those who are users of the service. This of course is a complicated matter in relation to children's services where often those who receive the service are 'reluctant customers'. Here the difference between community care colleagues and children's services colleagues is very marked. Those who receive a community care service tend to be the elderly and vulnerable and those who are being supported primarily
to remain within their own environment. In general community care colleagues have moved towards a deeper and closer partnership between service users in a wider context than possibly there colleagues in Children's Services and this will need to change and develop.

Technical Influences

In 1995 this Children's Services was revelling in the introduction of fax machines, better telecommunication etc. Computers were used on a limited basis and tended to be specifically for child protection or child care legislation through specifically designed programmes. At this time there was restricted learning through the use of technological development and there was limited use of such techniques to disseminate information, to track research, to gather internal statistical analysis and to allow localised developments to be progressed. The full use of IT facilities was limited within the department and this reflected on the then financial circumstance where updating technology was highly costly and politically sensitive, at a time of reduced resources.

This five year period has seen massive growth in the use of technology. This has firstly been internally driven by the recognition that technology could be a significant assistance to social workers in their service delivery to clients. Each social worker now has a laptop to complete their own work and much of the repetitious nature of the completion of forms has been reduced through this technology. It is further being used as a management tool to hold individual workers to account and to progress work towards timescales. The introduction of this technology has been widely welcomed and there has been little resistance within the employee group about the introduction of such technological advances. This probably reflects the nature of social work training and also the enlightenment of most staff about the use of technology in regard to communication and to assist in detailed tasks. The growth in the social services' budget over this period of time has led to the growth in technology with the support of local politicians.

In central government terms the accounting for the work of the department is almost wholly expected through electronic means. Central government therefore expect local authorities to have comprehensive accounting systems which they can then interrogate and analyse through returns sent to them electronically.

The use of technology as a method by which to gain information via research etc remains limited within this organisation. Direct access to the internet has been restricted by senior managers and technology is primarily used in relation to client orientated activities. The plan however is that technology and laptops will be used to download policies and
procedures and eventually have controlled access to research documents and those which are accepted as authorised material. The concern of senior managers at this current time is the inappropriate use of some information which may be downloaded via the internet and may then have an inappropriate ad hoc impact on service users.

The national development centrally driven by the government is to progress an integrated Children's Services data with the move towards a multi-agency data base. This has, of course, real issues for confidentiality, civil rights etc and these arguments have still to be progressed. The dramatic and sustained rise of technological influence however cannot be denied and there is real potential to use such technical capabilities even more extensively. In this location this is probably one of the greatest changes developing from a confined and suspicious use of technology to the current extensive allocation of resources to this area. This in many ways reflects how society has accepted the 'computer age' which in turn has allowed expenditure to be dedicated to this 'administrative' arm instead of traditionally to direct services. It is also a sign that senior managers and politicians are moving towards a more corporate acceptance of the benefits of technology.

Competitive Environment

Porters (1979) provides a framework of five forces which enables an analysis of the competitive environment and its level of threat. In 1995 the competitive rivalry from voluntary and private organisations is evident but not significant.

Then, as in 2000/2001, such bodies had the luxury of research grants and time for reflection and although the local authority's personnel have the same abilities they do not have the same capacity. Thus the status of one increases and the other stays the same. By 2001/2002 voluntary agencies remain a powerful influence especially as they 'speak' through nationally recognised bodies. They therefore attract positions of power through the growth in initiatives. The Children's Fund for example is managed by the NCH.

The threats of new entrants were restricted in 1995 by large capital costs. Further differentiation in service delivery was difficult especially in reduced financial budgets. Five years on, finance has been available to new entrants via government grants. Additionally such grants encourage differentiation in service delivery which in essence complements the statutory services. The same developments have occurred in the power of suppliers. The government's thrust of partnership, consortia, shared data bases, new purchasing arrangements has encouraged this.
The power of buyers has again changed to those who were not traditionally seen as purchasers of child care facilities. Education for example now manages early years child care facilities and in specialist services joint purchasing budgets have diluted the power of social services as sole buyers. Finally the threat for subsidiaries, not evident in 1995 is now present through new working practices and new intervention techniques. The multi-agency nature of such services as child protection has in practice moved services to a different style. The reality remains however, that for public protection such services firmly remain the social services' responsibility and accountability.

Environmental Audit Conclusions

The environmental changes which have affected public services in general and specifically Children's Services have been vast within this period of between 1995 and 2000/2001. These changes have been dominated by the political movements at central government and with a powerful Labour government who has a large majority. The effect of the increased central political influence at a local level has been primarily around the issues of accountability and performance. This has been because the government has very much attached their success to that of measurable public sector improvement. There is however within the public services and within Children's Services real difficulty in performing imaginatively in such a tight performance culture. In essence flexibility has been invested in such organisations as the initiatives of Sure Start and the Children's Fund. Ironically these initiatives may be undermining rather than enhancing statutory services.

Synopsis of Ferris 1995 Study

Introduction

The research completed by Ferris (1995) has been the basis from which a further indepth and rigorous analysis of the organisation in 2000. The size requirements of a PhD study have however precluded the inclusion of the detailed work in 1995. Concentration will therefore be on the work completed in 2000 as presented in Chapter 7. This explores the organisation from different aspects but concentrates on the examination of the Eight 'E's through the use of the Knowledge Influences Audit. This testing out of a new model has been at the core of this study however it developed from the 1995 study and so this will be referenced here as the foundation from which the rest has grown.

In 1995 well practised methods were used to explore whether this organisation was a learning organisation and had a learning capacity. The research, supported by academic advice, led to a number of changes being implemented. The 2000 study, not only
considered whether those interventions were successful but also whether a new approach could enhance the analysis of such organisations.

In both 1995 and 2000 it was important to ensure the research design was organisationally relevant and had validity. This is particularly important in an organisation which, in common with most public service organisations, operates in a highly pressurised, demanding environment. The fact that resources would be used such as staff time and travel etc, meant that the research design needed to reflect questions the organisation would routinely need to ask itself. The Department of Health's Quality Protects programme for example, demanded a detailed human resource strategy and the Council's desire to achieve the Investors in People award provided the impetus for Senior Managers to welcome a vehicle to review the organisations operations. The fact that a further study was allowed in 2000 does indicate an organisational acceptance and to some extent the usefulness of the study in 1995.

There is an element of concern that, in an organisation dominated by a sociological perspective, a qualitative design may not suffice in terms of validation and status. This is an organisation which is moving swiftly towards evidence-based practice and one which, because of perceived threat, is rapidly adapting to a more 'scientific' approach. It remains however important to engage and communicate with a staff group which relies heavily on personal interaction. The research design over both studies included both qualitative and quantitative elements.

The following is synopsis of Ferris 1995 study. This will outline the information gathered and the resultant changes which occurred. Figure 1:2 outlines the research process in 1995.

Methodologies Used – 1995 Study:
Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used by Ferris in the 1995 study. Qualitative data was collected via the use of focus groups, the use of scenario examples and in five incidences, individual interviews. Focus group method was chosen because much of the information was qualitative in nature for example, attitudes, approach and perception. Twelve participants were seen as an optimum number with the level of commonality within each group. Groups were selected therefore on either status commonality, task commonality or qualification similarities. It was also a technique acceptable to managers and participants.
Figure 1:2 Flow chart of Research Methodology 1995 study.
Quantitative data was through the three methods of completion of Learning Style Questionnaire, Learning Diagnostic Questionnaire and Cognitive Styles Analysis.

The aims of the collecting data were as follows:

- To identify the current approach of learning in the Children's Services to the perception of different groupings, at different levels in the department.
- To explore the possible solutions to establish a learning organisation if it did not already exist.
- To register the perceived barriers which may exist which would block creating a learning organisation in Children's Services.
- To assess through the above data collection the state of readiness and acceptability of learning principles within this organisation.
- To determine the extent of common ground and level of deviation from different groupings.
- To start debate within group context and to establish a foundation for future change.
- To 'open' staff and managers' minds to the concept of organisational learning and to enter these principles into organisational language.

**Qualitative Methodology – Focus Group Results**

The following results were recorded against the McKinsey's (1982) Seven "S" Audit format.

**Structure**

The structure which existed in 1995 was described as fragmented, split and restrictive. The structure had multiple managerial and supervisory layers and teams were created primarily around functions. The result of highly specialised, functional service areas in teams was the creation of discrete groupings which became, to different extents, separate from the other services. Isolationism was seen as existing within the service areas and this division and isolation was further heightened by the geographical spread of teams. The further functional split between administration and support section from operational activities created a tension which, if 'in extremis', was destructive and undermining. There was evidence, therefore, that specialisms were creating a blockage in mutual understanding, a lack of corporate identity and an 'us and them' between team specialists.
The lack of cross-fertilisation created fixed images about colleagues and a lack of understanding of mutual responsibilities and stresses. For example, child protection team members did not know what was occurring in the child care teams even if they shared the same physical office space. Staff members at all levels acknowledged internal conflict, as opposed to co-operation and inter-group rivalry between sections was seen as undermining cohesion.

A number of specialisations however had benefited from such a segregated functional structure, for example adoption, fostering, 'under eights' and child care. Under a generic structure these have been subsumed by child protection work. Segregation therefore had offered a level of protection to them and had allowed for a high level of expertise being created within those areas.

Evidence about the strength of lateral groupings was mixed – middle managers particularly were not strongly aligned. The highly segregated structure had established isolated pockets of staff who had no connective framework by which to see the whole picture. Teams were described as polarised with fixed views that were often inaccurate about other teams. This was heightened by poor lateral and linear communication structures and resulted in internal conflict and a possible insular approach. Although the flexibility of local initiatives may be welcomed in learning organisation, their unsanctioned nature had resulted in a lack of co-ordinated approach. Where close teams did exist, the common conditions appeared to be location, functional work specialisms and the personalities of local managers. All three needed to be present.

**Systems**

The Children's Service procedural manuals were large and noted for their 'heaviness'. Each service area such as child protection, adoption, 'under eights' etc. had its own information systems, resulting in the same information being duplicated on numerous occasions for the 'internal market'. There was evidence of a lack of co-ordination between systems which further underlined the fragmented internal structure. Too many opportunities were seen as falling into 'a vacuum of documentation'. New systems were said to occur in isolation. Systems were noted as having an administrative/political need, rather than an operational one.

The evidence from practitioners was that inappropriate systems were hard to change and so on occasion subversion occurred rather than challenge, and the lack of monitoring enabled this to be perpetuated. No lateral communication systems existed and so cross learning did not occur throughout the department. Poor information processes meant that there was a heavy reliance on informal structures and personalities to disseminate
information. The 'top' of the organisation was viewed as being badly served by poor upward information systems. Information technology was not widely used and there was limited local data collection and management information systems. There were limited systems by which to 'calmly analyse'. Although checking systems were clearly evident they tended to be in risk-laden activities such as child protection. There was little evidence of rounding off systems and feedback mechanisms to enable the department to progress. Systems that were established appeared to be focused on checking and control. There was little evidence of systems that would coherently connect and link the individual to the organisation. The lack of regular auditing systems meant that 'tracing back' on events did not occur to assist understanding and did not eliminate repetition in critical incidents.

**Skills**

There was acceptance by all management groups that the skills base of the organisation was significant. Skills within Children's Services were noted as high but possibly not utilised to their full potential. The sharing of the skill-base did not occur and there was evidence of pockets of excellence which were not repeated. It was considered the bureaucratic nature of the work that brought staff away from practice and into 'form filling'. Staff across the groups recognised the de-skilling that occurred in traumatic events and acrimonious situations and the need for colleagues at all levels to assist in re-skilling after such an event. The possession of IT skills was seen as a gap at most levels as was the need for wider understanding and use of public relations skills.

**Staff**

It was recognised by the management group that a cultural change needed to occur and there was a wide acceptance of the lack of ownership and responsibility for learning. Learning appeared accidental rather than designed, however it was recognised that it did occur, mostly through modelling and in some instances supervision. Teams and groups learned sporadically on their own initiative. There were however significant levels of avoidance of difficult or stressful incidents. Thus the group 'schema' tried to exempt themselves from direct incidents, thereby limiting reflection but there was evidence of observations indirectly from others' actions. Teams however were open in discussions and clear about solutions, they appeared thoughtful and even though this was a time of redundancies were helpful and constructive in their interactions.

The exploration of possible tension between the individual and the organisation resulted in little evidence that staff felt that professional decision making should take predominance over the corporate view if plans were changed. Individuals felt able to express profound disagreement with no evidence of being pressured into a position.
Unqualified and qualified staff and direct managers felt it was undermining to have petty checking and to have lack of delegated authority in such issues as finance. Staff saw this as confusing given the discretion available in most case matters.

Most groups considered the increase of litigation, complaints, etc had had the result of increasing the role of legal advisers and consultants or experts. The confusion between such advisers and the executive role was seen by most participants as improper but a symptom of the organisation's fear of 'getting it wrong'.

**Strategy**

There was limited evidence that a strategy for Children's Services was either known or widespread. Some staff were aware of the Children's Services Plan but few had considered it or contributed to it. Both the senior management and middle management groups felt that in many ways legislation dictated strategies and plans. Some areas had clear strategies, these were noted by groups as those which had the 'special status' and where it was used as a mechanism to reduce risk e.g. child protection strategy supported by procedural manuals. Strategy here was seen by participants as protection for the organisation with political leader support rather than a directional document for the organisation. The lack of comprehensive strategy could emphasise the fragmentation of the Children's Services giving it a lack of identity.

**Style**

The prevalent style noted by all groups was that the organisation and individuals were highly reactive. A reactive approach to incidences was accepted as having increased because of the nature and type of the job. However, a reactive response to negative and critical events led to the view that the style is 'crisis led'. Emotive and public issues moved quickly through the system.

The organisation, although desiring a corporate approach, was noted for its individualistic responses. The lack of a learning process allowed individuals to pursue individual biases outside the remit of the organisational view. Thus individuals created possibly incomplete views without referring to the corporate benchmark.

Senior managers at this time were gravely concerned that there was a perception that mistakes and errors would receive an angry response and that a lack of mutual support amongst colleagues at lower levels could result in one professional undermining another. Staff had felt that, when a personalised response had been gained from senior managers, it had been positive and should be more widespread but that senior managers' good intentions were in general poorly communicated by middle managers. There is evidence
that the heavy slow style of middle managers linking the gap between the top and the bottom was noted as possibly contributing to mutual misinterpretation of actions and a lack of mutual understanding.

**Shared Values**
The evidence showed that there were no overall shared organisational values, but that this lack was somewhat supplemented by professional principles associated with social work.

There was a common perception amongst groups, other than the senior management group, that the management value system was financially based and the staff's operationally based. It was noted that these often conflict especially when the resource was being reduced as at this time. There was evidence that specialist groups held common values e.g. child protection, and adoption. However, the value base again appeared to contain inherent conflict when value bases did not complement each other between specialisms. The absence of obvious shared principles and shared perspective on events has led to the ability to learn from each other being restricted.

**Conclusions**
The qualitative research carried out in 1995 showed a highly segregated structure with a lack of co-ordinated systems and shared values. This had established an isolated team structure. Rivalry was strong and the lack of mutual understanding established working relationships based on, to some extent, conflict rather than co-operation.

It was evident from the focus group recordings that the Children's Department sharing was dominated by client, case related matters. This resulted in the ability to misinterpret more widely policies, organisational views and desires. It was noted that limited feedback and monitoring systems allowed issues to lapse and individualised interpretations to predominate. This was further heightened by the lack of consequence for behaviour which was contrary to that organisationally decided.

Information was often disseminated in an ad hoc manner and with little indication as to its level of importance. Thus any information was often not absorbed or its influence noted. The lack of synergy and cohesion between different aspects of the Department brought the groups to the conclusion that currently the Children's Service did not display the characteristics necessary to create a learning organisation.
Quantitative Methodologies and Results

Learning opportunities are most effectively utilised if firstly opportunities can consciously be designed to maximise the learning and secondly there is recognition of the learning styles of members and their learning process.

The 1995 investigation used three techniques. Firstly the Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) Honey & Mumford (1986) is used to identify individual learning styles and the influence that they may have on management training, development and individual self-development. Secondly, the Learning Diagnostic Questionnaire (LDQ) Honey & Mumford (1989) which was used to investigate participants’ understanding of the opportunities offered by the organisation, and their own ability and willingness to learn. The analysis of these aspects identified gaps either in the participant’s knowledge, work situation or attitude to learning opportunities. Thirdly the Cognitive Styles Analysis (CSA) Riding (1991) is used to identify preferences of individuals in social, management and learning context. The following information is an accumulation of key factors which were particularly of note from the quantitative data.

The Learning Styles Questionnaire links with the learning cycle shown in Figure 1:3, as designed by Honey & Mumford (1986). In essence, this technique is based on individual’s preferred learning style and in turn these styles are associated with different parts of the learning cycle. This questionnaire was used to assess whether the correlation between different groupings and the predominant style was enhancing positive or reinforcing negative aspects of the organisation as described through the focus groups.

![Learning Styles Diagram](image)

Figure 1:3 Learning Styles (In Relation to Kolb’s Learning Cycle).
The data collected showed that there may be preferences within different groupings which could influence organisational behaviour. The strong or very strong preference of the management group for an Activist style may be relevant if a more reactive, 'here and now' style were imposed across the department which may not be acceptable to other groupings where the Activist style was less prevalent. These other groups had a medium to high proportion of Reflector style. The manager group had a significantly lower Reflector percentage in its members. The implications of this mismatch may result in a lack of mutual understanding and expectations. It may also establish that natural learning styles are not utilised to their full potential. Further the qualified and unqualified worker group had a low percentage of those with a strong preference Pragmatist style. The high percentage in both direct supervisors and management of such a strong Pragmatist preference may indicate a misunderstanding of actions. The demands that such management posts have in this economic climate, and in tasks that are highly statuted and prescribed, may again lead the organisation in a pragmatic approach where workers either qualified or unqualified are less understanding of this pragmatism and desire a more idealistic approach. This is interesting if related to the qualitative data which recorded a perception by workers of managers’ financial value base as opposed to their purported quality value base.

The Learning Diagnostic Questionnaire was used to extend the findings of the personal learning style data by exploring the participant's personal and situational processes. The Learning Diagnostic Questionnaire tests learning for three aspects. Firstly the Knowledge and Skills base when combined with work show capability to learn from experience. Secondly Attitudes and Emotions combined with work show willingness to learn from experience, and finally the Work Situation.

These results showed that there was a range of understanding between different groups within the organisation in relation to learning, reflecting an experience, strategic direction of training and development and the ability to risk take. This lack of consistency may indicate a more individualistic than organisational approach to such issues and may also reflect levels of seniority.


1. Wholistic – Analytic Style
   Do individuals process information in wholes or parts.

2. Verbal – Imagery Style
   Do individuals represent information during thinking verbally or in images.
Riding (1991) suggests that the two dimensions are independent of each other. The information regarding these styles is taken from Ridings (1991) Cognitive Styles Analysis Manual. The CSA programme comments on Social Style, Management Style and Learning Style.

The results indicated that an Analytic style dominated. As these tend to see themselves or close colleagues in an isolated manner and fairly autonomous this may have organisational implications in a highly segregated structure. Those with Analytic preference may welcome and encourage exclusive groupings but this may not be to the organisations advantage. The results further showed a higher proportion of Imager styles within Children's Services. These are more private and positively inward looking and this may influence sharing of not only positive events but errors and mistakes. The positives however are that Analytics are good at objective setting and are goal orientated. They tend to be incisive and pragmatic in management style.

The Analytic/Imager alignment does have possible implications for learning approach and both benefit from the integration of old and new knowledge and a structured approach to learning.

Summary of Key Evidence – 1995 Study

When Children's Services was assessed via qualitative and quantitative data the primary research led to clear observations. The structure was highly specialist and functionally separated in many instances. Its mechanical nature and many layers had created confusion and allowed for the 'top and bottom' of the organisation to become distant, resulting in misunderstanding and misperceptions. The structure itself had however many advantages which should be recognised. It had allowed for, in some instances, the creation of close teams (although this was not widespread) and had allowed for a significant level of protection for specialist areas. These areas previously being negatively affected, when all functions were together in generic teams, as they always took 'second place' to child protection.

A segregated structure in itself may not be a major concern but in this instance two factors have affected it severely. Firstly that the co-ordinating point between the specialisms was at too high a level with too many layers in between. Thus a social work practice issue between teams had potentially three layers to go through (on each team 'side') before the Assistant Director finally arbitrated. This had the consequence of decisions being made by senior managers without direct consultation with staff only their managers. In learning terms the understanding of the process and resultant decision can
be rejected or resisted by staff because of their lack of participation.

The second effect of the segregated structure was the lack of other mechanisms to underpin it to reduce this segregated nature. The apparent lack of shared values, systems and strategy allowed isolated, restricting teams to work to their own agenda not the organisation’s. The benefit however of the structure in 1995 was its team orientation and this positive could be capitalised on if other contributory factors are altered.

The Children’s Service style has been identified as reactive and often crisis led. This, may, to some extent reflect the nature of activities and tasks associated with a Children’s Social Services Department. The reactive style however did not appear countered by a reflective or pro-active approach or the processes to track back, debate, review etc and so its dominance may have become imbalanced. The quantitative data only serves to underline this with the preferred learning styles of staff and managers. Style was also influential in the cognitive styles analysis in relation to the possible preference for Analytics and their associated traits to be insular, exclusive in behaviour and close relationships. This link with a segregated specialist structure may indeed have been comfortable on an individual level but may have a consequence for interactions and openness with other teams. This balance may need to be countered through systems and networking to ensure that the combination of a highly segregated structure and a high preference for isolationism in individuals was not detrimental to the desire for a whole Children’s Service and a more corporate approach.

Delegation and openness with information were not widely present in the Children’s Service. The evidence suggested this was associated with methods of control on the one hand and a lack of clear understanding regarding what can be shared and open. The significant reliance on individual managers to use their discretion on such matters leads to an individualist approach to a number of issues. This in consequence meant that an organisational ‘style’ is hard to determine as individual local managers’ styles tended to be imprinted on various teams and localities. The conclusion one could make from the evidence in Children’s Services was a senior management group which was open to challenge and debate and open to the acceptance of mistakes. This was evident from the group.

There was little reluctance in the department from whatever level, to have a more open collaborate approach on case matters but systems and the shared value that this can occur was not evidenced. Staff, particularly direct supervisors, desired more delegation with responsibility and accountability. This could enhance the mutual feelings of trust between layers and could place authority at lower levels of the organisation. This would
be welcome by those who would take the responsibility and there was a desire for this to occur at a senior level as long as the accountability occurred and mechanisms to ensure control were present.

Staff at all levels, at least on an intellectual level, accepted the need for a mutual support within the department other than with local colleagues but also with management. There was evidence that this seemed to be wanted by all but a perception that this was given by few. The critical mindset, the negative rivalry, the lack of mutual understanding was recognised by all groups but each group also contributed to those behaviours and to a certain extent continued to maintain them. This of course, in practical terms, is easy when a culture exists that is based on a fragmented structure and when workloads and the 'nature of job' lead almost automatically to a 'survival' mentality.

Staff noted the importance of 'boundary skills' such as P.R. for the management of the interface with the public in general. The conclusion was that this was important for each member of staff not merely senior managers. The new skills that were identified included 'political' skills, knowing what was a sensitive issue, skills of negotiation, honest challenge, confidence and the ability to look behind the event not merely at the obvious.

The army of advisers that appeared to be attached to the Department seemed to have caused confusion and undermined the 'executive' role of the managers. Therefore the anomaly exists that to ignore 'advice' become unsustainable especially if a problem arises. The undermining of professional and managerial expertise occurred therefore with the 'advisory' roles of legal, personnel and consultant posts. What was clearly necessary was the shared understanding of these roles and responsibilities and a shared 'value' of their advisory status, thus ensuring the advice does not become executive decision-making by default without responsibility on the 'advisers'.

The split between qualified and unqualified staff was evident at most levels. Qualified practitioners particularly felt that the right staff for the right task was not always applied. This occurred when bureaucratic demands deflected from the operational direct demands, multiple form filling was an example. The proper use of skilled staff was important particularly in a resource reducing organisation. Therefore the proper identification of bands to work appropriate for unqualified and qualified workers and the auditing of administration/bureaucratic demands could assist in achieving this aim.

The lack of a common strategy in the Children's Services team had again allowed for the stamp of individualism to predominant in many areas and localities. The necessity of a strategy or plan was recognised by most groups and, without it, it is hard to see how this
Children's Services could be synergistic or hologetic. The interrelationship between the parts and the whole then potentially remain separate.

The lack of learning strategy both corporately and within each segment again implanted the personalised approach of managers – resulting in a clear support of learning in some teams and not in others. In order for learning to be instilled and accepted it needed to become an incorporated part of strategic management at the County Council level and then cascading down at each complementary strategic level. This includes the embedding of learning from the global to each individual team and individuals own strategy for self-development and learning which fits with the rest. Thus a hierarchy of learning can occur.

The learning approach of teams again emphasises separateness with each specialism learning and gaining more expertise in their area of practice. The lack of cross-fertilisation and constant updating across segments establishes further de-skilling on the one hand with one segment and considerable expertise on the other. A learning strategy could offer the necessary input between the need for expertise for some and a level of common knowledge for all. This really being necessary to allow working together, mutual understanding and better service delivery.

Systems of feedback, appraisal, review were, in general, limited thus experiences and knowledge present were not fully realised and important issues possibly missed. Systems are also needed to take new information in from external sources, as effectively and safely as possible. A system to complete the cycle in regard to learning from experience was partially present through supervision but not seen as a positive process. A formal system for the management and reflection of critical incidents was absent and so the repetition of critical events can potentially occur. It was agreed therefore that a learning system should be established to manage such important information.

It was concluded from the evidence presented that the Children's Service, when assessed against the recognised characteristics of a learning organisation did not in 1995 match the criteria. In essence therefore there was a lack of systems, strategy, shared value or style which promoted learning, especially from critical events within this organisation. Learning at that time appeared to depend on locality, specialism and personality.
Recommendations Actioned

1. The structure of the Department delayered with the removal of two management layers.

2. There was significant delegation of responsibility to a newly created District Care Manager. This included all social work activities and also all budgetary responsibility.

3. The highly segregated functional structure which existed was reduced to geographical teams where there was a high level of discretion in the allocation of work across a geographical area rather than a specialist function.

4. There was considerable effort by senior managers to reduce the level of separation between senior managers and frontline staff. A newsletter was created, a regular meeting of senior staff and frontline staff was achieved via quarterly roadshows and there was more visibility of the Director in local teams through visiting offices.

5. Debrief meetings were designed to reflect on court cases and this added reflection to particularly difficult events.

7. The Best Value process created in essence project teams which did cross-fertilise across the Children's Services on particular Best Value Reviews.

8. There was a series of management meetings established which regularly reviewed practice and service delivery on a weekly basis for senior managers and on a monthly basis for senior and middle managers. This inclusive model was designed to ensure that all parts of the organisation were working in harmony.

9. Training was offered on critical skills analysis and on supervisory skills to address the issue of organisational defensiveness and to enhance the reflective skills of both individuals and supervisors.

10. The government initiative of Quality Protects established clear shared values between senior managers and frontline staff and this was widely disseminated. This government document in essence did assist the creation of this shared value approach.

11. Although the creation of a learning strategy had not been fully achieved there has been a much wider use of the language of learning within the organisation. This has also been reflected by government documents which encourage a learning organisation approach.

12. Induction courses have been established on a regular basis for all members of staff. This was initiated by Children's Services then taken over by the Social Service Department as a whole. This however has not satisfied the need for a Children's Service induction and there has been a supplementary programme to ensure that mental models into the children's department are established and understood.
13. The considerable developments in technology between 1995 and 2000 has firstly brought the demands of new skills but has offered an opportunity to manage performance and to disseminate a high level of accurate information.

**Comment – 1995 Study**

In 1995 there were 88 respondents. These were made up of 25 managers, 31 qualified social workers, 17 unqualified workers and 16 staff who worked in the residential services. Of these 88 respondents all managers and qualified workers were professionally certificated practitioners as were three staff in the residential services. Of this 55 personnel, 11 manager and 13 social workers held first degrees. At the time of this study there was limited encouragement for training of unqualified workers and so there was for example no NVQ strategy. These staff had a range of vocational courses such as NNEB but there lacked consistency.

Between 1995 and 2000 a number of factors effected the respondent profile. Firstly there was a reduction of the management layers. This and retirement had reduced the managerial numbers. By 2000 11 managers had left, the 14 managers who remained were surveyed. Of this latter group 7 had first degrees, 4 of the ten managers who left had first degrees. By 2000, 18 of the 31 qualified social workers had left, of the remaining 13 staff, 6 had first degrees. In the unqualified group 13 out of the 17 workers had left the organisation and further, of the 16 residential staff 10 had left and 6 remained.

The respondents in 1995 had significant experience. Table 1:2 shows the length of time this group of staff had worked within this department.

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<tr>
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a = those who remained in the department at 2000
b = those who by 2000 had left the department

Table 1:2 Length of time 1995 respondents had worked in this organisation.
The data in 1995 shows that of 88 respondents 51 had left and 37 remained. Of this the manager group was the only group where more staff remained than left. It is particularly of note the high numbers of unqualified workers who had left the organisation. It is also of note the societal difficulties and how this impacts on the difficulties in recruiting qualified staff.

In the 2000 study there were 136 respondents. This increase is reflected in the surveying of all district teams and managers as well as specialist services – in this intervening time two features had occurred, firstly the delayering of managers, which had then been overtaken with significant growth in 1998 in budgets after the 1997 election. This growth had been focussed on increasing frontline staff both qualified and unqualified.

The significant change in the intervening period between 1995 and 2000 has in many ways led to some dramatic reaction within the organisation and the culture of the department has been severely disrupted. This disruption has been caused firstly by the initial facing of redundancies in 1995 as the result of a significant budget reduction and then by growth in 1998 with the increase of staff members of the children's team. This change created an air of wariness among staff and clearly the children's department facing redundancies for this first time was a new challenge to the organisation, managers and staff.

The consequence therefore of delayering was personally traumatic for those concerned but also had the inevitable effect on contemporaries and long-term colleagues. It also however had the contrary and beneficial effect that the next layer 'down' within the organisational hierarchy in essence received promotion through the new key organisational role as a District Care Managers.

The creation of a management board for Children's Services had the aim to manage the service area via mechanisms similar to that of the business sector. The slow creep of these influences at this time occurred fairly unnoticed. This along with the change within government expectations of performance targets has inevitably meant a significant cultural shift from 1995 to 2000.

It was evident through the study of 1995 that there were two outstanding matters. Firstly that the techniques to assess and learn within an organisation were relatively unsophisticated and although there was some work in regard to learning organisations and organisational learning this was still very much developing. It was secondly noted that the understanding of learning within the public sector was limited and those settings
tended to use techniques which were associated with the private sector. It is clearly argued here that these methods although useful, do not take on the particular context in which the organisation operates especially that of the environment and the political dimension.

It was with this in mind that in 1995 the recommendation was that there were different and inventive ways in which to look at influences and knowledge and then the consequence of that for managers in how they manage those sources of influence. It was then that the 2000 study developed, aiming at firstly identifying those influences and secondly considering how they could be managed.

**Conclusions**

The purpose of this chapter has been to set the scene for this PhD from three different perspectives. Firstly it outlined the academic parameters within which this study operates, secondly it described organisational context which has developed and thirdly presented the foundations from which the 2000 study emerged. It has outlined the progress of the PhD from the initial analysis of what organisational learning is, why organisations consider learning as a competitive force and how they try to create a learning organisation and manage knowledge. The longitudinal nature of this PhD has necessitated a description of the 1995 study and how this was where the embryonic thinking of a new approach was formed. The range and amount of change which has taken place will now be presented and the development of a model which could have utility for managers will be explored.
Chapter 2

Learning – Knowing Beyond

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the analysis of organisational learning. To do this, individual, group and organisational learning processes will be explored and the academic advice, as to how such learning can be enhanced, will be noted. The aim is to highlight the complex and often voluntary nature of knowledge sharing. Learning is a key issue for managers to understand if they are to explain and utilise behaviour in the workplace and maximise the organisation’s intellectual capacity.

Learning – Individual Perspective

Psychologists, in their quest for understanding the human phenomena, have considered individuals from a variety of different perspectives in order to determine how people learn and what factors influence that process. There is a wide range of theoretical perspectives; a selection of the most relevant to this study will be noted here.

Stimulus-Response Theory

Stimulus-Response theorists are influential when considering how individuals’ behaviour is affected by stimuli. Pavlov’s (1927) experimentation with dogs led to an understanding of classic conditioning. In Pavlov’s experiment a dog, when a light was switched on, salivated. The dog’s association with light, a neutral stimulus, was that feeding would occur. Food in itself therefore did not become the only stimulus but another factor, in simple terms this is learnt behaviour.

Fincham & Rhodes (1992) recognise that in conditioning processes there are two important features present – generalisation and discrimination. Generalisation is a similar response to similar stimuli and can be helpful in simplifying the complex world. Discrimination on the other hand is responding differently to similar stimuli for example a young child recognising its father from other males.

Increasingly, the intricacies and subtleties of stimuli-response, in relation to adult learners and how they react to work and their environments, is important. As with all things, the negative aspect of learning and response can lead to adverse reactions such as phobia or avoidance behaviour. A severe trauma, for example a violent incident, can debilitate
that staff member in future settings unless, of course, the response behaviour is 'unlearned' and the pattern of avoidance, or fearful behaviour, broken. These patterns which, as Evison & Horobin (1983) explain, are rooted in formative early experiences are conditioned by past feelings and behaviours and are unresponsive to new or altering situations. Distress at incidents, unless the situation is recognised, can continue to elicit subsequent, possibly inappropriate behaviours to the detriment of others and the organisation.

One can extrapolate from this, that classic conditioning has a profound effect on performance and response within the organisation. There is, as well as the result of practice events and stimuli which create a positive and negative response, the key issue of management and internal organisational style. Staff reactions to supervisors can be conditioned either to the organisation's benefit or detriment.

Skinner's (1954) operant theory however emphasises how the environment shapes individual behaviour by either encouraging similar responses or suppressing them. Operant conditioning is about what occurs after the response. Skinner terms this reinforcement. Positive reinforcement occurs after a pleasant stimuli-response. Praise after a difficult job will increase the likelihood of repetition. Praise can also elicit other responses such as loyalty to the superior who is praising the individual. Negative reinforcement is the reduction of the unpleasant response. This produces, according to Finchman & Rhodes (1992), two types of learning, 'escape and avoidance'. Here giving in or acting passively is a good example of avoiding something worse or perceived as worse. Adverse conditions, either consciously or unconsciously, result in avoidance. The avoidance in itself may be perceived as positive and so reinforce the adverse condition. Autocratic leadership can lead to subordinates, through fear, working twice as hard; perversely this can lead to the leader thinking that their style is positive.

Skinner's (1954) final two categories are punishment and omission. Punishment being the response of contempt, ridicule, criticism, which in turn leads to avoidance. This is more overt and direct than negative reinforcement and is unlike it as it will not increase the strength of a response rather the opposite. Omission occurs by the removal of the pleasant stimulus like removing a treat when a child behaves badly.

According to Skinner, reward is a more powerful stimuli than punishment, thus good behaviour is reinforced. This has important implications for management style where positive interaction, rewarded by, for example, praise, is more positively lasting and enduring than punishment. It is not possible to reinforce every action and indeed to do so may negate the desired behaviours because a lack of reinforcement can lead to positive
behaviour stopping. Instead, it appears that behaviours can be sustained without reinforcement but can noticeably increase performance when intermittent reinforcement occurs. This does again have the effect on management reinforcement of subordinates and vice versa. Luthan & Kneitner (1975) closely associate operant principles and organisational behaviour. They suggest that there should be an identification of the responses necessary for effective performance and recognition of the rates at which critical behaviours occur.

Seilgman (1975) underlines within organisational behaviour the importance of not creating 'learned helplessness' on the part of the individuals. This is the avoidance of creating situations which do not link events experienced by the individuals with their behaviour. This is particularly of interest to this study when considering the segmentation of work and the possible result that practitioners do not see the impact of their actions or the impact of others' actions on themselves. This in turn can lead to denial of one's own actions and their impact or transference of blame to others.

The principles of contiguity and contingency apply where, the bigger the gap between the behaviour and reinforcement, the less influence there is on changing behaviours. The reinforcement whether negative or positive becomes less important with time. Time delay therefore is likely to influence levels of effectiveness of reinforcing behaviours.

Skill Theory

The development of cognitive theory suggests that the stimuli response model is too simplistic. Crossman & Cooke (1962) found that beyond this relationship can come experience where if an action is repeated it may be instilled and established in the individual as a mental model. In turn, this may mean the individual can predict and interrupt the stimuli-response and alter the response.

Finchman & Rhodes (1992:33) explain that people actively develop models of the systems and events with which they interact, "in other words, individuals do not respond directly to the environment as stimuli response theories assume, but to the models they construct of it". Observers have called this model making SKILL this is the less obvious aspect of learning and should not be confused with the wider use of this term in every day language.

Improvement in performance therefore can be altered by the change in the models people possess of the systems with which they interact. Gibson (1968) offers depth of analysis of the developmental stages which allow the creation of the processing, retention and cross referencing of information from different perceptual systems'. The complexity
of information becomes reduced through categorisation and selectivity so that individuals choose a response from less information: skilled workers and experts, for example, need less information than students to determine a response. Gibson (1968:320) explains that "perceptual development and perceptual learning are seen as a process of distinguishing the features of a rich input.... a perceptual system hunts for a state of what we call 'clarity' ".

Skills theorists propose skills have two dimensions horizontal and vertical. Horizontal being where time creates a macro-cognitive ability to select responses in order and timing to match the circumstance. Unskilled workers thus have so much information that response can be confused. The vertical relates to the conscious awareness of responses. Thus behaviours become 'sub-routine' and so well learned as to be automatic. The significance of this automated response is important when considering 're-atomising it into new sub-routines'. One can see where learning new skills can take time because of unlearning old ones and instilling new patterns.

Cognitive Styles Theory

Cognitive Theory is summed up by Hilgard & Bower (1966) as having a number of principles. First, amongst those is the central feature of 'perception'. The 'dependent' variable being, as Hill (1997:113) explains, "largely peoples' descriptions and interpretations of what they saw or heard". This 'information processing' theory is the study of how we "convert information from stimuli to interpretation of what we are perceiving – what it means". Hilgard secondly listed the principle of 'the organisation of knowledge' enabling the move from a simplified holistic approach to a more complex understanding. Learning is also 'centrally relative' within cognitive theory as is cognitive feedback which acknowledges and confirms appropriate and correct knowledge and alters faulty learning. This is very similar to stimuli-response theory but cognitive theory, according to Hilgard & Bower, tests out more the hypotheoretical issue through feedback processes. Finally 'goal-setting' motivates learning and measures success or failure.

Cognitive Style, is how individuals gather, process and evaluate information and is generally accepted as the preferred way of performing particular actions in response to a situation. According to Hayes & Allinson (1998), it influences how the interpretation of information, from whatever source, is integrated into the individual's mental model and actions. Hayes & Allinson suggest that there are individuals who repeatedly succeed in whatever job or task because of their continued ability to transfer this processing of information to whatever setting and whatever new input. Streufert and Nogami (1989) put this down to a 'personality' where regardless of the situation, individuals' common
response to how they perceive and process information and subsequently act, will ensure success. Failure is where the ability to identify the need for new skills means change occurs but the processing of information has not kept up with that change.

Of course the 'situation' that individuals find themselves in can demand different types of style and this may be why individual styles are often grouped in certain organisations. The auditor's cognitive style for example may differ widely from the crisis orientated emergency services. The two types of processing information are where the former has the need for laborious detail and the latter a quick reactive approach to the situation presented. One can see that to swap these individuals in their roles could not only create difficulty in performance but increase stress and personal discomfort. This is particularly of interest in an organisational context where often individuals progress from say being a professional teacher to becoming a manager or head teacher. The need, then, to learn not only new skills but to take on possibly new organisational cognitive style requirements, e.g. budgets, accounting etc, is present.

Streufert & Nogami (1989) identify, the need for adaptability using preferred style plus other styles, as to take on tasks or jobs that are in line with a preferred style solely, could lead to lack of flexibility and rejection or lack of identification of the new. Here is of course where organisations can balance preferred styles of individuals when planning their human resource input. Allinson & Hayes (1996) note that there are lateral groupings that can demonstrate flexibility and cognitive style and these are mostly in leadership roles where there is not only style associated with leadership but with the organisational type and with the need to adapt cognitive style to suit the new requirements of the senior post.

Learning Styles Theory

Experiential Learning is a further theoretical perspective which considers how everyday processes are constructed in a certain way. Experiential learning, according to Usher (1993:169) is a “body of knowledge about learning from experience, based on constituting experience as a form of knowledge”. The process of learning from experience becomes a systematic practice which properly analyses rather than simply relays an event which has just occurred.

Kolb (1984:38) defines this as “the process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience”. This then is not about gaining information or indeed transmitting it but is the process by which the content and the experience interacts in a way which transforms or changes both content and the experience. Learning styles emerge as a preferred method by which individuals process such experiences and ultimately react to them.
Hayes & Allinson (1998) consider learning styles as a sub category of cognitive style and a good example of how individual preferences can be exampled. Schmeck (1988) suggests that if individuals use the same strategies (behaviour) to address different situations then this in essence is the use of their style. Schmeck (1988) suggests two influences affect behaviour, a person's own profile (experience, cognitive style) and the situation in which the behaviour occurs. The focus in 'style' is on the behaviour that these two influences create.

The range of work completed on learning styles indicates it is a fertile area of academic work. Writers such as Kogan (1976) and Dryden & Vos (2001) with different views reflect the debate between the active and the reflective styles, the detail approach and the holistic or global. Three writers will be illustrated here to develop the issue of learning styles.

Kolb (1984), for example, considered that there were two dynamics to learning styles perceiving and processing. Thus he categorised people into divergers, assimilators, convergers and accommodators as shown in Figure 2:1.

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<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
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<tr>
<td>DIVERGERS</td>
<td>INFORMATION CONCRETE PROCESS REFLECTIVE</td>
<td>GENERALISE</td>
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<td>ASSIMILATORS</td>
<td>IDEA ABSTRACTION PROCESS REFLECTIVE</td>
<td>THINK AND WATCH</td>
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<td>CONVERGERS</td>
<td>ABSTRACT EXPERIENCE PROCESS ACTIVELY</td>
<td>EXPERIMENTATION</td>
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<td>ACCOMODATORS</td>
<td>CONCRETE EXPERIENCE PROCESS ACTIVELY</td>
<td>FEELERS AND DOERS</td>
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Figure 2:1 Kolb (1984:7) Styles Categorisation Process (adapted)

Lessem (1991) on the other hand lists seven learning styles linked with seven stages in a learning cycle which he explains grow and develop as one's own natural style is consolidated. Thus there is a deepening and broadening of that preferred approach. Lessem (1991) argues that each learning experience, in order to be valid, has to go through the learning cycle as shown in Figure 2:2.
The importance is to identify one's style preference and then to be aware of the positives and negatives associated with it. Thus one can enhance the positive and counter the negative. Belbin's (1981) work on individual team member types is similar in the identification of different members' approaches, emphasising the value in selection of complementary learning types to the balance of the whole.

Honey & Mumford (1992) detail four learning styles, **ACTIVISTS**, **REFLECTORS**, **THEORISTS** and **PRAGMATISTS**. These writers note that effective learning can be contributed to by the understanding and use of the learning styles of individuals. They base their model on Kolb's Cycle of Learning which is shown in Figure 2:3

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**Figure 2:2 The Learning Cycle.**

**Figure 2:3 Learning Styles in Relation to Kolb's Learning Cycle**
The matching of the individual's learning style to the learning experience, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness from that experience, is at the heart of Honey & Mumford's (1992) work. This allows for increased matching of activities to the dominant style, Honey & Mumford (1992) explain, thus avoiding inappropriate experiences, identifying areas where the learning process can be improved, and developing specific skills improvement needed. Honey & Mumford's (1992) version of the learning cycle and its link with learning styles indicates its use across both the organisational and individual activities. They suggest that fault lies when this cycle is interrupted by too much concentration on one part of the cycle. Thus two little time can be spent, for example, on thinking and reflection. It is important therefore to balance the cycle to make it a complete learning experience.

Adult Learning

The subject of adult learning is wide and complex and not the focus for detailed study here. However, its complexity is noted, as is the difficulty to develop from the issues of adult learning, an understanding of organisational effectiveness. Historically adult learning has its many tentacles rooted in a variety of theoretical disciplines. These range from the psychological, sociological, social psychological and philosophical disciplines and how they influence the debate around adult education and adult learning.

Adult learning theorists attempted to offer an integrated framework on which to present adult learning theory and from these developments emerged andragogical theory which is explained in detail by Knowles et al (1998:64). Knowles et al explains that the andragogical model is based on six assumptions in relation to adults, how and why they learn. Firstly 'the need to know' where the adult has become or needs to become convinced of the gap between current knowledge and that which is needed. This is very evident in the social care field where for example Sheldon & MacDonald (1999) outline the level of reluctant learning and an unconvinced population of staff leading to a low updating on learning. Secondly 'the learner's self-concept' where there is potential conflict between the need for the adult to be self-directing and 'independent' yet in the educational learning setting, past educational conditions exist where the adult reverts to 'dependent' (teacher-pupil) relationships. This is particularly interesting, in social care, at a time when government is demanding upgrading of all social work qualifications via a taught training route. One can see the possible conflicts of not only self-direction versus dependant learning but the imposed element of having to learn. Knowles et al thirdly notes the 'role of the learners experiences' and the fact that this, on the one hand, encourages an individualistic approach to learning to develop learning from experience and on the other hand challenges the habits, biases and prejudices that may have arisen.
out of repeated and singular experiences. Fourthly the 'readiness to learn' is important in order to capitalise on the adult's openness and willingness to undertake the learning. This can be helped by, for example exposing adults to others with superior knowledge where the adult can recognise that superiority and thus increase their 'readiness'. Knowles' et al's fifth assumption is that of adults 'orientation to learning'. This practical application of learning is about real-life situations and can often be seen in adult's desire to 'learn on the job' or to see new learning as it relates to what they do. Finally Knowles et al notes 'motivation where this links with either explicit or implicit structures'. This integrated theoretical framework of andragogy relies on adults recognising the need to learn and having some decision making potential in that process. It also depends on the relevance to their situation and the perceived benefits that will arise from that learning opportunity. Other writers offer alternative approaches.

Mumford (1990) offers a different perspective via the diagrammatic illustration of influences on adult learning as shown in Figure 2:4.

![Figure 2:4 Influences on Learning](Source: Mumford (1990:62) – Management Development)

Knox' (1977) work supports this when he explains learning varies greatly between individuals depending on mix of skills, attitudes, knowledge and the learning context. Knox (1977) further suggests that Ability, Approach, Processing and Thinking in the
learning context is important to understand. Thus age, educational level, positive approach based on experience, attention to information, memory, practice or rehearsal skills, prior learning, achievement, all reinforce the learning process. It is interesting that with the diversity that the above inevitably creates, organisations often have only one method by which to disseminate information, take on new innovations, and learn from errors.

Learning in organisations can potentially be enhanced when there is a conscious effort to harness the profiles of staff. Knox (1977) suggests activities can be designed to expand the enabling features rather than the disabling; that existing cognitive structures based on prior learning can be used; that individuals learn best at their own pace and preferred style thus resources should be fashioned to a more individualistic model. Knox confirms that feedback enhances learning thus evaluation is important.

Of course in order to understand learning there has to be some acknowledgement that learning can have different degrees. Kim (1993) terms this the 'know how' and the 'know why', the former being operationally based the latter conceptual. Schmeck (1988) differentiates learning into 'surface' and 'deep'. Again the former meaning the literal reproduction which is often associated with parts rather than the whole. 'Deep' learning is however more associated with 'communicative intent' this leading to interpretation and ultimately achieving Maslow's (1987) self-actualisation. The importance of not only learning the activity but what is behind and beyond that activity is crucial and is reflected in the work of Senge (1990) in his analysis of superficial versus the consideration of structures behind an event and leading to what Herriot & Pemberton (1995) terms 'Knowing Beyond'.

Negativity in Individual Learning

The analysis of the individual perspectives of learning shows the importance of stimuli and response, skill information, and the use of learning styles. These three are snapshots of the variety of different psychological theories in regard to individual learning.

The negative consequences of learning from an individual perspective are clearly key when there has been a situation which leads to avoidance of embarrassment or threat. A negative response to stimuli thus elicits from an individual, behaviours which try to interrupt and protect the individual from painful experiences.

There is another aspect, however, which will be explored here: the issue of the organisational setting which can elicit behaviours which in themselves are inappropriate. The individual can copy behaviour but cannot determine what is good practice and what
is bad, e.g. a student who models a poor supervisor. Discrimination therefore has not been able to occur appropriately because of lack of knowledge and lack of learning. Negative behaviour can be instilled within the individual and the organisation and maintained until those behaviours are challenged by another. This challenge can often lead to resistance and conflict. Learned behaviour therefore is not always positive and organisations in considering individual learning should be aware that prior learning experiences can lead to negative reactions which in themselves become established mental models. Changing a mental model therefore in such circumstances is not only challenging the mind set but also implying fault and error. Tsang (1997) acknowledge this need for 'reprogramming' of personnel through 'unlearning'. Cook & Yanow (1993) note that learning in itself does not always increase performance or improve practice. The contention, understandably, is that the learning or knowledge acquired must be accurate.

Tsang (1997:78) also notes the issue of time, or lack of it, as a significant factor in "achieving accurate learning.... Nowadays organisations face an increasingly complex and fast changing environment". The clear ability therefore to see cause and effect and to learn appropriately from that experience becomes questionable. This is particularly interesting in a public sector organisational context where such rapid and extensive organisational change is heightened by the fact that these are 'new' skills and demands on the previously slow and laborious bureaucracy.

**Learning – A Group Perspective**

Humans are social animals and social psychologists have researched the inter-personal and inter-dependent relations of humans. Families, socialisation into teams, and then employment all shows a social side of humans and the source of learning potential that they are. Bandura's (1977:vii) social learning theory gives an explanation of how people learn from other people. Bandura notes that this theory "emphasises the predominant roles played by vicarious, symbolic and self-regulatory processes in psychological functioning". What in practice does this theory propose? Firstly Bandura is concerned with how individuals 'model' or 'imitate' others behaviour, this goes beyond copying behaviour, to wanting to be like the other person, this is called 'identification'. One can see how powerful and pervasive this can be. This modelling can also, according to Hill (1997), include 'inhibition' and 'disinhibition'. The former assists individuals in deciding when to use behaviour by observing others. The latter occurring when other behaviour disinhibits one from acting in the acceptable way — yob behaviour is cited as a good example of 'group pressure' to act against the norm. Bandura & Walters (1963) also suggest limitation can 'elicit' already learned responses from others, these are positive
although sometimes automatic responses to the stimuli of others' behaviour. Here rewards and reinforcement will make a difference to the repetition of the imitation but this doesn't need to be overt, Bandura (1977) terms this 'vicarious reinforcement'.

Such observational learning is achieved, according to Bandura (1977:23), through "attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivational processes". In essence this means that while accurately attending to the observation selectivity occurs as total replication would be well nigh impossible. Bandura explains that much of this attention will be referenced by how often the modelling or association occurs with the same 'model' and in the same or similar circumstances. Retention is the remembering of this imitated behaviour and its repetition, here memory and symbolic attachment occurs. Reproduction on the other hand is where this symbolic representation is transmitted into appropriate actions and finally, motivational processes within social learning theory is where the modelled behaviour has perceived benefits or is considered valuable by the individual.

Social learning theory vicariously observes and copies behaviour of others – this is often seen by those who copy leadership style and behaviour, associating success and actions. The self-regulatory nature of this theory places with the individual the discrimination to copy or not and such discrimination is often linked with perceived 'reward' whether explicit or implicit.

Modelling behaviours, sharing experiences, supporting the extension of the individual are all central to human development. Teams essentially combine and integrate efforts to a common aim. Leavitt (1989) notes that the diminishing of the church, the village and the extended family leaves a vacuum of 'unsatisfied belongingness' and membership. Organisational groups can fill that gap to be social and to learn from each other. Leavitt (1989) considers the importance of groups as a fundamental building block acknowledging that groups seem to be good for people, providing wider opportunities of support when under stress. Groups appear to be useful when co-ordination is important and when complex issues are addressed. They can effectively assist in increasing innovation, development of ideas and increase of employee ownership for progress and development.

A Managerial Tool

The team, as a mechanism, has been used by the organisations as a way of organising activities and dividing labour in a manageable way. In addition, as Tjosvold (1992) explains they foster communication and integrate effort. The result being the combination
of specialist knowledge and experience developing unified solutions to work, thus accommodating a variety of different views. Teams contain the ability to integrate members into the organisation, especially new members and can be a mechanism of control of individuals and can aid in the achievement of change. Lessem (1991) in Figure 2:5 offers a list of team functions as they relate to learning and integration.

PROMOTING

DEVELOPING

ADVISING

JOINING

ORGANISING

MAINTAINING

PRODUCING

INSPECTING

Figure 2:5 Team Functions

The Group – a Community of Learning

Tsoukas (1994) maintains that learning is closely associated with the conditions in which the learning is accomplished. He goes on to explain that rather than this being individually based and objective it is the result of the ability to behave as a member of ‘a community’. Jordan (1989) supports this by her analysis of midwifery and the importance of accumulating and appreciating community appropriate stories. Work place learning, according to Tsoukas, is about communities, or groups, to be joined and to participate in.

Tsoukas notes how this, in effect, moves the learning process into the situations where learning occurs. Lave and Wenger (1991:176) argue that "learning, understanding and interpretation" are not necessarily about the explicit or implicit but about the "critical communal context" it is framed within. The learning therefore of all the codes within the group is as important as the activity itself.

Learning traditionally has been rooted, almost exclusively in the psychological field but increasingly, as highlighted by Easterby-Smith (1997) learning has also become associated with sociological theory and in turn, organisational theory. The sociological perspective focuses on the social aspects of learning and from this perspective has developed the communities-in-practice approach where individual learning is seen very much as not solely a personal issue, but influenced by 'situated' learning social aspects and shared activities, debates and approach. Writers such as Augoustinos & Walker (1995), even though based in a psychological grouping, like many similar psychological
writers recognises the importance of the contextual influence on individual learning processes.

Lave & Wenger (1991) propose the framework of communities-in-practice where there is recognition that adults, especially those in a work situation, learn in a multiple of different ways in relation to the situation they find themselves in and the relationships associated with that. Lave & Wenger (1991) suggest that such social interactions linked with activity reflects significantly on the learning processes of an individual and in essence converts this experience from individual to a multiple or group process.

Lave & Wenger (1991:56) interestingly suggest these group relationships are a complex of triadic dynamics. The "old timers/masters" "young masters/foreigners" and "apprentices/newcomers". Here newcomers contribute to the learning as they themselves are undertaking work, therefore the traditional teacher/student dynamic is made redundant and a more mutual dynamic replaces it. This is particularly of interest in a professional setting where 'newcomers' may be qualified but not experienced thus contributing on the one hand but learning from the 'masters', the more experienced, on the other. As the newcomers become more experienced they themselves become more respected and contribute differently to the learning 'community' of the group. This is arguably regularly a process occurring in teams especially where the individual in their own right has been deemed, through qualification, to have reached a certain learnt 'standard'. In an organisation such as Social Services the individual professional is supported into the organisation through supervision. Thus as Fox (2000:856) explains "novices progress through specific 'details', under close supervision, building up a repertoire of discrete competences". Brown & Duguid (1991) outline how this community is but one and that in organisations there are communities of communities-in-practice. These communities of course are not only local (in the terms of location of community) but lateral (across gradings) and linear (in specialist areas). They may further be, as Brown & Duguid explain, formal canonical and informal, recognised by the organisation or ignored by the organisation.

Organisational learning has been associated closely with a cognitive approach where according to Elkjaer (1999) it is more closely linked with a social interaction through communities-in-practice. Elkjaer acknowledges that humans are programmed to learn right from the beginning. They are born into a socialisation system which demands of them a transfer of information in order that they can operate within their network of either the family or community. The community is clearly part of assisting the new entrant to learn the organisational mental models whilst also an active vehicle for new ideas and growth. According to Elkjaer (1999:80) this social constructivist approach to learning is in
Reflection of events within teams is no less significant than with individuals. Tjosvold (1991) argues that the team organisational model provides a framework for such reflection. The fact that reflection and learning becomes the team norm rather than individually focused allows it to be 'proceduralised', installed in the mutual understanding of members and created as an expectation to examine team and individual behaviour. Senge (1990:236) claims "if teams learn, they become a microcosm for learning throughout the organisation". Further if these units do not learn the organisation cannot, because they assist in aligning disparate individuals in a common direction for the whole benefit.

Controversy and Dialogue – How groups learn

Tjosvold (1991) suggests that 'controversy' is critical to groups to explore issues and to make decisions. Controversy allows opposing views to be aired honestly and in turn allows elaboration of position, search for new information and ideas and then possibly the integration of what appears to be opposing views. Thus close-mindedness is reduced, inadequate evaluation eliminated and the problem simplified with a group confidence to support it. Figure 2:6 shows the dynamics of controversy according to Tjosvold (1991).

Figure 2:6 Dynamics of controversy

Tjosvold (1991) emphasises the importance of controversy as long as it is constructive in stimulating intellectual and emotional positives. The result is higher morale and strengthened working relationships if joint solutions are found. Avoiding controversy, of course, is perhaps more simple, in the short term. It may be that group members wish to
avoid challenge or the fear of being seen as wrong or naïve. There may also be present internalised values which restrict and avoid any controversial new ideas. Disagreement may be seen as anti the team norm. Risks in a situation of open controversy can be high and of course memories can be long. This is especially so when relationships within the team are not cemented but superficial in nature. As Argyris & Schon (1978) explain, failure to deal with controversy is suppressed to the extent that it becomes 'undiscussable'. Controversy therefore demands open-mindedness, the ability and capability to discuss and consider different perspectives, and to change and alter existing mind sets. Otherwise, sub-cultures in groups can undermine the process by subversive action outside the formal process.

The key to learning according to Senge (1990:241) is 'dialogue' but this dialogue is based on the discarding of ingrained assumptions and the establishing of genuine sharing, “in dialogue individuals gain insights that simply cannot be achieved individually”. This is turn allows deeper insights to be discovered that the individual, on his or her own, cannot achieve. The emphasis on dialogue and discussion is made firstly to listen and explore other views and to defend and debate one's own thus “in dialogue people become observers of their own thinking” Senge (1990:242).

Seeing each other as equals allows positive dialogue and consensus is built from “the larger poll of common meaning accessible only to the group” Senge (1990:240). Here, is either an 'opening up' to various approaches or a 'focussing down'. The latter creating common ground and the former individual perspectives in a "larger reality".

Senge (1990) and other writers recognise the importance of conflict to team learning and it is viewed as a reliable indicator that the team is actually learning. If however the characteristics of polarity of view or suppressed conflict exist or are denied then team learning will not flourish as the underlying agendas in the team dominate. Communication skills are clearly important and as Ends & Page (1977) note should have five features: honesty, openness, constructiveness, adultness and respect. Team learning therefore is a special type of skill that in itself needs to be acquired and learned.

Casey (1993) notes the importance of the process by which groups operate which enables the capturing of self analysis and the objective interjection from others. Groups will need to allow for subjectivity whilst aiming to reach an objective conclusion. Subjectivity allows the emotion to be recognised and contained, for example fear or threat, but this is only possible if a group is established to deal with such issues. An interesting example in Children's Services is the acknowledgement of stress in child protection – where acknowledging personal feelings of threat or distress can easily be
confined under the ‘professionalism’ banner. To accept distress however may benefit the whole group.

Casey (1993) underlines the close association with risk, experimentation and learning. It may be, he suggests, not easy to take those risks with known groups in the organisation. It might be implied from that, that groups set up and sanctioned by the organisation could be controlling and repressive mechanisms. The corollary to this of course is that confidence can elicit more risky behaviours and that the established group can encourage this as the norm.

Groups can be very powerful and as Blackler & McDonald (2000) explain, this power lies within the group process and their ability to operate as a 'collective mind'. This is particularly interesting as Blackler & McDonald completed their research in a healthcare organisation where the familiar boundaries of professional groupings was loosened and less aligned because of the multidisciplinary nature of current teams and tasks. The concept of shared mental models is more challenging in this setting because of different organisation culture and occupational background.

Teams – the downside

West (1994), quoting De Geus (1988) & Senge (1990) add their concern that teams can hamper and restrict learning just as easily as they can enhance it. This inhibiting of learning results in the aggregate performance diminishing rather than being increased. This, according to De Geus (1988) can be a result of institutionalised learning being more difficult to mobilise than individual learning thus teams block the learning experience. Teams can also create their own 'defence routine' which results in complacency and inertia. Problems become hidden because these routines are so strong, as De Geus (1988) explains, these may defend the team against change where paradoxically the real defence is to be a learning team and to develop.

This cautionary note on teams must also include, as Leavitt (1989) suggests, an acknowledgement of other dangers. They can create their own power centres, they can be unjust to those who deviate from the group’s desired norm, they can rather than enhance diversity, eliminate individuality by pursuing co-operation. Intra-group rivalry can be exacerbated by inter-group allegiances. Leadership can also be confused between the group leader and the organisational leader, thus the organisation can become highly politicised and different sources of power and influence conflict.

Janis (1972) confirms this in his studies on 'Groupthink' where he found eight symptoms present that need to be avoided. These include the perception of illusion of
invulnerability, rationale is so strong that warnings can be ignored and collective rationale created. Stereo-types can be perpetuated; self-censorship can result in the control of those expressing dissent or misgivings, and unanimity can appear to be present when it is not. 'Mind-guards' can also be created to protect the leader's view and group morality is assumed and not questioned.

The establishing of groups in themselves therefore does not mean learning can occur. However, Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1995) note that research shows people understand and learn more completely if discussion, and a rich exchange is present and joint learning occurs.

Organisational Learning

Organisational learning, as with individuals, means the change of behaviour, only in this instance the organisational behaviour. Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992) see this as a 'collective learning process'. Such a process is the interaction in and through people within the organisational setting. Kim (1993) agrees that organisations can only learn through its individuals but it is not automatic that if an individual learns then the organisation also does, therefore "individual learning is a necessity but not a sufficient condition for organisational learning" Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992:33).

The concept of organisational learning is the spreading of the improved or changed individual behaviour throughout the company as a whole and as a result all members' behaviours are altered. This therefore is "mutual behavioural change and therefore mutual learning" Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992:33).

The reliance of the organisation on individuals to learn is noted but, the guarantee of that being transferred into the group or the organisational learning and collective competence is not reliable. Conversely, the group's and organisation's growth can be significantly more than one individual can achieve. The art therefore lies in how the group and the organisation utilise individual learning to the maximum potential of the whole through an interactional process.

Antonacopoulou (1999:219) suggests that organisations can address this by considering how "individuals construct realities within their organisation" particularly concentrating on how learning informs attitudes and understanding. Antonacopoulou is more interested in what encourages individuals to be 'willing' to learn in the organisational context and what restricts them. Thus the individual motivational issues, which are mostly rooted in a psychological approach, are balanced with the need to consider the social constraints
within the organisation. This results in Antonacopoulou's categorisation of mathiaphobia (negative) and philomathia (positive) attitudes of individuals to the need to learn. Because these categorisations are "situation-specific" each individual may react differently to the same situation depending on their attitude. Thus learning ability becomes less crucial than the "educational reasoning" of the individual towards learning. Antonacopoulou (1999) further suggests the mathiaphobic (negative) attitude creates a risk-adverse learner who is restricted by the confines of the process whilst those individuals with a philomathic (positive) attitude are active learners who are receptive to learning opportunities and self-development.

The important aspect here is that the individual and the situation (control) are both open to change and to development and that the key to the learning organisation is the creation of learning managers and individuals who are self-aware, emotionally competent, creative, inquisitive and of course highly receptive. Antonacopoulou (1999) in demonstrating her hypothesis, emphasises the significance of the interdependence between individual and organisational issues and the 'dialectic' nature of the relationship.

"In essence, individual learning within organisations is influenced by organisations and produces reactions/phenomena (e.g. mathiaphobia and philomathia) which could effect the organisation beyond processes or activities which could be influenced to as 'learning'" Antonacopoulou (1999:238). Therefore cautious, safe learners may in fact be a reaction to the organisation's desire to have less risk laden behaviour and the learning attitude of individuals reflecting such adversity. This is particularly interesting when considering a public sector organisation and the individual reaction within the organisation situation.

Jones & Hendry (1992) describe organisational learning as having three aspects. Firstly, a shared vision where the creation of organisational mental models occurs. Secondly, the unlocking of hidden knowledge within the organisational setting extending the collective knowledge and skills base and thirdly, better communication structures which not only disseminate information but allow two way communication, dialogue and debate.

Single, double and triple loop learning

Argyris & Schön (1978) suggest that organisational learning occurs in two ways. Firstly, when objectives are achieved; secondly when the outcomes intended have not been achieved and there has been a correction of the mismatch between the intention and the outcome that occurred. This in essence is error. Organisations learn through their individuals and those same individuals are the cause of the organisational error or achievement. This inter-dependence is evidenced in organisational learning where
individuals bring their own values, biases, behaviours and socialisations. Despite this the organisation can create frameworks within which individuals act and operate, find solutions to problems and fashion learning experiences.

Argyris & Schön (1978) terms 'single loop learning' when an error is noted but there is no in depth questioning of values. ‘Double loop learning’ occurs through the altering of underlying value systems. These are noted by Argyris & Schön (1978) as ‘governing variables’, relate to inferred rather than exposed values and are observable through individuals’ actions. Organisational learning therefore does not merely occur where problems are solved but when that problem solving is reproduced. Single loop learning can solve simple, routine issues but double loop learning is necessary in the analysis of "complex, non-programmable issues” Argyris (1992:9). Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992) align single loop learning with ‘rules level’ and agree with Argyris & Schön (1978) that this is not a level that considers ‘insights’ as double loop learning does. This is the ‘why’ stage where questioning occurs collectively in knowledge and understanding.

A practical example can be given which relates to the organisation under study. If there is little tension between the organisation and its environment and the resultant performance, then the likelihood is that the shared mental model, which already exists, will be sustained. This is evident in the public sector where the performance tables are likely to reinforce existing mental models as long as the targets are met. Conversely when the target is not achieved then a higher collective learning occurs because it calls for deep analysis to question whether the existing mental model is sustainable. This is easily exampled in the technical field of childcare and Placement with Parents Regulations. Here the law allows for such an order to be made which gives the Local Authority shared parental responsibility even though the child remains at home. Without traversing the detailed reasons why this may occur, the point here is that the government target nationally for looked after children is significantly lower and therefore more challenging than in reality occurred in most Local Authorities statistics. This called into question the whole ethos of Placement with Parents Regulations, their use and the changing of the collective mental model to adapt to government demand. The aim was to adjust not only behaviour but real understanding as to the change of approach in the authority to reduce the numbers and such orders. Changes associated with double loop learning can also be triggered by major events: change of chief officer, change of government and resultant change in policy, change in the law etc.

Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992) however, develop this debate further by their ‘triple-loop learning’ which they relate to the very question of principles on which an organisation is built. This level is more about ‘will and being’ and may relate, the author suggests, to the
transformationalist's view of organisational change and the development and vision for the organisation. Figure 2:7 shows a Collective Learning Model.

### Becoming a Learning Organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Loop</th>
<th>Learning Area</th>
<th>Learning Level</th>
<th>Learning Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>rules</td>
<td>obligation and permission</td>
<td>improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double</td>
<td>insights</td>
<td>knowledge and Understanding</td>
<td>renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple</td>
<td>principles</td>
<td>courage and will</td>
<td>development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2:7 Organisational Change**

Source: Swieringa and Wierdsma (1992:86) – Becoming a Learning Organisation

This triple loop learning is noted by Hawkins (1991) when he quotes Bateson's Learning Level Three: The Spiritual Dimension. This reflects the intangible view of the organisation's 'very self'.

Torbet (1999:96) acknowledges this alignment with a transformational view and suggests the individual, group or, organisation must "become capable of generating and responding to" not only change in specific behaviour (single loop) but the way the individual strategies, defines and measures practices and outcomes (double loop) but "changing the very quality of one's present awareness, of one's actual visioning" to include "assessing, performing, strategies and visioning". This deep penetrating learning result implies gradual transformation which is sustainable. Figure 2:8 portrays Torbet's diagrammatic interweaving of single and double and triple loop learning.

**Figure 2:8 Enactment and single-, double-, and triple-loop learning across the four territories of experience.**

Argyris & Schon (1978) suggest that the issue of organisational learning is further complicated by the actions of human beings, mainly that their 'espoused theories' and their actions are not congruent. Further when individuals give advice they use their 'espoused theory' and when they act their 'theory-in-use'. These produce an advocacy of views which tries to eliminate enquiry about one's actions and secondly a unilateral desire to 'save face' and to reduce the chances of failure. The importance of identifying the theory-in-use model remains as it can lead to inconsistencies and escalating error and it can inhibit one's ability to enter the double loop learning phase. These defences are automatic. The paradox is complete when Argyris (1992) suggests that these individuals can note the mismatch of espoused theories and actions in others but that 'they withhold feedback' to spare the feelings of others. Organisations in turn feed into this individual's theory-in-use and as a result organisational defence routines are created. Argyris (1992:40) claims these paradoxes and defences are "endemic to the way most organisations are managed". Tsoukas (1994) underlines the importance of organisations in learning to close the gap between the espoused and the actual.

**Systems, Shared Mental Models and Schema**

Both Kim (1993) and Argyris & Schon (1978) place considerable store on the organisation building its learning through a method of shared mental models. Organisations have structures and systems which encapsulate individual schema or belief systems into an organisational schema. Just as an organisation's shared mental model can be positive, it can also stifle and desire the maintenance of the status quo rather than encourage challenge and expression.

Kim's (1993:43) OADI-SMM integrated model of organisational learning links the observe, assess, design, implement cycle of learning with shared mental models to result in "increasing an organisation's capacity and to take effective action".

In essence Kim's (1993) model starts with the premise of individual mental models, based on individuals' learning cycles, influencing the organisation's shared mental model. Kim's (1993) 'Structure of Learning' could be interpreted as the hierarchy of learning from individual mental modelling to group mental modelling and on to organisational mental modelling each contributing to the whole and the whole contributing in turn to the other parts of the hierarchy. In Children's Services this can be illustrated by new children's legislation. The redundancy of the previous statute replaced by new practice styles, new 'orders', new working models. The hierarchy of learning going on beyond the organisation to those designing the statute and their mental models.
It is evident that automatic compliance and synergy between the individual, group and organisation is neither an easy process nor an automatic one. It is also evident that there can be potential tensions created between the individual and the organisation through the individual learning process being at a different pace than that of the organisation's. The management of this, inter-group pace and sub-group time, is all crucial to the organisational learning process.

Individuals and organisations can also clearly have conflicting mental models as can groups, inter-groups and sub-groups. Cohesion and harmony of mental models are therefore important to achieve organisational learning. The relationship between the individual and the organisational learning, according to Argyris & Schön (1978), is incomplete unless the individual learning is embedded in the organisational memory and its theory-in-use. Unless there is a double loop learning or a triple loop learning process then the superficial tensions between the individual and the organisation will remain unresolved potentially to the detriment of those the organisation is there to serve.

Systems are established in organisations to enable such learning. Kim (1993:41) lists these as "procedural, behavioural and interpretive". Procedural systems as Winter (1985) argues can 'routinise competence' and behavioural systems in an organisation can alter the response to, primarily, environmental conditions. Similar to stimuli-response models in individuals, the organisation has also such learnt behaviours. Cyert & March (1963) call this 'learning rules'. An example is a Local Authority philosophically opposed to redundancy but having to carry out redundancies because of financial constraints. New skills have to be learnt, not only practical ones but the interpersonal skills of coping with loss, anger etc.

Interpretation systems exist when the organisation scans the environment, converts that data, develops practices which fit with the previous models of the environment and learns about the inter-relationship between the two, for example the political debate and inevitable policy formulation 'down the line'.

Attention to the concept of schema may assist in understanding the power of individual and organisational schemas. George & Jones (2001:421) outline how schema are "cognitive structures" which reflect knowledge "stimuli and concept". This somewhat complicated and indeed in itself, abstract, explanation when simply put, is where individuals, as a result of repeated examples develop schemas for that stimuli or concept. Labianca et al's (2000:243) explanation is much easier to understand "schemas are cognitive frameworks that give meaning to experience". Once developed further stimuli are fitted to that schema and the schema is used to interpret the new data. Individuals
therefore construct or interpret reality to what they are already familiar with. Fiske & Taylor (1991) show how schemas are methods by which individuals 'make sense' and match events to the familiar and expected. Walsh (1995) in the organisational context demonstrates how organisational schemas are relied upon by organisational players to guide decision-making, direction, 'sense-making'. George & Jones (2001) present a seven stage model by which to change individual schema. This model is reliant on the recognition of discrepancies between the existing schema and new phenomena, the emotional reaction to that discrepancy, the information gathering, challenge and resultant schema replacement.

Labianca et al (2000:237) advise how difficult schemas are to change and that they "tend to endure".... even when disconfirming information is presented. They suggest however persistent information from the environment and change in the leadership approach do influence such schema replacement. This is well evidenced within the public sector especially in relation to performance management and measurability. Finally public sector workers recoiled at the suggestion of measuring 'caring' services. This has of necessity altered in response to the persistent, government led obsession with accountability. Accountability translates into 'survival'. This government led approach also reinforces the view that schemas are hierarchically linked.

Similarities exist between the concept of individual and organisational schema, namely that they give meaning to events. The dissimilarity is, that the latter is a shared and social process and that the extent of that shared view reflects on the strength of the schema and resultant practices. For example one group schema may conflict with other groups. In Children's Services the determination of Youth Offending Teams to assist young people in avoiding custody is in direct conflict with other internal childcare teams who feel young people must face the consequences of their actions. Of course, as Moch & Bartunet (1990) found, there is often conflict between different layers as well as groups in the organisation. Of course seniority more often than not prevails, however an uneasy peace can exist when promoting the organisational view whilst internally not all schemas are that strong or 'bought into'.

Crossan et al (1993) suggest a socio-cognitive model for organisational learning based on Neisser's (1976) perceptual cycle. This endeavours to consider organisational learning holistically as shown in Figure 2:9. This model has two interesting features: the acknowledgement of the environment and the focus on 'schemas' at different levels. In other words, 'belief systems' of individuals, and the organisation, and the process by which they are interpreted. Crossan et al (1993) notes that the individual level is extended to the group setting through the process of integration. The individual
interpretation and the group integration leading to the organisational schema. This is the collective belief and guides resulting action.

Figure 2:9 Sociocognitive Model of Strategic Management

The model links cognition and behaviours, behaviours in turn lead to interpretation and possibly altering cognition. Collectively, the actions of members lead to performance outcomes. The process and products of this learning model indicate the creation of organisational learning as one which is holistic, from individuals to group to organisations. Further organisational learning is holographic, and knowing beyond. It is not merely the sum of individual input but the integration of their separate beliefs. Structures and systems are the integrating methods and as Crossan et al (1993:232) explains "the store house of knowledge".

Thus individuals and organisations store knowledge in the form of schemas. Schemas in turn interpret what is going on around us and affect how we respond to incidents, data, etc. The understanding of an individual's schema is of interest in organisational terms because it reflects the system of constructs individuals have in interpreting events especially critical incidents. The organisational schema is a "collective belief system
which guides action" Crossan et al (1993:234). The lack of integration and interpretation of individual schema into organisational schema leads to what Crossan et al (1993:236) term an "impoverished organisational schema". Brunsson (1982:41) supports the importance of positive integration of individual, group and organisational schema, to ignore this increases "idealogical circumstances" leading to conflict, such "conflicts interfere with co-ordination". The influences of the environment and its effect must be interpreted to "bring into the organisation" new information. Thus the link between internal and external is forged.

When organisational learning is considered, two key components need to be addressed: the level of interpretation of organisational members and the level of integration of their schema.

**Organisational Learning Style & Learning Cycle**

The importance of cognitive and learning styles has already been recorded in respect to the individual. What then of the organisation? Does it have a learning style? This brings us back to Gherardi's (2000) 'root metaphor' of organisational learning that is the relationship between the collective-the organisation and the individual. The centre of this debate is what is traditionally seen as an individual attribute, now being transposed onto a collective. It also raises the issue of learning not merely as a cognitive activity but, as Gherardi suggests, a social phenomena. Tsang (1997) supports the view that organisations do themselves have different learning styles.

Dixon (1994), in 'the Organisational Learning Cycle', identifies four stages not dissimilar to an individual learning cycle. Dixon begins with the 'widespread generation of learning' from both internal and external sources, then goes to stage two 'integrating of new information into the organisation', this is a total systems holistic dissemination including from different 'local' parts of the organisation laterally to ensure mutual internal learning. Thirdly Dixon notes 'collectively interpreting shared information. This through dialogue and the social process of creating a joint meaning'. Fourthly Dixon lists the 'overview of current trends and future possibilities'. Dixon completes the cycle by 'responsible action based on the interpreted meaning'. Dixon's approach is based on activating the type of learning cycle proposed by Kolb (1984) and transposing that four stage individual cycle into the collective cycle.

The individual cognitive style of members is obviously important and can influence the collective mental model. Indeed Hayes & Allinson (1998) agree that individual members tend to group together and share a similar cognitive style and as such process
information in a 'typical' way. This may be worth further exploration especially as Hayes & Allinson explain that collective learning is best achieved when this individual/group cognitive style (information processing) is reflected in the organisational information processing. The implication is that individuals have a cognitive style — a way of processing information and so too does the group and organisation. The latter is the accumulated knowledge gained over time and translated into the organisational code or mental model. Just as individuals are affected by personal circumstances Doyle Connor et al (1994) suggest so too is the organisation. These circumstances include the length of company existence and the demographic profile of its members. Interestingly this includes the age and length of service of individuals. Thus, according to Doyle Connor et al, those with common age and experience are likely to have experienced similar social and political influences which in turn affect their cognitive style and the organisational cognitive style. This makes the demographic profile of organisations important and the identification of these issues. Certainly the number of '60's' students, now leading political and institutional leaders, must mean something. In terms of team profiling this is also important information with the analysis of how that may influence differences between occupational groups and the consequences of social difference.

Organisational Memory

As with individuals, organisations more often than not possess memories. Kim (1993:43) argues that these are generally supported by procedures and routines as a means of containing past experience and learning of the collective. “Organisational memory, broadly defined includes everything that is contained in an organisation that is somehow retrievable”. These retrievable aspects in a Social Services Department would include the mass of static organisational memory, past documents and files, both personal and organisational files. This very historical perspective can be on the one hand a benefit and on the other the ‘jailer’ of fresh thinking and innovation.

Olivera's (2000) research into memory systems in organisations highlights the dilemma that many public sector organisations, particularly a geographically dispersed one, experience. That is how do multi-unit organisations store and share information which can be used in different 'sites' and which can reduce the 'cost' of repeating activities especially errors or mistakes.

Walsh & Ungson (1991) suggest an integrated framework of five areas where organisational memory is built and retained firstly in individuals, secondly the organisations' culture (the way things are done around here), thirdly the convectors or transformers (those systems and methods by which the resources of the department are converted into the organisational outputs e.g. procedures), fourthly structures and ideas
and finally the 'ecology' or physicality issues in a department or firm. Olivera (2000) in pointing out the inadequacies of this model adds aspects which 'oil' the other areas, namely the computer-based techniques and the social networks.

The methods by which information can be retained have been enhanced multiple fold even over the span of studying this organisation. The increased use, flexibility and sheer capacity of computer hardware is frankly staggering. Computer ability to make information accessible, transferable and cross-referenced not only saves the information but intelligently compares and uses that information. Of course such organisational memory is arguably a 'threat', as well as a benefit to organisations. The easy exposure and analysis of data, especially in the public sector, is not merely an internal device to assist staff but open to external sources with differing agendas. The use of league tables for schools is a good example where explicit data, without explanation, may cause misinterpretation and poor outcome. Information systems can of course reduce duplication and repetition and as such the memory of the organisation can be shared with others such as in the public sector, health and education, to design and promote multi-agency work and customer analysis.

Social networks and organisational memory raise the issues of not only explicit knowledge but tacit knowledge. Simon (1991) explains the capacity of individuals as a means of storing information, for example, experience. On their own, such experiences do not constitute organisational memory similar to the issues of organisational learning, it is only when such memory is put in a collective that organisational memory occurs. Anecdotally of course we all experience such collective memories through social networks. Families and their extended links are a good example of such multiple memory process where not one person remembers everything but brings a different perspective to the remembrances. Cross & Baird (2000) consider social network as key in passing on skills, indeed most 'societies', 'tribes', groups, pass on skills and there is social expectation of passing on information.

Sims' (1999) interesting paper on organisational learning discusses the development of organisational stories – the 'sacred writings', and the various memories of individuals in the relaying of 'their' story. Levitt & March (1996) term the inconsistencies between the organisational or 'ordered' memory, with that of possible 'confusions' that occur with interpretation from the individual. Levitt & March name these 'deviant' memories where those with the different 'memories' scurry away into sub cultures or sub structures. Sims' (1999) other insight is to call us all storytellers, the relayers of narrative. This struck a particular chord in an organisation whose client base and main resource are both human and so the strength of storytelling is likely to be considerable. Anecdotally this can be
seen by the extent of office gossip, repetition of views, speculation and inevitably the
instilling of critical events into the memory via articulation of these events. It is this very
memory that in organisational research is often tapped, not merely the ordered memory
of documents, reports etc.

Metsger's & Coogan's (1993) characterisation of 'canons' as they relate to status of such
information is used by Sims (1999) in his analysis of stories and organisational learning
and is helpful in understanding the power of such memory type. The authoritative source
is where a story is associated with the status and power of those involved so that senior
and particularly charismatic or potentially fearful members give weight to the story and the
desired outcome. The Director 'said or did' then becomes a powerful source of respected
knowledge which gives staff an idea of acceptable or non-acceptable behaviour. Experiential authority is where previous events are repeated mostly for new entrants. A
good example in organisational terms is the treatment of staff in a particular event, each
'story' has the 'authority' of experience and although not personally experienced has a
vicarious quality where others repeat the story because of its sensational nature. Thus
the storyteller, the wise 'old hand' also gains kudos even if they did not personally
participate in the event. Thirdly the physical placing of the body – where the 'story' is
placed. National newspapers' 'story telling' about say adoption or child protection gives a
status to information. For example, the media story release about adoption where if one
is too thin, too fat, smokes, is too old, or subject to the overly politically correct social
worker they cannot adopt. These myths regarding applications, although inaccurate,
have wider publicity and in organisational learning terms the environment then influences
the internal action. Finally the view of leaders and other people, this differs from the
authoritative source in that the source may not be the leader but the story may be
sanctioned and supported by that key person.

The issue of stories in organisations can be seen quite practically in any organisational
setting. Not only are we human and social, we rely on stories to ground us in
understanding events, in relaying events and in helping to put into context new events.
The power of such stories, such changing interaction should neither be underestimated or
ignored and can in practice be identified as what in reality does occur.

Organisational Learning Difficulties

Learning by the definition of 'detecting and correcting errors' is likely to be a painful and
challenging process. It can lead to feelings of embarrassment and threat. Argyris (1990)
categorises error into 'first order' – those based on "I did not know" and 'second order'
error. The latter being errors which human beings design. This designed error, Argyris
(1990) claims is at the heart of organisational ineffectiveness. Organisations remain mediocre if there exists such organisational defences that deny honest appraisal, open inspection and which undermine and violate the proper managerial control of the function. In simplistic terms, in order to learn from errors, there must be no 'cover up' or no 'covering up' of the 'cover up'. If by nature humans are naturally defensive when threatened or potentially embarrassed rather than exposing themselves to that threat or embarrassment they by-pass the potential threat, convincing themselves that it is not only for their benefit but for the organisation's as a whole. Managers in turn, who rather than upset other organisational players, support the by-pass and avoidance of threat, support and collude with the superficial solution rather than solve the problem prior to the by-pass. The organisational norm which is thus created, is layer upon layer of defensive action, usually covering up a threatening situation, rather than addressing it. The learnt behaviour therefore is defensive action rather than open appraisal.

In order for the organisation to learn, it must overcome this layered defensive shell which is there to protect the second order errors. The power of the defensive can be so strong that the managers and subordinates stop addressing designed error and become insensitive to it. The fact that this is an unconscious action shows the depth of the problem and also the depth of the action needed to address it.

In these instances, individuals may not be aware of producing any action which is defective and needs to be corrected. It is important therefore to create objective mechanisms to allow this to happen especially when balancing the tension between the organisation and the individual's professional judgement and actions. It is easy to create an organisational defence which rests on the argument that social workers, as professionals, have the right to their professional opinion. This denies potentially the appraisal of opinion solely on the basis that it contains an expert knowledge. The cover up in this instance is the lack of challenge to those who happen to possess the professional qualification. The individual's response is to rest on his or her professionalism and in turn the manager's response is to fail to criticise and test out that professionalism.

Organisational defence behaviour can be deeply embedded and restrict the recognition of inconsistencies and paradoxes. Indeed Bain (1998:414) is somewhat critical of Senge's (1990) 'fifth discipline' considering it is not robust enough to counter "the world of maladaptive social defences".

actual system is often structured in such a way as to add a defence in itself and that this in turn makes it difficult to counter. Thus no one nurse took sole care of any patient. The depersonalisation of care was to counter over involvement and checking systems were onerous and there to prevent responsibility. The fact that the system deeply embedded such attitudes and behaviour made on the one hand any change difficult and on the other the culture of care over systematised and against the very tenet of care. Menzies (1970) work showed in fact that the system had the counter effect to reducing anxiety and in creating staff retention. Anxiety, and staff turnover were high mostly related to the fact that the lack of discretion and decision making plus the atmosphere of checking and double checking had an undermining effect.

Bain (1998) goes further and his research hypothesis was that not only were system defences present in local situations but across the whole 'systems domain'. Thus one hospital's defence mechanisms were likely to be repeated across the whole hospital sector. Current evidence of this can be seen through the Bristol baby heart scandal and the subsequent ripples across all similar hospital settings. There are limited 'stand alone' institutions especially in the public sector and so the concept of 'systems domain defences' is strong. This will be explored further when discussing public sector organisations.

The acknowledgement of an organisational learning cycle assists in positively trying to manage the learning process. By similar measure a dysfunctional learning cycle can interrupt achieving learning. March & Olsen (1975) in Figure 2:10 illustrate the interruptions which can occur in a cycle which are due to disjointed and disconnected processes leading to the non-transfer of actions into belief systems.

![Figure 2:10 Model of Organisational Learning](source: March & Olsen in Kim (1993:42) - The Link between Individual and Organisational Learning.)
Kim (1993) adds to this by listing three further issues 1) **Situational** learning where an individual has an experience which is not transferred into their store of knowledge thus allowing it to be used again. Kim (1993) suggests crisis events are one example but the author suggests that this may also include actions which have resulted in denial. 2) **Fragmented** learning is where the individual learns but the organisation as a whole does not. The 'expert' positions in Children's Services is an example of this where high levels of learning in a specific area are known to a select few and 'shared' by the giving of expert advice and then can be dangerously partial and misinterpreted. 3) **Opportunistic** learning, the bypassing of procedures to make an action easier can occur within large bureaucracies especially where levels of professional discretion can be high. Pockets of practice can by default then occur which the author suggests become a shared mental model of a sub-set not the main organisation.

Such interruptions between the individual and the organisation can clearly hamper and reduce organisational learning or, possibly more dangerously, create partial or inappropriate organisational learning behaviour.

Snyder & Cummings (1998:881) however discuss not process dysfunction but the fundamental organisation learning disorders. They start on the premise that learning grows through discovery, invention, production and generalisation processes and that each of these have associated learning disorders. Figure 2:11 shows the learning disorders with Snyder & Cummings' article supporting this somewhat colourful language with an analysis of each. In summary they suggest 'blindness' in failing to see problems and possibilities with a lack of ambition or analysis. 'Projection' however relates to the lack of objectivity in such analysis of data resulting mostly from stereotyping, personal interest etc. 'Simple-mindedness' relates to the narrowness of the conceptual map thus complexity and connections are missed. The lack of 'co-ordination of multiples' and the lack of integration between individual, group and organisation leads to 'multiple-personality disorder' and Snyder & Cummings cautions against 'paralysis by analysis' or indeed paralysis because of confusion or apathy. 'Alien-Hand Syndrome' relates to the organisation's parts working in parallel and un-coordinated, leading to conflict and misinterpretation. 'Amnesia' on the other hand refers to a lack of reflection or evaluation leading to the possible repetition of negative events. Thus isolated, disconnected learning can occur and finally 'superstition' where self-interest and self-preservation can make analysis difficult.
This analysis of learning disorders and Kim's (1993) situational learning etc. indicate the deep seated and difficult issue of dysfunction in organisational learning. This is heightened when Swieringa & Wierdsma's (1992) 'negative collectives' are listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational Learning Process</th>
<th>Associated Learning Disorder</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Blindness</td>
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<td>Invention</td>
<td>Projection</td>
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<td>Production</td>
<td>Simple-mindedness</td>
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<td>Generalisation</td>
<td>Multiple-personality Disorder</td>
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<td>Amnesia</td>
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<td>Superstition</td>
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Figure 2:11 Diagrammatic Representation of Organisational Disorders – Snyder & Cummings (1998) represented by Ferris.

They acknowledge that there can in organisations be 'collective blindness', denial of a problem or change: 'collective avoidance', the ignoring of a process or procedure which is considered unworkable; 'collective reluctance' where challenge is suppressed and 'unlearning' then becomes difficult; finally 'collective ignorance' not always a 'blissful state'.

The personal and individual issues of defensive practice, possibly in denial, is then layered with the group control of collective issues and onto the organisation's systemic difficulties captured in the banded routines that currently take place. This individual, group and organisational progress, established in organisational learning, is then mirrored in organisational learning disorders.

Argyris' (1990:12) response to reducing organisational defences and resultant 'skilled incompetence' is to interrupt them so that they do not maintain themselves. This is the creation of a 'Model II' theory-in-use. The key principles of which are "valid information, informed choice and the responsibility to monitor how well the choice is implemented".

The responsibility is on the individual to ensure that they establish valid and observable information which lends others to support their action. This process therefore is open to both individual's and others' scrutiny. This principle may have considerable merit within
the Children's Services where the decision making is scrutinised and exposed in public settings, such as the courts. The position of multidisciplinary decision making in, for example, child protection may however be more difficult when trying to achieve joint ownership where a defensive routine may be 'it was not my decision'.

The second principle in Model II is the minimising of unilateral 'face saving' which would reduce the potential of 'whistleblowing'. It is suggested here that this may only be possible when the culture has established a level of honesty and acceptance of mistakes. 'Face-saving' is arguably a result of the fear of consequence and to minimise the need to practice it is important. Argyris (1990) suggests that Model II increases people's ability to confront ideas; increases the ability to self-reflect; enables advocacy of a person's position and encourages honesty and minimises cover up.

Model II works on the principle of publicly testable decisions which reduces errors and misunderstanding. The logic of this model is understood, but the question is, as public services work in a publicly testable arena situation, why then do organisational defences still exist? The premise here is that, unless the environmental factors are given due importance, then organisational learning remains tenuous.

Bain (1998:422), when addressing the systems defences considered the reduction of these through not only a leadership for change and a supportive culture but the creation of "reflection and learning spaces". These 'learning spaces' were constructed consciously in the organisation to reflect on the whole organisation's activities – all the interconnected parts. The very consciousness of social defences increases and these then are explored and anxieties are identified and purposefully altered. Bains (1988:425) suggests "organisations that lack learning space, or reflective space which allows for organisational awareness, are 'asleep' to their own behaviour". These learning spaces can be through a number of different methods e.g. staff meetings, project teams, lateral meetings.

**Explicit and Tacit Knowledge and Motivation**

When considering individual, group and organisational learning two aspects consistently arise, that is the nature of knowledge whether it is identifiable or explicit or whether it is implicit and secondly what is the motivation to share and transfer that knowledge from individual to collective? This brief explanation of these issues underlines how difficult achieving collective learning in an organisation really is.
Explicit knowledge is that which is visibly known, can be identified and as Berlets & Savage (1998) explain, can be stored, and once stored traceable and retrievable. Often such knowledge is explicitly articulated and as such can be codified and transferred from individual to individual, individual to group, group to group, group to organisation and so on. Popper (1972) puts such knowledge in the ‘objective world’ and it is relatively easy to communicate and share. Here is the basis for much of the organisation’s memory bank, that information which has been translated into codified text, routines, reports, procedures etc. Schüppel et al (1998) add that this is ‘materialised’ knowledge which concentrates on the factual materialisation of explicit knowledge for everyone’s use, the internalisation of collective knowledge and the widespread nature of new knowledge.

This singular dimension however gives only partial explanation for knowledge ‘type’. There is the much more fascinating, less quantifiable, intuitive, personal, context specific and unarticulated dimension of tacit knowledge. Polanyi’s (1966) is a key exponent of the epistemological dimensions of tacit and explicit knowledge. The latter is explained by Lam (2000:490) as being acquired and accumulated “through logical deduction and acquired by formal study”, the former acquired “through practical experience in the relevant context i.e. learning by doing”. Further explicit knowledge can be accumulated and stored “without the participation of the knowing subject”. In contrast tacit knowledge must have, according to Lam (2000), the personal permission of the individual to share and it is less easy to aggregate. Explicit knowledge is public, tacit knowledge private. The latter is what Osterlok & Frey (2000:539) see as the “crucial source of sustainable competitive advantage” because as Teece (1998) explains it is hard to replicate.

Here we stray for a short while into tacit knowledge as an emotional, feeling, sensing aspect of human behaviour. Increasingly there are presentations, conferences, papers, articles explaining the intuitive side of key organisational players, mostly managers. Emotional intelligence, management intuition or indeed as Gardner (1993) explained ‘multiple intelligences’ which included, according to Dulewicz (2000) “interpersonal, self-awareness and emotional traits”. Emotional intelligence is that very essence of survival that is innate and basic and which gives individuals that predictive quality or sense when facing new or troubling experiences. Dulewicz (2000) lists some of the emotional competences as interpersonal sensibility, motivation (energy), emotional resilience, influence and adaptability, decisiveness and assertiveness, integrity and leadership, including the motivation of others. Clarke & Mackaness (2001:148) agree that intuition is a key component in sense and decision making. They explain that this is based on the combined facts and experiences which have been gathered over the years and are "combined and integrated with a well-honed sensitivity or openness to other, more unconscious processes". Managers then, or those most experienced or expert, will be
able to gauge new situations against this knowledge and be able to determine an action plan intuitively based on the past accumulated input. This is an interesting point especially in an increasing evidential evidence-based childcare public law setting. Clarke & Mackaness tie their considerations on intuition to the cognitive style of managers especially. It is not proposed here to explore this in depth as this again trespasses into a well-covered range of organisational texts in relation to leadership style. Suffice it to say that intuition is that tacit knowledge which is 'going beyond' what Clarke & Mackaness term the rational data and information, where using experience 'cuts through' the mass of detail and effectively short circuits the amount of data.

This interplay of intuition, cognitive style, individual schema and group interrelations is central to the debate on organisational learning. How can the most experienced of personnel, mostly managers, in their decision-making use the amount and depth of experience on the one hand which may visibly be hard to quantify and expect others to learn, accept and establish a joint mental model? How can managers with different cognitive maps or different levels of insights assist those more functional operators within the organisation to create a common learning?

Into this particular melting pot we can further throw motivation and the creation and transfer of knowledge. Motivation of course is more relevant to the generation and transfer of tacit knowledge. Why do some individuals create, generate and transfer that wealth of tacit knowledge, which can be, if nurtured, an amazing organisational as well as individual resource?

Social psychologists sub divide motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic. Osterlok & Frey (2000) claim that motivation is central to knowledge transfer and sustainable competitive advantage. The 'bottom line' is how can managers encourage the development and use of tacit knowledge and can that be achieved through different motivational situations?

Extrinsic motivation, similar to explicit knowledge, is easy to identify and explain. It is the visible reward to the employee to encourage action. Mostly this is monetary or other exposed incentive schemes. Intrinsic motivation, like tacit knowledge, is much more an intimate and individualised process. Intrinsic motivation is where an action is taken that has value and satisfaction for its own sake. Ideally the tasks, job or circumstances in an organisation can be designed so that they are, for their own sake intinically motivating. This results in an enthusiastic individual who is keen to learn, to share, to develop and contribute.
Osterlok & Frey (2000) explain that intrinsic motivation in organisational terms is not widely advantageous. True there is a low cost transaction to motivated employers but then this mismanaged, highly motivated staff member may have unrelated outcomes to those organisationally desired and further this misplaced motivation is then hard to change. This arguably is strongest in professional organisations where part of the reward system is the intrinsic value of doing something for society, the public, children, adults – whoever the client group is.

Clearly intrinsic motivation is likely to be more creative and diverse, it is not implicitly tied to explicit rewards. However the management of such motivation is a key skill especially when linking this to learning, growth and sharing of such learning. Further this multiplied into a group intrinsic motive could be even harder to shape and manage especially if the manager is an 'outsider' to the group e.g. a senior manager.

**Integrated Frameworks**

Osterlok & Frey (2000) highlight that the competitive advantage of knowledge transfer cannot be underestimated and that this is 'intimately connected' with motivation. It is here that the debate about the integration of motivation, knowledge types and organisational form will start to merge.

Osterlok & Frey offer four types of organisational design which combines motivation and knowledge requirements in organisational forms. The four organisational types balance the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with tacit and explicit knowledge generation and transfer. The underlying importance is the value of intrinsic motivation because it is difficult to imitate and when linked with tacit knowledge has great benefits, if also great management challenges. The lack of observation of both is just as invisible for internal and external sources including managers. The results however can be identified if not always attributable to specific employees. The organisational forms are 'graded' according to the explicit and extrinsic nature of the organisational output through to the intrinsic and tacit. The latter organisational form is highly dependent on participation, personal relationships and how the individual, groups and organisational link together.

Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) offer a model of different dimensions of knowledge creation in an organisation. These dimensions are epistemological, ontological and temporal. Further Polanyi (1966) divides tacit knowledge into functional, phenomenal, semantic and ontological. These writers offer a detail of different levels of interrelationship within the knowledge field and as key writers their advice is acknowledged.
However it is Lam (2000) who will be used here as a reference point to try to help understand and to decode some of the writing in relation to organisational learning, tacit knowledge and societal institutions in her offer of an "Integrated Framework". Lam (2000:488-489) emphasises that the "extent of tacit knowledge constitutes the knowledge base of the firm and how it is formed and used are powerfully shaped by the broader institutional context". In essence Lam links the cognitive, organisational and societal levels into an all embracing typological framework and "explains the links between knowledge types, organisational forms and societal institutions". The framework’s aim is to indicate how the three levels "interact to shape the learning and innovation capabilities of firms".

Lam’s (2000) paper builds on the organisational learning theorists, those from a knowledge base theoretic procedure and those who are able to link the ‘societal’ approach with the effects on separate institutions. This latter is particularly of interest in the public sector where so much of the external societal perspective affects internal organisational design. Lam’s paper focuses on tacit knowledge and this of course then highlights the social and interpersonal nature of knowledge transfer, organisational learning and knowledge creation.

Lam (2000) initially, at the cognitive level, distinguishes between the epistemological (Polanyi’s modes of knowledge expression - explicit and tacit) and ontological (individual and collective level) dimensions. The former has already been addressed. The latter refers to the individual knowledge as part of, and autonomous within, the organisation’s whole knowledge with its ownership being with the individual who can voluntarily transfer it or who, if leaving, can take it with them. The collective on the other hand has been already noted as that shared and distributed among members and visible through rules, procedures, routines etc. As Lam (2000:491) explains “collective knowledge exists between rather than with individuals”. This collective mind however is not the mere accumulation of individual knowledge given how much permission is needed from the individual to share. The organisational collective mind is therefore that already shared.

Lam’s (2000:492) cognitive level results in four quadrants against the ontological/epistemological dimensions. These are embrained knowledge (individual-explicit). This is formal, abstract and theoretical and according to Lam, relies on "individuals' conceptual skills and cognitive abilities", scientific knowledge is the example given here. Embodied knowledge (individual and tacit) on the other hand is reliant on experience and doing and does not need to have a process by which to fetter and sort the knowledge. It is voluntary, context related, and action based. Encoded knowledge (collective and explicit), is coded and received with a predicted outcome. Its simplicity
and routine nature is controlling and does not capture the tacit judgement and emotional sense that the previous category can. Finally embedded (collective-tacit) is the culture belief. It is social, shared, 'communities-in-practice' where knowledge is based on organic development with a group or collective.

The corresponding organisational form to each of the quadrants noted relates to how the different knowledge types are demonstrated in typical organisational structures. This results in different levels and styles of learning and creativity. This of course is understandable when one considers that the epistemological dimensions of explicit and tacit have different requirements to make that knowledge dimension. For example a highly mechanistic prescribed structure can confine tacit knowledge where a decentralised informal flat structure can enhance tacit knowledge and sharing.

Lam superimposed the quadrants of professional bureaucracy, machine bureaucracy, operating adhocracy and j-form organisation on the previous cognitive levels. The dimensions being knowledge agent (control and autonomy) and standardisation of knowledge. The professional bureaucracy is packed with those who are highly trained and seen as expert in their field. The machine bureaucracy is heavily reliant on standardisation and control. Key personnel in knowledge management are those, mostly managers, who proceduralise and write the rules. Operating adhocracy, is linked with embodied knowledge and these organisational types are very fluid in their work processes. Their dynamic organic nature allows formal education and experience and a diversity which is attributed to this knowledge type which are individual, experimental and based on experience and interaction. Finally a j-form organisation is that which relates to embedded knowledge, and communities of practice model which are knowledge creating. This model "combines the stability and efficiency of a bureaucracy with the flexibility and team dynamics of an advocacy" (Lam 2000:497). This is team orientated with a tight central bond which transfers the team level into the organisational level.

On the final level of institutional and societal, Lam explains that here educational and labour market institutions affect the type of 'institutional configurations' which in turn influence the previous two levels of organisational and cognitive. These societal institutions can reflect sector, regional or national conditions. Lam divides these corresponding quadrants into the professional model, the bureaucratic, occupational community and organisational community models.

The professional societal influence relies on a high level of formalised education and as such the labour market is highly specialised. If one takes the scientific field it can demonstrate that here there is little room for tacit knowledge, systems favour an individual
thirst for knowledge. The benefits however of societal acceptance of the professional as the knowing person because of the educational base and status is invested in such a societal response. The bureaucratic model is similar to the professional but with a tiered career tendency and generally the labour market from which a career can proceed, is internal.

The occupational-community societal approach is described by Lam (2000:506) as smaller interdependent units working together with "high inter-firm mobility which fosters the development of knowledge". The labour market is not bonded but can be external and open and occupational but where the relevant set have high social networks. Silicon Valley is given as an example where there can be movement between those knowledgeable in a specific field and where innovation is celebrated. Finally the organisational community model conversely is reliant on an internal labour market as it is characterised by an educational and experience background which is career specific and hierarchical. This decentralised and co-operative model is said to be best found in Japanese firms or those copying their approach.

Lam's final diagrammatic representation builds as follows:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 2:12 Knowledge, Organisations and Institutions: Three Interlocking Levels Lam (2000:506)
Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to outline the key theoretical perspectives on firstly individual learning and then group and organisational learning. Learning is a complex subject to understand when considering it from the individual perspective alone. Additional to the stimuli-response theories and the adult learning process noted here there is a variety of other theories which are likely to have an impact on the individual. These include such issues as genetic influence, personality, leadership, intelligence etc. It is suggested here that managers should have understanding of the impact of such issues and how they may affect the subsequent management of learning in their organisations.

The recognition and understanding of organisational defence routines will assist in reducing organisational disorders. In reality, larger organisations particularly will find elimination of such disorders possibly unachievable. However it remains no less important that managers have their awareness raised as to individuals' reactions to past events which may result in denial or avoidant behaviour.

When one considers the necessity in organisational learning not only to make explicit as much information as possible but also to encourage individuals to share their tacit knowledge, then the whole dynamic around motivation comes into play. Within organisations such as the public sector such motivation is likely to be intrinsic because of the lack of flexibility of extrinsic rewards. Because of the ethical value basis of the organisation, systems to enable and support such sharing, will need to be considered, with the aim not only to reinforce its importance but also to some extent impose new behaviour. Additionally the creation of shared mental models and an organisational schema does demand as Crossan et al (1993) explained, the interpretation and then integration of environmental factors. In order to do this organisations may need some method or framework on which to base such analysis, to assist managers especially at a time of rapid change.

The societal framework has been noted by a number of academics. The interaction between work requirements, labour markets and careers is evident. This can be shown in the public sector with the lack of doctors, social workers, teachers and the resultant political need to address this, whilst the length of training means such a need cannot be satisfied readily. As Lam (2000:499) explains "the extent to which the organisation of skills and careers is governed by market and firms in turn, defines education and qualification systems which relate to knowledge and competence". The increased need
for business skills within the public sector shows a need to have skills traditionally associated with the private sector embedded in that of non-profit organisations. The link between labour markets and education and training systems is accepted here. Organisations may need to address the labour gap by finding new sources of qualified staff – however this in turn will demand different consideration of organisational learning and how it can be achieved. For example the traditional professional bureaucracy had high education expectation through formal training with strong reliance on codified knowledge via an academic institution. The progression of internal staff through a vocational route of unqualified status to qualified status will have a completely different emphasis as internal control may be high, with education as a re-enforcer.

Five themes emerge from this analysis. Firstly the importance of knowing one’s personnel, and their knowledge profile, secondly establishing mechanisms by which to encourage sharing tacit knowledge thus codifying as much information and knowledge as possible; thirdly to establish systems which allow double and triple loop analysis; fourthly to acknowledge and try to manage organisational defences and disorders and finally to consider the impact of societal and environmental factors.

The description presented of the academic analysis in individual, group or organisational learning is a convincing one but it would be inappropriate not to note some contrary issues. Clearly this complex balancing and exploration of knowledge is both time-consuming and potentially expensive. The difficulty in proving its value is the very measurability of the effort inputted to its management versus the outcome of such knowledge. There has been much academic assumption, based on a reasonable hypothesis that the harnessing of knowledge will add value to the organisation however there is limited direct evidence of this. There is however a plethora of research which does assist indirectly. Motivational theorists for example such as Alderfer (1972), Herzberg (1959) and satisfaction studies such as Locke (1976) show how much more effective workers are when they feel there is personal growth and development and that there are intrinsic rewards to them personally. Certainly those who study human behavioural patterns also encourage the development and understanding of individuals learning both the painful and the positive.

It is also however a reasonable question to ask how much organisations should be responsible for unpacking and addressing past events which may affect current organisational learning. Academic advice leads to the conclusion that the impact of pre-organisational experiences, as well as current organisational events can have a major influence and can result in either positive or negative defensive reactions. Inevitably organisations will have to accept that such circumstances exist indeed operational
experience would anecdotally show that workers do, for example, go off with stress because of events that have triggered past trauma or where apparently unexplainable resistances are present. It may be that an audit tool could be used before employment which assists in screening such influences thus preparing for organisational learning in the whole staff influences' profile.

Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992) suggest that organisations operate on implicit and explicit rules to achieve required organisational behaviour, the objective rules and the implicit 'way of doing things around here'. Shrivastava (1983) considers the very demonstration of adaptation shows learning has occurred. This may be somewhat naive when considering the power of the implicit and how the implicit and the explicit are not always in harmony – how often does the centre of an organisation work against the espoused position of the organisation?

The acceptance here is that collective learning in itself is not a pre-requisite for increased performance and that there are difficult issues in the organisational learning debate. Learning is a complex issue in the individual, cognitive level as can be evidenced by the fragmentation of learning theory as explained by Knowles et al (1998). Hilgard's attempts to rationalise this fragmentation into three main 'families of theories' go some way to manage this complexity. Hilgard's (1966) stimulus-response theory, cognitive theory and motivation and personality theory all indicate the multiplicity of issues which affect adult learning. The individual learning difficulties that exist can hamper the identification of the need to learn and secondly defend against altering behaviour. Couple this with the necessity, in organisational learning, to harness the use of the group process, to enable and encourage the transmitting of tacit knowledge into accurate explicit knowledge and one can see what a sophisticated set of dynamics exist. When then, within the public sector, organisational learning is further impacted on from external forces such as societal levels of understanding these difficulties are potentially increased. This, however, balanced with the wide information about learning and its importance to individual's survival. Why not then organisational learning to the organisation's survival? The following chapter will address how organisations address such issues in practice whilst trying to create a learning organisation.
Chapter 3

The Learning Organisation – A Valid Approach?

Introduction

The shelves of any business library are likely to be laden with texts that show the substantial developments in management theory and the different approaches proposed by different academics. It is intended here to note the major developments and to underline how within these developments the learning organisation and knowledge management comfortably fit and are not at odds with the thrust of thinking.

Why is Learning Organisationally Important?

Historically managers concentrated on the “efficient pursuit of productivity... and were rewarded for doing so” Lessem (1993:5). There was heavy reliance on capital-intensive plant and equipment which was associated with ever striving for extreme efficiency.

By the 1980’s change was occurring within the management of organisations. Three examples of this are given here. Firstly, as Reich (1992) noted there was an increased demand for product range, differentiation was moving away from cost alone. There was a need for more adaptable systems, closer networks with external agents such as suppliers and distributors and a more integrated internal approach between the creative teams and those delivering the product.

Secondly the development of, as Davidson & Burke (1994) note, the increase in new industries such as marketing and consultancy, where traditional work patterns do not exist and there is no blueprint of style. It is evident these industries place their own stamp on new thinking in management presentation and the creation of flexible approaches to leadership.

Thirdly, the developments within the public sector must be noted. The originally ‘safe’ and non-threatened organisations, where jobs were for life, have been the focus of many a government policy where the eye of the relevant minister of state has been for increased efficiency and accountability. The change of emphasis from the sole provider of services to the purchaser of a range of provision from whichever source has become evident. The privatisation of public organisations and the dissembling of professional bodies have led organisations to take on new management styles. Traditional management practices as noted by Reich (1992) in these organisation’s would create
such a juxtaposition with professional service deliveries as to be destructive, thus a participative, informative management style is imperative to harness the abilities and 'consent' of those who are delivering the organisations goals and aims. Arguably today's management of public services has in fact regressed. Critically led performance management and the high degree of 'interference' or 'intervention', depending on one's perspective, has been imposed on traditional management techniques in the very detail of service delivery. The demand to cope with these changes and to move with new demands remains important.

These examples brought with them an almost inevitable acceptance that organisations needed to change and that to achieve change a different approach was necessary. The move from directive to a more participate management style developed, as evidenced by the Likert study (1961). Blake & Mouton's (1964) Managerial Grid further showed the equal integration of task and personnel as the ideal management approach. The acknowledgement that organisations can benefit from a human resource strategy, especially when the organisation is changing, has led to a shift towards co-operation, participation and a democratic style within management practice.

A range of theories grew within the broad family of change management which recognised that firstly change was almost inevitable if organisations were to survive within turbulent environments and that the effectiveness of that change can be managed.

The development of transformational leadership theory for example had a pronounced effect on today's leadership models. It underlines the move within modern organisations to change from their very core to determine success through embedding and reinforcing new cultures and demands. Leaders in transformational style base their actions on trying to raise the consciousness of followers. The negative emotions of fear, jealousy and greed are supplemented by the positive emotions of equality, fairness and being humanitarian. Bass and Avolio (1994) explain that transformational leaders stimulate new perspectives, establish the visions for the team, develop potential motivation of others and look beyond their own interests to that of the whole.

Transformational leadership is seen as being able to move an organisation from one state to another. This may include as Hamel & Prahalad (1994) explain, shifting the whole industry or sector to a different plane. This means being at the cutting edge, even within the public sector, of strategic developments - not just being followers but leaders.

The constant shift to consider the more intangible aspects of an organisation are further underlined by the change management and organisational development theorists.
Organisational development is noted by McKenna (1994:519) as an intervention which is based on “humanistic and democratic values, such as trust, open confrontation of issues, participation and power equalisation”. The aim of such programmes is to increase the ability of the organisation's own members to problem solve, adapt to environment changes and to manage the internal culture.

Change in organisations has been driven by many developments and influences organisational behaviour, for example new technologies, with their wealth of actual and potential impact, part-time and variable job-design, and the structure of organisations themselves. The expectation from employees, as Carnall (1999) notes, is that it is unlikely that they will only be employed by one organisation in their career, change therefore being personally inevitable on both organisational and individual levels. These changes are, according to Buchanan et al (1999) multi-dimensional and therefore complex. The rapidity of change, its discontinuity and diversity adds to this complexity. The rapid change demands the necessity for change management, with consultation and communication vital for employee support. The fact is that change can be both stimulating and stressful for organisations and negotiating, persuading and influencing skills of either a change agent or managers, to achieve the desired state will be required.

The managerial trends are summed up by Capra (1986) who suggests that there is fundamentally occurring a “paradigm shift” which influences the world organisations operate within. The move has been:

<table>
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<th>From</th>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on parts</td>
<td>Focus on whole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concern for structure</td>
<td>Concern on process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revolution</td>
<td>Evolution</td>
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<td>Objective science</td>
<td>Understanding how we are learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Network (metaphor for knowledge)</td>
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<td>Domination &amp; Control</td>
<td>Co-operative approaches</td>
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Adapted from Carnall (1999:69)

It is within these social paradigms that organisations must exist and operate and it is within this theoretical context that the learning organisation and knowledge management firmly sit.

Closely equated to this shift towards accepting the importance of effective change management has grown the acknowledgement of learning within an organisational
context. For Garrett (1994:37) it is fundamental that "for an organisation to survive, its rate of learning must be equal to, or greater than, the rate of change in its external environment..."

Why has this concentration on learning within organisations developed. Stata (1989:64) suggests that it is because "the rate at which an organisation learns may become the only sustainable cause of competitive advantage especially in knowledge intensive industries". Nyhan (1991) supports this by underlining how volatile and fraught the environments are within which organisations operate and that it is important to utilise the collective intelligence of its members in order to survive. Public organisations are just in such an unpredictable environment. They are exposed to the constant change inevitable with political cycles; this in turn affects growth or retrenchment depending on public finance formula. They operate in often hostile environments where accountability and expectations are high and where failure or perceived failure results in media and legal scrutiny. Their 'survival' depends on public confidence and trust and the political success of others. Survival is often linked with public service effectiveness. This will be explored in Chapter 4.

It appears an easy concept to accept that much of the uniqueness of organisations is the profile of its personnel. At a time when as Herriot & Pemberton (1995) explain, organisations are already as lean as they can be then competitive advantage can be through the more intangible areas and human resource orientated.

Carnall (1999) suggests that in current conditions where organisations depend on fewer people and where the loyalty of those people cannot be assumed, the effort must be taken on behalf of the organisation to retain those personnel to utilise, develop and reward them. The managing of such precious resources then becomes a strategic managerial challenge. "Visualising strategic changes is not merely a matter of analysis, it requires the ability to think about, to conceptualise, the future, the willingness to experiment and learn, to see what might happen, to estimate how the organisation might respond and much more" Carnall (1999:9).

The linkage between change management and a learning culture is noted by Jones and Hendry (1992). They see the need for change and change management becoming a way of life and a starting point for the learning organisation. Sudden reactive change possibly associated with crises, can be debilitating to any organisation. Continuous self-development and transformation can firstly allow an openness to change in a non-threatening way and can establish adaptability and flexibility as the organisation's watchwords. The premise behind the learning company, according to Pedler, Burgoyne
& Boydell (1991:1), is that companies should no longer have to face massive restructuring because the signals from the environment were missed. Instead they describe what one could imagine is an ever alert, wide eyed, head swivelling animal which is capable of “adapting, changing, developing and transforming itself”.

Pearn (1992) additionally suggests that learning organisations establish a flexible, thinking workforce and that such a workforce is firstly more prepared to incorporate new learning, take on new skills, e.g. reflecting technological advances and are more able to work collectively in groups and teams. These in turn should increase individual satisfaction and this will link with Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs reflecting a personal need for self-actualisation. The intention of course is to maximise individuals contribution by increasing their confidence, entrusting them with tasks within their capacity and allowing greater autonomy. This in turn can assist in, as Garrett (1994) suggests, increased staff retention.

In organisations and business societies today then there is a move away from 'hard' management style, and purely task-orientated objectives to the 'soft' human resource management techniques. The latter centres on the expectation of the most valuable resource of the organisation, the people.

The uniqueness of a workforce is emphasised by the uniqueness of the individuals across the organisation. Diversity is a moral and political issue, it should not merely be accepted as political correctness but should embody the reality of the benefits of diverse staff groups, diverse thinking, and diverse practices. Iles (1994) argues that this is also a strategic business issue. The changing demographics in society, more demanding customer need and expectations leads to focusing on the full utilisation of all the organisation's talents to meet these needs.

The importance of diversity as an example goes beyond itself as an issue. It is not only that difference, be it gender, race etc, adds to the real tapestry of organisational life, diversity stops organisations becoming insular and narrow minded and ultimately rejected by the environment and society. Diversity embodies the very nature of change, new ideas and differences, all central to the principles of a learning organisation and its ability to adapt rapidly to that which is currently unknown to the organisation or to which the organisation is unenlightened. Lawrence (1997:5-6) suggests four important variables should be considered when analysing organisational diversity. Additional to “visible demographic attributes” (gender etc) there are “relational attributes (e.g. organisational tenure), status attributes (e.g. marital status) and personal attributes (e.g. personal beliefs and perceptions)”. Kilduff et al (2000:21) tries to address some of these diversity issues.
and notes how the growing diversity within the workforce "underscores three questions of theoretical and practical importance". These are the effects the demographic profile has on cognitive diversity, how the cognitive diversity affects performance and finally the cyclic nature of a firm's performance on this cognitive diversity.

These complex issues are reflected in the increased management writing as they relate to managing complex systems and complexity theory in an organisational context. From an external perspective Anderson (1999:228) emphasises how the environment surrounding an organisation has multiple interactions "amongst organisations and institutions, creating complex, non linear relationships between actions and outcomes". McKenna (1999:302) notes that whether it's the public sector transformation into an "efficiency driven machine" or the private sectors globalisation, these changes have clear force. Indeed McKenna could have gone further and recognised that the public sector faces its own type of 'globalisation' in the professional sense. The mixing of different organisations which, with different mental models, language, cultures, are forced to work together to survive. Social Services, Education, Health, Police and the Voluntary sectors all try to cope with the effects of invading each other's professional territories, this is not unlike global companies operating in another land. Thus strategic alliances, whether global or professional, are similarly challenging whether those agencies' alliances are sought via multi-agency, joint agency planning or global working. Change and direction setting in such multi-agency, joint-agency context has the possibly additional complexity of other professional resistances where sharing the vision may be more difficult.

In internal terms complexity is reflected in the analysis of Daft (1992) and Garvin (1998). Daft measures complexity from the structural perspectives of vertical (meaning hierarchy), horizontal (across the department and subunits) and spatial (across geographical location). Garvin's approach focuses on processes. These being organisational to include work, behaviour and change, and secondly managerial. Garvin (1998:37) discusses how, on the one hand, work is best designed and integrated for efficiency and on the other behaviour so "deeply embedded and recurrent" that even when, as Weick (1979) explains, personnel change, such patterns remain powerful and persistent. Garvin's three behavioural processes: decision-making, communication and organisational learning each have their own independent, individual, group and organisational dimensions and levels.

Galbraith (1982) notes that the organisation's design may accommodate the complexity internally via structure, systems etc to match the external complexity of the environment whether that be political, social, technological or economic. McKelvey's (1999) anxiety is for those organisations where the rate of external change outstrips that of the rate of
internal change – thus placing the organisation at risk of decline and non-survival. In these organisations, as Anderson et al (1999), points out, the waves of change overtake each other and in order to sustain the organisation, adaptation and constant movement must occur.

The environmental, structural and process complexity outlines how difficult recognising the elements and managing them can be. McKenna (1999:308) offers a model of complexity mapping aimed at identifying influences both internal and external and their effect on the organisation at various levels. This mapping includes perceived as well as real influences, informal as well as formal, and a diagnostic tool for "identifying personal, behavioural, interpersonal and structural issues" faced by managers. The complexity map should underline the nature, depth and power of multiple relationships, allowances and groupings.

In essence, as Frank & Fahrbach (1999) outline, there are multiple interrelated values, attitudes which then as MacDonald (1995) explains are exposed to exogenous effects and this in turn affects organisations and how they learn. Complexity therefore, sometimes a misnomer for difficulty, is the detail of all the impacting issues which need to be managed.

The almost inherent complexity which exists in and around many organisations demands of an organisation the ability to transform and change. Managers' task is to make sense of that change and help the organisation flow with it. A learning organisation philosophy can create a lively inquisitive organisation prepared to meet new experiences and new knowledge with the willingness to establish new learning and consequently new behaviour.

Developing Into a Learning Organisation

The learning organisation as a concept has grown, developed and adapted as it becomes established within organisational literature. McGill and Stocum (1993) support Pedler et al (1991) in that the true state of a learning organisation is hard to achieve. They suggest that organisations develop into learning organisations through four stages.

Stage 1) The knowing organisation is one which aims at efficiencies, knows its environment, makes small, adaptive changes but where change is limited as aspects around the organisation are fairly stable.

Stage 2) The understanding organisation where the search to understand the environment is prevalent.
Stage 3) The thinking organisation where difficulties and complexities are recognised but the response is more reactive.

Stage 4) The learning organisation where change is accepted as ‘a way of life’ and where the organisation is pro-active and a step ahead. As Rollinson et al (1998) explain experiences are seen enthusiastically as are learning opportunities and experimentation is embraced with barriers to innovation challenged and changed.

The overall characteristics of a learning organisation are summarised by Snell (2001) into seven categories.

1. **Free exchange in, across and between communities of practice.** These communities of practice as Brown and Duguid (1996:14) explain can be either hierarchical where seniors or “expert masters socialise novices” into local meaning, or collegial where “informed dialogue among members is central to the ongoing co-evolution of meaning and capabilities” Liedtka (1999:7). The learning organisation is characterised by openness, free flow, exploration and development between these communities of practice. Formula 1 may be a good example of how different communities internally e.g. mechanics, drivers, design, have to operate together to get the edge over other Formula 1 teams and how the acquisition of a driver from one team to another enhances the community.

2. **Network Knowledge and Experience.** The organisational unit acquires knowledge and shares it openly in order to extend the meaning and interpretation. Groupings within the public sector such as child death enquiries may be an example where ‘fixed truths’ are in themselves less useful than how the outcome effects different but co-operative organisations e.g. Health Visitor, Social Worker, Teacher etc.

3. **Continual improvement amongst inputs and outputs.**

4. **Learning leadership across all levels of management and supervision in the organisation.** Here seniors create a shared vision based on creativity and innovation and implement such a vision co-operatively.

5. **Open dialogue** in order to deal with the complexity and intricacy of current turbulent environments where data alone cannot satisfy. The necessity for discourse and dialogue to explore as, Snell (2001:322) outlines, the “learning about the nature of self, other, the organisation and its environment”. This, creating a reflective thoughtful interaction which entails “a stream of meaning flowing among and through a group of people” Bohm (1990:1).

6. **Continual Transformation.** The ability to continually be able to adjust flexibly to whatever faces the organisation.

7. **Protean psychological contracts.** The exposing of members of the organisation to situations, challenges, environments which enhance their capabilities.
Encouragement is given to individuals to embrace learning and in doing so help the collective to learn also.

If these characteristics occur within an organisation then, in theory, past inadequacies could be avoided. Garrett (1990) for example notes that in many national disasters, the post event analysis showed that the knowledge existed which could have avoided the very event that transpired. Organisations arguably have most of their own solutions already within, yet further past difficulties are often repeated, both in the organisation and other similar or partner organisations. Ricki Neve and Maria Colwell child death enquiries are examples of this. What then, in practical terms, can managers do to establish a learning organisation, embed the characteristics and achieve the conditions which allow organisational learning.

**The Learning Organisation – A Description**

The following description accumulates the managerial thinking on what features, in an organisation, enable it to develop into a learning organisation. For management students and practitioners this means what one would ‘look like’. McKinsey’s Seven ‘S’ Audit (1982) is used as a format for such description.

**Structure**

Pedler et al (1991) illustrate in Figure 3:1 the need to release the internal energy of the organisation through the decentralisation of structure. The management of this is important to create a positive learning company and not allow the chaos of ‘frenzied anarchy’.

![Figure 3:1 Combining Energy and Structure for Learning](source: Pedlar et al (1991:166))
De-centralisation, local decision making at the lowest possible point and flexible working practices coupled with self-regulation and reduced control systems are all hallmarks of structures that can be exploited to develop a learning organisation. Jones & Hendry (1992) claim flatter structures in essence allows change to be faced more rapidly and positively. Such a ‘de-layering’ process can therefore be, as Pearn (1992) notes, synonymous with better decision making and communication.

The importance of teams in this de-layered structure is emphasised by West (1994) and Wilson (1992). Teams allow for the expansion of the organisation’s ability to cope with new ideas and practices and not change. Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992) sum it up by suggesting a set of organic networks based on a) loosely combined teams; b) decentralisation; c) mixtures of thinkers (staff) and doers (line); and d) co-ordination through discussion.

Jones and Hendry (1992) are clear that the bureaucratic structures of the past created too much work, and got too large to enable learning in any widespread way. Learning is impeded and restricted when there are two features existing, firstly fragmentation and functional teams which have no horizontal connection and secondly when the different stratas of the hierarchy have poor up and downward interaction. The former allows segregated issues to become exclusive or untouchable and in both it is difficult to share and mutually develop. Plunkett and Fourier (1991) explain the importance in structures where control is shared and interaction between groupings is established.

Pedler et al (1991:22) suggest a move away from restrictive job descriptions, confined and prescriptive roles and positions, a reduction in red tape and ‘rigid mind sets’. They go on to support roles that are loosely structured which reflect more the client’s needs. “The departmental and other boundaries are seen as temporary structures that can flex in response to changes”. Flatter, enabling structures with reduced segmentation between functions is supported by Hayes et al (1988). This, in broad terms appears sensible but it is important when delayering or restructuring to ensure the structure is not so lean as to hamper learning because capacity and space, especially in management post, are not present.

Style

The style of an organisation and its members can be aligned with what one could call personality in an individual. In a learning organisation the prevailing style is one that has a concern for others and sees the value of colleagues. The leader does not believe they
are omnipotent or that they have all the answers. Rather, as Jones and Hendry (1992) explain, they see others as a source of vision, innovation and creativity. The leader’s task is to harness and encourage this. Management and membership style is open and approachable and there is encouragement to be innovative and risk taking. The protection of position and information is alien to the organisation that wishes to learn.

A collaborative delegated style of management allows for the development of a higher set of vision and goals rather than merely the completion of the task, e.g. quality, excellence, service etc. The management style, as West (1994) underlines has moved away from the charismatic leader where more than an element of blind faith existed, to a manager as facilitator, steward, more team-based and democratic. Donegan (1990) discusses the culture as being people-empowered and this participative, inclusive focus enables leaders leading others to lead themselves thus creating vision for the organisation in all parts of it.

The style of the organisation to Jankowicz (2000) is one where the only separation between layers is the levels of control not participation. Individuals at all levels can contribute as long as they have the language to do so and the methods or systems by which the lower levels can influence strategy and policy making and where senior levels can participate in operational issues with equal respect on both sides. This empowerment leads not only to participation in design and decision making but when representing the organisation. Those with most knowledge and experience, regardless of status, represent the organisation as they are the best persons to do so not because they hold greater command.

Individual style demands confidence and an inner sense of self. It often necessitates a lack of defensiveness and protectionism, which allows for the acceptance and acknowledgement of mistakes, mis-judgements and errors. The ‘always getting it right first time’ requirement would not exist. This of course will necessitate honesty and an ability to share feelings, needs and fears.

The description of the style of the learning organisation is dominated by such terms as dynamic, adaptive, a living system, intelligent, self-organising, innovative. The over-riding impression one gains from key writers is the necessity for organisations to have a style which is not repressed by systems, attitudes and existing cultural norms. The organisation style needs to be based on co-operation, honest dialogue and an atmosphere not restricted by fear or favour. The learning organisation is able to be reactive if necessary but solutions will mostly be based on reflection, feedback, constant audit and analysis of activities.
Increasingly, learning is seen outside the context of formal training and education structures. Critchley (1993:17) explains the recent changes in rethinking of the learning process within organisations and suggests "that the linear teaching-led paradigm has been strongly challenged by a newer self-managed, person-centred, learning-led paradigm". Iles (1994) notes that managers often use mentors and role models to underpin their skill base. Learning, therefore, does not need a formalised style in order to ensure it occurs. Indeed, to do so would be beyond the finance of most organisations. The central principle and style of learning should be a demand for continuous self-development. Every interaction and every situation would be seen as a learning opportunity.

Staff

Pfeffer (1994) shows that the one abiding source of differentiation in an organisation is its employees. Human resource differentiation has one major advantage to an organisation, that its successful aspects are hard to copy and often hard to emulate by others. It is primarily because effective interaction is often not a visible, quantifiable and recordable source - it does not have patented features. Secondly, like DNA testing, each organisation has its own individual profiling.

Human resources are one of the few organisational assets which can over time and with the right input, increase in value. Experience, knowledge, training, all can positively accumulate to make a precious and often unquantifiable asset to the organisation. Depreciation of the human resource can be created by the organisation itself when personnel feel unfulfilled, frustrated, under-utilised, not involved. Likert's (1961) studies of managing change and participation shows the benefit of proper consultation with the staff resource in order to ensure change and development is maximised and as effective as possible.

Mayo (1993) reflects on Japanese firms and learning cultures to gather points for western organisations. Here the principle of 'kaizen' continuing improvement and learning from others follows accumulated knowledge of staff to be used in harmony and to the benefit of the organisation. In these organisations which have a learning focus the creation of experts is seen as a negative concept as the expert status may only result in undermining and under valuing other important contributors.

The shift of balance within a learning organisation is to ensure that staff take responsibility for their own self-development with the support of resources and facilities from the organisation. Staff are no longer passive players within a training field but pro-
active in creating a learning process. Jones and Hendry (1992) underline that staff attitudes is a central feature in achieving any improvements and that no-one is exempt from the necessity of continual development. This is supported by Carnall's (1992:67) reminder that, particularly in the public sector, staff's shift from a 'career for life' model to a more "individually centred concept of career perhaps adds a new impetus to learn how to learn". Moller (1991) confirms that staff should accept responsibility, at least in part, for themselves and their self-stewardship. Staff in turn gain more equality and decision making powers and this increases personal responsibility for the organisation. This reciprocity is important.

In order for a learning organisation to be established, there has to be a significant change in mind set with organisational members. Trappings of status, historical working practices, all the props and symbols existing, will tend to move away into a new mental model. Staff profiles in such an organisation are likely to be different in order to gain advantage but existing companies may be surprised at just how diverse their existing staff groups already are.

When staff feel valued, trusted and part of the whole, then studies show that performance improves. Isolation can create defensive actions and result in a poor action base. Staff in a learning organisation take comfort from the team approach, the shared experience and the mutual support but this is coupled with their own responsibility for their performance and ultimate accountability particularly in a professional organisation.

These may seem relatively easy to instigate but the balance between change and stability is a delicate one given that change in itself creates its own demands on personnel. Much depends on the organisation to assist in the success of managing that balance. In addition, the current environmental need for quick responses has led to a delegation of power and 'empowerment' of personnel. However along with this can come struggles from more senior managers who may resist such delegation as risky and unacceptable. It would be wrong to create the impression that the making of a more empowered workforce is not without its difficulties.

**Skills**

Sadler (1993:12) suggests that in order to participate in a total learning system, management development is crucial. Above the common skills of appraisal and review, a learning organisation needs the higher range of competency and vision. Competencies are particularly needed in the formulation of "business policies, analysis and diagnosis of organisational problems, and intervention and social skills" Sadler (1993).
Communication skills are essential where "learning to engage in dialogue" is, to Critchley (1993:20), a vital challenge. A communication model should not be attached solely to position and hierarchy because a consequence may be conflict and adversarial positions. The skills of negotiation, sharing, joint decision making, objective setting, advocacy and reasonable presentation of argument and debate are the skills encouraged, especially where organisational defences are very much in evidence.

Argyris (1992) particularly is concerned with learning organisations having the ability to look not only at the superficial but at experiences from a new depth of understanding. This ability to look at learning, not merely from the presenting evidence but from a level of meta-analysis and what lies behind the evidence, is central to Argyris' & Schon's (1978) single loop and double loop learning model.

Illes (1994), it has already been noted, recognises the length and value of the skill life cycles of personnel. These skills of course are not only based on the accumulation of knowledge but as a resource are transferable to other settings all within the existing organisation. Illes (1994:4) suggests that one should consider organisations as a "portfolio of strategic skills" and a collection of "core competencies". Skills therefore become an organisational skill base as opposed to an individual one.

In a learning organisation, self development, self discipline, coping with self doubts, self-criticism and self motivation are vital. All organisational players will benefit from the ability to empower and be empowered, to enhance learning and to learn, to let go decision making and to take up decision making. As the learning organisation is one which capitalises on the individual skills of organisational players, according to Jones and Hendry (1992:5), the key is to "unlock hidden knowledge and skills which exist within the organisation": the hidden knowledge that is accumulated day by day but never recognised. Interestingly the NVQ scheme endeavours to tap in to and recognise this knowledge base.

If one considers the complex organisation, skills are quite distinctive. Meyer at al (1998) notes that managers in such systems become 'organisational architects' who control the levels of improvisation, the pace and rhythm of innovation and the types and nature of alliances and collaboration. These are quite different skills to the traditional managerial tool kit. The manager in today's environment relies on the ability to create an organisation that Anderson (1999:228) terms 'evolutionary' and adaptive "where cascades of change are constantly playing out and overlapping with one another.....". "Adaptation is the passage of an organisation through an endless series of organisational microstates...."
If the learning organisation is to concentrate on the ability to adapt constantly rather than to change rapidly then clearly the cycles of change and stability, restructuring and maintenance are made redundant in preference to the ability to constantly alter and achieve 'lizard-like' change according to the environment. It is the ability to maintain service delivery at a time of looking forward, developing, and 'envisioning' that is important. This dual personality in the organisation can not only be difficult but can also create internal tensions and stresses which in turn must be dealt with healthily.

Skills of reflection and analysis are vital so that current information and experience is fully utilised. Extrapolation from relevant data allows for lateral thinking and a freedom of mind to wander the corridor of experimentation in one's mind. Carnall (1999:10) terms this "a combination of cognitive/analytical skills and knowledge - and behavioural or process skills and knowledge".

Of course, skills to deal with painful matters may also be required if they do not already exist. There is no utopia in a learning organisation, indeed the various exposures that accompany a learning organisational strategy will mean that some staff will be de-skilled and others will dysfunction. Challenging staff actions may lead to expulsion from the organisation and this will need skilful handling for those excluded and those remaining.

Strategy

Any organisational strategy will include internal and external stakeholders. This is no less so in public organisations where stakeholders hold high power and influence and where external stakeholders are often the weather vane of society in general.

Whether at macro and/or internal level Iles (1994:5) explains that organisational learning is at the heart of any corporate strategy. A strategy should include the principles of organisational development and, according to Iles, learning should be promoted as a principle and this "integrated at the strategic level into the organisation". This means that the internalising of learning as a strategy can also be reflected in the powerful leaders of the organisation, particularly the political leaders.

Jashapara (1993:2) notes that learning for its own sake will not achieve the organisation's desire. It must have a focus through its organisational strategy and time will dictate a shift in the focus to cope with new demands and needs. Jashapara terms this the 'competitive learning organisation'. Here the learning requirements are closely attached to the organisation's understanding of the key forces in the environment and then the
"levels of learning are linked to the firm's ability to manage and mobilise its resources through time..."

Strategies need adaptability and as Collins & Porras (1991) suggest, strategic goals need to be attainable and challengable. Interestingly, they also suggest that they should be 'risky' and not an end in themselves as organisations can lose their impetus. Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992) see them as one of continual development, pro-active and participative in their formulation. Managers exercise control and influence through probing the rhythm of what is occurring in the organisation generating novelty and innovation by minor changes whilst retaining the best practices. The strategy therefore is evolutionary, adaptable. Instead of shaping what Mintzberg & Waters (1994:188) describe as the "pattern in a stream of decisions" and defining that as strategy, Burgelman (1991:229) considers "managers shape the context within which it emerges".

Strategies within a learning organisation are not the old style barrier and defensive mechanisms, no longer the isolated, insular model. Modern public sector organisations especially have demands placed upon them to develop strategically with other similar organisations. This makes strategic development difficult as it can be unpredictable and subject to rapid multi-layered change each having inter-connected knock-on effects.

Anderson (1999) claims that strategists, by altering the context, also change the behaviours that emerge and the extent of diverse responses to such shaping of the context. In essence, therefore, there is more likelihood of innovation, as change and strategy is not led by one or a small number of senior managers but generated in the middle and lower parts of the organisation. This increases the repertoire of organisational behaviour and responses but of course demands clever strategic management and sophisticated managerial skills. West (1994:36) suggests that to have a learning approach it is necessary that strategic planning should be "determined by enquiry driven action and experimentation", thus forward thinking.

Janokwicz (2000) provides an analysis on how organisations move from 'learning' to 'adaptive'. He suggests that much of what is involved in adaptive organisations is making explicit what is implicit when discussing learning organisations. Strategically he suggests an organisation being able to refer to itself as a whole and recognising that in self-analysis there is an 'incompleteness' by virtue of the undecided or 'undecidable' from the organisation. The strategic question therefore is 'should we, rather than can we' do this.
Systems

Organisations are a myriad of different types of systems, interactions and processes. Systems can on the one hand restrict, repress, control or can enhance, exploit and facilitate. It is evident that the latter describes best the type of systems expounded in a learning organisation. West (1994) suggests that learning organisations are those where systems are open and structures are 'contingent' on the 'situational variables' that exist. Excessive control systems are seen by West as blocks to the learning ability of the organisation. Here systems establish inflexibility and thus restrict the potential of individuals and the organisation and fetter the learning process. Argyris and Schon (1978) suggest that systems and operating procedures can often reduce rather than enhance learning and performance.

There are a variety of different systems within any organisation, each can either enable the organisation or hamper it. Information and managerial systems as Ross (1992) explains are there to inform about trends, resource needs, to predict need and to account for actions. Information has in the past often been held at a certain strata in the organisation, dissemination can lead to greater understanding and ownership at all levels. Mayo (1993) suggests that reward systems should be geared towards learning and they should acknowledge accumulated learning, skill and experience. This is of course different from reward associated merely with position. The danger of course is reward as performance and interpreting that as rewarding learning and growth, the latter a less tangible measurement.

Communication systems in general are seen by Francis (1987) as having four important functions namely to share the vision, to integrate effort, to make decisions and finally to sustain the community. They are in essence, essential to the maintenance and sustainability of the organisation. They can, according to Jones & Hendry (1992) assist in unlocking the organisation’s collective knowledge. This will ensure that the communication is accurately interpreted and received.

Carnall (1999:72) however, believes that there is a necessity for convergent systems which "capture and create knowledge". He suggests the converging of IT capacity, management structure and systems designed to consider learning as well as "corporate development processes" with the vision of achieving learning. This will include technical systems. Leadership, rewards and 'mental maps' are necessary if this is to be gained. Snell (2001:320) supports this when he suggests that in learning organisations "people,
practices, policies and principles develop systematically and collectively in harmony with the changing environment”.

Systems reflect the complexity of the organisation and the external and internal environments that it operates within. Indeed Pascale (1999) notes that they are inherently complex adaptive systems and in order to address such complexity, systems must constantly alter. Simon (1996) points out there are then ‘nested hierarchies’ of complex adaptive systems and sub systems that contain other adaptive systems. These as Anderson (1999:225) explains, are subject to evolutionary pressures, “every aspect of a complex adaptive system – agents, their schemata, the nature and strength of connections between them, and their fitness function can change at any time”. New ones develop whilst older methods decline and the injection of new phenomena introduces the ability for cross-fertilisation and imitation of the existing system. Groups, sections, and tasks are all affected by the integration of new ideas, and the impact of new demands. Technological developments, by virtue of their ability to have higher capacity, are a good example of developments that affect systems’ building. Additionally the increased multi-agency strategic developments demand new systems’ developments across, not only teams and units, but different organisations.

Shared Values

If one considers shared values as those commonly held through norms, language, myths, stories, then it is evident this reflects the culture of the organisation. Shared values are often the intangible. Morgan (1986) terms this intangible as the ‘social glue’ which holds everything together.

Shared values can of course be concrete principles and indeed in professional organisations there are many commonly held, recognised and noted values that persist across the organisation. Shared values in a learning organisation like other organisations hold the principles and philosophy together. Without them, especially in a format which needs so much giving of oneself and taking from others, limited learning may exist or be sustained.

Shared values and ethics in such an organisation means a move away from individual isolation to group and mutual task patterns. This sharing of activities is important but clearly needs a new organisational culture to sustain it. The values that currently exist within many organisations rest on the common themes of success and achieving goals. To change this value base, to accept failure, to own up to personal stress and inadequacies and to see mistakes as learning opportunities, is a significant shift.
Organisations' cultures can be so strong that the development of that which is new is hampered. These 'closed' internal situations are contrary to that needed for any organisation to learn. Cultures need to be strong, not strangling, open but not 'unattached'. Denison (1990) develops this by suggesting that culture itself is underpinned by prior learning experiences and by sub-cultures. It may therefore be key to the development of a learning culture to 'unlearn' the existing cultural norms. Argyris (1992) details the necessity of the 'unlearning organisation', where such unlearning of past behaviour, in order to move forward, is a painful and particularly difficult process.

Illes (1994) makes reference to the presumption of learning and work being invisible. If this were to be the first principle of shared values then organisations could establish an ethos of learning which would be ever developing, ever organic and ever keen to know new things, assess new ideas and always be in advance. New knowledge and new skills are acquired through the learning process and it is important that the value of that learning process is recognised. How often do staff attend training courses but rarely have the value of that new learning accepted? The value of others' learning can be shared and accepted in order to gain the most from the experience and the insights. Learning therefore should not be ridiculed by others who may feel threatened by the growth in their colleagues.

Pedler et al (1991) offer a model of the learning company, which demonstrates key issues. This is presented in Figure 3:2 and has been adapted by the author against McKinsey's (1982) Seven 'S' Audit.

**Synergy – Putting it all together**

In order to achieve a vibrant community across the organisation, Illes (1994:5) argues that learning cannot occur in isolated patches, "a little oasis of learning in an otherwise arid desert". Illes' (1994) first suggestion is to audit the existing organisation and then to identify and remove barriers. This study will include both these elements in relation to Children's Services.

Garvin (1993) describes learning organisations as skilled in five areas, systematic problem solving, experimentation, learning from experience, learning from others and with a sophisticated ability to share and transfer knowledge. These all lead to the maximisation of information and learning.
Company policies reflect the values of all members not just those of top management.

Policy and strategy formation structured as learning processes.

Company regularly takes stock and modifies direction and strategy as appropriate.

All members of the company take part in policy and strategy information.

We regularly meet with our competitors to share ideas and information.

You can get feedback on how your section or department is doing at any time by pressing a button.

Information is used for understanding, not for reward or punishment.

Systems of accounting, budgeting and reporting are structured to assist learning.

The nature of "reward" is examined in depth.

We have rules and procedures but they are frequently changed after review and discussion.

People make time to question their own practice, to analyse, discuss and learn from what happens.

Managers facilitate communication, negotiation and contracting, rather than exerting top-down control.

The basic assumptions and values underpinning reward systems are explored and shared.

Roles and careers are flexibly structured to allow for experimentation, growth and adaptation.

It is part of the work of all staff to collect, bring back, and report information about what's going on outside the company.

There is a general attitude of continuous improvement - always trying to learn and do better.

Departments speak freely and candidly with each other, both to challenge and to give help.

The Learning Company

Figure 3.2 Pedlar et al 1991:25. The Learning Company Model adapted by author to include McKinseys (1982) Seven 'S'
The issue of strategy symbolises the necessity of the holistic approach where integration of learning is part of the core of organisational aims. All else flows from this. Here the boundaries between the inside and the outside worlds of the organisation need to be complementary and reflective of the value and acknowledgement of the learning as a key cornerstone.

According to Lessem (1991:28) a learning organisation harmonises the participative and innovative development between the multi dimensional aspects of the organisation. “The learning organisation therefore, is able to accommodate progressively more complex information, ranging from the specific to the universally abstract”. This integration of systems, employees, vision, purpose, managers, style, change, metaphorically creates the organisation’s spider’s web of linking segments and supporting the organisation’s raison d’être.

Argyris & Schon (1978) raise the paradox of organisations not merely being a collection of individuals and yet without such a collection an organisation does not exist. It is the very synergy of these individuals that is the important intangible in a learning organisation: how the individuals become a collective and how in one sense they become an individual i.e. an individual organisation. Morgan (1986) uses the example of companies being like organisms with all the interconnected parts changing and altering in relation to the environment. As Kim (1993:47) outlines the “complexity lies in the nature of the interrelationships amongst the parts whose cause – effect relationships are highly non-linear and distant in space and time”.

It has been noted that learning and diversity are closely and positively linked and that diversity cannot be constructive unless as Hawkins (1991) notes it has some over-arching vision, a structure for strategic groups, a ‘capability for dialogue’ and ‘co-creation’ to hold together the diversity. As McLean & Marshall (1989) recognise if isolation occurs between the strategic and operational domain then this leads to ineffective practice. Hawkins (1991) indeed calls lack of integration as ‘the greatest danger’. The learning organisation is one which brings together all activities, disparate ideas and the co-ordination of all issues and recognises how each fact impacts on another.

The learning organisation therefore organises and reorganises itself and considers holistically the complex system it operates. The social systems, external networking, environmental audit and analysis, changing balances between fluidity and rigidity layered with the delegation of decision making, allow the organisation to change naturally and alter, underlining a fundamental. That fundamental is that organisations, to survive must accept
and manage the unpredictability and the complex. Pascale (1999) emphasises that strategically, organisations should be aware of four principles.

a) Equilibrium in such systems place the organisation at risk 'of death'.

b) There must be 'intelligence' at all levels and extremes of the organisation in order that there can be 'self-organisation and innovation'.

c) That complexity and chaos are closely linked because these are more conducive to encourage innovation and creativity than stability is. Organisations at their peak must 'go down' in order to regenerate and re-peak.

d) "One cannot direct a living system, only disturb it" Pascale (1999:85). The linkages between cause and effect are not always relevant, especially in relation to impact. Therefore the impact of a single event e.g. the publicity in regard to one case can have a wide ranging effect on national organisations. This is evident in individual mental health cases where government policy comes under scrutiny. The further complexity is that one case may have an effect whilst another does not.

The overriding shared value in this learning organisation is to acknowledge and deal with this complexity. This can only be achieved at all levels by facing dynamic and threatening phenomena together, with all the parts working as a whole and recognising its strength in doing so.

Senge's (1990) Fifth Discipline encapsulates the very depth of approach needed to move towards a learning model. Its holistic approach is summed up by Lessem (1993:28) as "a discipline of seeing wholes". Senge's systems thinking "seeing the world anew" in "a framework for seeing interrelationships" (1993:68) as an integrated whole not merely unconnected parts, sees "circles of causality" (1993:73) which builds acceptance of shared responsibility. This builds on "reinforcing and balancing" (1993:79) feedback focussing on the implicit as well as explicit. The acceptance of established structures and patterns are Senge's "nature's template" (1993:93). Acknowledging what is there, working with the inherent and identifying limitations to create "leverage" (1993:115) is important. "Shifting the burden" (1993:104) represents the ownership of one's own actions but also the real problems rather than cosmetically dealing with the systems. Such identification leads to "the principle of leverage" (1993:115) where enduring improvement occurs and finally "seeing the wood and the trees" (1993:127) - the implicit necessity of a holistic approach and managing the range of complexity.

This descriptive analysis of the learning organisation has led to the conclusion that in essence is supported by managerial theory. Rigidity in organisational management will not
cope with the complexity that faces today's survivors. When this organisation was first studied, learning organisations were not accepted phenomena in many mainstream organisations. Its development was then still viewed with some scepticism and cynicism by those who remained rooted in a 'harder' approach. Currently the phrase 'learning organisation' is contained in many government documents, raising the public sector management consciousness of this development. However maybe even this can benefit from current thinking and the growing debate and analysis of Knowledge Management.

Knowledge Management

The period between 1995 and 2000 has seen developments within the academic field as well as developments operationally and environmentally. In 1995 academics in management theory had written fairly extensively about learning organisations and organisational learning. The intervening years have seen that balance shift towards terminology such as 'knowledge management', how to manage knowledge wisely, the 'knowing' organisations, the 'knowledge economy', and how to strategically manage intellectual capital. It is suggested here that this is a balance shift and development in academic thinking and not a radical new approach in itself. It fits with the 'family' of management theories which include organisational development, management change and learning organisations.

Chumer et al (2000:xvii) consider the 'revival' of knowledge as a mainstream management activity as developing from within the expert/consultant grouping and as a result of various research and academic studies. They suggest influence has come from three different experts or academic sources. Firstly developments within "information and library science" where the retrieval of information from a mass of material can be achieved through "objectified, catalogued, classified and therefore selectively retrieved" systems constitutes knowledge management. Computer science and information systems build somewhat on this objective and codified approach where knowledge management is hijacked by the technocrats who equate knowledge and information. Indeed the dominance of information technology is demonstrated, as Easterby-Smith et al (2000) explain, by approximately 70% of publications on knowledge management being sourced from information technology specialists. Here computer infrastructures are said to offer, through e-mail, groupware, internet access etc, a higher potential for innovation and the reduction of co-ordination costs. Davenport et al (1998) express concern that knowledge management may be overwhelmed by those very techno-managers who may have such focus on the accumulation of knowledge without considering social factors.
Secondly the area of strategic management and economics has produced, through writers such as Spender (1996), Tsoukas (1996) and Nonaka (1994), the concept of 'knowledge-based' theory with its focus on the evaluation and stabilisation of new activities within the firm. Economics is of course central to most managerial studies and the development of thinking by such writers as Howitt (1996) and Hodgson (1999) provides the linkage between knowledge and economic advantage. Freeman (1996) suggests that such change may be temporary as it has a focus on 'techno-economics' and that this may well move into a new set of social, economic and organisational arrangements.

This leads thirdly onto that of knowledge management and organisational learning which concentrates, from the academics viewpoint, as Blackler (1995) outlines, on the social infrastructures of individual, group and organisation. The centre of this work as Chumer (2000:xxix) explains is establishing how to improve "the depth, spread and speed by which employers acquire and apply commercially valuable knowledge". Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995:70) are key exponents of the principles in organisational learning which transfers tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge through a variety of means as "organisational knowledge creation is a continuous and dynamic interaction" between the two social interactions leading to the conversion.

The three sources of influences in the development of knowledge management theory have different emphasis. The former from the information/technological perspective concentrates on the accumulation of data, its codification and distribution. This in essence appears a mechanistic approach. The strategic management and economic viewpoint does however try to systematise through processes that inform and arguably manages by the selection and interpretation of data. The organisational learning angle, however, appears the most sophisticated approach because it centres on the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and manages the 'raw material' of perhaps multiple individuals, adding value through the socialisation of those individuals in the organisation to have knowledge of higher specification.

The reasons for the re-emergence of the rhetoric around knowledge may reflect the massive technological changes affecting the information arena; the demands on organisational behaviours because of increased complexity and, in strategic management terms, the need to have economic/competitive advantage. This is an increasingly pressurised world with reduced managers and limited difference between organisations.
At this point it is important to clarify any residual confusion about knowledge and learning. Knowledge, according to Brown and Woodland (1999:178) is both a 'means and an end'; learning on the other hand is the “process of acquiring knowledge and teaching as the process of disseminating knowledge”.

Similar to the differentiation between organisational learning and the learning organisation there is here a differentiation between management acceptance of the importance of knowledge as an organisational asset and how knowledge management, as a process within an organisation, occurs.

Knowledge can be described as an accumulated, complex and, as Starbuck (1992:150), suggests a "stock of expertise not a flow of information". Learning on the other hand can be a solitary, isolated, event led concept which is about the acquiring of new information. This then is added to the wider range of information, in its broadest sense, to influence and impact on existing knowledge.

Organisations with a Knowledge Focus

The use of “knowledge as strategy” is outlined by Earl (1997:3) where, in his analysis of the developments within two companies Skonda & Sharko, he discusses the difference between data, information and knowledge and the use of the latter strategically to achieve competitive advantage. This realisation of knowledge as a strategic resource is underlined by Earl's identification of three levels of knowledge. Firstly accepted knowledge, e.g. procedures, laws etc. (aligned by Earl with a more scientific paradigm), secondly workable knowledge e.g. policy, probable events (aligned with judgement) and thirdly potential knowledge e.g. observation, history etc (aligned with experience). The level of certainty within the knowledge base increased up the levels from accepted, through workable to potential. Each of these levels requires a different strategic approach. As Earl (1997:6) explains “experience requires action and memory, judgement requires analysis and sensing, and science requires formulation and consensus”.

Birchall and Tovstiga (1999:1) highlight that knowledge, in today's assessment of a firm's capabilities and competitiveness, is becoming a key determining factor. They suggest “as firms move towards becoming more knowledge-based, they are recognising the need to harness, manage and exploit knowledge like any other asset". Such a harnessing of knowledge is similar to the debate which emphasises that the whole is more than just the sum of the parts. The ability to use information and learning across the organisation allows
for the creation and innovation of new ideas and proposals, thus the accumulated expertise adds value, reduces inappropriate duplication and allows for similar experience, learning and expertise to be integrated knowledgeably.

Abrahamson & Eiseman (2001:68) agree that the current knowledge economy means the acceptance of knowledge as a commodity and therefore having a saleable value. They go on to suggest that developments in "the management knowledge market" will become such that it is an increasingly "sought after, lucrative commodity..." which in itself will stimulate further the market economy of knowledge.

The development within organisational theory now views knowledge as a commodity in its own right. This is so clearly evident in human intensive organisation and those where the added value to an organisation is sourced in its intellectual capacity. Public sector organisations, with high levels of professional staff, are a case in point. This of course acknowledges the internal value of strategically managing knowledge and intellect.

Teece (2000) however, gives a much more practical example of strategic management within the environment. Teece's contention builds on the entirely new environments in which organisations operate. Decreased time and cost of information sharing, on the one hand increases markets, knowledge etc but also increases threats from other organisations. The replication of the intangible assets historically was difficult and arguably remains so to a greater or lesser extent. Strategically therefore, the protection of intellectual property, brands, etc is important to add to the security of the organisation. This is a particularly interesting dilemma for the public sector where increased use of knowledge processes, creative ideas and intellect may need to be protected but where there is a political demand for sharing across organisations and giving away intellectual growth, ideas and developments for the 'greater good'. Ironically however, the 'political' forces do not acknowledge in performance tables such creativity in the traditional settings of public organisations. Comparison between similar organisations has little flexibility and does not acknowledge or celebrate difference.

Teece's (2000) suggestions therefore of limitation strategies, entry strategies in markets, licensing options, outsourcing and insourcing strategies for innovators and the strategic development of complementary assets may not immediately seem so easily related to public sectors. The shifting environmental ground around such sectors however does demand a strategic approach which could do worse than learn from such advice. Technological developments and the licensing of those are a good example of creating a
commercial business advantage even within such settings. Strategic qualities of top managers in managing intellectual knowledge assets could therefore reflect such developments, particularly in organisations unfamiliar with the commodification of knowledge.

It is of course, accepted that systems in a learning organisation context will not be dissimilar to that of a knowledge management dimension. Systems development in the latter however is captured by Gupta and Govindarajan (2000) when they highlight the mistake that knowledge management and information management are synonymous. They suggest that, although important, information management on its own is not enough. The 'social ecology' of the organisation is more specifically the social system in which individuals practise. Gupta and Govindarajan (2000:72) suggest such a social ecology is determined by “culture, structure, information systems, reward systems, processes, people and leadership”. This therefore is not an informal self-developing social system but one which holistically maps interactions from different, disparate individuals. These writers suggest “creating and acquiring new knowledge” and secondly “sharing and mobilising such knowledge throughout the corporate network”. Under the former of accumulating knowledge, Gupta and Govindarajan place knowledge creation, acquisition and retention; under the latter knowledge identification, outflow, transmission and inflow.

Lyles' & Schwenk's (1992) particular 'angle' however centres on knowledge structures of goals, cause and effect, beliefs and cognitive elements within the organisation. Such structures have a close relationship with the external environment and there is a clear interactive element between the two. The internal response is the creation of coalitions, establishment of knowledge structures with their own 'schema', these in turn change as external influences, grouping and internal structures alter.

This brings us to the formal and informal communication and transmission methods in an organisation: the formal methods seen by academics and management practitioners alike as the visible evidence of communication methods. Knackhardt and Hanson (1993) however concentrate on informal networks and advise on how to undertake an analysis of these. This includes the consideration of communication, trust and advice networks and understanding what Hayes and Walsham (2000) note as the relational perspective. These informal systems are similar to the almost hidden world of tacit knowledge. It feels almost having a 'secret service' function there on the one hand as a protector and defender, on the other as potentially so unknown it is untapped and viewed with suspicion.
Birchall and Tovstiga (1999) suggest that the networking of tacit knowledge may seem somewhat challenging especially as they note that such tacit knowledge is most evident around quality control, start-ups and problem solving. Collet (1994) however notes that the transferability of knowledge is directly, and negatively, affected by the level of tacitness of that knowledge and as such this increases the challenge. Kogut and Zander (1992) add that in knowledge sharing and transferability two features dominate – the level of complexity and the codification of that knowledge.

The systems within a knowledge organisation will need to consider the breadth and depth of the flow of knowledge: the management of new ideas, outside information, the establishment of practices and the effective transmission and sharing of those across the department through efficient channels and the retention of knowledge which has been built and accumulated. The latter reflects the learning organisation model of reward systems and strategies, thus not ‘asset stripping’ in relation to intellect as historically occurred with tangible resources.

When considering structural issues in relation to knowledge management, a level of sophistication is reached which reflects the complexity of the issues. Two aspects appear to dominate. The first is well presented by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997:106) where they propose an organisational structure which supports the other aspects of knowledge management. They suggest a “hypertext” organisational structure which is a hybrid of a “non-hierarchical, self-organising structure working in tandem with its hierarchical formal structure”. This in essence is a hybrid of the two traditional structures of a bureaucracy and a taskforce format. The former offering control but stifling initiative and unresponsive to rapid change. The latter on the other hand offering flexibility and adaptability whilst being participative and open to change. The limits of the latter is its often temporary nature which may ‘lose’ knowledge and may find difficulties in the transfer from the task team into general operations. Government taskforces across organisations in many social care issues are a practical and real example of these limits and restrictions.

The ‘hypertext’ organisation is Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1997:106) answer to an organisational design to establish a structural base where “the central requirement for this design is that it provides a knowledge-creating company with the strategic ability to acquire, create, exploit and accumulate new knowledge continuously and repeatedly in a cyclical process”.

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The hypertext organisation is a network of interconnecting, interrelated layers or contexts. The bureaucratic underlay is explained through the main layer which is the business system, the second layer is that of the project team where as many teams as appropriate are established to consider new ideas and new initiatives. The underpinning layer is that of the 'knowledge-based' layer where knowledge collected in the other two layers is "recategorised and recontextualised". Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) explain this layer is not quantifiable or obvious as such but is marbled through the corporate vision, culture etc. The uniqueness of this model is said to be in its layers' interrelationship between each context as shown in Figure 3:3

![Figure 3:3 Hypertext organisation Nonaka & Konno (1993). In Nonaka & Takeuchi (1997:107)](image)

This description may seem somewhat esoteric but in reality knowledge gathered either in the project or bureaucratic layer is moved, consciously, into the knowledge base with the clear creation of an inventory of the knowledge gathered. This knowledge is both of successful and unsuccessful ventures. Members of the project team, when their task is completed, return to the business layer and are reintegrated into the mainstream. The proposal is that the bureaucratic, business layer has the positive features of implementing and communicating knowledge whilst the project layer allows for the imagination and
creativity to be developed. The ability of members to move from one context to another remains the key.

A modern example of such hypertext structures may be the Best Value reviews held in the public sector organisations. These are in essence project team sources from the business layer at the end of which new knowledge is established in the knowledge base while officers return to their substantive role.

The second structural characteristic most noted is that outlined by Prusak (1997) and relates to flat organisations and their ability to learn and communicate. Downsizing or indeed delayering can of course have the positive effect of stimulating a somewhat 'clogged' organisation however the negative effect is the removal of those who may in fact have the most knowledge and expertise. The stripping out of those through, for example early retirement packages, may be removing the very knowledge base needed to build on. This is especially so in organisations which delayers middle senior managers. This is often uncontroversial in public sector organisations at a time of budget reduction as these layers are seen as less political i.e. not taking away from direct service delivery. They may be however the very personnel who should be retained as they hold vast reserves of tacit as well as explicit knowledge.

Storck and Hill (2000) discuss the importance of a strategic community in managing knowledge. Here Storck and Hill go beyond the structure of project or task-orientated teams and suggest a strategic body which would be more representative across the organisation. This would reduce the structural confines of status and 'us and them' and establish what Quinn (1992) would promote, namely structures which are centred around intellect. Quinn's 'intellectual web' has the key features of participants who have regular interaction, mutual interest, recognition of the intrinsic value of learning and incentives for sharing. Here there is an open view and trust built up across the organisation as emphasised by Easterby-Smith (1990) and where challenge is celebrated rather than receiving a defensive reaction. These aspects are of course reflected in the learning organisation, here the additional feature is the increased 'reputation' of the organisation, division or sectors because they are knowledgeable or 'expert'. Rather than viewing this jealously or critically within organisations this is seen positively. The organisational 'swots' are therefore envied not ridiculed.

The link between individual and the whole brings increased emphasis on the social skills of the individual with the ability to communicate and transfer accurately know-how and
knowledge acquired. Many bright ideas, scientific inventions, academic theories are laid to waste by a poor ability to help others understand. The caricature of the clever scientist turning teacher to relay some great invention reflects the anecdote of those who have extraordinary knowledge but an inability to share it. This transfer does not only need good communication skills but an ability to translate the sophisticated to the understandable. Social work students often rail against the superior who may be able to assess a situation quickly. Helping the student to understand that process of deduction is quite a different thing.

Edvinsson and Malone (1997) underline a dilemma when considering intellectual capital as a resource. In organisational terms it is difficult to measure human resources output in terms, as Miller & Wurzbing (1995:16) explain, more “knowledge and skills – intensive economic activities”.

Input into training, education, upgrading of knowledge and qualification is difficult to consider in either measurability or transparency. Unlike other input-output relationships this linkage is not obvious. The ‘quality’ of judgements in public sector organisations is often attributed to experience and status which are often inter-linked. Why? What allows that to happen except the tacit acceptance that these judgements are sound. Confidence, calmness, decisiveness, all these may be the trappings of such a knowledge base and as such establish acceptance of such judgements.

Staff can come from many quarters in the modern organisation whether they are detached workers as ‘corporate gypsies’ such as part-timers, consultants, temporary workers etc. The public sector has significant shortages in teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers and their replacements are often less qualified, temporary, agented staff. Edvinsson and Malone (1997) recommend the management of this intellectual mêlée through replacing hierarchy with concentric rings of staff the ‘bullseye’ being the core who hold key knowledge and have long term established relationships. The requirement here is the ability to have leaders who are ‘networking competent’, that can manage the concentric rings to the organisation’s knowledge benefit.

A different angle on staff is encapsulated in Jones’ (2000) title “Knowledge Workers ‘R’ Us”. The new type of worker here is indeed one who is transferring into the ground traditionally held by academics. The acknowledgement of expertise, the informing of actions through research, the academic support of practice is now being invaded by the practitioners and those who marry the academic and the operational. This of course
clouds the usual split between training/teaching and learning. The former being 'done unto you' the latter a participative self-development approach. Here too is the increased integration of the individual intellect and the organisations intellect with the consequent demise in traditional training methodologies. Such an integration places in some shade the "specific intellectuals" as Foucault (1980) terms them and the traditional expert role. Indeed in the social work field the galloping ahead of practitioners in the use of current research has somewhat left behind academic colleagues. Their ability therefore to train new entrant social workers, to reach the expected level of basic current knowledge, is at risk.

These new knowledge organisations appear to have a number of grades, circles or layers which are differently treated to affect the knowledge of the organisation. The diversity in organisations needs to be recognised and with that diversity different knowledge bases. Thompson et al (2000) lead us to consider different high-grade knowledge held in different places. The most unqualified direct service practitioners e.g. a home help, may possess high level competence in client communication and practical knowledge whilst the senior manager would be at a loss. The reverse then occurs with strategic skills highly honed in the latter group. Programmes on the television such as "Return to the Floor" BBC2 are a good example of how different knowledge bases are resident in different staff levels. The capturing of that capability is the key.

The debate on knowledge management has highlighted additional features to that of a learning organisation. The two key criteria of knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing have already been noted. Identifying opportunities to share knowledge, then encouraging individuals to do so, having effective "transmission channels", and "convincing individuals to accept and use the knowledge they receive" are all proposed by Gupta & Govindarajan (2000:77-78) as the bedrock of shifting the social ecology. They however also add that the "knowledge machine" can only be effective if companies "set stretch goals, provide incentives, encourage experimentation, empower people and culminate within the company a market for ideas" (2000:78). The move therefore from redistributing learned activities to the creation of new approaches is an important balance shift. The permission to be creative, to make mistakes, to try out new approaches is celebrated. This however is underpinned with a different cultural approach in the organisation. "Knowledge hoarders" are banned and "knowledge givers" (2000:79) celebrated. The struggle to codify tacit knowledge is invested in and the fast movement of this knowledge is a corporate goal.
The analysis of knowledge management as opposed to learning organisations does establish the additional feature in such organisations as the virtual organisation, the 'parallel universe' of knowledge management through knowledge structures, strategy, skills, systems etc. The central learning organisation is enhanced therefore with the strategic management of the knowledge both explicit and tacit of its personnel with this strategy being 'upfront', known and shared.

Knowledge management has then two particular features to add to that already noted in the Seven 'S' Audit of the learning organisation. The first is the engagement of staff beyond systems and routines to genuinely share especially tacit knowledge and secondly that engagement is continual as knowledge is an accumulated process and not a single learnt event. The learning organisation's collaborative, team-orientated, flat enabling structure with clear strategic acknowledgement of learning and systems to support it, all remain. The art of knowledge management is the added value of a sophisticated capturing, in the organisation's knowledge repositories, of experience and knowledge of individuals. This capturing is according to McKinlay (2000) significant as it is not only about mobilising and harnessing knowledge but storing it for re-use. Knowledge management is recognised as having a value but this is intangible, hard to quantify although conversely its loss is tangible once it has gone. Knowledge loss therefore must be guarded against even though in audit terms it is hard to relate inputs with outcomes until the individual leaves.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to offer some description of the key characteristics of a learning organisation and how that is then developed by the knowledge management debate.

The concepts of a learning organisation and knowledge management are neither separate nor unrelated. Indeed Earl (1997) places the learning organisation as one of the inter-related components to knowledge management. Figure 3:4 demonstrates these components.

Earl's proposal is that knowledge can only be maximised through the systems and workers if the organisation can learn.
This chapter has also been aimed at establishing the importance of managing learning and knowledge as an asset and resource within the organisation. Jacques (2000) underlines that to do this there needs to be firstly the acceptance of ‘knowledge workers’ and a shared understanding of their capabilities and organisational value, secondly an agreement as to ‘knowledge work’, accepting all work completed knowledgeably not merely that done by those deemed as experts. Finally the acceptance of the organisation as a knowledge organisation where knowledge is seen as a competitive advantage which needs to be exploited to the full and where the knowledge economy is held in the less tangible asset of intellectual capital.

Such a complex series of dimensions in the learning and knowledgeable organisation will need means by which to order such complexity and to some extent this chapter has aimed to do that. Poell et al’s (2000) response is to offer a comprehensive learning-network theory. Here the emphasis is on the intricacy between three main ‘components’ namely ‘learning actors’, ‘learning processes’ and ‘learning structures’. This network will exist in its own right but in order to be effective must be managed. Learning then exists and operates within this network. To make the best of this learning the three elements must be managed to work in harmony and to best effect. Figure 3:5 shows the interrelationships between the learning and labour network in an organisation.

Learning actors include both internal employees and managers and external sources of influence e.g. government bodies. These actors work together to organise activities in the organisation and so have a direct influence on consequent behaviour, this results in learning policies, processes and programmes. Such processes when repeated establish a pattern and such learning structures inevitably affect other structures in the organisation. Therefore work actors, work processes and structures mirror the learning network.
Poell et al's (2000) point is that although work and learning are integrated there are 'inherent tensions' between learning and work networks. The need for performance in one may be over-demanding for the others. Over care or under care in either network could be to the detriment of others.

A number of approaches has been examined all of which have endeavoured to offer solutions to the complicated matter of capturing organisational learning through different structural, systematic, strategic and personnel perspectives. The diversity of such different approaches only serves to underline that the very nature of this question is in itself difficult to address. How do managers establish organisational learning processes thereby creating a learning organisation in turn managing the accumulated knowledge or intellect of its human resource capital? In 1995 when this organisation was first studied much of the advice offered here was used to move the organisation forward. Five years on, with the changing nature of public sectors, much of this information holds good but there appears to be room for a new approach – one where these learning structures, processes and actions can be examined in a new way and where managers can more easily try to trap explicit and tacit knowledge and identify its sources and then transmit it to the whole. This new approach is aimed particularly at doing this in the public sector which has unique factors to contend with. These factors will be examined in the next chapter before the exploration of the Ferris Eight 'E's Model. It may be that just implementing the 'right' structure, having appropriate adaptive systems, acquiring an open and democratic style with engaged and self-confident staff, is not enough on its own to create a learning or knowledgeable organisation especially in a public sector organisation.
Chapter 4

Public Service Bureaucracies – An Impossible Case?

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to highlight the special circumstances of public sector organisations. This will begin with a briefing on the history and traditional characteristics of such organisations. This foundation is laid down as a reminder of the background of such organisations and to acknowledge that this history and these foundations still have resonance in today's organisation, this is despite the changes and movements in such settings and in the environment in which they operate.

The aim here is to argue that this sector has particular challenges in trying to achieve a learning organisation and that establishing organisational learning could potentially be restricted unless these challenges are acknowledged and managed. This chapter should establish an argument for fresh ways of thinking and the importance of new model design.

Bureaucracies

Job descriptions, hierarchical stratification, influential staff departments and standardisation of inputs and outputs are all traditionally the organisational norms within such a setting. To a great extent control of behaviour is through systems and structure - Pedlar, Boydell & Burgoyne (1991) describe the benefits of a bureaucracy as putting order into chaos and changing 'energetic amateurism' into professionalism. The formal, hierarchical structures are said to reinforce the sense of self and individualism rather than concern for the whole. Internal tension, poor communication, a lack of corporate identity or conversely an over-identification with the organisation and internal conflicts, are all legacies of this organisational model.

Cummings & Wortley (1997) note the often entrenched behavioural patterns in public bureaucratic organisations. Clearly these organisations have mature associated behaviours. Pattern and culture are ingrained and as such the extent of the change necessary to, more than just tinker with, learning may be unhelpfully protracted. Historically bureaucracies' attention was often inward, rather than outward looking, thus concentrating on internal efficiencies, controls, etc, “the rational organisation becomes strangled by its own web of rationality” Pedlar et al (1991:8). The directiveness and prescriptiveness down to the smallest detail is aimed at preventing problems. To prevent
problems can in turn paradoxically prevent learning. The process within bureaucracies potentially restricting the will and ability to learn.

Ward (1994:143) describes bureaucracies as those where authority is vested almost entirely on role. Here there is the appointment of like minded people, promotion to those who are a safe pair of hands, the denial of bright young things, the denigration of those who shine out as having a touch of brilliance, the desire is for sameness. Clearly this is at odds with the learning culture that is to celebrate diversity and to revel in difference. Internal organisational 'politics' are rife as Ward (1994:143) explains that “to ignore (such) organisational politics when managing change is to fail”.

Informal organisations within bureaucracies can also be powerful and are often underestimated and neglected. They can contain their own pecking order, norms and views and can be more pervasive than positive. If informal culture rejects the need to change and to become more open with others then the goal of achieving this will be severely affected. In many senses professionalism itself also creates an exclusivity that may confine openness and exposure to vulnerability.

The very term ‘bureaucratic’ can be laden with a public image of de-personalised, slow, narrow-minded and one-dimensional behaviour. The imbalance between direct activity with those they serve, whilst accounting externally for that interaction, is captured in the ‘buried deep in paperwork’ perception. The police service is an example of this with the public demand for ‘bobbies on the beat’ whilst police leaders explain the disproportionate time officers spend at their desks.

This negative description of bureaucratic organisations is balanced by many including Jacques (1976) who positively supports them as internally live and ever changing. Indeed the traditional description may be at odds with the modern bureaucracy where contradictions exist. The features described still exist where behaviour remains steeped in the traditional, but with now a real world inevitability about change and new behaviour. They however continue to offer containment and safety through controls. Such controls allow the organisations to take responsibility, rather than the individual, and this is often a relief and supportive. Bushe & Shani (1991) also note such features as task specialism which protects vulnerable areas of activity from the dominance of more crisis-laden activities. This is seen in many public sector activities, such as police, health and social services. The dilemma is that if zealously pursued specialisation, as McKenna (1994) explains, can restrict corporate identity and the activity of organisational objectives, it also allows conflict and isolationism to be established instead of co-operation and corporateness.
Professional Bureaucracies

The bureaucratic model clearly has special features which influence the potential to establish a learning organisation. The further imposition of the elements of professionalism onto such an organisational model establishes for Mintzberg (1979) inherent conflicts between professional and organisation which adds to the complexity of such organisational types.

Professional bureaucracies contain a fascinating mix of anomalies which will inevitably influence their learning ability and willingness to learn. For example the specialisation evident in a bureaucracy is further underpinned by, as Mintzberg writes, professional pigeon-holing of identified problems which in turn respond to professionals being co-ordinated with standardisation of skills. One has only got to view organisational structures to see this in practice. This rationalising of complexity emphasises categorisation and stereotyping whilst also demanding of the professional an individualised professional discretion to consider each case on its own merits.

The academic foundation of professional staff coupled with their accumulated experience establishes their ability to meet complex requirements. However, their involvement in determining either national or even corporate strategy can be limited where the strong centralist, as in government-led, approach dominates and where local ability to influence policy is often lacking. Francis (1987:67) claims that “decision making emerges from political intrigue. Influence rather than reason may well rule the day”, a view which remains current to a large extent.

The very individual nature of this well-educated professional group does, according to Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992:55), mean such organisations, although having an academic workforce, generally have staff learning on an individual basis. They go on to suggest that these are organisations “which collectively experience great difficulties in learning, more so than any other type of organisation”. This clearly has consequences for group and organisational learning. Here innovation, demanding the co-operation of others, may be difficult especially if new problems and ideas continue to be categorised by the majority as into old patterns and ‘pigeon-holes’. This can reduce the impact of innovation.

The tension between individual professional and management control is an interesting one and this reflects a potential tension for the learning organisation. Professionals who keep up with trends, fashions and new thinking may wish to experiment, innovate and 'try
out' new professional techniques but the organisation may be cautious of such risks and see this as inappropriate. This is further complicated by the management of ever-scarce resources where experimentation may be both costly and ineffective in the end. The question of conflict between professional decision making systems versus management can be seen within the medical profession where costs and patient care can conflict.

Professional bureaucracies further often have within them two organisations: the professional operational staff, and the shadow organisation of the administration. The tension that often exists, as Mintzberg (1979) describes, can in itself restrict learning. The two internal organisations are often at odds, vying for power and imposing without consultation methods of practice. In this organisational framework, learning can be difficult because of inflexibility, lack of ownership and inertia. Bureaucracies therefore, if they are to become learning organisations must address the issue of segregation within the areas of administration and operations. This is especially important in a performance culture and where measurement is administered by one section over another.

To be professional does not only mean possessing a special knowledge but also having a professional commitment. Such a commitment in professional circles is often aligned with the professional value base instilled in training and supported by a professional body such as BMA, BASW etc. Mintzberg (1979) notes that professional bureaucracies often have their value base associated with the professional governing body rather than the organisation. Additionally, professional training is aimed at individualism and standing on one's own judgement. The question is how learning organisations establish shared values that are not present internally in the organisation but rather common to the principles of these external bodies. Further complication is placed, for example, in those public organisations where there is a high number of ancillary staff with no allegiance to a professional body value system.

Even within the professional value base Laffin & Young (1990) believes there is an erosion of such value base with the increased political influence on public services. This is particularly exampled by centralised budgetary control, either restriction or growth, and how this is controlled through performance targets. Secondly the increased separation of management from professional staff with management staff not having a clinical/managerial background and finally the impact of multi-agency work. The latter diluting the professional value base with different professions encroaching on each other's territory.

The mixture of professional, quasi-professional and non-professional staff within these organisations to some extent weakens the powerful impact of the traditional professional
bureaucracy but this will bring with it its own struggles. These are most obviously seen in social work, health and social care. It is suggested here that a number of different features emerge.

1. The common man syndrome – the de-mystifying of professional trappings, i.e. language, theories, etc.
2. The organisation's own pragmatism – scarce resources mean that unqualified staff are cheaper to employ for direct work. However the paradox is that this undermines the very core of the professional basis for the organisation.
3. The lack of professional staff to employ mean this pragmatism is extended to possibly compromise practice.
4. The acrimonious challenge of professional view, particularly in formal settings, can result in lack of confidence and de-skilling.

Herriot & Pemberton (1995) interestingly suggests that even though the government has had repeated assaults on professional territory the main 'enemy' or demanding critics are those who use the service. Professionalism across the wider arena of public services has increasingly become a conflicting basis on which to work. Take for example the traditional confidence of the Health Service. The family GP, the consultant based in a well renowned hospital, pillars of the public sector – untouchable in public confidence, treated with a reverence and complete trust. Dr Shipman and the Alderhay scandal have had an influence on this. The deeply disturbing events around each have arguably served to tell the public that there is no one in the public arena who can be truly trusted, even the well-educated 'professional'.

Laffin & Young (1990) claim that professionalism was already on the wane before such events. They suggest the two most powerful professions, medicine and law, are in decline in relation to their power. It is true that the public, mostly spurred on by an ever-challenging media, are questioning even these institutions, not helped of course by themselves.

Professional bureaucracies have the additional difficulty, as Mintzberg (1979) claims, of addressing incompetence. The situation of having professional discretion creates difficulties of dealing with inappropriate action. When professional judgement is challenged, it can, as with many experts, be a difference of opinion. In many Court situations experts representing different 'sides' can see a situation differently. If a learning organisation is to prevail, then where is the 'right', how is the 'right' determined and what occurs when the deviation of that view, from equally qualified sources, exists? Is the ability and willingness of professional staff, individually trained and employed for their expertise, higher or lower, to take on the principles of a learning organisation?
The modern bureaucracy may seem worlds away from its historic ancestors but there remain undeniable links between the past and the present. Bureaucratic features still exist with position power and hierarchical structures. The internal administrative shadow organisation is strengthened with the strong relationship between it and its accounting to central government on performance data. Finally there is the inextricable cyclic nature of the influence of politics, society and service delivery which has increased rather than diminished.

**The Public Sector – Agenda for Change**

The traditional split between expectations of public sector organisations and the private sector has become increasingly blurred especially in management terms. History and politics point us to the extraordinary shift that public sectors, and especially their managers, have made in the 80s and the 90s. The movements within both public organisations and private companies have established many central features and common ground. As Moe (1990:1) explains, "the privatisation of government has been paralleled by the governmentalisation of the private". One has only got to consider the ongoing demands on commercial companies to reflect pro-environmental and pro-community policies to example the latter.

It is however the contention here that regardless of this mutual movement which has resulted in less clear demarcation between the private and the public sectors there still remains enough 'clear blue water' between the two organisational bases. This ensures that when considering organisational learning or knowledge management the public sector's particular situational factors dictate the need to look at a model which can encompass such organisationally related issues.

Considering the public sector's most recent history is a good place to start. Harrop (1999) outlines the political influence of developments around the public sector since 1945. Reference will be made here to the last ten years. John Major as Prime Minister was still trying to rebalance the antagonism that had grown between Margaret Thatcher and her public servants. As Wilding (1992:202-12) notes, Thatcher's tenure is encapsulated in terms such as "challenge to collectivism", "managerialism", "rights of citizens", "cuts", "privatisation". Major's less confrontational approach nevertheless retained the increased demand on public services to become accountable and to be, as the audit commission demanded, "effectively, efficiently and economically" managed (Audit Commission).
Tony Blair meanwhile, according to political analysts, moved increasingly into Major's territory. Political jibes of Blair progressively turning Labour's red into a nice shade of purple with the mixing of Tory blue policies into a labour agenda, is evidence of this.

Retrenchment of the public sector continued under Major especially as he was still trying to manage sensitively the damage to the Conservative Party caused by the Community Charge. The Council Tax replacing it of course could not be over zealous at trying to elicit finance from the public. Couple this with the pre-election purda of no tax increases and if possible tax-reductions left a beleaguered public service continuing to suffer cuts and under investment.

Blair's election in 1997 came with high principled speeches in relation to Education and Health. As Harrop (1999) explains the pursuit of a stable economy and low taxation, with high unemployment, was reminiscent of the 80's.

In 1998 however, Chancellor Brown invested in the public sector. With this handout came rigorous requirements for improvement and change. Quality, efficiency, an integrated co-operative approach, responsive to community need, was captured in the 'Best Value' framework. The message loud and clear was that only one thing was certain - change.

The cross departmental, joined up approach necessary at local government level ironically in practice is not reflected five years down the line in central government. In the social care field this is repeatedly obvious, the demands for example in relation to youth crime led by the Home Office are not in harmony with that of care requirements under the Department of Health.

If nothing else, this brief résumé will illustrate a number of givens in the public sector today. The magnitude of cultural change in public sectors is immense. The very swing from deep retrenchment to growth in a period of a few years, under different governments, is an example of this. No longer the dinosaurs, slow moving, resistant to change. In addition the linkage between political intent and instant demand from public service, to meet that political intent, is evident. The link between the media and the politicians has become so close and interrelated that it, in itself, is open to criticism but political commentators, especially at the last election, saw the media as the 'real opposition' at a time when the Conservative Party was in disarray. The immediacy demanded by the media for solutions whether it be to the country's entire Health Service or the Afghanistan war puts politicians in a complex relationship with its public officers.
On the one hand politicians set an agenda for change: higher education attainments; reduced health waiting lists; reduced children in public care. To achieve these, teachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers must be encouraged to remain in the public sector. Too much central demand for unattainable performance may haemorrhage staff from these services to the very competition which is often more costly and less reactive to political demand.

Public sector activity is directly dictated by government direction and is, as Hughes (1998) explains, command-based, that is government can make organisations do what it wants through statute and regulation. Private organisations on the other hand, although having to work within legislative boundaries have flexibility within them. They also work with markets and these are voluntary.

Ranson & Stewart (1994:5) believe that much of the current argument around the public sector organisations have been "prompted by the economic, social and political transformations of our time...". The in-depth analysis of the political and economic changes is well described by Ranson & Stewart and although the effects are of interest here, the analysis will only be referenced. The key dilemma that has been established is the social thirst for an individual consumerist approach against what is the social and moral demand of collective citizenship, equality and the very essence of 'society'.

The linkage may be between the individual and how they 'permit' or consent to the collective. Consent for actions is not individually given but authorised through legislation and statute. Of course such 'consents' are not always agreed by the public in advance. Take for example the introduction of speed cameras, on the one hand the 'consent' is via a general social need to reduce road deaths. The motoring public however have a different, often negative, view of the intrusion of speed cameras and 'critical' of individual actions via them. This tightrope of different 'publics' is an example of services in this area balancing different expectations.

The environment in which an organisation operates is of course important regardless of the organisations raison d'être. In the public sector there is a clear responsive and demanding relationship between organisation and community which is based on expectation and a sense of a 'right' to have a particular service especially if the client is a tax payer, or has been. Hughes (1998) also suggests that environmental factors are influenced to a greater degree than those in the private sector. Additional to the individual client demand for account there are interest groups. Such interest and pressure groups can wield considerable power. Their influence can at times be disproportionate to their size but they can home in on an issue which is 'politically
sensitive’ and open to dispute. Take for example public policy issues on reducing teenage pregnancy and the influence of religious groups. Even though statistically such a group is small in numbers in the population, this religious sector still holds power within society.

Wilkinson (1992) somewhat supports this contention of public service organisations being quite different and notes the inherent dilemmas, the necessity for collaboration whilst also competing, the complexity of conflicting needs demanded by different stakeholders and the short-term versus long term dilemma.

Stewart (1989) lists seven important tasks that, although in part and in degree, not exclusive to the public sector, are certainly the core tasks dominating the management agenda and some of the supporting reasons to consider public sectors in a special category. They must deal with-

- Political sensitivity
- Managing public pressure and protest or complaint and the consequences
- Public accountability or Accountability to the public
- "Marketing for equity" – matching needs and services
- Rationing because of potential infinitive needs
- Measuring Performance –
  where there is no simple bottom line but a mass of political competing indicatives
  (Is a low number of registered sex offenders good or bad?)
- Strategic management of social change

Pedler (1992:53) supports, to a greater or lesser extent, Stewart’s agenda and adds that public and private sectors ‘should’ be different. He advocates for the need for research into public sector organisations, the need to be more outward looking not in competitive terms but in partnerships. Ultimately, according to Pedler “public service managing is about achieving social change”. Pedler suggests all organisations are about managing – is this, asks Pedler the ‘edge’ for public services where the ‘edge’ for the private is about managing, profit etc - is the edge for the public sector achieving change?

Pedler (1992) is clear however that the learning company does not have in these circumstances a ‘blue print’ to follow. Instead each organisation must find its own way. It may however be that in such circumstances a mapping tool, an audit device could assist in such shaping of the organisation into a learning company.

Banner (1988) agrees that private does not automatically mean good and public bad. He points out his work in private companies saddled with the same bureaucratic
methodologies and one has only got to consider the startling lack of success of some private organisations to see that this is true. Marks & Spencer's with its loss of direction, and a series of chief executives later, seems at last to be holding its own but only after troubled times.

Friend (1988) indeed suggests others should build on 'public sector wisdom'. He proposes that rather than looking to the private sector, public sector management should focus on its own sector, to gain knowledge. Friend points out that the conventional perception of public (inefficient) v private (efficient) management is supported even within government thinking. The current 'threat' to schools and social services to 'send in the private sector managers' if performance does not increase sums up the centralised view. Friend's paper implicitly praises the public sector managers who have internalised into their practices the inherent complexity of working with the public and the issues of multiple accountability around that. Because of this complexity Friend suggests that managers in the public sector have a lot to offer others. This is especially in the balancing of diverse and often conflicting interests, many times played out on a public stage, brought into our homes through television. Our vulnerabilities therefore touched immediately by others' disasters.

The usual view of bureaucracy being slow moving, bound up by process, place and status, has been overtaken by highly regulated and inspected activities where survival depends on performance output and frankly the avoidance of scandal or mistakes. This in essence establishes a different form of bureaucracy.

This recent model has foundations in accountability to both the government and the public. The demonstrating of processes of decision making and action, financial accounting and performance measurement have replaced the traditional approach to a "new bureaucracy". Proof of equity, fairness, reasonableness and the imperative of getting 'best value' for money has created within the public services, especially local government, an industry in itself and another set of personnel to inspect those already in post.

The area of accountability is a good example of how different methods needs to be developed and established particularly relating to public sector organisations. Law (1999:78) of course is right to see accountability as "a complex multi-dimensional concept". The traditional view of accountability rooted in professional associations has been subsumed by other accountable measures.
Law quoting writers such as Day & Klein (1987), Oliver (1991) and Ranson (1986) suggests four main dimensions for accountability.

1) **Political accountability** to the public and parliament. This accountability from politicians to their local electorate and nationally to a government in turn affects officers delivering those services on their behalf.

2) **Managerial accountability**. Political accountability and managerial accountability merge when considering performance indicators and published 'league tables'. Traditionally managerial accountability was intra agency up and down lines of management and across segments of the organisation. These internal accounts however have moved from internal compliance to procedures, to the measurement of outputs and outcomes whilst adhering to processes and procedures. The involvement of politicians in managerial matters is evident through specific government dictates especially in the arena of such high-risk areas of practice as childcare. Under the umbrella of 'governance' there is detailed expectation on accounting to politicians for what would be previously within managerial boundaries. Of course this can, as Humphrey (1990) suggests be welcomed by managers who are eager to protect themselves from claims of negligence or irrationality.

3) **Legal accountability**. The security and control of public services' activities through the legal process is described by Loughlin(1992) and this in practice is evidenced on a daily basis. There are few examples of areas of practice that have not been subject to judicial review, private law and public applications – all seeking an answer to a dispute or a refusal of service from the law. This accountability is particularly evident in Children's Services (Social Services) – there are in reality few decisions of major consequence which are not decided on the outside, rather than the inside of the organisation. The law however rarely takes the credit – or blame – for such power. Rather, public perception remains with the more easily identified public service officer rather than the somewhat anonymous and well-protected judiciary.

4) **Professional accountability**. The issue of accountability and professionalism is noticeably becoming more entwined. An interesting shift has taken place in who are professionals and how they see themselves. There is more than some truth in Laffin & Young's (1990:108) observation that professionals are themselves wary of being set apart as having some general expertise. Increasingly expertise is specialism within specialisms and professionals' main attributes is to know their limitations. "They accept that professional claims are no longer accepted on face value, but that professionals have to earn their credibility......". National scandals have only served to emphasise this point. The surgeon who undertakes plastic surgery without the specific training required is a recent public example of where previous acceptance of competence is now much more scrutinised. No longer then is it good enough for someone who is generally competent. Indeed in the Victoria Climbie child death the
media not only analysed the qualifications of the social worker but length of experience, number of allocated cases, range of responsibilities, child care expertise. Of course professionalism is often associated with independence of opinion. Such independence in a litigious world is individually risky. The division between the professional and the organisation, may as a consequence of challenge, become less stark with individual professionals seeking the protection of the organisation in an ever-fearful environment.

The Distinctiveness of the Public Sector

Willcocks & Harrow (1992) argue that the range of public sector management initiatives undertaken over the last two decades has been predominantly copied from the private sector. This is particularly evident in hard hitting, task orientated management styles, but also in the way which performance is managed and measured. The argument here is that there are real differences between public and private organisations and this difference should be acknowledged and addressed.

Rose (1999) entitles his paper 'the distinctiveness of public management', where if one considers clinically the difference between the public and private providers a central tenet is that the former is not in existence for commercial or consumerist reasons. They are there for the greater good and as a result of society's political choice at the ballot box. Public services are at the centre of politics and they are used as a political football between parties: bigger, better, more efficient, quicker, but not more expensive, services. Rose is right to talk of this form of management as distinctive. The services are burdened with the company's 'board' being the government's cabinet, of whatever political shade, and by the inevitability that political cycles will mean new philosophical leadership and the demand for visible change. The success of the public sector and the success of the government being closely interrelated with the latter's sustainability through re-election, depending on the former and the former's survival depending on the latter's rationality.

High levels of change are inevitable as is the fact that politicians set the goals and professionals achieve those goals whether they approve of them or not. It would be rare in private business to expect staff and managers to carry out goals without consultation, explanation or usually reward, and indeed private companies have high levels of control in determining their business and what sector they will target. All good management texts describe this co-operative process between staff and leadership to instill enthusiastic committed personnel who all work to a common agreed direction. How does the public sector marshal such enthusiasm especially if there is disagreement with the government
stance. Take the Children Act legislation seen by some child care practitioners as a great disadvantage to children yet it is centrally imposed.

Hughes (1998) believes that there will continue to be five particular developments in the public sector. Market orientation will increase with more multi-agency relationships not only with other statutory agencies but also with private providers. Administration and management in the future will require flexibility to cope with ever changing demands. Thirdly Hughes considers politicisation will increase and with it, officers acknowledgement of the political costs of officers failure and consequently their own. Openness and participation are also likely to be a development although each government starts with that intent only to find the openness of government and their public organisation a complex, tricky business. Finally public services will also be acknowledged for their improvements and competencies.

Stewart (1992:14) continues with considering the requirements of government in current times. These requirements, because of the close link with the officers and managers create a necessity within organisations. Stewart lists a demand for “a high capacity for –

- **Learning** as problems, needs and aspirations change as solutions are contestable.
- **Innovation** as past ideas fail and accepted expertise is challenged by experience.
- **Adaptability** as the public seek choice and diversity of response”.

In turn the public organisations reflect this ‘changed policy’. Stewart's (1992) central point is that in such political conditions the simple solution to change in the public sector is not merely to dress up in private sector clothes. Stewart & Ranson (1988) list in Figure 4:1 the difference in the public and private domains and models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The private sector model is based on:</th>
<th>The public sector model must encompass:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Individual choice in the market;</td>
<td>☐ Collective choice in the polity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Demand and price;</td>
<td>☐ Need and resources;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Closure for private action;</td>
<td>☐ Openness for public action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The equity of the market;</td>
<td>☐ The equity of need;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The search for market satisfaction</td>
<td>☐ The search for justice;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Customer sovereignty;</td>
<td>☐ Citizen sovereignty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Competition as the instrument of</td>
<td>☐ Collective action as the instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the market;</td>
<td>of the polity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Exit as the stimulus.</td>
<td>☐ Voice as the condition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4:1 ‘Stewart and Ranson’, Public Domain Model. Source: Stewart & Ranson (1988). In Stewart (1992:17)

The real science, and art, is approaching public sector management as unique and different, learning from others that which is relevant and deciding within the sector that
which is pertinent to it. Bad management and indeed a lazy approach is merely to copy the private sector without giving real attention to purpose, conditions, content and task. Here Stewart & Ranson (1988) underline the political discourse necessary, the public's right to be heard and the fascinating complexity of the task which is solely human based. Stewart (1992:18) goes as far as to argue that "if an activity should be managed as it is in the private sector, then it should be placed in the private sector".

Stewart's (1992) strength of argument is a convincing one. What does, in reality, private management do – it varies itself to its task, techniques and environment. To take on a wholesale drive for efficiency through a set private sector model is inappropriate. There are dangers in such 'universalism'.

Why is there such reference made here to this differentiation between private management and public service management. It is based on the contention that new models need to be established for the public sector in not only management of the service but analysis of features which affect and influence such management issues. A good example of this is Joyce's (2000) proposed diagnosis of the public sector from six perspectives. The purpose being to consider the health, both internal and external to the organisation.

A) Political Health – Local politics and their influence on public service delivery have many obvious examples of where a fragile hung council can result in conflictual politics and indecisive processing. Further conflict between local politics and central government can often leave officers in limbo between actual demands and lack of local will, and therefore finance, to achieve that which is necessary.

B) Reputational Health – Good PR in public organisations is clearly beneficial but local success is often dominated by negative national agenda. The old adage good news does not sell sadly has effect on reputational health.

C) Cultural Health – Joyce (2000:23) suggests that there are four main aspects to this – "accountability, pride, pessimism about change and complacency". These are in themselves almost self-explanatory. A public service staff group must have a positive understanding of the former two and managers must address the latter two aspects. Under cultural health it may be also appropriate to list the ability to be adaptable and to innovate and change. Joyce categorises this separately but it would be argued here that there should not be a differentiation of change capacity from culture.

D) Corporate Health – This relates to how well co-ordinated all sections of the organisation are in trying to achieve aims and outputs. Joyce lists management capability, team working, systems and strategy as some of the key elements to assess under corporate health but one was listed which is often given little credence.
Corporate health is not merely about credibility and capability but the
loyalty and energy of its key personnel especially managers. How often can,
especially middle managers’ own style and approach, positively and negatively affect
a whole section. Dynamic, energetic, loyal staff have a wholly different effect to
those who do not demonstrate such organisational commitment.

E) Financial Health – Financial security is important in any company or sector. The
public sector finance is of course reliant on those outside the organisation but clearly
retrenchment has very different effects to stability and growth.

F) Performance Health – Increasingly in all organisations, including the public sector,
performance and finance are closely interrelated. The public sector performance
targets are generally set by others rather than the organisation itself. In the Social
Services Department there are over 500 government performance targets with
additional sub objective. This excludes additional County Council indicators such as
communication and responsiveness to clients. Health Services are judged by such
issues as waiting lists and schools by pupil achievement via exams. Of course
customer/client/service user feedback is the other significant performance measure
generally managed via complaints and judicial procedure. Performance health is so
closely interrelated with finance that for those public services which perform well
there are rewards of additional finance for growth and developments. However
performance failure leads to tighter external control and the ultimate sanction of
imposed leadership from outside.

Joyce’s (2000:37) assessment criteria was designed to consider the “healthy functioning
of the organisation”. It is considered here that an analysis from these aspects is a useful
approach when considering whether a public sector organisation has the capacity to
learn. Political, financial, cultural, reputational etc are all important influences on whether
those within the organisation feel they can learn and have the freedom to explore,
experiment, or the security to make errors or mistakes.

Multi-agency Impact

The strategic development within, public sectors, dictated by central government, is to
work in partnership with sometimes those in ‘competition’. In local government the LEA
and Social Services are affected by the impact of government initiatives such as Sure
Start, On Track, Children’s Fund. The overall aim is to mainstream temporary funding,
place direct involvement on the statutory agencies to co-operate and work with those in
these initiatives. In reality this reduces or strips the core funding from statutory services
in the long term.
Relationships and networks fall into a variety of different categories whether they be voluntary, social, welcomed, informal, imposed, formal or competitive. The relationship which politically has caused most stir is that of the public/private partnership and the involvement of the private sector in the non-profit making public sector. The concept of making a profit out of public service is an anathema to many. Many partnerships have proved beneficial particularly as they are a key means of attracting funding. There are however many conflicting issues around networks that are important to note in the context of public sectors and how they can achieve a 'learning status'.

Metcalfe & Richards (1987) note how public sectors are constantly in such multi-agency relationships with numerous stakeholders with often competing demands. The crucial question in such a complex environment is how these new organisations can achieve a learning state. How can public sector organisations achieve a common value base, identify agreed learning issues and disseminate within each organisation key questions and developments. Organisational survival in these terms takes on quite a different perspective. Survival may mean inclusion, lack of it, a 'take over'. In a department such as elder care this survival is questionable as others in the partnership can replicate the skills and service delivery. In child care this may be less so, as experienced staff have skills hard to replace by those without qualification and experience however the development of the government initiatives under the Primary Care Organisation slowly increases a risk to such services which are currently the preserve of the Social Services. Metcalfe & Richards' (1987:134) claim that "management in the public domain is necessary management in an inter-organisational context", is of real relevance. Such inter-organisational work of course places public services again at variance with its private sector counterparts. The presumption therefore is that of mutual understanding, in-depth knowledge of others and a capacity to 'give away' a share of responsibilities and roles without fear of threat and of course learning in this new inter-organisational context.

Risk Threshold

Harrow & Willcocks (1992:107) note that risk taking is a major stumbling block in an organisation "that has the public common weal at the centre of its purpose". This relates here to risk avoidance creating risk adverse behaviour. Public sector managers need to balance acting efficiently, cheaply, quickly on the one hand but with the near elimination of risk to those they serve, the general public. The balance of effective, efficient management acting simultaneously as the public representative is not an easy one to achieve especially in trying to ensure equity and customer care and with an individualised care approach.
Peters (1987) encourages the acceptance of failures in organisations in order to learn but Harrow & Willcocks (1992:107) suggests that public sector cultures cannot allow this. Risk is only acceptable if it succeeds not fails... “public accountability models will not accept the likelihood of ‘first getting it wrong’”. The public outcry that occurs when children’s welfare decisions are seen as unacceptable has not resulted in criteria for what is an acceptable risk.

Swieringa & Weirdsma (1992) maintain that in bureaucracies the tasks are formulated in such a way as to reduce inter-personal interaction and thus reduce the potential to learn. In Children’s Services professional isolation within the task has been reduced but not necessarily with learning and mutual co-operation in mind. Rather multi-disciplinary and dual working is a symptom arguably of a fearful culture of organisations under threat and the level of risk adversity that exists. Here the endless pursuit of making sure no risk is taken particularly in the light of national occurrences results in no individual acting independently.

Risk taking for public services demands therefore, in today’s climate, multi-agency and inter-agency shared responsibility. This in practice can be, on the surface, beneficial especially in child protection. However the issue of child protection is a good example of what Stewart (1992) describes as ‘praiseworthy’ only when the risk ‘comes off’. When child protection matters go wrong the scurrying away by each agency, into the protection of its own shell, is evident – often leaving only social services exposed. Cleveland, Orkney, Ricki Neve are all national child care scandals that although having multi-agency consequences are still in the public’s psyche seen as a social work failure. Risk taking in such circumstances is difficult. Further the risk taking that has worked is often shyly kept to oneself or one’s organisation. Maybe the lack of praise or recognition established a psychological profile in organisations that makes sharing the risk that has “come off” limited.

If Pedlar et al (1991) are correct that learning and risk taking are connected then can the bureaucratic organisation in a hostile environment achieve the goal of a pure learning organisation? This was somewhat summed up for the writer by a spokesperson for the BMA who in a recent television documentary about medical practice talked of patient notes now being a back covering tool not for the patient’s benefit but about doctors being forced, because of litigation, to practise ‘defensive medicine’. Here one can see many parallels with other professions, social work being one of them. How in this climate can such an organisation ‘practice safe learning’? How can managers feel confident enough to match the risk taking of the learning organisation with those waiting to pick over the bones?
Risk is a good example of where public sectors have conflicting agendas. The absolute need not to 'experiment' either with public finance or indeed the clients themselves has hitherto been an overriding principle. Harrow & Willcocks (1992) followed by Hoggett (1991) however demonstrates the encouragement of risk taking by public sector managers in order to learn. This risk-taking development has to date mostly been confined to the specialist and the specific area of expertise. Harrow & Willcocks (1992) consider, in their paper 'Managing to Manage risk in the Public Sector', to what extent this risk taking can be made more general. It is true that the search for managing risk has become more obvious. Rather than worrying about risk and being paralysed by it, there is now a real crucial challenge of analysing risk, reducing the potential negative outcome and accounting for the process of risk management. If this process is sound and the risk taken has negative consequences then the consequence is limited and defendable.

The very language of risk is in the private and public sector potentially different. Risk taking according to Bederain (1989) is a careful process of weighing up alternatively the likelihood of negative or positive outcomes and the benefits associated. Being in the public domain and responsive to public opinion can stifle real debate on risk taking strategies.

Fischoff et al (1981) offer a list of conditions which allow for risk taking to be considered in public organisations. The acceptable risk will be comprehensive, legally sound, practical, open to evaluation, politically acceptable, compatible with the institution and conducive to learning. Even though Harrow & Willcocks (1992:105) acceptance that "risk taking by public managers now seems regarded as a proper means for managerial and organisational learning", public service managers however may be barred from exploring the managerial alternatives because the price of doing so is seen as too costly either politically or personally.

Organisational Learning in the Public Sector

Leach et al (1994) in analysing the public sector do not specify learning but offer significant reasons why the separation of public and private sector management should be acknowledged. The special features of the public sector lead Leach et al (1994) to recommend that public organisations should not take on the characteristics of the private sector which are in themselves diverse and multiple. Rather the features that the public domain experiences must be noted. These are just as relevant when considering public sector learning. The first obvious point is the highly labour intensive nature of public services. This is particularly obvious in the Social Services Department where the
replacement of personal client-staff interactions by technology etc is not widely appropriate, although technology can enhance that process. The public sector has the dimension of being a governmental and political institution, Leach et al (1994) add it further is no longer a sole, direct provider but is a purchasing agent, an ‘enabling’ organisation. This latter point particularly demands a move away from a traditional model to one which is less uniform and which involves external networking with other agencies.

The Children's Services have an added complication which is not noted by Leach et al, and is not even common to all social services' functions, this is the fact that the services are often imposed, not always desired and indeed often contrary to the wishes of the reciprocants, but not the public in general, e.g. child abuse situations, and where resource restriction is further complicated by the length and complexity of intervention techniques. Additionally, the main clients, children, have no 'public' voice and are likely to be vulnerable victims who depend on the organisation to protect them.

Ranson & Stewart (1994) suggest that organisational learning is particularly relevant in public organisations. They argue that the organising principles within the domain of the public sector are the same as principles for learning and that these must involve double-loop learning – the questioning, not of whether activities occurred (single-loop), but whether they should, why and should they be different. Ventriss & Luke (1988) argue that public services require more development in their approach to learning. They suggest that reflection on policies, implications, intended or otherwise, is necessary. Learning should be focussed on problem-posing as well as problem-solving. Ranson & Stewart (1994) however complicate the issue further by suggesting that there is an inextricable link between society and the public domain which makes learning in each inter-related. Societal learning impacts on the public sector and vice versa. This is an interesting argument where many public organisations do change with societal demands, an example being the response to juvenile criminals where the tough lock-up approach was superseded by the more community orientated packages and now the current climate returns to the 'short-sharp shock'.

Learning in societal, and therefore public organisational, terms is about perceived current policy ineffectiveness, different aspirations, new problems, new knowledge and the capacity of current public sector activities to meet all these. Public organisations, it is suggested, have a dangerous gap if they rely solely on single-loop learning because current practice dictates that style. However, because of the inextricable link between the community and those who serve it, then this double-loop necessity goes beyond the organisational boundaries.
The analysis of public learning is best highlighted by Ranson & Stewart (1994) in essence the linkage between double-loop learning, that is the responsiveness and then the subsequent development of activities as they relate to public and societal development. This societal development according to Ranson & Stewart (1994) is where the society acknowledges that present delivery is outdated, that aspirations cannot be met, that new problems are not adequately addressed and there are capacity and change issues in the organisations. The obvious difficulty that may arise is where the society is not 'educated' to understand these development needs. If actions continue without reflection and dialogue both inside and outside the organisation, frustrations can arise and public pressure placed on the department.

Public sector learning has then additional organisational factors, the influence of political processes and the link with societal learning, the depth and quantity of that public learning being highly relevant. Public organisation learning, to some extent, is hampered by the very nature of needing stability to produce performance and consistency and yet the ability to meet rapid change. Unlike the private sector response to the market, the public sector triggers to learning, according to Ranson & Stewart (1994:178) are in “the arena of public discourse and the political processes that lead into and form the arena”. The ‘voice’ of the public expresses issues, concerns and expectations that can come from different avenues e.g. interest groups, political parties, government policy units. This societal/organisational link therefore is especially important in public sectors. The difficulty is trying to achieve this in both education of the ‘public’ and in the ‘timing’/responsiveness of the public demand where issues often move on apace.

**Social Services**

The public services are heavily controlled by state. They have politically been under the eye of politicians and central government since the sixties. The Social Services Department of the County Council alone has been subject to forty pieces of legislation between 1970 and 1997. In addition there is a myriad of guidelines and codes of practice which all act as an external prescriptive device to control Local Authority actions. The fact is that legislation and statute do not allow for mistakes or for risk taking, the aim of the statute being to reduce these two factors and to hold the services to account.

Craig (1994) in his article 'Boundless Chaos' claims the prognosis for Social Services Departments and their functions is gloomy. Indeed, the claim is that much of the work to create community care will eventually subsume to local care markets in conjunction with Health Authorities. The second fear is that if smaller authorities were created then strategic planning would be reduced and specialist expertise for complex tasks hampered. The conduct of unitary authorities and the ability to perform is an example of
Craig (1994) acknowledges that politically Social Services Departments have tended to have a low political priority despite the fact that there functions are the largest currently maintained by local government. The central question for the future, as Peryer (1994) explains, is whether authorities will be significantly funded and resourced.

Learning organisations need time to think and reflect, they need finance to support the mechanisms which allow this to happen organisationally. The public sector is of course highly sensitive to the economic climate of the day. Finger & Bürgin Brand (1999) consider this firstly at a macro level as related to the global economy. The global events and their resultant economic consequences are demonstrated in the American & European economies which obviously in the long term have an effect nationally. Spending on the public services is always a benchmark for government policy and indeed their philosophical approach. The short-termism and cyclic approach of economics dictates a 'boom or bust' approach in the services delivered.

It remains the case, as suggested by Cummings & Worley (1997) that public services have difficulty in gaining financial support for such methods as organisational development and transformational techniques because of scarce resources. The financial control system of one arm of the public sector auditing another means the accountability and consents for such finance are difficult.

The practical economics of the public sector bring with them the practical solutions of part time and temporary workers. Although part time employees should be valued, Pfeffer (1994) notes that temporary and multiple staff affect the organisation's ability to learn. This coupled with 'contracting out' further dilutes the ability to move together cohesively.

Technically the government's drive to have accountability via an electronic system approach has complemented a developing management approach to technology. There has been in most Social Services Departments a massive financial outlay to bring the service up to technological competence. This technological drive brings with it a new skills' demand from professionals and administrators alike.

Jones & Hendry (1992) note economic, financial and competitive conditions, as one of their five inhibiting factors to a learning organisation. Internal organisation, culture, systems and decision making comprising the other four. However, there appears little written about the power of the external environment, when hostile, and the organisation's response to that. It is the contention here that one of the greatest barriers to public sector learning is what happens outside and how those inside react to it.
When the government, society, societies' institutions, e.g. Courts, the legal framework, the media, all appear at best unsupportive, then organisations and personnel can become defensive, sensitive, 'closed' and key existing features are low morale and cautiousness. Further strict codes of confidentiality can deny a 'fair hearing'. This is possibly contrary to Bushe & Shani's (1991:26) emphasis on the importance of innovation and change needing "considerable slack and tolerance to inefficiencies". Can one really imagine such a situation being tolerated in the police force, medicine or social work? Social work departments, in relation to children's lives and families, clearly do not have the facility to make mistakes or errors or to experiment – or is there a way to manage this?

Social Workers' public image is not assisted by strong advocacy either in the political arena or with a professional body. Ruth Winchester's (2001) critical 'Little Voice' notes the lack of a proper professional body to advocate for the profession, to protect the workforce and to 'wield' the political stick! Whereas nurses and doctors have respected associates and politicians who openly support them, this linkage and advocacy between professional social workers and their public is missing. Furthermore the constant segregation of issues even within a department, for example, Adults' Services broken into Elder Care, Mental Health, Learning Disability, Autism etc, and in Children's Services into Adoption, Fostering, Child Protection etc, all disconnect professional staff from the common cause of social work and social care which twenty years ago under a more generic model would have gained great defence and advocacy from the workforce itself. Therefore support for those in Children's Services from their Community Care colleagues is limited and indeed rivalry can often occur. Winchester (2001:15) claims one reason for the lack of national representation "may be the simple grinding down of all passion, idealism and self esteem amongst social care staff".

"The sector is undeniably tired of being vilified in the press, targeted by politicians and derided by the public. Large numbers of staff are choosing to leave the job for something less arduous, but those who remain are struggling with new initiative after new initiative, drowning in paperwork and often thoroughly demoralised. It could be argued that after so many years of constant battles the profession simply has very little fight left in it". Winchester (2001:15).

A stark statement with major consequences for this public service organisation and its capacity both emotionally and in time to learn.

The systems around any public sector organisation can either enhance or restrict its learning potential. Rickford (2000) and Russell (2001) in their separate articles point to the learning level of accountability currently placed in public care settings and social work especially. They note the time consuming, detached approach that is now the consequence of endless 'form filling'. Russell (2001:14) emphasises that the effect of
such administrative systems' demand is that it erodes professional discretion and as one manager is quoted as saying "it is getting more and more difficult for social workers to work creatively". Further it establishes a less flexible imaginative service and restricts new ideas.

George (2000) in his article entitled 'Respect Yourself' understands how local authority staff feel, they rarely receive positive press and although the majority of clients welcome and are satisfied with services, great frustration arises when this is misrepresented in the media. Perceptions are formed and as such lock staff into what George sees as a self-defeating cycle. Such negative mindset sees even the most constructive of challenges as unwanted and increases the beleaguered feeling of the individual.

When Social Services is considered specifically, Balloch et al's (1999:1) introduction sums up the position social care finds itself in. Health and social care are increasingly difficult to differentiate. Purchasing and providing, places social services in a "mixed economy of welfare", and of course national scandals lead to calls for even tighter regulations and training.

Andrew (1999) gives a demographic analysis of social services in the late 1990s. The following points are relevant from a study into a selected number of authorities in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- Approximately 80% of staff had other paid employment prior to entering social care work.
- Most staff and managers undertook their first job on their late twenties although younger managers and staff were unlikely to have had other employment
- Employees joined social services after considerable life experiences. The average age of entry for women was 30 years. The majority of males averaged 28 years of age.
- Once in social work, employees remained for substantial periods of time on an average approximately 10 years, from a range between one and twenty three years.
- Longest serving staff tended to be managers.
- The majority of staff joined the social services and subsequently trained and became qualified. Approximately 62% of staff gained the qualification in subsequent years with a further 26% after joining but in the same year. Only 12% qualified before joining.
- In all studies over 80% of the workforce were women and most had children and had had a break in service.
- All men in social services worked full-time whilst about half of all women worked part-time.
• Field workers and managers mostly worked full-time whilst residential workers were predominantly part-time, and women.
• Men tended to be higher salaried as they were in more senior jobs.

McLean's (1998) work is one of very few studies into social services and as such adds a valuable contribution here to the 'state' of such an organisation. McLean (1998:61) notes that, to have a quality service, staff need to have satisfaction from their job. He suggests that it is a reasonable expectation that staff are stimulated in their work whilst not being subjected to "unreasonable frustration and stress". The nature of the work however is in itself inherently stressful. Working in Children's Services with significant numbers of reluctant customers, working to help and assist the disadvantaged, on the one hand, whilst on the other, being a law enforcer and 'social policeman'. Staff deal with risk, balances of opinion, and culpability if things go wrong.

McLean (1998) found in his study that staff in social services had most satisfaction in the levels of discretion they were allowed to exercise, progress in challenging work, team working and the levels of responsibility. On the other hand the less satisfying aspects were level of influence in the organisation, time, and the amount of paperwork. This latter is not surprising when this same study showed only one third of a worker's time was spent directly with clients, less so for managers.

Of course dissatisfaction and stress are often interrelated. North (1996:20) found that there were staff in social services who dealt with "intolerable levels of stress". Many studies on stress for example Landy (1989), Cournoyer (1988), highlight the inevitable consequences of persistent stress, ill health and high levels of sickness absence.

McLean's (1998) work showed that although most staff did not take time off with stress, staff in social services had a proportionately higher stress level than other workers and that this stress emanated from long hours, coping with change, internal conflicts, overwhelming user demand and a feeling that their knowledge was not respected. The key factor of low satisfaction and low control appeared to have the most damaging effects on staff. Interestingly those jobs that had high client contact, and therefore demanded personal and emotional commitment caused most stress, and as Gibson et al (1989:78) noted this was "due to the worst combination of high demand and low control".

It would be misleading to suggest that the majority of social services' staff were dissatisfied with their work environment. However there was still a significantly higher proportion of dissatisfaction leading to sick leave than in other professions. Those most at risk, according to Balloch et al (1999), were males, managers and field and residential
staff and those working with children and families or mental health issues. It is of note that staff were also surveyed on their support mechanisms and it was found that only one in ten found their most supportive relationship with their manager or superior. These staff who felt unsupported had higher levels of dissatisfaction and stress.

Pahl (1998) notes the prevalence of violence at work in a social care setting. Mayhew et al (1993:89) quoted the British Crime Survey where nurses and 'welfare workers' were "three times more likely than the average employee to be physically attacked or threatened". Pahl (1998:100) quotes in detail the different types of jobs and related violence. This violence ranged from physical assault to verbal threats and abuse. The key point made by Pahl is that social care, even above health care professionals, and others "represents a relatively dangerous occupational choice".

The combination of stress and the dissatisfaction with the job were in turn the reasons why staff moved on or left the profession. This increased staff shortages which in turn created a cycle of more demands placed on remaining staff. McLean & Dolan (1998) point out that the necessity for staff to 'cover their backs' created a heavier burden of paperwork and defensive actions to account for activities undertaken.

Social Service organisations face these extraordinary challenges in trying to establish a learning organisation. The key features necessary such as time to reflect, supportive managers and colleagues, emotional accessibility and capability to learn and a source of fulfilment may not always be present. This, coupled with the demographics of such organisations, makes the challenge of creating a healthy, supportive, creative, learning environment particularly complex.

**Blocks and Barriers**

Inherently in any organisational development there are blocks and resistances to overcome. In many ways the converse of those enabling aspects of an organisation will inevitably have some level of barrier to change and learning. Inflexible structures, unskilled workers, de-skilled fearful personnel, restrictive systems and lack of strategic direction reduce the capacity for such change.

There are however a number of specific blocks that are worthy of note and demanding of attention. Senge (1990) supports Garrett (1990) in the contention that generally the post mortem on any event will show that in advance of the incident, evidence was available to at least signpost the potential for a problem. What makes such 'learning disabilities' occur that lead to evidence going unheeded, avoided or minimised?
Senge’s (1990:17) analysis highlights these learning difficulties as having seven features. ’I am my position’ where there is over identification with role and position thus being constricted by task boundary, job description etc. This is arguably high in bureaucracies which can encourage retrenchment into specialist areas and where personnel do not see themselves as part of a whole. ‘The enemy is out there’ – blaming others for failure and deflecting it from one’s self is known in psychology terms as displacement. This diminishes ownership and reinforces defensiveness. Negative experiences can particularly heighten this. Thirdly, ‘The illusion of taking charge’. Reactiveness should be reduced and proactiveness increased. This of course is difficult in a public sector driven by outside forces although possibly no more so than Marconi or telecoms in general trying to plot the future. ‘The fixation of events’ is Senge’s fourth ‘disability’. Here the complete concentration on the actual activity leaves managers inward looking and disconnected from the whole. This leads to the ‘parable of the boiled frog’ where less perceptible change is often missed and where organisations need to slow down to take stock of the subtle and not just the dramatic. This is of course difficult as the dramatic can be very distracting. The sixth aspect present is ‘the delusion of learning from experiences’. The ‘learning horizon’ between actions and consequences can distort the actual experience and therefore the learning. This is a common phenomena in a social work setting where often intervention and impact are lengthy periods apart. Finally Senge lists ‘the myth of the management team’. Here the cohesiveness of the team, personal honesty and maturity and the acknowledgement of ones limitation can often be difficult when there is a perception of much learning reliance on this group. The cosmetic cohesiveness that may exist is no substitute for a group that can sustain arguments.

Bushe & Shani (1991) complement Senge’s work with the categories they provide. These again emphasise key internal blocks which can confine organisational learning. Bushe & Shani’s (1991) ‘clarification of expectation’ refers to being clear of the change agenda not only to understand but also to action the agenda. Generating accurate information is essential as inaccurate, distorted communication and data not only do not support learning but increase inappropriate learning. Such distortions may of course have a much more sinister root which may be the result of fear of consequence or misunderstanding feedback loops. It is especially important to ensure the systems themselves are not acting as a block, being able to share different views and have those accepted or tested, including experimentation. Allowing time to develop common understanding is of course potentially seen as a luxury when there is so much to do. Of course in the public sector, timescales and performance targets often don’t allow such reflection. Finally Bushe & Shani’s (1991) protecting experimentation is important where there is such a drive for performance and expectation of high output and low error exits.
Senge (1990) and Bushe & Shani (1991) have clearly dominated this analysis but it is worth noting particularly two additional features. Firstly, honesty in the organisation. Senge (1990) has opened up the perspective of systems thinking to look beyond the event to the structures behind it, but what of the organisational members' permission to police themselves and to identify for the organisation the mistakes, not only made by oneself but others.

"Whistleblowing – Subversion or Corporate Citizenship" is a book title which in many ways sums up the debate within the chapters it contains. Vinten (1994) explains that increasingly staff in organisations are speaking out about ethics and practices at work. Indeed, recent press releases show this is desired behaviour, e.g. in the health service. Whistleblowing, ensuring corporate principles are being met, needs to be seen as a positive so that the victims, either clients or other personnel, are protected. Professional abuse by staff on those they are there to take care of is a prime example of ensuring an open culture where debate and communication can occur without the fear of retribution, harassment and an unsustainable position. Certainly, Winfield (1994) underlines that the very size of public organisations demands a way in which these organisations need assistance in making sure that there are safety nets and that these are the staff themselves.

Alan Milburn in September 2001, on both radio and television interviews, sought to stem the thirst, when public sector errors occurred, for individuals to be blamed. In response to the Bristol heart incidents, he encouraged not only a whistleblowing culture but that the public must accept that mistakes will occur and they should be learnt from. This far sighted approach may be welcomed within the professional field of public service but without the taming of the media then the cycle of blame could continue with possibly drastic effect. The consequence being a paralysis of action for fear of doing wrong and in no action, wrong occurs. Here the societal learning links, and its advocate the press, with the organisation and its subsequent actions.

Deal & Kennedy (1988) suggest that it is essential to have 'spies' within the organisation to aid its cohesiveness and to ensure that the greater good of the organisation is positively accepted. The skill is reading the right 'ethical balance sheet' and creating a sea change in attitudes and long standing practices.

This debate is of interest because the learning organisation's key characteristics demand an open and honest culture where criticism and challenge are seen as positives. If learning is about others questioning practice where does this align with Drucker's (1989) concern that mutual trust can be impossible, especially if this challenge is in the form of communication to more senior managers. If a learning organisation is to be created what
is the balance between questioning and challenging and telling or exposing others. Does this have an effect on team building, trust and mutual respect? Does this create a potential conflict rather than a consensus culture?

Vinten (1994) proposes that any organisation that wishes to know about a problem before it gets out of control needs to show that it values employees who are prepared to 'speak up'. This institutionalising of 'telling' is important in internalising openness and honesty. Winfield (1994:18) agrees that "the best hope for regulating the public sector is the vigilance of individual employees". If this is so, what is an appropriate institutionalised format within the Children's Services? Should it or does it exist? What are the issues which would be included in the codes of practice in the Service which ensure the protection of the organisation and those they serve and where malicious whistleblowing which hampers rather than protects, is eliminated.

**Conclusion – The Need for a Fresh Approach**

It would be naive to suggest that one management 'type' is a universal panacea for all organisation ills. Therefore the political approach especially in the '80's, '90's and to date of equating private management with positive outcomes and public management with inefficiency and lack of direction is not, it is suggested here, either insightful or wise. Even within private management, different methodologies are used depending on the market segment.

Ranson & Stewart (1994) support those other writers who describe the distinctiveness of the public domain. They suggest that the public domain is more "grounded" in politics than economics – maybe it should be that they are grounded in both where the private sector is dominated by the latter. Ranson & Stewart explore the public/organisational interface and the creation of a learning society. This is noted here as a potential long-term consequence but the focus in this study is more how in the mêlée that exists around public organisations, internal players can establish a learning culture. How then in turn can this possibly influence an external development, if not with society as a whole, at least with individual clients and other professionals within the network.

Hughes (1998) claims that public sectors are changing to 'flexible market-based' management practices. It appears that there remains some debate about the extent of change. Are hospitals in reality less bureaucratic, status driven, with consultants, or compartmentalised than before? It is however fair to claim that massive change has occurred. It is just that it is not as simple as noting that it has moved to a more 'private organisation' modus operandi. No, public sectors have changed in many ways extensively and in others marginally so.
There is some considerable debate between writers about just how different public and private sector organisations are. McCraw (1986) on the one hand, may not see them as so mutually exclusive, whilst others such as Ranson & Stewart (1994) consider public sectors as having some distinguishable factors which merit this sector being considered independently of its private sector colleagues. Of course there will be common ground and areas of central issues which affect both, but it is the analysis here that public sectors are worthy of particular attention to their special circumstances. Not to do so could put at risk in depth consideration of those barriers which affect the public sector achieving a learning state. Ranson & Stewart (1994:4), in their support of the uniqueness of public sector management, claim “there is an urgent need to retrieve an understanding of the distinctive forms of management, for in the public domain any notion of management which cannot encompass the recognition of politics and conflict as constitutive of public organisation rather than as an obstacle to it is barren”.

Balloch et al’s (1999) work considers influences specifically in the social services department. Their conclusions draw attention to key policy issues that are important for social care staff. The image of social services in the public’s mind has clearly changed from that of benevolent ‘do gooder’ however well intended, to a profession under siege. LeGrand & Estrin (1989) refer to the “unprecedented barrage of criticism” being levied on the public sector since the ’70’s. Social workers, like many other public servants, have suffered from an ambivalent approach from political masters. Increasingly however the nature of this professional service is undermined by its own leaders. Increasingly too part time, unqualified staff and many employed by other agencies take over the basic care tasks from the more qualified workers. This leaves the contentious, conflictual, complex tasks. In essence this is the boundary role between state and social control and managing the social obligations of the state, whether that be child protection or mental health. This task has inevitably created stress and dissatisfaction. Although proportionally higher in this profession, the concern expressed by Balloch et al (1999:184) is that the persistent nature of this stress has been met currently by resilience and maturity but it is important in their view not to mistake “resilience for indestructibility”.

The parallel growth of encouragement of the private and voluntary sectors plus the likelihood of a devolved social care service to Primary Care Organisations all creates conditions within which learning and development become even more complicated.

The relentless onslaught of the media on the public sector in general has both potential benefit and detriment. It has on the one hand led to the acceptance that change needs to occur and that a management approach is necessary. It has however had the consequence of deep-seated morale problems. Teaching, medicine, nursing, social work and the police service are all public services with recruitment crises. Low morale
therefore not only affects those in the organisation but also makes the professions less attractive to 'fresh blood' and 'new ideas'.

Here we have then the conundrum – how in light of what has just been highlighted can a learning climate be established? It has been recognised that the extensive private sector academic analysis has many important pointers but may not give enough consideration to the unique attributes of the public sector organisation. The need is for a new fresh approach which considers different aspects within the organisation which influences its personnel. It was proposed that a different perspective needs to be explored. The aim to capture those aspects of the organisation which influence the personnel in this unique setting. The aim also being to manage the blocks and barriers both on an individual level and in a structural context. The following chapter attempts to identify a new approach.
Chapter 5

The Eight ‘E’s

Introduction

The organisational literature in regard to learning emphasises the importance of acknowledging that whereas individuals can learn without the organisation, organisations cannot learn without the individuals that make it up. Placing individuals then at the centre of any analysis on learning appears critical when considering learning organisations and organisational learning. Secondly the environmental condition within which the individual and the organisation work, clearly influences behaviour, learning capacity and learning opportunity.

The dilemma, as introduced by Vince & Broussine (2000:25), is that of centring learning on individuals whilst also controlling the impact of that learning on others. In essence they argue that public organisations are wary of the destabilising effect of learning and how that can often undermine a desperate need for compliance and control. If learning in effect is synonymous with change, then learning becomes “a political as well as personal experience within an organisation”. This clearly demonstrates, arguably in all organisations not just local government, that the tensions which are described by Vince & Broussine as paradoxical – a desire for change but possibly controlled, a desire to allow autonomy and improvement whilst promoting compliance. This model of allowing learning yet limiting it or its effects in case of ‘harm’ is very ‘parental’ in its style. This being encouraged and influenced by environmental/public account and exposure.

This chapter will propose a new approach by which to audit and analyse the impact of different influences on an individual. It begins with a brief reminder of the particular elements which drew the author to considering a new approach. The model will be described. Each element of the Eight ‘E’s Model will be examined to determine its validity as a specific segment. The chapter will end with translating the theory of the model into a practical tool for managers. This model will then be tested out in the primary research contained in Chapter 7.

The Development of Eight ‘E’s

Chapter 2 considered the theoretical perspective in regard to individual, group and organisational learning. At the end of that chapter, five issues were highlighted firstly the importance of knowing one’s personnel and their knowledge profile, secondly establishing
mechanisms by which to encourage sharing tacit knowledge thus converting it into explicit knowledge and thirdly having systems by which to challenge not only rules, but insights and principles. The fourth issue was the importance of recognising organisational defences and finally the impact of environmental factors was recorded as important. Any model that is therefore designed would ideally encompass these issues. In 1995 Ferris considered that there may be a gap in organisational thinking. How can managers, in this environmental mêlée identify and manage what influences the individual and the organisation and what consequences are there for the individual and organisational actions.

This model is based on the premise that each individual within an organisational context has a number of influences which to a greater or lesser extent affects their behaviour. Inevitably some of these influences will be conditioned by pre-organisational events for example educational background and experiences from the past. It is argued here that, whether a source of influence is before the person’s involvement with the organisation, or after, it should be firstly identified and then secondly managed in order for maximum organisational effectiveness to occur.

The central linkage between the individual’s learning profile and the organisational learning capacity led to Ferris (1995) reflecting on her own professional and intellectual profile; what firstly influenced that profile and secondly how then was this utilised by the organisation? The ethnographic nature of the study allowed for such self-analysis as at least some initial way of determining a starting point to consider a new approach.

Ferris (1995) determined that Education and Experience were readily identified as two factors which impacted on her own learning. These were also accepted widely both managerially and academically as influencing personnel behaviour. Ferris (1995) however observed within the public sector that colleagues’ behaviour and actions were also dictated by external forces which imposed certain actions or activities. These were primarily through statute or policy. In practice therefore professional opinion may have to succumb to the boundaries placed around it by legal procedural controls. Self-analysis of influences also showed that in professional activities there was a growing move to defend professional reasoning and intervention by placing these within an evidence-based framework. Therefore actions and behaviour had some objective source of support and further that actions were accounted for through aligned observations and behaviour in a practice context.

In 1995 the internal and often extreme influence of experts within the practice arena was observable. The organisation had created, to a large extent as a defensive mechanism, a
range of specialist advisors. The resultant impact on practitioners being caught between manager and expert was evident in day to day activities and behaviour. Individuals picking and choosing of advice which suited either their own professional opinion or desire for the easiest option was also observed and the potential dangers of this lack of control on decision making, noted. Further, staff felt the need for a proper evaluative process which analysed activities, considered actions and which influenced future behaviour – this was evidenced in the 1995 data. The lack of good evaluative/endorsed systems had led to dissatisfaction with staff and clearly here was yet another significant source of influence on individuals' behaviour and how those behaviours were enhanced, altered or changed.

The academic advice in 1995, had led to an understanding of the severe impact error can have on individuals' behaviour. The extraordinary, often subconscious, levels of defensiveness, for self-preservation had created for Ferris (1995) an awareness of this area of influence and for the need for identification of such patterns. Finally management writers had been convincing that in order for organisations to survive there needed to be the constant exploration of new, and better, ways of undertaking activities. Innovation and experimentation therefore, although difficult, were necessary because the public demanded from its officers, the constant striving for new solutions. If such experimentation did not occur how could the public rely on finding 'cures', new treatments, new solutions. In social care one has only got to look at the huge developments in community care in both mental health and elder care services, enabling the enhancement of home care and the reduction of institutional care.

By 2000 Ferris was able to explore these Eight 'E's, to discount some or include others. In the interim, the academic debate however had moved forward from the basis of organisational learning and learning organisations to knowledge management, intellectual capital etc. This very much emphasised the shared nature of knowledge in an organisational setting, the demand to look at ways of identifying tacit knowledge, converting this to explicit knowledge and encouraging individuals to do this. By 2000 then the necessity to have a method of identifying influences on individuals, an analysis of these influences and how they were managed and shared, seemed imperative.

The conception of the Eight E's was informed by the 1995 study. The testing of its reasonableness as an approach developed in the intervening years to 2000. Firstly the academic basis was considered and then its viability as a practical tool was investigated through the primary research of this PhD study.
**The Eight ‘E’s Model**

The Eight ‘E’s once identified can be audited and an assessment made of their level of influence. This in turn then leads to how the sources of learning are managed for the individual. This should develop for the individual and manager a keener understanding of the individuals approach to learning and reaction to the sources of influence which operates around the individual. Managers can then plan accordingly.

The link between the individual and the group should be identified particularly around the sharing of positive learned experiences – these communities of learning subsequently impact on the organisational learning and result in increased effectiveness and reduction in barriers, either personal or structural to learning. Disrupting the cycle which promotes organisational defences being established can be addressed once such features are recognised and their significance noted.

The model also has segments which have high influence on the individual such as Education, Experience and Error. The latter two, additionally have an effect on group learning. Experimentation, Evidence-based and Evaluation have a high influence via systems and are an objective learning source – these are sources where the learning is verified through objective or third party data collection such as audited or examined material. Finally external influence is high with Experts and Enforced both where outside services can impact although it should be acknowledged that Experts and Enforced can also be sourced internal to the organisation.

Figure 5:1 shows the model as first designed in 1995 when the model had not been explored. The 2000 model Figure 5:2 is the result of further academic study and also the result of the primary research carried out in this study. Two changes have occurred in the terminology from Model 1 and Model 2. Evidence-Based has replaced Extracted although the same principle is present namely that information is gained or taken from another validated source. Secondly Evaluation has replaced Endorsed again the principle remains that this is the verification and feedback on activities carried out. Evaluation is a much more current and commonly used term in public services.

The Knowledge Influences Audit in Chapter 7 explores the applicability and suitability of each of the Eight ‘E’s. The audit not only considers the description of each ‘E’ as perceived by the individual but also tests out how much individuals share of the knowledge they have accumulated. This attempts to address the link between individual learning and organisational learning – how much tacit and explicit knowledge is shared.
Figure 5:1: Sources of Learning 1995 - Model
Source: FERRIS (1995)
©H.Ferris
Figure 5.2 Ferris The Eight 'E's Model
Source: FERRIS (2000)
© H Ferris

- Individual Influence High
- Systems (Objective) Influence High
- External Influence High
The Eight ‘E’s Model itself further attempts to raise awareness amongst managers and staff to those aspects that influence them and their behaviour and in raising this awareness endeavours to encourage the harnessing of each element to the organisation’s and individual’s benefit.

This model has been designed through consideration of the influences on staff. It has been important to ensure that elements have not been either included or excluded because they did not fit the neatness of Eight ‘E’s. The following detailed analysis on each ‘E’ is to challenge this, to ensure the necessity of each category and to identify if there is indeed a gap.

**Expert**

The intention here is to note that Expert knowledge has significant influence on an organisation and therefore should be managed. It is on three fields of study that this analysis will rely. Although not exclusive they reflect the main elements that support the special place of expertise and the potential power that such expertise possesses. The three perspectives are from the legal, psychological and organisational theory fields.

**Legal Perspective**

The law can always be relied upon, more or less, to have a clinical and logical approach to what can be complex issues. The use of expert witnesses in trials gives an indication of the difference between those who are respected as having a particular knowledge and those who are not. Originally as Jones (1994) explains, expert witnesses in court were mostly those with some linkage to the scientific world. Thus forensic scientist and pathologists were depended upon to give some concrete evidence and the benefit of a supporting opinion which assisted the judge or jury in proving innocence or guilt. The distinction centred around the production of facts which most witnesses can offer and the giving of opinion which is the preserve of the expert. The expert as Jones explains is the ‘interpreter’.

Hall & Smith (1992) have a more subtle interpretation of those who qualify as an expert. They suggest the requirement to be identified as such, rests on an accepted ‘specialist knowledge’. Hall & Smith suggest the test is not whether someone has a particular qualification or indeed the method by which someone attains expertise and special knowledge, although a qualification helps to prove expertise, it is that the person satisfies the court that he/she is skilled.
The legal context leads us to acknowledge that experts have some 'special knowledge' from wherever that is sourced, either lengthy study, qualification, experience but having the feature that it is testable, demonstrable, provable. The additional requirement of acting as if you are expert is also important in order to create confidence and trust and according to Mildred (1982) the ability to express oneself, weigh up facts and show logical conclusions combined with fair and impartial presentation are equally important qualifications.

Increasingly the public services, be it Health & Safety, Transport, Education, Social Services, are pursued through the legal process especially if failure or dispute arises. In the world of Social Services the extensive use of the court process in children's proceedings serves to expose children, families and social workers to those termed Expert. The lack of 'experts' in the different fields of child care leads to an over reliance on a few. This in turn undermines the very premise of expertise – special knowledge in a particular area. Often experts are used in confrontational settings and often have the result of undermining the other professional opinion – the main objective to create doubt and therefore protection of the defendant. Experts therefore in the legal context have historically had a powerful role in the determining of justice, traditionally with their opinion accepted without question. Today it could be argued that Experts may be used as much to cause confusion as clarity but one thing they retain – their influence and impact.

Psychological Perspective

Feltovich, Ford & Hoffman (1997) in their Introduction open with explaining that early research into expertise was mostly conducted in discrete areas with the research trying to determine if there was fundamentally something different about those who became experts. Initial results as listed by Feltovich et al (1997:xiii) quoting de Groot (1965) and Simon & Chase (1973) showed that experts did indeed have “differences in perception, knowledge and knowledge organisation as a basic source of expert capability and not fundamental differences in reasoning”. However further studies showed that these capabilities in themselves needed to be enhanced by qualification and use and so experience was intrinsically linked with the cognitive qualities and that these cognitive qualities change as practice occurs. The work of Ericsson (1996), Ericsson & Smith (1991) and Hoffman (1992) support this. The question still remained can people practise something and still not be expert and how are those with similar qualifications and length of experience differentiated by others as either being an expert or not. Further, as Feltovich et al explain what gives some tasks 'expert' status and others not. The key of course is that there is a social context operating as well as a cognitive approach.
enhanced by experience – others attribute expertise; expertise is not therefore on its own, unwitnessed or uncredited. Complexity and therefore expertise is a social concept but again its complexity is supported by the objective, the science as well as the social.

Zeitz (1997:43-44) suggests that experts reason at a "more abstract or principled level" than those who are new to the field. Therefore there is a more complex degree of analysis. This complexity, according to Zeitz centres around the ability and level of abstraction exercised by the expert. In practise, this means looking beyond the literal "surface-based system of representation". The meaning of the input is maintained but patterns emerge which allow the development of other representations beyond the literal input. Experts therefore are able to apply knowledge, in a given domain, which solves more than the surface or presented problem. This knowledge as Seifert, Patalano et al (1997) outline is based also on experience over a protracted period. This experience stores in the memory and is a continued source of assisting the expert in future situations to determine actions or avoidance. This memory is constantly informed and the capability of the abstract knowledge increases.

The way experts process information, their wider knowledge and how they organise information effectively are generally accepted as key characteristics. Sternberg (1997:160) however also notes a) their greater capacity to use the knowledge they have to infer things others cannot on the same information and b) their abilities to create new knowledge from old through selective combining, comparing or encoding. They are almost effortless in this handling of knowledge and have a superior way of operating in their field. Sternberg further notes that they are subject to 'others' expert construct' where "people have a shared conception of what an expert is", here the social psychology of labelling being as powerful as cognitive ability.

Social construction of expertise is supported by Agnew, Ford & Hayes (1997:222) who accept that "expertise is socially selected" – at least by a relatively large group. Secondly they will have characteristics which are domain related – an expert choreographer will have expert knowledge of movement, the body etc. Thirdly experts in a domain, even if they are different in their approach or resultant viewpoint will have core skills and common knowledge.

The psychological approach to expertise usefully details both the cognitive and social psychological influences. The acceptance of a person as an expert therefore is a matter of combined factors resulting in a socially accepted position. There remains however an undefined quality which is most readily identified when trying to create expert systems or artificial intelligence processes. As LaFrance (1997) notes the challenge of trying to
transfer knowledge into computer systems still cannot grasp the 'know-how', the fact remains that 'tacit knowledge' is hard to replicate and needs a more emotional approach than the mechanistic computer system.

Organisational Theory

The third perspective highlighted here is that of the expert within an organisational context and their position in relation to power in an organisation. Buchanan and Badham (1999) explain that power has both individual and relational properties. The former can be found in both structural and individual sources of power as explained by Pfeffer (1992), including position, allies, level of control over resources, importance of the task undertaken, the level of replaceability of the individual etc. This, coupled with personal traits such as energy, toughness and sensitivity, ability to encourage others and to lead, establishes different sources of power for those in the organisation.

French & Raven's (1958) well known categorisation of power lists Reward, Coercive, Referent, Legitimate and Expert power as the five sources within an organisation. Student (1968) contends that, with referent power, the most influential power base in an organisation is expert power because of its voluntary nature on the part of the 'follower'. This voluntary nature of expertise supports Rollinson, Edwards & Broadfield's (1998) contention that expertise therefore is not necessarily associated with rank but can be allocated throughout the organisation. Bachman, Smith & Siesinger's (1966) research into expert power shows its particular influence in the supervisory relationship where it has a direct impact on others' performance and output.

Expert power has, over a number of independent studies, ranked as the most important of the power bases and with the most influence on others' behaviour. These studies ranged from Ivaneich & Donnelly's (1970) in a manufacturing plant to Burke & Wilcox (1971) in a public organisation. It was only in settings, interestingly, with an educational focus that expert power ranked lower, in Jamieson's & Thomas' (1974) work.

Prichard et al (2000) rightly point out the increased dependence that society has on expertise and experts from those they receive a service from, whether that be in financial matters, in healthcare or for example in house building or buying etc. This demand of course puts additional expectation on those experts and also undermines all others who do not fall into the acceptability of the definition.

Being an expert or having experts in the organisation may seem a positive contribution but as with other organisational features can have, as Benfari et al (1986) shows negative
aspects. Experts can have an undermining effect on the mainstream personnel – by accident, if not design. They can often set up complementary or secondary structures to those who are their followers. Moe (1995) supports this caution by pointing to the ‘downside’ of reliance on experts. Control over them is difficult and could be against the rest of the organisational direction. Experts also, although having an expectation of objectivity, are according to Moe likely to promote themselves and possibly their own cause. The expertise may also be defended in such a way as to be unexplainable to others and unchallenged by the paymaster. ‘Blind Faith’ in the expert solely because they are denoted as experts may be risky. Experts of course themselves may encourage this superiority and in so doing cause organisational disengagement with a section of employees, this disruption being ultimately destructive.

**Experts – Management Issues**

The three perspectives show the influence that experts, or those perceived as experts, have. A number of themes emerge: the mix of knowledge and experience, the cognitive processing of information and the social psychological impact. The management of experts is a feature possibly given less emphasis than it deserves. Issues for managers begin with the diagnosis of the type of expert perspective needed: how do such experts, as with others, understand the organisational objectives and how does the manager influence the expert’s mental modelling to manage this with the other organisational players? Managers must monitor whether experts, like other influential members, are subversive or enhancing of the organisational direction and how the organisation establishes mechanisms by which experts can share their knowledge and expertise with others. Finally managers must ensure the very existence of an expert layer does not undermine core staff and by default undermine their capability. This can be hard to identify in professional organisations where it may be legitimate to call on expertise. Management should ensure that such intervention is not supplementing failed systems such as supervisory or other decision making processes.

**Experience**

The link between experience and learning has been peppered through the chapters on learning organisations and organisational learning and these points remain relevant but are not repeated here. This section will emphasise learning from experience as a process which has managerial implications in that process.

The differentiation of considering experiential learning from other processes such as educational or behaviourist is emphasised by Kolb (1984:26). The essence of
experiential learning is that it is fluid, ever altering and changing as further experiences inform. This ability to have “ideas not fixed or immutable” but “formed and reformed” described its organic features. In these circumstances “learning is an emergent process whose outcomes represent only historical record, not knowledge of the future”.

Of course society’s conditioning has led to qualification and certification being the acceptable forms of acknowledging learning and these have traditionally been achieved through training and education. Evans (1994) helpfully points out how such a system can be undermining to the non-academic who may in turn consider himself or herself a non-learner. In reality it is a matter of individual, or indeed group experiences, not being ‘tapped’ because they have not been subjected to a systematic process of verification. Evans (1994) suggests a fourfold approach.

a) Systematic reflection on experience  
b) Identification of significant learning  
c) Systems of evidence to support the claim of increased knowledge or skill  
d) Assessment for accreditation

Kolb’s (1976) learning cycle is central to the developing recognition that there is more to an experience than merely having it! Kolb’s model highlights the need for learners to possess a number of abilities for them to be effective learners. They must have concrete experience abilities, reflective skills and the ability to abstractly relate these, through theory into implications for future actions and finally to draw these into active experimentation in new experiences. Kolb (1984:41) further suggests that such a cyclic model operates within two dimensions. These two dimensions are ‘prehension’, a grasping of the experience, and ‘transformation’, the transformation of that grasp, through internal reflection (intervention) as Kolb explains, or “external manipulation of the external world here called extension”.

Kolb (1984:41) gives a detailed analysis of these areas and their implications for the learning cycle. In simple terms he sums up “that learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, knowledge results from the consideration of grasping experience and transforming it”. Each internal segment of the cycle in Figure 5:3 has a related knowledge formulation associated with how experience is grasped and transformed.

The common theme accepted by academics is supported by Kolb namely that having the experience alone does not create learning and knowledge. Simply experience has to be firstly represented and acknowledged as an experience and then it must undergo a reconfiguration which converts this experience into a learning event.
The substance of Kolb's (1984:101-102) approach, is that in experiential learning there are fundamentally two features, that of apprehension and comprehension. Knowledge "emerges from the dialectic relationship between the two forms of learning". 'Apprehension' is about the "here and now". It is as Kolb describes the "continuous unfolding of present movement". "Comprehension on the other hand is, by its very nature a record of the past that seeks to define the future". 'Apprehension' further is a "registrative process transformed by ...appreciation whereas comprehension is an interpretative process transformed by criticism".

Appreciation may be less well understood than criticism, the latter being reflective, analytic, dispassionate and objective assisted by a distance from the experience. Appreciation is about the attention to the aspects of the experience that interests us therefore it is selective and is more immediate.

Finally Kolb explains that 'apprehension' in an experience is a "personal subjective process", 'comprehension' on the other hand is objective and interactive and based on a social process. The interrelated nature of the relationship between these two dimensions of knowledge, apprehension and comprehension, is obvious. The latter cannot exist without input from the former. The dynamic between them creates knowledge. The latter, by the very nature of it being critical and selective affects subsequent choice of experiences and activities, including both avoidance and promotion.

The analysis of the structure of knowledge and experiential learning can assist in understanding the complexity of the management of the experienced employees. It is
simply not enough to allow an experience to occur and then to rely on it to increase knowledge. It is evident that the experience must be part of a learning cycle including reflection and subsequent effect on outcomes or behaviour but remembering the process of learning from that experience is not outcome lead. The organisation will also want to consider the two dimensions of apprehension – appreciation via the interest in the actual experience and comprehension – the central dispassionate and social process activating that comprehension.

Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) whilst acknowledging the importance of completing the cycle of learning in order to achieve the full potential of creating new knowledge, are critical that Kolb does not offer more detail on the very aspect of reflection itself and so they offer their own analysis. They start with the premise of ‘intended’ learning that is that persons are consciously trying to learn from the experience where the learning is retained and applied – not an ad hoc, unstructured approach. This can be an individual or group reflective approach. The result of the experience can be centred in, as Boyd & Fales (1983) explain, a feeling of ‘discomfort’ that the experience was dissatisfactory or possibly a positive experience where achievement was not predicted or expected. Therefore this reflective process can confirm or validate an experience or create a new affective position.

Boud et al’s (1985) model starts with the individuals themselves and their desires and attitudes. Their accumulated past and how it affects the individuals’ state of mind to learn is important to identify. Those who have past positive experiences may be more open to learning and reflection whereas those with negative experiences either of learning itself or indeed the experience itself will have to be managed differently. Mezirow’s (1981) proposal is that individuals should become critically aware of their own assumptions and the effects of the past. He terms this ‘perspective transformation’ and encourages individuals to be conscious of those restricting and restraining factors which influence their capacity and readiness to move forward. This is particularly of interest in a social work field where it is important to approach situations open minded, free from preconceptions and where formal training prepares social workers to challenge their assumptions and their own behaviour, feelings and ideas. Mezirow underlines this real analysis of oneself to include considering the meanings or behaviour of one’s own actions, how discriminating those thoughts and actions are and identifying judgmental reflectivity, that is one’s value judgement and its impact.

Boud et al (1985) in explaining their model list pertinent points which learners and managers should be cognisant of. Learning, for example, is enhanced when there is a close link between the learning and the reflective activity. The management implication is
the scheduling of debrief processes and the allocation of time for this. Further, if there is a series of events it may be difficult to achieve separate debriefs therefore grouping debriefs may be appropriate.

In the production of the reflective process detail should be given to recall the detail of events without including judgements or feelings. This 'returning to the experience' as a clinical detached record of what has occurred uses such techniques as chronologies. This gives the individual time to think about the experience – a luxury that they are unlikely to have had at the time. Finally Boud et al note the four components of re-evaluating experience. These are association linking this new data with old, integration establishing relationship between such data, validation and appropriation the latter two achieving authenticity and internalising the learning.

The outcome in this model is the creation of a new state for the individual. This may include a new skill, a new approach, even a new cognitive map or indeed seeking new learning from past events. The result of such learning may be beyond the increase of knowledge and skill. It may include an inner confidence and desire to learn more, a security to try out something more adventurous. This of course leads to Argyris' (1976) double-loop learning and the constant questioning of assumptions and actions.

The style of adult education has been increasingly to use an experiential learning approach. Evans (1994) explains how this is a real motivational factor for older learners but also a risky one when challenging individuals' prior experience and expecting change in behaviour especially if the current practice is inappropriate. The possible consequence is to disempower rather than empower and create self-confidence.

Heron (1990) arrives at similar proposals but via a different methodology and representation. Heron categorises learning from experience into four layers. The four are namely practical action orientated, secondly conceptual, use of language, symbolism etc, and learning about experience e.g. considering proof, analysis etc. Thirdly imaginal where intuition plays a significant part and finally affective which is emotional and results from being integral to the experience.

In Heron's model each section relies on that below it and so the central foundation of emotional competence is established from which imagination, language, concept and ultimately action occurs. Postle (1993) supports the importance of Heron's emotional base and Brew (1993:92) underlines the effect of "strong emotional attachments", which have been driven by past experience, again reinforcing the linkage of experience with emotional consequence. This is a central tenet which is to be acknowledged in a learning
process. This debate links of course with the section on Error where experience is so powerful.

Boud, Cohen & Walker (1993) in setting out a number of propositions, in respect of learning from experience suggest experience and learning are inextricably linked. Experience is an accumulated process, layer on layer, multi-faceted and a complexity of positive and negative events and resultant feelings. The triggering of these in future events can be unpredictable, especially if a proper learning/debrief process has not occurred. Boud et al (1993) are clear however that there is no automatic link between experience and subsequent learning; experience needs to be subject to a systematic process. Aitchinson & Graham (1989:15) emphasise that experience has to be “arrested, examined, analysed, considered and regaled to shift to knowledge”. Brew (1993) however cautions that experience is not merely accumulated. It may be that new experiences undermine past knowledge and so replace this, not merely adding to that existing. Thus unlearning is as important in the process as learning itself. Hutton (1989) also reminds us that new situations can evoke uncertainty, fear, denial and that this can be strong and resistant.

Boud et al's second proposition is that learners actively construct their experience. They are unique because each past experience has shaped them and because of this a single shared experience can often be seen differently by different individuals. It is therefore subject to individual interpretation and is 'relational'. However it must also be activated by the individual as a learning experience – it could be blocked, avoided or ignored.

The third proposition is in regard to the holistic nature of learning. Thus, the cognitive, affective (feeling) and psychomotor (action) parts of the learning process are not easily separable if academics sometimes do wish to segregate the three. Boud et al's (1993) fourth proposition is that learning is socially and culturally constricted – this in essence means that the environment plays a significant part in the interpretation of experience, the language used, and the values already embedded. Finally proposition five is that learning is affected by socio-emotional influences. Here not only the emotional affect of the experience itself but the social reaction. The social support connects with expected reaction and the consequences of that expected reaction occurs as predicted or not.

Experience – Management Issues

It is generally accepted that there is an increased harmonisation of qualification and experience within the 'ideal' employee profile. What is clear here is that there are dangers in merely accepting experience without managers considering its effect, both
positive and negative on the employee's behaviour. Levitt & March (1995) caution about the impact of unmanaged experiential learning and how this can affect organisational learning processes. The interpretation of experience is critical to that organisational process and the resultant routines, beliefs and memory. Without systematic processing the organisational learning from employees' experiences may be maladaptive rather than adaptive and productive.

Management implications are therefore to identify key influencing experiences and their effects on individuals and to establish processes by which to ensure current experiences are systematically considered. Further, managers will need to consider including structural expectations such as monitoring, supervision and debrief and, in the social service context this may need to be multi-agency based as rarely do actions occur in isolation or are insular to the department. The organisation will need to ensure a critical, but compassionate analysis of events and this will dictate the need for new skills.

Managers have a responsibility to own this process of learning from experience and can make tremendous strides by effectively dealing with the range and variety, both positive and negative, of experiences to which their staff are exposed.

**Experiment**

This section will address the central question of how can public sector organisations, with a 'right first time' demand, allow experimentation within its sources of learning. Chapter 6 will detail experimental methodologies. This section will concentrate on the principle of the acceptability of experimentation in health and social care.

An experimental approach begins with a 'hypothesis' which grows from, as Nation (1997) explains, observations and from the feeling that some phenomena deserve more investigation. De Poy & Gitlin (1998) suggest that with 'human service professionals', including social care, these 'interests' and questions arise from one of five sources - a) professional experience and identified professional challenges b) societal trends, often supported by central policy makers c) professional trends d) research studies that can be extended and e) existing theory which can be built on.

The hypothesis is the start of a systematic analysis of what is proposed as an explanation for whatever phenomena. Brinkworth (1968) describes it as a search where the researcher endeavours to reach a conclusion by the most efficient manner but where the systematic approach reduces error. It is, as Deese (1972) explained, based on an inductive learning process. The hypothesis is tested against the data collected through
the experiment, analysis and interpretation of the data, then coming to a reasoned (not just reasonable) and logical conclusion which in itself can be examined. The key principle of objectivity underpinning the whole process.

It is already a requirement of any research that the question of ethics in the research is addressed. This is particularly so in experimental methodology in health, social or other care or human interface research issues. The reality is of course that experimentation is occurring all the time, especially in the medical field where the testing of new treatments, approaches, medications is ongoing. Indeed research is often an associated activity for leading hospitals and institutions. These institutions receive kudos from such research status.

The field of ethics is of course the discipline of placing a moral framework around any interventions, for research purposes, with, in this case, individuals or groups of people. In the public sector there are two moral and ethical codes at work. Firstly the professional value base and secondly the research ethics. Indeed in many public sector organisations experimentation is strictly controlled by ethics' committees who authorise each part of the experimental design. This is to ensure the integrity of the process.

The ethical standards, such as full information about study, confidentiality etc are standard for all research. In experimentation however, there may be situations under test where the ethical dilemma is the need to conduct the research but where the participants may suffer pain, discomfort, stress etc as a result. As Christensen (2001) explains, the balance then is whether the potential gain of knowledge is worth the possible cost to the participants.

These dilemmas clearly are more wisely dealt with by reference to an accepted code of ethics and by an internal body which regulates such research. In the public sector such models do not always exist across the services. In social care no such rigorous investigative process is established similar to that of health care research. On the other hand research into crime, offending patterns etc is often authorised by such authorities as the Home Office given the political sensitivity of the possible results.

Oakley & Fullerton (1996) argue that experiments should be more evident in social care research. Issues in social care can be of particular interest, for example Brinkworth (1968) highlights that it is important to understand the causal effect of intervention. The difficulty arises because causality has possibly many sources and identifying causality accurately can be difficult. However Brinkworth offers an analysis of how experiments in such settings can be conducted and agrees with the quasi-experimental methods. He
particularly suggests the use of single subject experiments which are very much on an individual level. These techniques are more commonly used in social work through single case design. This experimental methodology is individual patient/client led thus reducing the potential for error between a group finding and how it relates to an individual.

This single case design has the benefit of being able to be incorporated into what would be the individual caseworker's practice. Indeed Beigin & Strupp (1970) suggest in human studies they should be on a case to case basis because group intervention is not necessarily an accurate predictive tool when translating that to individual situations. The single case design is not a case study which describes events as they unfold. On the contrary, in the single case experimental design, the independent variables around the individual are controlled or manipulated and then effects measured. The experiment can as Nation (1997) explains simply measure the pre and post 'treatment' effects. This is used often in the mental health field where a patient's pattern of behaviour is assessed pre-medication and then post intervention.

Although single-case design appears to have such potential in a social work setting especially in child care and mental health treatments where such intensive interventions are involved, it nevertheless is of value to acknowledge the other techniques particularly in their potential use in services which have more compacted and regular service delivery. An example is the extensive use of home care packages for the elderly. Here the research approach could include within subject, between subject, group or multi-factor design. Chalmers et al's (1989) research in pre and postnatal care in the health field is an example of experimental design. Similarly the work of Hayward (1975) & Keeble (1995) uses these to demonstrate why an experimental approach can be effective in the health field. Pulsford (1992) to some extent supports this especially when using experimental design in small, focussed work where it can be used as promotion for discussion with those commonly interested. He is however more cautious about its use in a more widespread context because of the difficulties of transferability of results from a group to an individual situation.

The initial question of 'can you experiment in a public sector organisation' is simply answered, "yes". There are different types of experimental design from true experimentation to quasi-experimental methods which can be used in different settings.

Keeble's (1995) introduction into experimental research in a health care setting has many examples of how such designs can be applied and the usefulness of the results. Wilson-Barnett (1991) in asking the question 'the experiment – is it worthwhile?' undertakes a detailed exposition of the experiment and its value as a systematic analysis of causal
relationships. Wilson-Barnett acknowledges the true experimentalist's doubts about its widespread use in research with human beings. Despite this Wilson-Barnett is confident that progress in understanding the application of experimental evidence in the fields of psychology and physical interventions is undeniable.

In conclusion, there is sufficient analysis of experimentation as a proper and valid method of researching human beings that it is beyond question that such techniques can be used within the public sectors. A more relevant question may be about the conditions under which such experimentation can be allowed and how to undertake such work in such a setting.

Innovation

The other perspective on experimentation is that of the generation of something new, the building on an idea, the introduction of a change – all of which comes under the umbrella of innovation. Trott (1998) explains that in industry or business the use of research is a much more fluid and generic phenomena. It involves the old and the new, the scientific and a systematic approach and a resultant, or not, outcome. This in fact may be what the layperson sees as experimentation – a trial and error, an exploration of an idea.

It has already been accepted in Chapter 3 that in order for organisations to survive they must change, innovate and ultimately learn. This section will concentrate on the key features of innovation and its management and not present again the argument for innovation and survival. Kanters (1963:23) emphasised the importance of organisations establishing the conditions for "individuals to get the power to experiment to create, to develop, to test, to innovate".

The terms of innovation and creativity are often interchangeable when in reality they are quite different phenomenon. Creativity can be an individual, inspirational, almost spontaneous phenomena. Innovation however as Drucker (1999:85) explains "is not a 'flash of genius', it is hard work". Adair (1990) concludes that creativity and invention are different as they are less easily planned for and are reliant on the creative abilities of an individual. Innovation on the other hand can and should include others and this inclusive process makes it less threatening in organisational terms.

Innovation is a systematic process. Innovation is not just having the idea, it is as Adair (1990) says having the idea and being able to implement it and to determine its usefulness to the organisation. Further as King & Anderson (1995) outline it is a social process which demands the involvement of others to achieve it successfully. In order to
convert the innovative idea into reality there is the need for organisation, finance and environmental support.

Already it can be identified that the issue of innovation has similar characteristics to that of experimentation. A systematic, well thought through process which "results from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities....." Drucker (1985:67). Drucker goes on to identify where the sources of such innovation may arise. Again like experimentation, and unlike creativity, innovation is provoked by a reaction to both internal and external opportunities or threats. Drucker lists these as: Internally – a) unexpected occurrences b) incongruities – where expectations and outcomes don’t match c) process needs and d) industry and market changes for example in the public sector the demand for accountability with the services can lead to inventive use of computer programmes and new methodologies to reduce duplication. Externally, Drucker lists demographic changes e.g. the increased elder care population needing home care support, demands innovative but equally safe multi-agency care packages to reduce hospital populations; secondly changes in perception – where confidence in new approaches in itself leads to further innovation. The computer, the internet, initially seen as a threat in big business now are indispensable tools to organisational survival and finally new knowledge – whether that is, as Drucker (1985:71) says "scientific, technical or social".

Innovation as Pearson (1991:18) explains is linked with uncertainty and change. The latter can be "incremental or radical, evolutionary, enabling or disruptive". In his analysis he recognises the importance of reducing uncertainty in the innovative process. This uncertainty can either be in the end ‘product’ or in the approach or ‘means’ to achieve the end. Pearson designs an ‘uncertainty map’ which puts these dimensions against each other with the other variable of high risk and low risk. Such techniques are useful to assist those innovators or change masters in a risk analysis of the innovation.

Clegg (1999) helps us to ground innovation and creativity into a structured process by offering a do’s and don’ts section which relates to establishing a creative culture, explaining problem areas, generating solutions, evaluating ideas and implementation factors. Clegg is helpful as this allows a comparison with the experimental process. Innovation may appear to be a more ad hoc concept when in reality it is controlled and managed with a useful outcome. Similar to an experimental approach Clegg notes the process of ‘identification’, ‘generation of answers’, ‘polishing the outcome’ and ‘implementation’ of the innovation cycle.
Trott (1998) in identifying the tensions in organisations between stability and creativity leads to consideration of dilemmas. Tidd et al (2001) note the growing move to a competency led approach, seen as positive, but has in fact the consequence of establishing a minimalistic mindset, blocking innovation and reducing a thrust for excellence.

It is also clear however that the issue of risk is often the most restricting factor to innovation and especially so in public sectors. Adair (1990) gives the most detailed argument in respect of the issue of risk. Organisations must accept that failure is probable at some point. Indeed Adair highlights in 3M Company that 60% of new product innovation never makes it, clearly this level of innovative loss is not acceptable in a public 'company'. However if experimentation or innovation did not occur, advances would not be made. Adair acknowledges that risk cannot be eliminated but it should not be used as a reason for inaction and indecision which can equally lead to failure. Risk can be managed and Adair (1990:16) proposes "calculate risk and adjust your exposure to match your resources". Adair in his conclusion encourages risk management and discourages the fear of innovation.

Although the public sector may have a more risk adverse approach to innovation there has been a growing political will to allow innovation within public sector organisations. Without this central permission then major innovation, at a time of extraordinary levels of accountability, is difficult. Since the election of the Labour Government in 1997 major innovation has been via government led initiatives e.g. Education Action Zone, Health Action Zone, Sure Start etc. Innovation then kept separate from the public sector direct service delivery. The short term funding of such innovations has inevitably impacted on mainstream services and dictated a more integrated approach between public services and initiative developments. The result has been an inevitable demand for the public services to innovate and Martin (1999) explains how important this is because of the necessary attention to sustainability of new and successful ideas.

The Best Value Performance Programme and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment has, for Local Authorities, brought with it both 'carrots and sticks'. For those underperforming Local Authorities more stringent supervision occurs but for 'Excellent' authorities, the carrot is a real freedom to innovate. This has been complemented by the national development of bodies such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Improvement Project (LGiP), both of whom have a remit to encourage experimentation and innovation and to duplicate it. For those 22 councils that have 'Excellent' status the government has created an 'Innovation Forum' with the logo 'Beyond Excellence'. This has the Prime Minister's authority to 'free up
local leaders to innovate, develop and be creative”. The creation of the innovation forum (L.G.A. 2003:4) has been a unique opportunity to meet the governments wish to “use the existence of the excellent councils to develop, explore and test new ways of working...” This forum is an opportunity to formally have a “test bed for new approaches”. “The Government believes that they can learn together from an open and experimental approach”. In practice this will mean that Excellent councils can apply for finance for innovation and be 'beacons' for other councils.

Innovation within the public sector therefore can occur at a minimal level locally but the authority that now comes from central government gives an institutional permission to innovate – similar to that of most commercial companies where a research and development department has similar organisational permission to experiment not only to survive, but to grow.

Experimentation – Management Issues

Experimentation has been presented as a systematic and logical way to address casual links between an event and an outcome. Innovation is no less systematic and purposeful. As Drucker (1985) explains it requires knowledge and often ingenuity but essentially focus.

The main question has been can experimentation/innovation be allowed within the public sector? Yes there is a 'right first time' demand from those who are being served but equally there is a demand for current practice techniques to be used and new ideas to be generated. The debate raging at present is the unanswered question in regard to the MMR vaccination for children. Unanswered questions demand from the public a 'certainty' which may only arise as a result of further experimentation with single and multiple vaccines so that research can give some definitive reassurance to parents.

The managerial issue that arises out of this is, as West & Farr (1990) identify, to encourage the creation of confidence in staff to try new ideas and to be encouraged to innovate. In doing so the appropriate risk management assessments and managerial controls must be present. This allows for both staff and clients to be assured that experimentation is not an ad hoc, haphazard, unmanaged process but a formally researched, monitored and ethical process. Social Services, for example, may wish to follow health care or academic institutions in setting up a "Research Ethics and Management" Committee to review all innovation and experimentation.
Time is of course a valuable commodity in all organisations. The value however of encouraging new ideas and participation can increase staff motivation and interest and be a real incentive for staff retention. Status and kudos can be achieved through such interventions and this is particularly important when there are flat organisational structures with limited movement and opportunity.

Experimentation and innovation are important to an organisation’s growth and development and managers should strategically plan for this key element. Further structures should enable new ideas to be tried out and systems should not only review but disseminate and circulate key messages. Managers can promote and manage experimentation and innovation in the public service and should be encouraged to do so as long as it is a process which has inbuilt safeguards. It should retain the overall approach of public sectors namely that of being accountable with professional, and visible, processes open to scrutiny and inspection.

**Error**

‘Learning from one’s mistakes’ is a commonly accepted method of growth and development. It is argued here that error within organisational terms is of such managerial significance that it demands attention as a separate category. If it is subsumed by experience it may, because of its powerful associations, be denied proper analysis and may, be marginalised or avoided and by implication appropriate learning may be missed. The consequences of such avoidance will be considered here. This section will explore the concept of error. It will then relate this to the public sector environment and conclude with managerial implications.

**Human Error and Mistake**

According to Hammond (1996) there are two different error types namely false positive error and false negative error that is where actions have been taken which should not have been or not taking actions when one should have. Either way, whether through action or inaction error can occur and consequences experienced.

When individuals face making decisions the whole basis of judgement and human reasoning comes into play. Individuals weigh their options and for a number of different reasons choose an action or inaction which has for the individual the best predictable outcome. When the outcome is positive this reinforces the reasoning but when the outcome falls short of the predicted outcome this failure can be described as a mistake or error.
This seems a somewhat simplistic if understandable process, it is of course much more intricate. In Baron’s (1998) introduction he explains that decision making is not always the straight choice between the best and less best outcomes. Many things impact on a perception of what may be a best outcome and of course one person’s best outcome may clash with others decision making. Baron (1998) explains that intuition plays a key part in the process. Intuitively we refer back to a moral code and various rules which impact on a judgement. “We avoid positive options that have negative side effects, even if the positives outweigh the negatives”. Baron (1998:1). This stance in essence is a survival technique where often not taking an action, or risk, means maintaining a status quo. The status quo being less likely to create an error or mistake. Baron’s argument is that in the public sector such mentalities, especially in groups of decision makers, leads to not the best outcomes but possibly the safest – if in reality they may be the worst.

Baron’s moral code, and intuitions which result from that, centre on a principle of ‘doing harm through action’. Baron’s example is that there is a general acceptance that those who commit a harm are more culpable than those who stand back and allow a harm to occur. Thus co-mission has much more consequence than omission. An example is the Bristol Hospital heart surgery where a whole array of professionals took no action to prevent harm. The absolute responsibility fell on the consultant. This may have resulted from what Baron describes as ingrained beliefs which restrict actions, in this case the automatic acceptance of the ‘rightness’ of the consultant’s actions blinding people to errors and actions.

Within the cognitive psychological domain the issue of error has more recently been studied. This has been a reaction to the demand to more effectively predict error, especially where there is risk, and to reduce those errors that are deemed as dangerous. The psychological perspective considers the mental processing which on the one hand produces appropriate behaviour and on the other malfunction or error. Reason (1990:1) explains that errors are “inextricably bound up with the ‘computational primitives’”. In other words how the knowledge stored is selected and retrieved to make decisions about actions or non-actions. Reason (1990) brings us through some major points about the very nature of error.

Firstly there is a ‘cognitive balance sheet’ where performance and error are the reverse sides of a coin making unplanned results inevitable. Secondly errors take a limited number of forms and are less common than correct action. Thirdly there is difference between variable and constant error, these depending on the nature of the task, its environment and the performance mechanisms. These when analysed can identify the
probability of error. Fourthly intention, actions and consequences are synonymous with error. The gap between intention and result the very essence of error. Finally clarification of errors is subdivided by Reason into behavioural, contextual and conceptual levels. Contextual relating to causality and reasons why an error occurs and conceptual which consider deeper theoretical error production.

What does all this mean in practice? It means that errors are inevitable as they are the downside of the coin of success. They reflect that humans are fallible and that this fallibility is linked to cognition, as is success. They use the same stored information to make judgements and to take action. Whether they are as Reason (1990) suggests failures in planning or as Rasussen's (1986) analysis of errors shows are at a rule-based level or knowledge-based level, the identification merely highlights the different layers, degrees, impacts of situational factors, predictability etc that affect error complexity. The fact remains errors will occur and this should not be surprising where there is a high requirement to consistently sort difficult informational tasks.

If this then is the case, how can individuals and organisations establish mechanisms to detect error, the premise being that detection can lead to correction or prevention. Detection of errors, according to Reason (1990:161) can be found in three sources. Firstly self-monitoring. Many psychological studies show how humans have a natural correction ability. They recognise, before being told, intuitively or innately that the action, its process or outcome, is wrong – an error or mistake. In many occasions this can be self-corrected by minor adjustments but occasionally it requires greater refinement to address the error. The main point is however that this is self-detected. Secondly there is the "environmental error cueing". This is where the environment stops further action or progress. For example this is something that stops an action occurring until, whatever stops it is corrected. One cannot open a door without unbolting the lock. Thirdly there is error detection by others. This is where a manager or supervisor can identify in others the error that is occurring.

The immediacy with which an error is detected is a significant factor in its ability to be corrected. This is one reason why self-detection is often the best, and how in most cases error is addressed. These self correction adjustments often happened automatically and the more self-aware an individual is the wider range of error correction can happen. The most complicated error correction is that sourced through the other methods of identification and these can be hampered by distance between event and discovery and because they are more likely to be either rule-based or knowledge-based thus those most deeply integrated into an individual's actions and behaviour.
Organisational Implications

This section has concentrated on the nature and categorisation of error from an individual's perspective. Error is not a simple matter. The different forms listed show that judgement is at its centre and that judgement is based on two forms of cognition - analysis and intuition. The former, a logical, conscious and as Hammond (1996) explains, defensible process whereas the latter, intuition, is the opposite. This is a cognitive process that is not observable, quantifiable or indeed 'logically definable'. Analytical approach is both overtly open to scrutiny and based on rationality. Intuition is affected by background, internal factors and external influences by what the individual considers moral and by the basic innate senses that on the one hand lead us to identify error and on the other possibly deny it because, our other instinct – survival, takes over.

In organisational terms Argyris & Schon (1974) were concerned that organisations had limited abilities and systems with which to balance the preservation of existing knowledge structures whilst allowing for the necessary challenge to those activities which need to be unlearned. Argyris & Schon term those limited learning systems and they conceal errors by, as Probst & Büchel (1997:66) explain "introducing inconsistencies and making attempts to disguise". This in essence creates situations where employees at different levels in the organisation can establish defences in order to protect their position. For example the implementation of a system may expose behaviour which was purposefully put in place by others to avoid, ignore or bypass a less than desirable action or effect.

The power by which individuals learn to establish behaviour which maintains their survival is immense. In order to avoid threatening circumstances, patterns of behaviour are established to the point where the individual creates or invents reasons, establishes stories, tells lies in order to remain positively perceived in others' eyes as competent and in control. This level of defensive patterning is labelled by Argyris (1990) as 'skilled incompetence'.

It remains startling that these self-preservation skills are so powerful. Argyris' explanation of defensive reasoning alone underlines this. Argyris outlines how, even with free will, individuals will not always carry out actions which are in their own best interests. They choose ways and actions which either are contrary to or fall short of desirable outcomes. Defensive reasoning comes into play when the individual convinces themselves and others of the validity of their actions and the premise behind it.

Argyris (1990) outlines in detail the model theory-in-use proposal where individuals endeavour to take unilateral control but to do it in a socially acceptable, negotiable way.
When embarrassing, threatening events occur, such as the exposure of mistake or error, they create defensive mechanisms which will avoid or minimalise such embarrassment. In doing this they create misunderstanding, distortion and self-protection.

The need to be in control is all controlling, to the extent that error occurs not because of a genuine lack of competence but by the ultimate need not to be exposed or embarrassed. This triggers Argyris (1990) Model I Theory: take the social worker in court ridiculed by the 'game' of the court room, the most minor of inefficiencies exposed. The longer term effect on the traumatised social worker may be the avoidance of court even when it is really necessary. They may rationalise out their behaviour in the second case in order to avoid the experiences in the first. This 'skilled defensiveness' created a 'designed' error often subconsciously established. This is of course where, when multiplied, it has significant effect on organisational routines and the establishing of avoidance techniques. Error in these circumstances, in organisations, will go undetected and subsequently uncorrected. This is because the organisational norm is to bypass error, not to discuss it and to make discussing or addressing it also untouchable. Argyris says that these very strong defensive routines only become increased with any attempt to break into them.

The solution put forward by Argyris is to create a new theory-in-use which he terms Model II. This calls for the informed choice in a decision based on valid and full information, taking responsibility and monitoring the implementation of those decisions to detect and correct error. It is important to also make explicit the premise and assumptions behind decision-making. This 'productive reasoning' again gives the ability to others to test others' assumptions publicly and repeat positive actions.

Contemporary Issues

Error is, in public service terms, a sensitive and very political issue. The 'intuition' of society as a whole was historically to support the bureaucratic nature of such services and the status of the professionals in them. There was limited questioning and indeed some sympathy for those who had 'tried to save the patient' but failed. The civil servant was seen to be thrifty, equitable, fair and above all trustworthy. How things have changed and much of the reason for this is that errors, mistakes, misjudgements have been made with terrible consequences and the heinous crime of all - it was covered up, not only at the time but over time.

Channel 4's programme 'The Trust' (31.01.02) related to Queen's Hospital and in many ways typifies the issues of error in public sector. The first incident is the death of Wayne Jowett who died when doctors mistakenly administered a cancer drug. This was an
individuals' and systems' mistake where the judgment of one and the lack of protection of the other resulted in tragedy. At the same time Alderhay was exposed. This was quite a different error formation where there was the repetition of the practice of retaining organs without permission. This then was repeated inappropriate behaviour – an organisational routine – sustained by successive pathologists, without question, they accepted the designed error and perpetrated it. Thirty years of work and 42,000 cases at one hospital alone needed review. The dilemma being that such a time consuming and protracted process inevitably delaying redress could be interpreted as 'cover up'.

The Department of Health (2000) in an attempt to identify error creation and to emphasise the systems' response to error creation published “An Organisation with a Memory”. This was to encourage individuals and the public in their acceptance of individual error. The document identified the current way of systematically analysing errors and learning from them. It suggested that person centred error can be reduced through supervision and controls and when error occurred then the ‘defensive’ system there to protect the organisation, would be examined first. The two features noted here in public sector organisations is firstly that there is currently poor error analysis and secondly that individuals are often blamed thus creating a defensive culture especially in the increasingly litigious world.

Social Services events and mistakes are equally exposed and analysed. The current Victoria Climbie enquiry has led to the question – why again? The Laming enquiry, reported on BBC Radio 4 (20.02.02), highlighted that the local authority concerned had 10 child deaths since 1988. These single unconnected deaths were linked by the Laming enquiry establishing the concept of institutional negligence, repeated failures to protect. This becomes then more than a single tragic event, it is a betrayal of trust and an assault on the public sector. In this instance leading to the entire restructuring nationally of children's social services.

The police authority 'institutional racism' was a much more fundamental sort of error identified in the Steven Lawrence inquiry – a complete failure to recognise basic principles. The mistakes and errors inherent in a whole service were endemic. The redress that now must occur, not only in this service but across all organisations is now enshrined in resultant legislation.

Error management, from an organisational perspective, on this evidence alone is crucial to how those who maintain the public services view those services. The crisis in confidence in the public sector has mostly been provided by the issue of error. Mistakes are individual, organisational and institutional in nature all having layers of complexity.
Error – Management Issues

The Department of Health (2000) proposed seven recommendations to address adverse events.
1. Introduce a mandatory reporting scheme for adverse events.
2. Introduce a scheme for confidential reporting by staff of adverse events.
3. Encourage a reporting and questioning culture.
5. Make better use of existing sources of information.
6. Improve quality and relevance of adverse events investigations
7. Undertake a programme of basic research.

If this is taken with Reason’s (1990) proposals to minimise errors then most managers could reduce error occurrence. Such practical ideas as structuring work to minimise overloading the vulnerable cognitive process in individuals, thus demand on memory, planning, problem solving is eased. Making the whole process explicit and visible opens it up to question and analysis thus planning for the occurrence and the recovery post error. If all else fails standardise processes and reduce an individuals' span of discretion to create failure – this of course can reduce innovation and flexibility.

Individuals can recognise the symptoms which lead to increased possibility of error occurrence. Distraction, overwork, pressured for outcome, the inability to reflect, the time restraint to do so. In busy public sector organisations, be it teaching, social work, health care or police, the pressures and demands on the public services create the conditions for error occurrence. The individual, the manager and the organisation must take responsibility within these conditions and should, when pressured, exercise good risk management techniques. Assessing risk, balancing probabilities, recording thought processes and making a decision and acting on it. In reality if these processes occur risks can be taken and errors, if not eliminated can, at least, be explainable.

Education

It was difficult to know where to begin when trying to offer a synopsis of the current issues in education as it affects those within the workplace. The rows of educational texts held little comfort as they spanned the details of the education system from that of how children learn to adult learning issues, lifelong learning, diversity issues, research approach etc. It is necessary then to reemphasis what aspect of education is referred to here. This section highlights the need for an educational process, its purpose and how
that is changing to meet the demands of today's society. The section will end with the new balance that has been created between the purchaser – the employer, and the provider – the educator.

Education has been very much a political issue since the industrial revolution when there was a demand for technical and scientific knowledge and the requirement for a workforce to produce. As Watts (1983:11) explains, factories needed time-discipline, obedience and "a capacity to engage in rote, repetitive work". In the nineteenth century politicians recognised the use of education in socialising and controlling the populace and establishing not only task skills but a 'productive citizen' who was diligent, thinking etc. The interrelationship between education, politics and social intent is clearly evident. Political leaders, whether the new right consumerism or the new left corporateness, demanded of education not only knowledge sharing but instilling work ethics, achievement, behavioural controls e.g. law and order and social or team skills.

Ranson (1994) suggests four main diverse purposes for education which gives a multi-layer dimension. Firstly meeting the needs of the individual - this person-led approach should in essence release potential, establish growth and enhance capacity with the individual. Secondly education is for society, the transmitting of moral, ethic and cultural codes. It initiates the individual into society. Society more or less replicating institutional or organisational life. Education then is part of the method of passing on social codes, values, expectations. Thirdly education has an economic function investing in personnel growth to enhance the workforce and finally it has a political function. This of course is easily seen in the distribution of power and influence within educated groups and fourthly the political use of education either to create a market consumer approach or an equality, social democratic philosophy – each education policy following a political lead.

The relationship between employment and education is therefore a powerful one and Watts (1983) highlights four functions where education especially assists the employment area. Watts (1983) firstly points to selection. Education does not give individuals skills and knowledge alone, the conveying of this knowledge is then judged, ranked and graded. Such processing of achievement in turn selects those through entry qualifications into the next stage of employment or higher education. Education invariably means differentiation and as Dale (1985) explains this is a rarely acknowledged but real aspect of the education structure – failure, success, selection, rejection.

Professionals and those working within the public services are, according to Dale (1985), most influenced by the need to have certificated qualifications. The increase in the growth of these areas has created demand within these sectors and the need to recruit
teachers, social workers, nurses, has now encouraged finding ways of entry that are less traditionally solely through an academic route but where past experience has been credited. The 'diploma disease' as Dale terms it, has possibly replaced the degree and higher education background. This has had significant effect on the quality of output of the students and is an aspect to which reference will be made later.

Education therefore in practice allows for a publicly accepted method by which to account for those who have been selected to do a job or as an entry method to higher education. It can further, as Dore (1976) points out, become a method of differentiation to long standing employees to get the edge over their colleagues. Public examinations allow for an expectation on the part of the employer for those leaving study and moving to an occupation. The objectivity of the process is relied on to select out the most able.

Watts' (1983) analysis highlights however that such selection tends to be at the beginning of a career and that such educational prowess tends to lose its potency and become replaced with other relevant qualities. Maguire & Ashton (1981) note that in practice employers used them mostly at the pre-selection stage to weed out rather than select in potential employees. Certainly as an employer gets to know individuals' capability education becomes a less explicit issue. Of course it remains an implicit benefit as it is likely that those who have the benefits of an education can conceptualise and intellectualise at a higher or deeper level.

Watts' (1983) second use of education in the employment arena is as a socialisation function. Socialisation including measurement against others and of course the establishing of a rewards' mechanism – pay replacing academic grades. Ashton & Field (1976) go as far as to describe how different socialisation processes extend to groupings within the educational provision into the work environment. Those who are seeking advancement tending to lead within both environments – and similarly those who have had little reward or satisfaction escape into manual work, often boring, which elicits similar behaviour as 'bunking off' or the adult version 'taking a sicky' or 'skiving'. This is an important factor to note. The experiences within an education process could then become part of a recruitment and selection design when particularly interviewing new employees who are progressing into work for the first time.

The orientation of the individual is seen by Watts as education's third function. There are many examples particularly within the professions where work experience, or practice time are embedded within a course. Teaching, medicine, social work, engineering are all examples of how those who are to receive a qualification need also to experience the workplace. This helps the individual to know expectations and to see others, qualified, at
work. This is not dissimilar to Watts' fourth function of preparation - understanding where education prepares the 'student' by establishing skills to be used directly in the employment. Take for example the current Diploma in Social Work Course and the necessity not only to have academic ability but direct work skills with children. Students therefore enter employment with the ability to do a job. This of course does not dilute the necessity for proper induction but does at least give the entrant a clear preparation for the job they are undertaking, whilst a level of skill competence is expected by the employer.

Rogers (1992) supports Watts' proposals for education with his own technical expertise, status, social structures, but adds the importance of a revolutionary force - establishing a critical, questioning body allowing for the ability to change. Shor (1992:11) raises this point of developing participants as "critical thinkers, skilled workers and active citizens". In the educational system, a mass market, there must be enough room to encourage the curious, to empower learners to question. Thus learning through education is not only about establishing a stability and repetition of that already tried and tested but an opportunity to destabilise and to question. The education process therefore is not only about tests, exams, measurable outputs but about empowering candidates to become, according to Shor, 'thinking citizens', 'change agents' and 'social critics'. Education then is not a passive process, 'done unto the participant' it is an active and interactive way to develop the individual which according to Knapper & Cropley (2000) should value learning for its own sake and should encourage an eagerness and motivation to learn. Specific to the social work field Balloch (1998:141) explains that education has the "role of enabling to think critically and respond to new demands and new circumstances with confidence".

Education's purpose however is not to create complete revolutionaries and ultimate chaos but to establish a critical mind, the acceptance of social boundaries but within that the latitude to develop new thinking and to seek clarification. Education gives the social skills to achieve this in a non-conflictual way. The aim of the education process is to acquire skills and knowledge which allow future experiences to be reflected on in a more meaningful and expanded way.

Training and education have become a central theme in enquiry reports in response to national critical incidents. The call for more training has led to the government's aim of increasing social care education from diploma to degree standard for all qualified staff. Of course this is a defensive use of education where both employer and state can place responsibility on educationalists to offer at least part of the answer to addressing poor standards and inadequate actions leading to individual disasters such as a child death.
Adult education is of course somewhat different to that exercised within the school field however the latter clearly influences the former. Although it is true that the number of those re-entering education as adults has increased over the years, it remains evident, as Tett (1993) explains, that adults who do participate come from a particular social grouping, they are mostly under 35, skilled, managerial or professional and have a positive attitude to school and education. Women, ethnic minorities, older persons and long term unemployed are all under represented. This is particularly interesting in the social care field where direct workers are mostly women and middle aged. Tett says that those aspects which encourage adults into education are when they receive information and when they see the purpose and benefit of education and know how to access it. This reflects the significant number of older persons seeking qualifications who are employed in a lower status job but are encouraged to progress once in the company of other professionals – classroom assistants, nurse auxiliaries, social work assistants, legal executives are examples of this. These individuals have overcome the conditioning and cultural influences which have constrained them in the past and are mostly sourced in their initial educational experiences. Overcoming this previous 'failure' cannot be underestimated in adult-learning settings and organisationally should not be dismissed especially if retraining is also demanded as professionals keep up to date. Tett highlights the factors of attitude and expectations as more powerful restrictions than finance, time etc.

This is of note in the nature of establishing critical thinking for participants with these past patterns of education. Shor's (1992) analysis that education must allow for a level of desocialisation as well as socialisation arises out of the need not to accept everything at face value. The skills and insight to challenge, may be hampered by those with poor educational backgrounds but also who may already be in the 'system' as for example a social work assistant. Here criticising the norm is important as the educational process will be underused and previous behaviour only reinforced not enhanced.

The link of education and work has been recognised as both a political and social issue. In this the style of education must also respond to the current political and social times. The desperateness to attract recruits into the public services whether it be nursing, police, social work, has resulted in nationally led advertising campaigns and incentives such as higher grants for London based professionals, home computers for teachers etc. The education system has to also respond to this social need. The need for part-time, flexible courses with techniques such as distance learning all may need to be utilised in order to meet the economic need. This interestingly and coincidentally reflects mature students' own preferred style of receiving an education experience. Becher's (1996) research showed professionals, whilst recognising the continued need for ongoing learning,
preferred modes of learning which linked direct experiences if in a structured learning way, with the use of mentoring, experts, 'learning by doing' or 'by teaching' etc.

Continued professional development may then have different approaches to the initial training stage. Universities and colleges according to Becher (1996) were seen by professionals as useful in the qualification stage but were rarely used in post qualifying study. This may be for a multitude of different reasons not least that professionals in the field may not see those within the academic setting as up to date in practice terms. This is certainly the dilemma in social work training where the pace of change in the organisation is so fast that those not exposed to it may find the range of that change difficult to keep pace with.

Eraut (1994) suggests that there are specific issues addressed in professional education and the acceptance of competence by those who are recipients of their practice. Education specifically must equip potential professionals to have skills particularly in acquiring knowledge. This is not only eliciting the information but placing it in a conceptual framework. This is particularly important in filtering the current mass of information all professionals must contend with on a daily basis. Eraut's (1994:111) "practical knowledge combined with ability" is the establishing of skilled routinised behaviour and as Erault explains the rapidity of that skilled activity. Deliberate processes include prepositional and situational knowledge as well as professional judgement. Giving information, not only relaying it, but selecting what to share which can be intuitive as well as reactive and finally metaprocess as Eraut explains as the control and direction of one's own behaviour and the critical adjustments needed, are all important professional educational aspects over and above the need to merely acquire set information.

It is important to hold on to the difference between education and other forms of learning. Tough (1971) and Colletta (1996) note education as a deliberate structured, intentional process where individuals prepare to learn and are aware that is the purpose of the intervention. Education has specific rather than general goals, there is therefore a range which boundaries the learning and the learner with certification ensuring that these boundaries are not negotiable. The currency is the fact that it is fitted against criteria and it is portable from any learning site into any employment site. Of course the other real benefit of certification is the psychological success on behalf of the participant. Knowing all that effort was worth the reward of tangible standards achieved.
Education – Management Issues

What do managers want from a professional education system? Van Horn’s (1995) work shows that employers were disappointed with the skills level of those educated solely in the academic world. Van Horn (1995) showed employers sought a more experience and education mix and felt that it was important that they had some influence in the curriculum.

The importance of establishing links between the workplace and the educational institution is a recurrent theme with many writers. Knapper & Cropley (2000) discuss the necessity of this linkage in the ever changing world of professional existence. This partnership emphasised workplace-based education – this is not to be confused with workbased learning which may more equate with experiential learning. It is developing specific programmes which has the benefit of the academic structure and the practice element – the control of the curriculum remaining very much with the colleges as with the accreditation. Co-operating and communicating together is, according to Teichler (1999), best achieved in joint curriculum development, representation on decision-making bodies etc more transference between academic and professional careers. Such methods as exchanges and shadowing may also enhance working together. The relevance of study, to the workplace, as Teichler, explains is central to this co-operation.

The mixing of the educational and experiential sources gives the balance between the contextual, problem solving and team approach of practice element with the idealistic, prepositional knowledge which is mostly associated with the educational setting. Candy & Crebert (1991) point to the fact that the former is performance orientated whilst the latter can expand choice and idealistic thinking through academic sources – another balance struck.

It has been noted that the educational 'history' and experience often has long term consequences in both learning and performance terms. Managers then may need to audit their staff more accurately, not only exploring the qualification but the person's experience of education and training. Any remedial action can then take place.

The managerial task then focuses on a number of issues.

- Collaboration between employee and educational establishment is important.
- Establishing the differentiation between initial training and post experience/qualified candidates.
- The demographic profile of workplaces should be assessed to determine the educational input of those who are female, part-time etc.
The professional aspects of the educational process should complement the prepositional knowledge.

Both employer and educationalist should work in partnership to design programmes that can address the rapidity of the change agenda.

Educational experiences should be critical and stretching in order to establish critical thinking and consequently new ideas.

Managers will need to be encouragers of adult learning enabling re entry and creating a culture of continuous improvement.

**Evaluation/Endorsed**

Performance has become a key watchword in both the private and public sectors. Hand in hand with the concept of performance is the evaluation of that performance whether it is in the financial, managerial, practical or professional arenas. Private sector organisations clearly have different evaluation processes and indeed 'bottom lines', market share, profit and loss, share price, sustainability of product success etc. Public sectors have equal, if not more, complex evaluative systems and these will be addressed in this section.

Here the meaning of evaluation will be explored not only in its present form but also in the realities of an organisation. This section will specifically relate to the organisation under research namely the social work/social care field.

**Evaluation – What is it?**

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey (1999:4) introduce their work on evaluation by accepting that "the broadest definition of evaluation includes all efforts to place value on events, things, processes or people...." This more formal definition sums up Øvretveit's (1998) more basic acceptance that evaluation is simply something we do all the time. Constantly humans evaluate – judge value, process data, place importance on events, people etc. When humans encounter an experience they judge its value and then take actions accordingly. Scriven (1991) notes firstly assessing the worth and then placing standards by which to measure, rank and place merit on the information collected.

Rossi et al (1999) underline the importance of evaluation not being a purpose in itself and this links with the need for evaluation to be organisationally relevant. Evaluation is practical and ideally should be aimed at its purpose and audience and the political, legal and administrative context in which it fits. This is an important feature of evaluation and
the consequences of it being badly handled can undermine the very program under scrutiny.

The Local Authority under assessment here has some experience of this. In an innovative scheme for children, attracting both multi-agency and central government funding, the demand for evaluation from each of the sectors was powerful. In reality the evaluation took on a life of its own and in many ways dominated the whole project – the evaluation process itself however was not reviewed in regard to its impact on the programme. Part of the complication of course was that the audiences were many and that the purpose of the evaluation was different for each audience – in one case cost-effectiveness, another as an attracter of money from other sources. The point to emphasise here is to be clear about the purpose of the evaluation and to be clear about the expectations of the audience, trying to ensure conflicting audience demands are addressed prior to the evaluation process. Øvretveit (1998:27) suggests this is best clarified when the following questions are asked. " - Who is the evaluation for? - What are the questions it aims to answer? - Which decisions and actions should be better informed as a result? - How much resources and time are available......"

Political Impact

Martin (1999:54) describes Prime Minister Blair’s vision for the public services and government. The great drive to improve performance, to become responsive to public need and to offer quality services where there will be “zero tolerance of failure and mediocrity, an enhanced role of audit, inspection and performance.....”. The link between government success and the productivity of the public services has never been stronger, whether it be waiting lists in hospitals, the number of children adopted in a year, the percentage of trains on time – public services or previous public utilities have to show their improvement. The reason lies in political survival through the public perception of economic prudence and ‘best value’. It is rare for any government initiative not to have with it an evaluative process. This includes the wider interpretation of evaluation in the performance management process.

The Personal Social Service Performance Assessment Framework Indicators (2000) reflect the Modernising Social Services agenda of the Labour government. The introduction sets the context of assessing each council’s performance through accumulating data from different sources. Social Services alone accounts for over 500 separate indicators. These are against 5 domains:

1) National priorities and strategic objectives – the extent to which local councils are delivering national priorities.
2) Cost and Efficiency.
3) Effectiveness of Service Delivery & Outcome.
4) Quality of Services for Users and Carers.
5) Fair Access.

These domains sum up the government agenda and the evaluative process, through the Performance Assessment Framework, against which Local Authorities are measured. This is just for Social Services, one can only speculate as to the enormity of the data collection the government undertakes across all public services. The thrust of central government for evaluation processes of course goes beyond the quantitative approach noted. The detailed enquiry process either with the status of a public enquiry or a formal review via an eminent figure in the law or other public services is a further device.

Management Impact

The central approach to performance review has certainly spilled into managerial practice in public sectors. How naive many managers may now feel when they, in the past, claimed that it was difficult to evaluate and measure inputs if they worked in the public sector. After all how could one measure outcomes given that the material one was working with was so individual, unique and unpredictable – i.e. human. The performance development has of course increased the recognition in public sector managers, already known by their private sector colleagues, that if “you can't measure it, you can't manage it”.

Managerial evaluation occurs in a variety of different areas as the rows of managerial text can testify. The intention here is to identify the possible approaches and then to consider the areas where evaluation will be used by managers.

A) Strategic Evaluation

The strategic position of an organisation reflects the organisation’s place in relation to its external environment. To some, not inconsiderable, extent this is predetermined by central government however there remains sufficient latitude for public sectors to manage their future strategically. In order to do this managers will need to step back from the day to day issues and plan systematically for the future with a series of hierarchical goals and objectives that cascade into the organisation. The reality is, as Nutt & Backoff (1992) suggest, strategy addresses the crucial concern of survival in an increasingly uncertain environment.

In the past, as Hughes (1998) explains, officers in these organisations were reluctant to plan strategically for fear of being considered ‘political’. Now the very nature of the public
sector is so scrutinised that the defence of the organisation's direction has to be clear and thought out. Strategic development of course is different in public organisations in that it is often confined by budgetary and political cycles. On the one hand this can tie the hands of chief officers, on the other the skilful leader can use such patterns and potential periods of disruptions to their advantage. Further according to McCaffery (1989) they are bound by legislative demands and judicial regulation, plus scarce resources and changing political climates, responding to changing client needs.

Blundell & Murdoch (1997) highlight the need to audit and review these components constantly and to adjust targets, strategy and the implementation programme accordingly. Strategy, in light of the ever-fluid internal and external situations, has to be constantly evaluated to ensure its relevance. Strategic evaluation is therefore a necessary managerial requirement to ensure that the organisation is responding to environmental changes. This will ultimately offer at least some protection to the alert organisation.

B) Cost and Financial Evaluation

Public services have no independent source of funding outside that of the political arena whether that is at local or central level and often resources are agreed in advance. To increase productivity does not increase income but can increase output levels on existing finance. Budgets in themselves are used as a mechanism, within this sector, of evaluating performance. The appropriate or expansive use of a budget is often attributed to good management. However the levels of authority, and permissibility for innovation and creative use of finance within these settings make such achievements more difficult.

Finance is currently used as a mechanism by central government to get different agencies to work together. The Children’s Fund, Sure Start, On Track are but a few examples of this. In the elder care and mental health sectors joint funding between Health Authorities and Local Authorities has existed for some time. Here evaluation goes beyond the direct outcome of the service as it relates to clients and into the area of assessing professional relationships and ‘working together’. Finance then used as a carrot by which to attract or adjust other behaviour. Of course along with each initiative comes evaluative, accountability demands to prove its use and value and there are in turn requirements on statutory services to consider sustainability and mainstreaming of the initiative.

Evaluation in relation to cost is embedded in the ‘Best Value’ programmes, by which public services must be reviewed. These programmes contain a high level of evaluation in relation to cost structures and service delivery which in effect influences strategy and develops alternatives which offer comparative services.
Financial evaluation therefore is important in managerial terms and managerial reporting systems are designed to ensure leaders get accurate information about the financial situation of the organisation. Such information, as can be seen, is then used to shape services and meet strategic objectives in an ever-changing way.

C) Performance Evaluation

The role of managers is to try to achieve the most with the resources available. In order to do this they must manage performance. As Armstrong & Brown (1998) underline performance management is about results but in being about results it includes not only the performance itself but processes, policies and procedures. These in turn enhance output and capabilities such as knowledge, skills and expertise which is vested in different individuals and groups to enhance the ability of the company to achieve results.

Historically evaluation of performance in the public sector was ad hoc and unsystematic. In today's organisation performance data ranges from national and local indicators, client information such as complaints, and formal reviews such as courts, ombudsman, serious case review, independent persons review system etc. The interesting development is the extensive and wide reliance on independent evaluative processes which has potentially left social services lacking confidence in its own internal quality control systems.

It is clear that there are large amounts of data collected within the public sector and in this department specified. Rouse (1983) advocates for the need of management to have a systematic framework by which to assess performance and that this framework should be well-interpreted into ordinary working practice and managerial structures. Oakland (1983) summarises the benefits of performance measurement and review. It allows managers to ensure clients' needs are met; it provides standards by which to compare either internal teams or against a national benchmark; it allows visibility as long as data is shared and either celebrated or improved. Measurement and review assists in prioritising and the identification of quality issues with the related cost implications. It helps justify how resources are utilised and finally gives feedback about the 'improvement effort' in other words that the drive for improvement was worth it. As management is about change, evaluation is the necessary mechanism to identify gaps or lack of achievement of that change and an identification of how to remedy any deficiencies or to replicate the positive.
Practice Evaluation

Consideration has been given to political and managerial evaluation issues. It is now appropriate to make reference to practice evaluation. It is not surprising that the opening of the social work text "Evaluating For Good Practice" Everitt & Hardiker (1996), under the umbrella of the British Association of Social Work, is concerned with the place evaluation has within the social work service. Not surprisingly, but possibly disappointingly, Everitt & Hardiker (1996:1) reflect traditional anxieties that associate evaluation with management control and a mechanism to make practice "conform to the new right policy agenda". Their work however develops into an interesting position statement as to the value of evaluation in protecting and promoting good practice. They support social work being evaluated and welfare organisation being 'evaluative'.

The need for professionals to evaluate their practice continually is an essential part of their responsibilities as professionals keeping up with knowledge, constantly questioning and reviewing. Reith (1984) suggests this is needed to achieve confidence and greater certainty about the effectiveness of their interventions. Part of CCETSW's own training requirements are evaluative skills where reflective, analytical review can occur in relation to the intervention designed and undertaken by the practitioner. Patton (2002) produces six evaluation categories which are applicable to practice.

A) Front-end analysis – assessing feasibility of intervention before it occurs
B) Evaluability Assessments – assessment of different evaluation methods, scope, design etc.
C) Formative Evaluations – programme improvements or modification – deal with process more often than measuring outcome
E) Programme monitoring – tracking developments
F) Evaluation for evaluation – meta evaluation.

It is important to remember that practitioner evaluation is focussed on individual social work practice and not widespread organisationally although it can have wider impact. Wallace & Rees (1984) in this context underline the importance of client judgement in this evaluation process. This fits with the client position in the social work relationship and the philosophical approach to this area of public service delivery. The importance of consumers' and clients' views is explored by Phillips, Palfrey & Thomas (1994) and the importance of involving them in service design and delivery is highlighted. Cheetham et al (1992) in their analysis of client-based outcomes and user response offer methodologies applied to collecting such information for example satisfaction surveys.
may be appropriate for some client groups but not others where interviews are a more suitable form.

**Evaluation – Management Issues**

In this section there has been consideration about the wide range of evaluation processes available to a local authority and more specifically a Social Service Department. These reflect in many ways the five broad approaches of evaluation listed by Dickens (1994)

1. The experimental approach used to formally evaluate programmes, interventions and practices.
2. The goal-orientated approach, where goals are set and performance is then assessed against what is predetermined.
3. The decision-focused approach, is the systematic collection of information such as the performance assessment framework which then informs decisions and management monitoring.
4. The user orientated approach. This considers the social, economic and contextual aspects of the intervention as well as being interactive with the user to gain feedback.
5. The responsive approach – a combination of a systems' approach and a user survey.

It is evident that the magnitude of information already collected is more than enough to ensure actions carried out reasonably meet the goals and objectives of the organisation. The plethora of performance targets centrally set are supplemented with data on finance, complaints, audit processes, internal review etc. – just as part of the usual management approach. This is further supported by client feedback, staff appraisal systems and supervisory processes extensively used in the social care field.

The question arises not about the amount of information collected or its sources but of its use and ultimate purposeful dissemination. If all this data is collected mostly for external processes then the internal environment will not benefit from its use and valuable messages. Evaluation is only useful if it is used to inform and to alter and change. Rossi et al (1999) underlines the importance of dissemination of the variety of activities to ensure that the evaluation results get to the necessary audiences. Reports, information, data must therefore be presented in an understandable way in order to be communicated effectively.

**Enforced**

Enforcement in legal terms means the necessity to comply, enforced in these instances means imposed. The respondent has no choice but to do as instructed. Within
organisations this is no less so where those range of activities within which employers must comply are ‘judgements’ already made at a political, legal or organisational level.

This section considers those factors which are imposed on organisational players which result in the necessity for behavioural compliance. This type of ‘learning’ is in essence quite different. Here, regardless of the individual’s own considered opinion, they must action according to the expectation of others. Although this focus here will be on public sectors the issue of a regulatory framework applies to all business and operations – indeed every citizen must comply with the law as laid down.

Enforcement in Context

Joyce (2000) notes that a politician’s raison d’être is to be elected in order to implement ambitious developments – how they do that is through statute and regulation. This of course can go wrong because such ambitious plans often are not in practice achievable as Pettigrew, Ferlie & McKee (1992) commented in relation to the plethora of developments in the 1970s NHS.

It is necessary here to unpick some of the forces behind how law, policies etc are influenced and the resultant implications for organisations, their employers and the learnt behaviours that arise out of such imposed demands.

The ability to be able to enforce behaviour and activities is a necessary part of all business environments but particularly those which have either been privatised out of the public sector and those that remain within the public arena. This is because of their unique position as being part of a sensitive ‘business’, mostly person orientated, and because they tend to hold monopoly or quasi-monopoly status.

The unique relationship between the public and those who service it, is highlighted by Prince & Puffitt (2001) as one which originated in trust. Looking back, the position of the police, GP and teachers in society was one of status and respect. In those times regulation was limited and ridicule of public services unheard of. Today’s atmosphere is different with the erosion of trust between the public and their servants. This lack of trust has created the necessity for increased vigilance and increased visible boundaries on officials’ behaviour, thus creating at least a perception of a layer of protection to society and the community.

The regulatory cycle begins according to Prince & Puffitt (2001:63) with “the critical mass of public opinion about a specific issue or issues…..” This may seem a simple
democratic process but in reality, as Hammond (1996) explains there are many dilemmas between society demand and policy formulation. These are not so evident when opinion and political leaders are in harmony, for example the requirement of a safe railway, however the balancing of minority need, against a wider community generalist approach is different. The relocation of sex offenders is a good example where there is a clash between the rights of the individual and those of the community. Here Ranson & Stewart (1994) argue for the education of society in order to inform the regulatory 'brief'.

Kay & Vickers (1988) subdivide regulation into structural regulation and conduct regulations, the former those activities which persons can operate in and the second how those individuals can behave. This is exampled, within local authority, in the power given to them to act within children's and families' lives, what powers they can and cannot exercise, and secondly in exercising those powers what conduct is acceptable or not.

Prince & Purfitt (2001) further suggest that regulation is different whether it is orientated towards the past or the future. If it is the past this is about compliance, if the future then about protection, for example quality or safety issues e.g. fire prevention schemes. Regulation can also be very specific such as in relation to food standards or general, less easily specified issues, e.g. standards of care in a hospital. Wright (1993) points out that the degree of regulation often reflects the culture of the country or the prevailing government philosophy. Thatcherite deregulation and dominance of a market orientation, exampled in the privatisation of British Rail, in fact in practice had the opposite effect of requiring ways to control and investigate those offering services on the government's behalf.

Blair's Britain has extended this to being highly regulated and controlled mostly as a result of trying to control quality and because trust in public services has been shaken by national events. OFTEL, OFWAT, OFSTED, SSI, are examples of this, even in Parliament itself regulation through the Parliament Regulatory Committee has resulted out of the Nolan Inquiry. These all act as 'protectors' for the public against systems failure or inappropriate actions. The additional complexity of the Welsh Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament layers of government, let alone the European Parliament and Court, does mean that the whole system of law creation and imposed behavioural requirements is highly powerful and directly dictating. The result of ignoring the latter's directions of course leading to litigation and significant compensation payments. It is no struggle to find a range of initiatives which support this regulatory and audit environment which drives and dictates public sector activities.
Best Value is New Labour's answer to the efficiency measures in the public sector. Bevir & O'Brien (2001) explain how it creates a regulatory framework even including the creating and demand for national standards to be achieved and indeed outlines the very processing of Best Value reviews. Bevir & O'Brien (2001) describe how along with Best Value the current Labour Government has established a variety of regulatory bodies to ensure efficiency and quality. The Regulatory Impact Unit is given as an example of extending its role in privatised companies to a programme of "public sector regulatory efficiency". The aims being to apply the five core principles of "transparency, accountability, targeting, consistency and proportionalising" (Cabinet Office 1999:542) to the public sector organisations such as social services, health etc. The establishing of the Commission for Care Standards is a direct consequence of these developments. This commission is one of the first in the public sector created to protect those children and elderly subject to care. It will inspect the implementation of standards and failure to achieve may result in the ignominy of being managed, however temporarily by private sector managers.

Regulation in relation to staff training has also been embodied in a new General Social Care Council, to replace the old CCETSW, its job to enforce standards in social work training. The whole aim of course is to establish in the public mind trust and confidence at a time when the public services are fairly beleaguered by criticism. This complements the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), a regulatory body for health care staff, which was created to ensure high consistent standards in practice.

**New Managerialism**

Clearly legislation and regulation are different facets of enforcement but enforcement can also be through dictation of managerial structures and behaviour. New public management arose out of an ideology that public sectors were inefficient, possibly dominated by professional and union groups, and lacking in public confidence. This has created a move from, as Dawson & Dargie (2002) note, government to governance. The consequence being increased explicit measures to manage rather than just administer the public arena. Hood et al (1999) further highlight the increased audit and regulation, and Woodhouse (1998) the increased judicial activity – which has gone along with the environment which public sectors now find themselves in. New Managerialism must deal with, on the one hand the requirements of the audit and review process and on the other hand protection from judicial decision-making which can by default shape behaviour and ultimately services. The boundless frustration and fear that this latter point can inflict on public organisations imposes yet more enforced behaviour and can not be
underestimated. The fear of liability often restricts behaviour and court judgements adapt and adjust behaviour which may not be organisationally acceptable.

The demands of a critical government and a new managerialism in the public sector goes beyond accountability methodologies to the very structure of local government at a macro-level and at a micro-level the ways in which organisations manage certain entities. In the former the modernisation of local government dictated local political structures and in the latter Flynn (2002) examples the design and applicability of financial boundaries etc. It is evident that the control of behaviour and activities is pronounced and diverse. This section opened with the dominance of legislative and regulatory requirements and has developed into an analysis of the new managerialism expected within the public sector. This has of course in turn demanded new skills and behaviour of public sector managers - not only to understand a private managerial approach but to actively undertake this style in the public sector. As Alaszewski (1995) explains for example community care legislation has changed those within the adult care sector into care managers thus the demand is for expertise in contract negotiations and purchasing skills rather than the counselling investigatory skills previously demanded in this section.

The Challenges of Enforcing

The public sector has the unique feature of professionals and managers. The NHS is an example where there are quite distinct roles between each section and the debate between clinical need and budgets often becomes a very public (media) one. Of course many public sectors, as Exworthy & Halford (1999) explain, have managers who are in fact the professionals promoted into such a position. Indeed most local authority managers have a related professional background. This in a learning context makes imposed behavioural requirements particularly testing especially if the professionals experience is at odds with the enforced demands. Such positions can increase resistance and when issues fail an “I told them so” attitude and a lack of ownership can arise. Exworthy & Halford (1999) further explain that the manager is usually seen as a conformist often arising out of self-interest whereas professionals can be categorised as creative, ethical and often committed to professional values rather than organisational ones. They, as Flynn (1999) explains, also claim their status through their expert power and knowledge where inspection appears acceptable from peers but possibly not from administrators or managers. Freidson (1994) explains that in such organisations definitive internal policies must be established to control behaviour and contain or limit the professional. It is noticeable however that the distinction between the two groups has become less clear. Newman & Clarke (1994) term the new hybrid as ‘bureau-professionals’. These hybrids have the advantage of being possible champions because
they can translate demands into professional circumstances. This is much more helpful than the two separate camps.

The difficulty of imposing change in such a way, through legislation and central dictate, is that the real mechanisms needed to achieve change are not present. Thus consultation, negotiation, achieving learning through explanation are absent. The imposition of behaviour can then create action by rote and the real extent and potential of change may not be achieved. Learning imposed in such a way therefore can have a restricted value if key champions do not manage that transition from government through legislation to the public sector organisation. Managers are important as key champions otherwise the rigidity of public sector bureaucratic systems can stifle or strangle the intentions of those from outside imposing the change.

In reality this process of changing behaviour in public sectors has traditionally been through the methodology of ministerial letters, guidelines, legislation, Local Authority circulars, national standards. Why is one surprised that there is, as a result, significant levels of non-compliance to legislative requirements or is it really non-comprehension leading to non-action – a much more understandable crime.

Prince & Puffitt (2001) detail four possible sources of non-compliance. Deficiency in knowledge, resources, support from the regulator and intent which may result from different value base, power balances etc). The resulting non-compliance can elicit a persuasion or sanction based response. The former is likely to be more co-operative and enabling, the latter establishing resistance and possibly further non-compliance. The regulator and the regulatee know that there can be a difficult relationship existing between them. On the surface it would appear the regulator has most power but what happens if a whole section of the public sector is offended by a demand. The debate with the police and teachers show how coercion and cajoling are often used in harmony by politicians. A fair informed approach with reasonable sanction is likely to be the most effective balance.

Social Services – An Example of Enforcement

Social work has a very curious history and this is to some extent why regulation and enforcement are so particularly influential. Originally the profession controlled officers' behaviour through self-regulation closely linked with social work training. Those who qualify as social workers are made aware of their dual roles of care and control of others. Unlike the police or probation, social work was designed to control, mostly those in a 'class-specific' strata, via a treatment and rehabilitation model. Therefore those most
vulnerable, or difficult could become functioning citizens – with a little help. Because its services were often associated with the poor and the dysfunctional it has become a profession which, if left to its own devices, could, as Jones (1999:39) explains, undermine governments through its exposure of social need and just how badly such a rich country is at looking after its weakest. Jones (1999:39) claims that the necessity of the state not to be embarrassed by these social workers should not be underestimated and the importance of not “exposing the realities of the societal underbelly remains one of the driving forces in the regulatory development of the occupation and is a core factor in the emergence of macho managerialism...”.

Social work of course is a profession which examples the worst treatment of public servants. It is designed to deal with those in society whom society dislikes because traditionally they were seen as undeserving. Thus their advocates became equally ridiculed. On the other hand they are agents of the state unwelcome by those they serve. Social work is therefore important to control because it is the mechanism by which to control those most out of control either behaviourally or emotionally in the community. The field of Child & Family Services underlines this. The state expects social workers to empower/enable families to stay together and prevent reception into care however the lack of appropriate progress by the family results in court action and sanction for the family. When the balance of social work intervention is wrong then outcry occurs usually followed by additional regulation to further dictate or control social work judgment or behaviour – to prevent the same ‘mistake’ happening again.

Increasingly as Jones (1999:47) explains the contemporary welfare system does not encourage the thinking, questioning worker but rather the “...ability to follow instructions, to complete procedures and assessments on time.... and to work in such ways that will not expose the agency to public ridicule or exposure”. Of course teaching, nursing, medicine all have been subject to moving from professional autonomy to managed automaticity with reduced professional discretion.

The creation of statute in the public services is a complex one and shows the importance of calm and informed legislative formation. Bad law can result in imposed poor practices and badly drafted law can be a lawyer’s paradise and a professional’s nightmare. Balancing the intent of the legislation with the resultant outcome is very difficult. This is what makes enforcement so challenging when the intent of enforcement is to control behaviour and more interestingly the judgements of the practitioners and managers.
Enforcement – Management Issues

At government level, enforcement occurs through legislation and statute. These in turn are backed up by a myriad of regulatory bodies and methods of account. This has the direct consequence of establishing organisational priorities and dictating decision-making within what is a professional field. For example the political requirement is for increased numbers to be adopted and new standards which demand this decision making within four months of initial intervention. This single example has resulted in considering decision-making, structures, style of intervention, balance of workloads and ultimately the promotion of a particular method of permanent care for children.

It may seem somewhat powerless to be a manager in the public services. It is argued here that in fact the manager can positively influence those issues that are imposed. One technique is to be predictive and to try to influence change as early as possible. Further it is important to comply, non-compliance only encouraging the view of ‘out of control’ and resulting in tighter control and possible demise.

The real enforcement of middle managers, a key role, in achieving compliance is crucial. In practice most performance targets are achievable. In reality legislation, which may appear unwise, must be worked with and cleverly interpreted. There is no option, the law does not change easily unless precedent and case law are established. Managers then are ‘translators’ and ‘sellers’ whilst usually using discretion where it counts.

Legislation is always subject to a consultation process and this is increasingly so with the continued move towards openness in state decision making. Draft legislation can be disseminated, comments collected and passed on to the relevant government department. This has three effects. Firstly it shows central government that local practitioners and managers are interested in legislative and practice developments, it secondly informs civil servants of the ‘real’ world and how the legislation can be implemented and thirdly it prepares staff for the change and the possible demands as far in advance as possible.

Policy and procedures are well within the absolute control of managers. Here clear, understandable and well communicated expectations can help achieve the desired outcome. Managers can also ensure that the new demands of skills required to meet those aspects are enforced. Therefore negotiating, contracting, managerial skills can again help to create confidence and achieve the desired behaviour.
Managers' role in enforcement then begins with influencing any change, interpreting it, reducing resistances, and ensuring appropriate compliance. The result of not doing this is increased scrutiny..., and reduced career prospects!

Evidence-Based

An evidence-based approach is currently promoted as central to good practice. This is supported and advocated for by central government, managers and practitioners alike. The question is – what does evidence-based practice mean, why does it or does it not occur and how to ensure that evidential 'messages' are disseminated to inform the organisation as a whole not merely one enthusiastic individual. Specific consideration will be given to social care organisations.

As the section develops it will become clear that evidence-based practice is seen here as quite distinct from experimentation and evaluation. It may however be appropriate to highlight that differentiation at the beginning in order that it does not hang in the air for the reader.

Experimentation is promoted as the ability to undertake new research or practice, the freedom to innovate and be creative, to test out, however that is managed, in a public organisation. Evaluation, on the other hand, is about reacting to collated information which then is disseminated. Evaluation is about current activities undertaken and their outcome, regardless of benchmarking it against research standards e.g. the analysis of complaints. Evaluation further is about accountability – mostly to politicians for the sectors performance. Performance management is generally against set, non-negotiable criteria and comparative data possibly against dissimilar contextual situations. Evaluation then should not be confused here with the systematic methodology of evidence-building.

Evidence-based was termed Extracted in the original model. This followed the same principle of selecting and using information and learning from other sources be it research, the internet etc. The increased use and understanding of evidence-based as accepted terminology has informed the use of language and so extracted is replaced with evidence-based.

Why Evidence-Based

The increased demand from an ever-discerning client or patient, for their public officials to keep up to date, know the benefits or detriments of a particular medicine, therapy, technique has led to the use of 'best evidence' to support actions taken. The government
reflecting this public mood, has enshrined the requirement for an evidence-based approach into a series of documents in relation to the National Health Service & Personal Social Services. Hughes et al (2000:11) show how the Department of Health have made a "firm commitment to evidence-based practice" through placing a requirement for evidence review as part of all funding requirements.

Gomm & Davis (2000) support how the government and indeed professionals are insisting on practice which has firm foundations in an 'evidence-based' application. They explain how there is a pressure for professionals to explain themselves and their choices. Of course in the acrimonious, often litigious world of the public sector evidence-based decision-making is a good defence even when plans and practice, in time, work out to have had detrimental consequences. Muir-Gray's (1997) analysis leads us to the fact that the world today is a different place and to survive in it professionals must equip themselves as best they can. In medicine they often see this as 'defensive practice' but whether defensive or proactive, evidence has come to the centre of the debate in professional life. Beck (1992) acknowledged the heightened awareness of risk and the complete distraction as to how to manage it leading to what Dunnant & Porter (1996) term the 'age of anxiety' and the increased use of a more 'scientific' approach to professional interactions to justify subsequent actions.

There may be some irony in the fact that at a time of mistrust in the public face of 'science' – that is the doctors, specialists and therapists, there is increased demand for a more rigorous scientific approach. Giddens (1994) explains this is because in modern times the 'promise' is that risk can be assessed and then controlled by expert knowledge, based on evidence gathering and analysis. The necessity, in the ever uncertain world of decision-making, is to increase certainty through some systematic method of evidence gathering.

Of course evidence can be a two-edged sword. Clarke & Newman (1997) interestingly suggest that the evidence-based demand may have the very counter effect to the new managerialism in public services. In the tense world of consultant/expert and manager, professionals can argue for more resources on the very basis of evidence. In this environment as Trinder (2000:12) explains "evidence rather than experience becomes privileged". Webb (2001) however shows how managers on the other hand can use evidence to explain their actions when difficult decisions, such as reducing resources occur. Webb's anxiety is that an evidence-based approach if obsessively pursued may confine professional discretion and a client based relationship – pigeon-holing by a different name.
What is evidence-based practice?

A regularly used quote summing up what evidence-based practice is is that provided by Sackett et al (1996:71). Evidence-based practice "is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decision about the care of individual patients". The best current research has two important features, that it is timely and has not outdated itself between conception and conclusion and secondly that it is patient driven, selective and close to client care not 'ivory tower' based – this translates into it being 'real world' research. "Without clinical expertise, practice risks becoming tyrannised by evidence, for even excellent external evidence may be inapplicable to or inappropriate for an individual patient" BMJ (1996:71).

This seems all well and good but Trinder (2000) does note that the relationship between practice and research is not always an easy one. Getting research into practice is often an ad hoc and erratic phenomena. There remain tensions between those who 'think' and those who 'do', with those who 'do' questioning the relevance or sometimes competence and understanding of, those who 'think'. Those who 'do' are critical that clinical client need is being researched away from the pressures and stresses of other clients' and patients' needs and demands. The advocates of evidence based practice surmount this by continuing to place professional responsibility and judgement with the clinician, social worker, psychologist etc. Secondly, as Trinder (2000) explains they emphasise the practitioner/patient relationship and that evidence should not be used in a generalistic automated way. Thirdly it supports practitioners being explicit about their reasons for actions thus allowing it to be open to scrutiny and question. Fourthly the proposal of Sackett et al (1996) is that evidence should be the best current. Research is never definitive if it has the ability to be revised and informed by the new. Finally because of its systematic evaluative approach it allows the practitioner to consider it reflectively in relation to individual circumstances, this content/individual dependency is emphasised.

![Figure 5.4 Evidence-Based Practice](Source Lipman (2000:52))

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In concrete terms what is the process of achieving evidence-based practice? Lipman (2000) presents the above model in Figure 5:4. This is the common model used to establish and accept an area where evidence is needed and new answers explored.

Concentration has been placed so far on evidence-based practice but Bury (1998) widens the scope out to include the range of organisational aspects which in turn affect client care. Figure 5:5 outlines these.

![Evidence-Based Organisation Diagram](image)

Figure 5:5 Evidence-based organisation
Source: Bury (1998:4) (adapted)

Bury is encouraged by Hicks' (1997:8) analysis of the service as that of those “decisions that affect the care of patients are taken with due weight accorded to all valid, relevant information”. Bury's dissection of this emphasises 'due weight' means balancing possibly competing information not solely relying on one type or source of evidence. For example research may indicate one thing but patient preference is for another. Secondly Bury emphasises 'all' with the encouragement to try to search for what is relevant – this is an active approach. Finally Bury highlights 'information', 'validity' and 'relevance'. This means inclusive information which is accurate and applicable to the context. Thus Bury extends evidence-based from practice orientation alone to the following range of organisational activities.

The model put forward by Lipman in regard to practice is of course relevant in each of these areas. Policy should be informed by recognising a gap in either service delivery or new demands placed on the organisation. Similarly evidence-based commissioning of services should be based on a balance of evidence and local voice and need. However the additional aspect of cost-effectiveness comes into play. Here caution needs to be
given to reliance on providers' own research and should need more than cost-effectiveness to 'sell' a product or service.

Restricting Factors

Sackett et al (1997) in offering a well used definition for evidence based practice, also explain why it is sometimes dismissed. They explain that there is a perception that all this happens already but point to the lack of consistent practice and outcomes which belie that claim. They also underline that evidence-based medicine is not 'cook-book' medicine - there is not one set remedy for all of us and not one recipe to follow. This of course will be helpful in reassuring some and highlighting to the lazy practitioner that there are no easy answers.

Of course resistances may occur and these are noted by LeMay (1999) as based in attitudes and beliefs which may in many ways be conversely supported by the current ritualistic approach to performance measurements and data collection. Bury adds to this the appropriate infrastructure by which to support this. This goes down to the basics of not only filtering information but then dissemination and review. This is coupled on the one hand with information overload and the other hand real gaps in high quality research. Openness in adoption is an example of uncertain, indecisive research much misquoted in courts – a real recipe for poor decision-making.

It is accepted that although there is a drive towards evidence-based practice there is possibly not widespread use of it across all parts of professional services. This is likely to be rooted in an unfamiliarity which can lead to complacency or mistrust. The very fact that evidence-based practice is not well understood as a practice development supports its own argument of how to take on new approaches in a systematic way. This cannot be achieved unless real effort is involved in making it happen.

Hamer (1999) offers a SWOT analysis Figure 5:6 of the introduction of evidence-based practice. Although this is medically orientated this is a valuable process by which to extrapolate issues to other service areas.

Hamer's capturing of the issues not only identifies the barriers and weaknesses but also the real opportunities offered by an evidence-based approach. This approach can further, according to Bury (1998), provide self-learning and improve reading habits and other skills such as critical appraisal which are transferable to other situations. Bury further considers that there is increased team working and support and an increased confidence and practice in research if this approach is used.
**Strengths**

- Practitioners confident at changing practice.
- Increasingly well prepared practitioners.
- Expectation of evidence-based activity in job specifications.
- Potential for multiprofessional working to agree outcomes.
- Reflective culture.
- Established accountability systems.

**Weaknesses**

- Limited research data in non-medical, non-pharmacological areas.
- Patchy access to information services.
- Critical appraisal skills variable.
- Internet idiosyncratic in its development and usefulness.
- Time.

**Opportunity**

- Current policy environment.
- Political consensus.
- Management prepare to support good evidential cases in business planning processes.
- Relationship between health service and university sector.
- Clinical governance.

**Threats**

- Positivistic view dominates; alternative sources of evidence not valued.
- Patients needs for accessible information not central to developments.
- Increased volume of expectations with no time for reflection.

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**Figure 5:6 SWOT analysis – Evidence Based Practice**

**Source:** Hamer (1999:7)

The national context should be noted here. The development of an evidence-based philosophy, led by government requirements has brought with it the increase of centres of evidence based. There is a national centre for Health Care through the major initiative of the UK Cochrane Centre and the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, the method the latter used is the publication of Effective Health Care Bulletins. NICE – The National Institute for Clinical Excellence also has a review and communication function. In the South West of England one and a half million pounds has been allocated to the Centre for Evidence Based Social Care. This has further been complemented by a national ‘Research in Practice’ organisation which produces research information disseminated to Local Authorities.

There has been much said about the acrimonious nature of public services and the environments in which they operate. Every defence is therefore needed to create professional confidence. Having one’s practice or management supported by objective systematic evidence can be comforting. It further allows situations where evidence is not available, to be at least considered critically.

**Social Services**

The concentration here on literature on evidence-based medicine is understandable, as this segment of professional activity is more advanced in its operation of evidence-based practice. However other areas such as social care, education, mental health, are all developing such practices.
Sheldon & MacDonald (1999) apply the Sackett et al 1996 definition of evidence-based medicine to social care. They concentrate on three key words – conscientious, explicit and judicious. The conscientious aspect emphasises an ethical responsibility as a professional to keep up to date. Sheldon & Macdonald are clear that one large dose of training at the qualifying time is not good enough to ensure you remain the best practitioner. If one expects continuous updating of others, whether that be the dentist or the plumber, then why not social workers. Secondly explicitness not only in assessment of client needs but their 'diagnosis' and 'treatment' and finally judicious – sound and prudent, sensible judgement. Sheldon and Macdonald disappointingly identify that there may be some work to do within the profession according to this criteria. They suggest that social workers have a number of troubling characteristics. Firstly they are very poor at reading and keeping up to date. Brown & McCulloch's (1975) research, supported similar research by Sheldon et al (1999), showing a lack of reading outside case and policy documents and a lack of organisational framework to achieve this. Secondly social workers are very susceptible to the last article, the latest trendy fad and their lack of critical appraisal skills makes such discernment, as is necessary, an absent feature. Thirdly social workers have an image of being "airy fairy", lacking in explicit, observable, and focussed judgements. All these have real significance for the quality and expectations placed on social work training and education. Marsh & Triseliotis' (1996) study notes that newly qualified workers had mixed responses to their level of confidence in the use of research material. This of course may be redressed by the new General Social Care Council whose subtitle is "Protecting the Public" and where the agenda is a more evidence orientated learning programme.

Establishing evidence-based practice in social work has two other structural difficulties both pointed out by Trinder (2000). Although acknowledging the push of evidence based practice this is hampered by social workers' inherent diversity and therefore complexity – although arguably medicine has the same struggle. This complexity however may be added to in the social care setting by such a high proportion of unqualified staff – up to 80% of social work agencies are staffed by those who have received no formal training let alone being able to exercise critical appraisal skills. Secondly the research dissemination process is hampered by the academic debate about what evidence-base is in social care. This exampled by the debate between Smith's (1987) and Littles' (1998) pragmatic approach and the Sheldon & Macdonald's (1999) empirical camp. Thirdly there is a 'double-message' from the Department of Health where the promotion of quality services on the one hand supports evidence-based practice and on the other dominates key documents with a performance accountability structure trying to create standards through regulation rather than education and research.
Tozer & Ray (1997) and Sheldon et al (1999) note additional difficulties namely the constraint of the lack of an evidence-based culture, the belief that evidence-based practice is an organisational, not individual practitioner responsibility, that workloads confine the use of an evidence-based approach. Further complex, uneasy documents can be difficult to understand, and poor dissemination systems and risk aversion to doing something different all restrict the creation of a real evidence-based culture. These all must be countered in order to fully appreciate the benefits of evidence-base to the organisation and its individual parts.

**Evidence-base – Management Issues**

Walshe & Ham (1997) offer managers advice as to how to move forward in establishing an evidence-based culture. Firstly move towards a scientific culture where there is a move away from a purely personal approach to being more informed by evidence. This requires a maturity in practice to use research appropriately and judiciously. Secondly managing knowledge demands a systematic dissemination to the right people at the right time. As Bury (1998) explains there must be a purposeful and sustained approach to diffusion, dissemination and implementation. Thirdly systems of change such as audit and review can supplement research implementation and finally an incentive to perform which may include payment for better more informed practice – this seems a sad reflection on what a professional should be expected to do to retain the status of professional.

The importance of integrating research into training and formal education cannot be underestimated. The core of much of this debate is the understanding and confidence in research, the ability to evaluate critically and select appropriate quality conclusions and to implement them are all part of the educational input. It is also the organisation's responsibility to update skills and training in this area and not to rely on one off qualifying training as the absolute educational experience. Internal systems by which to offer synopsis of research can also be valuable. This has three benefits – it organisationally authorises the suitability of the research findings in line with the department's objectives; it transfers it into easily understood language and it can be used by unqualified as well as qualified practitioners. Further established bodies such as The Dartington Research Unit and authorised Department of Health research will by virtue of their status be accepted as filters for such the validity of research studies.

In public organisations the engagement of the political leaders is important. Helping to create understanding can assist in decision making and policy formulation and fits with
the government's desire for proper governance of public authorities. Managers have a real ability here to influence strategy and also reduce risk by use of evidence with political decision makers.

Finally in the multi-agency context within which such professional organisations operate a real understanding of the evidence used by others is important to make clear joint plans understood by all for the protection of others.

**Implementing the Eight ‘E’s**

The academic validity of each section has been examined. In Chapter 7 the model will be explored in the primary research and this will consider whether the Eight E's have a utility within an organisational setting under study. At this point the proposal is how to use this model managerially for the organisation's benefit.

Firstly it is clear that the influences on an individual have an extensive, very personal and in turn, organisational effect. This dictates the need for managers to know more accurately staffs' influence profile. Secondly managers will wish to know which of these influences are most powerful to the individual and why.

The audit also provides for managers to assess their organisation from the eight different perspectives and offers a list of key questions managers may wish to ask of their organisation either from an external or internal perspective. This audit builds on the questions which arise out of the literature analysis as contained in this chapter. Figure 5:7 represents this audit wheel.

A Management Action Plan can then result from considering both the individual data and resultant team profiles and the organisationally assessed needs. Figure 5:8 is an example of a proposed action plan.

Teams can also use the planning device as a team planner to consider the 'fit' of the team with the organisation learning profile. The aim is for the individual, group and organisation to firstly identify and then accept organisational priorities and understand organisational actions.
Figure 5.7 Management Audit Ferris (2002) – The Eight ‘E’s

Central Section = Internal influences
Outer Wheel (Italics) = External influences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Influence</th>
<th>Identified Actions Need</th>
<th>Task Undertaken By</th>
<th>Method Used</th>
<th>Date for Completion and Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| EDUCATION           | • Establish regular meeting with Qualifying Courses  
|                     | • Audit staff qualifications  
|                     | • Design Training Strategy to fill gap analysis e.g. Skills Training | Senior Operations & Training Staff  
|                     |                        | Training Heads  
|                     |                        | Operations & Training Manager | Regular Meeting Questionnaire |
| ENFORCED            | • Establish workshops for managers re legislative/procedural changes  
|                     | • Establish Team Workshops re above  
|                     | • Design dissemination methods and review | Senior & Middle Manager  
|                     |                        | Middle & Team Manager  
|                     |                        | Senior Manager | Workshop Team Meeting |
| EVIDENCE-BASED      | • Training Input – critical skills and techniques  
|                     | • Learning and reading sets  
|                     | • Dissemination of accepted research | Training Manager  
|                     |                        | Middle Manager  
|                     |                        | Designated Service Manager | Training Day Team events Via Individual copy |
| ERROR               | • Establish open culture  
|                     | • Create 'Trust' in local Teams  
|                     | • Open discussion in Team meetings  
|                     | • Critical supervision | Senior & Middle Manager  
|                     |                        | Team Manager  
|                     |                        | Team Meetings  
|                     |                        | Experienced Line Manager Roadshows Reinforced daily operation Team Meetings One to one |
| EXPERIENCE          | • Establish debrief protocol and pattern of debrief methods  
|                     | • Critical skills in supervision  
|                     | • Training for managers and staff in reflexive practice | Senior Manager  
|                     |                        | Training & Middle Manager  
|                     |                        | Training Department Protocol and admin system Training and experience Learning Set |
| EXPERT              | • Draw up protocol for use of experts in court  
|                     | • Identify and authorise external experts  
|                     | • Induct experts into Organisational Mental Model | Senior Officer  
|                     |                        | Senior Officer in liaison e.g. Legal Department Training Department Written Protocol Applications Induction Programme |
| EXPERIMENT          | • Establish research approach via 'grants' for research  
|                     | • Publish staff work internally  
|                     | • Create protocol to submit research plan | Senior Manager  
|                     |                        | Staff & Manager  
|                     |                        | Staff & identify lead Manager Protocol Newsletter Line Management |
| EVALUATION          | • Disseminate expectations from central government  
|                     | • Establish internally formal feedback mechanisms  
|                     | • Induction programme for expectation | Senior & Middle Managers  
|                     |                        | Senior & Middle Managers  
|                     |                        | Senior Managers Workshops Protocol Induction |

Figure 5:8 Example of a possible Management Action Plan
Eight ‘E’s Sources of Influence, Ferris (2002)
Levels of Influence – Organisational Profiling

The Eight 'E's Sources of Influence originated in specifically considering the public sector. Even within that range of organisations there will be departments or authorities where some sources will have more influence than others. Some examples are given below as illustrations of this.

a) Child & Family Mental Health Services – This organisation consists of exclusively therapeutic and professional staff. Education, Expert, and Evidence-base may for them be ranked higher than Evaluation and Enforced. The latter two a symptom of this organisation’s lack of control and accountability and also lack of political impact.

b) Police – The police is a complex organisation where legal Enforcement in itself will be highly influential on actions – actions strictly controlled and accounted for. Some sections will rely heavily on Experts, but this expertise will normally be 'home-grown' and based on internal training and experience. Experience then became a second high grade influence. Experimentation on the other hand may only be present at certain levels within the organisation. New initiatives are generally sensitive and have a political impact so experimentation may be difficult and restricted.

c) Academic Institutions – The large variety and range of academic institutions will mean that different sections will be influenced by some aspects more that another. For example in schools Enforced will be high influence because of political demands, league tables, lack of curriculum flexibility etc. A university may have more influence in Experimentation if it has a research or development component or is seeking to attract outside, possibly European funding. Education in both however will be high where Error as a specific category may be present but less influential.

These three examples lead to the proposal that each organisation as part of the audit can rank the Eight 'E's in order of influence and possibly design an ideal organisational profile. This will assist in prioritising action requirements on the management action plan.

Time, changing environments, and indeed different sections in one organisation, can lead to a multiple of different profiles under one organisational umbrella. This is perfectly acceptable and shows that the organisation is flexible and responsive to its different parts and their needs. For example Community Care Services in Social Services have a high level of manual and unqualified care staff. Here Education, Experts, Experimentation, Evidence-based is less important than Experience, Enforced and Error. This is very different from Children’s Services within the same department where Education, Enforced, Evidence-based may be higher than say Experience and Error and higher still to Experiment and Expert.
The profile of the organisation against the Eight 'E's will therefore be different with different balances. It would however be concerning, if one team carrying out the same functions had a different profile from other teams offering the same services. Here the Eight 'E's as an audit tool can be useful in determining equity and consistency where needed. It is important however to stress that the Eight 'E's will be present to a greater or lesser extent in most organisations. The levels of influences recognise the needs of different organisations and the ability then to use this model flexibly.

Determining the Levels

The auditing of the Eight 'E's and the subsequent agreement of an organisational profile is in itself a learning technique for the senior management group. The progress then would organisationally follow the flow chart presented in Figure 5:9.

![Flow chart of Using Eight 'E's Model](image)

Figure 5:9 Flow chart of Using Eight 'E's Model

The first senior manager consultative step has a number of beneficial features. It allows discussion on what type of organisation senior managers wish to achieve and helps that group or team to commonly agree a direction. It further opens debate about learning at the highest level of the organisation or with key leaders who will then be responsible for implementation of the Management Action Plan.

The completion of an Eight 'E's audit at an individual level allows a wider acceptance about learning and development both personal and organisational. The accumulation of results into teams allows for team discussion and for local planning as well as more senior planning.
Conclusions

The benefit of this model is that it can firstly identify the influences on each member of staff and determine if any of those individual influences needs balancing or enhancing. Secondly it allows for the organisation to profile the importance of each influence and match the gap between the individual profile and the organisation's desired profile. Further teams and groups can also be matched firstly against the individual profile and the organisation's. Where two or more teams have a similar task function then differences in profile can be noted and reasons explored. The organisation can plan, from this model, both management action and the use of such budgets and plans as the training plan. If organisations fail to identify what impacts on and influences their staff then key issues can be missed for example the long term consequences of error, the effect of poor evaluative systems or indeed the possible anti-learning and avoidant behaviour from difficult educational experiences. This is particularly important in a professional setting where the ethical demand for 'keeping up to date' is expected.

This model and methodology is user-friendly in both organisational and individual terms – each ‘E’ is easily understood and relevant. Further if the audit is completed at the induction period of an individual into the organisation then the process of enhancing the integration of an individual's current mental model into the organisation can be assisted. For example the organisational priority given to enforced influences can set the central expectations of an organisation for the individual i.e. this is a high, low or medium priority for them as employees. Importantly also this is a model which does not need expensive external consultants to operate it – it can be an internal managerial and organisation development process.

Two questions had direct influence on the thinking around the Eight ‘E’s Model. Firstly is each ‘E’ relevant and a reasonable source to investigate and secondly can they then in turn be managed.

Each category has considered these two questions. There is significant evidence to back the categorisations. Each was in place because of its level of significance in an organisation. It almost falls into the cliché of “common sense” to acknowledge that Education and Experience have both active and latent impact on the individual. Error is segregated here from Experience because of the specific influence of learning from mistakes and because of the detrimental effects of mismanaged actions. When considering public organisations there are clearly systems’ influences around the ability to Experiment, the use of Evidence-based or Extracted information from other sources and the high impact of the Evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Those services which have
an external as well as internal aspect are also noted. Experts can be those recognised within the organisation or from outside and the real power of Enforced statute, policy and procedures imposed whether again from inside the organisation or another source has been acknowledged. Each section has been argued for in relation to the importance of that source.

Each organisational player did not arrive at the organisation without being influenced by something. Further the organisation will in turn influence the individual and group. Unless these influences are acknowledged, identified, their significance ranked, and the organisation audited, then the managers may not manage these effectively. Once all this is in place then of course the Eight ‘E’s can be managed just as budgets, resources and outputs are – after all the most important organisational resource, especially in the public sector, is its personnel and what influences their thoughts and actions. Chapter 7 will test out the use of this model in an organisational setting.

When reviewing the Eight ‘E’s model in methodological terms one leans towards organisation development theory as its ‘home’. Firstly the model is secure within the socio-psychological range and as such fits within the behavioural sciences. Secondly, as Cole (1995:271) explains, an organisation development programme is “the analysis and diagnosis of problems and issues”. Thirdly the techniques used within organisational development include survey and questionnaire analysis. Most significantly however organisation development is closely interlinked with change theory and learning theories and therefore relies on the ability of individual, group and organisation to be inter-related. McCalman & Paton (1992) in their analysis of the characteristics of organisation development discuss the focus on interdependencies, the transition the organisation faces in incremental change and that the value system is human resource centred, all this leads to a further desire to examine organisation development within the wider methodological framework and this will now be examined in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6

Research Methodology

Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to explore the range of research methodologies available which are suitable for the empirical elements of this study. It is the aim then to select the most appropriate and to present a model for research appropriate to the organisational context and the research focus.

The chapter will begin with an overview of the paradigms from which qualitative and quantitative methodologies spring, it will then explore and debate in greater depth, qualitative and quantitative methodologies and how they feature in the organisational research context.

It was a dilemma whether to begin with the exploration of research methodologies or to consider them after an organisational description. In starting with the former there is a danger of inappropriately detailing techniques which would not be contextually suitable whilst starting with the latter could discount approaches out of hand. Hopefully, this chapter balances the debate in order to demonstrate that, in considering methodologies, the key focus is in the nature of the information necessary to collect, its collectability, and the best way to gain accurate data in an appropriate manner.

Broad Paradigms in Research Methodology

The philosophical debate around research methodologies is subject to much analysis. Initially it was easy to be led down a description of the broad paradigms in research methodologies and to see those as extremes, which indeed were almost mutually exclusive. Easterby-Smith et al (2002:27) have a much more realistic and practical analysis of research design. They believe that in reality many research designs are a compromise “which draw from more than one tradition”. The following analysis describes the two broad paradigms.

Quantitative techniques are those that are rooted in a positivist or scientific paradigm. This is the world of, not only measurable, but observable facts which can be studied by others and similar conclusions drawn. As Glesne and Peshkin (1992:6) explain, this type of researcher seeks “explanations and predictions that will generalise to other persons and places”. Sampling and experimental design is carefully organised in order that this very generalisation from the specific can be made. The quantitative researcher's
obsession is to achieve objectivity and not contaminate data. The very nature of this research is pre-determined and with a “pre-specified intent” Glesne & Peshkin (1992:6).

This methodological grouping tends to have techniques which are converted into numerical, or statistical (quantitative) analysis. The extensive technological transference of data collection to statistical analysis is impressive. The data presentation in frequency distribution and graphical displays through histograms, pie-charts and bar charts adds a visible dimension to data representation that is interesting. The statistical ‘description’ through ‘measures of central tendency’, measures of variability, standard deviations, scattergrams and, of course, the theoretical ‘normal distribution’ is explained in many quantitative texts as is the cross tabulation of two variables.

Easterby-Smith et al (2002:28) underline the two assumptions in regard to positivism firstly “an ontological assumption, that reality is external and objective and second an epistemological assumption, that knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observations of this external reality”. The central philosophy on which quantitative or positivist approaches are based is explained by Cassell & Symon (1994:2) as the assumption that there is an objective truth that can be “revealed through the scientific method where the focus is on measuring relationships between variables systematically and statistically”. The reliable nature of this data allows generalisation which can link cause and effect. The debate is easily demonstrated in the professions of psychology and sociology. The psychologist’s ‘discovery’ is that of general principles that can be attributed to human behaviour through measuring that behaviour reliably, and visibly, this leading to an inevitable conclusion. Sociologists, on the other hand, look at patterns, social phenomena, indicators and their broad approach. The positivists are able to generalise by the very techniques of analysing means and correlations, thus making specifics into ‘averages’ and ‘typicals’. The ability to view the unique, the one off, the individual in depth, and in a singular mode, rather than comparative mode, is alien to the pure quantitative researcher.

Quantitative methodologies are a very valid approach to many research questions but may have limitations when trying to make generalisations against small samples of population. Cassell & Symon (1994:225) explain this limitation, especially in undertaking organisational studies, where sample sizes are not large, and where “organisations can be very heterogeneous” - “what is a “typical” organisation”? Cassell & Symon (1994:225) argue successfully that the transferability of an organisational study to the more general is questionable and therefore quantitative techniques are of limited holistic value to an organisational study. “In addition, because quantitative studies rely on the
dispersion of variables in statistical relationships, one cannot be certain about the processes underlining those relationships*.

Cassell & Symon (1994) in their introductory chapters summarise in broad terms the debate between the positivists (quantitative approach) and the phenomenological (qualitative) approach, the former operating from the assumption of the objective truth, reliable, valid and with the ability to make clear predictions. The latter, on the other hand, has developed through an "interpretative paradigm" which allows "interpretative analysis to describe and make sense in detail of the precise meanings to particular persons or phenomena occurring in their usual social context" Cassell & Symon (1994:231). Filstead (1978:2) notes that qualitative analysis is the concept that aligns with a constructivist approach with no real objectivity but where the "reality" "emerges from the shared creativity of the individuals". Easterby-Smith et al (2002:29) term this "social constructivism" because in essence there is more to reality than the fact of it, it is "socially constructed and given meaning by people". Qualitative methodology is an all-embracing term for the broad school of activities which as Van Maanen (1979:520) explains is "an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world".

Of course those who predominantly use qualitative data techniques do not use those to the exclusion of any collection of accountable data. It does not mean that there is an avoidance of numerical analysis. Indeed, Burgoyne (1994) promotes that researchers ensure that they "count the countable", whilst still being dominated by techniques which are the "collection and analysis of written or spoken texts or the direct observation of behaviour" Cassell & Symon (1994:4). The balance of including data which is descriptive to the process, is of course sensible. The size of the organisation, the number of employees, their gender, ethnicity etc. is countable data which is descriptive and 'objective fact'. Qualitative research, however, has the capacity not only to describe objectively but to seek information behind the statistics, the 'explanation for' phenomena, behaviours or perceptions. It allows the inclusion of people's beliefs and views which may or may not be reality, in the objective sense of the word, but are reality to the person or groups which in turn can have an effect on behaviour and outcomes.

The absolute search for objectivity therefore is not as necessary under a qualitative approach as with those who undertake a quantitative design. This lack of objectivity, however, should not be misinterpreted as meaning a lack of validity. As Bryman (1988) notes, one of the acceptances about research in this way is to accept that there is an inherent subjectivity, to seek objectivity for its own sake would deny therefore the
participant's own interpretations and perceptions which, of course, lead to their 'real world' and helps us to understand their subsequent behaviours.

The second feature which distinguishes qualitative methodologies from the positivist approach is again outlined by Cassell & Symons (1994) as the need for flexibility. The use of qualitative techniques allows for the development of new hypotheses and techniques and the use of additional tools as the research develops. It allows the changing of old hypotheses and the formulation of new ones and allows for change in how the information is presented and the interpretations then made. This is particularly important when considering such organic institutions as organisations and indeed the extent of changing the research methodology depends on what develops. Organisations can change dramatically in relatively short timescales and indeed one of the key features of this research is the extent of change which has been demanded. In a longitudinal study, the ability to try new techniques and respond to developments in the research field is important. This need for flexibility and the ability to try new techniques has been termed 'crucial' not only because of what is permissible within the organisation, but because organisations are such highly complex situations "which means we cannot define exactly what we are interested in or how to explore the issue at the outset" Cassell & Symon (1994:4).

The complexity of the organisation must also reflect, particularly from a sociological perspective, the importance of collecting data from other available sources such as secondary data from documentary evidence, etc. This reflects an essential ingredient in flexibility, either external or internal, allowing for "the triangulation of data by multi-method approaches" Cassell & Symon (1994:4). In essence this multi-faceted collection of data can arguably, add its own objectivity and counter-balance, thus establishing validity. This very flexibility is particularly important in a study addressing organisational change. The ability to take on new phenomena and to attribute appropriately the importance of it is clearly essential in trying to detail any analysis of a learning organisation. The 'hows' and 'whys' of change can then be explored rather than just, as quantitative colleagues would seek, the fact that the change has occurred.

Qualitative methodologies, therefore, as a broad school are particularly applicable in the organisational research field. This is primarily because of the evolutionary nature of the research and the ability to change and develop as the research develops. Glesne & Peshkin (1992:6) note the "open, emergent nature means a lack of standardisation" which allows, according to these academics, "discovery" - "hard to answer, context bound questions emerge along with unexpected patterns and new understandings ..." They argue that this sort of enquiry allows a comprehensive look at the "complexity of social interaction".
In considering the different types of qualitative methodologies which can be used there is a rich source of academic writing. The key principles of qualitative research are commonly agreed, by the mainstream academics. Silverman (1993) outlines the development of theories from Bryman (1988), through to Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) and agrees with Crabtree & Miller (1992) and Patton (1990) that qualitative methodology has the following main characteristics. It is reality as seen and experienced by the respondents, it does not arrive at the study with pre-conceived ideas, models and studies, it sees reality from the inside not the outside and it endeavours to explore the social interactions and meanings. These are research techniques which move with the subject, develop and reflect and are not only context sensitive and time related but are indeed timely. Patton (1990:40) suggests a “balance between description and interpretation” and as such lead to what Denzin and Lincoln (1998) note as the need to use a wide variety of inter-connected methods.

Easterby-Smith et al (2002) suggest that most researchers are flexible in their research design and do this by mixing methods. Although the purist may see the paradigms as opposing, in practice when faced with the research question investigative methods are used and this provides different perspectives on the aspect under scrutiny. Easterby-Smith et al summarise the strengths and weaknesses of both paradigms and encourage their acknowledgement in order that researchers use what is appropriate to the research question. The positivist ability to be economical and cover a wider sample section is balanced with its lack of flexibility and with the possible irritating factor for recipients who may not want to ‘waste time’ on large questionnaires and indeed the intended sample size may not be achieved. The social constructivist approach conversely may create great meaning and understanding of the process of change but the data can be enormous and difficult to collate.

Research Design

This study is based in a phenomenological paradigm using predominantly qualitative methodologies which are applicable in an organisational setting. The researcher is a manager within the setting and two other managers have assisted in the data collection. The study had three main elements. Firstly factual information gathered which gives descriptive data on the individual respondents, secondly the completion of the Knowledge Influences Audit and finally views and opinions ascertained using critical data to form questions. A detailed methodology is contained within the primary research chapter.

The overall approach is ethnographic. It is rooted in an organisational development approach and uses such techniques as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, the use of critical incidents and group feedback processes. Focus groups were offered to
unqualified staff who were dispersed throughout the department. Their possible isolation and status within the department lead the researcher to decide this was a more supportive methodology. 24% of respondents attended a focus group. There were six focus groups carried out with unqualified and residential staff with the groups ranging from four to eleven participants. The researcher facilitated all focus groups and notes were taken by one of the other data collectors.

The researcher and two data collectors carried out all individual interviews. Those individually interviewed were district team staff and specialist teams – all were qualified workers. The three interviewers arranged to attend office bases on a specified day and then divided the personnel for interview. Those unable to attend had rearranged interviews. Notes were taken contemporaneously. The following analysis will explore the basis of the techniques used and their applicability to this study.

**Qualitative Enquiry**

Shipman (1988) writing in regard to social science and social research, notes the various labels that are attributed to qualitative enquiry and how one understands 'what goes on around here'. This over-arching view is supported by such writers as Sarantakos (1998) who explain the practices of field research and grounded theory. Field research is described as exploring real life situations where this group of methods has been used for some time by social scientists, social anthropologists and indeed social workers. This of course encourages a natural inclination towards these methods from one with such a social work/social science background. Sarantakos (1998:189) describes generally how these field researchers “begin with some general notions or tentative hypothesis, formulate questions, accumulate data ... leading to tentative conclusions and to propositions” and importantly it is not only characterised “by the place of the study” but the holistic picture of what occurs around it. Grills (1998:3) outlines the focus of field research on *inter-active aspects* that is namely the processes, activities and actions, complemented with the *interpretative*, that is the perspective, meanings, definitions. This intimate knowledge of the field setting is outlined by the “getting close to dilemmas, frustrations, routines ... risks” and further, that the researcher's role is strengthened by the direct involvement in the situation.

Sarantakos (1998) concentrates on three forms of qualitative field research, namely case studies, grounded theory and ethnographic research. In considering each, there is an understanding of how each form may have impact on this study. **Single case studies** are often progressed over much time employing a number of methods of data enquiry. This intensive, singular and arguably introvert, self-analytical approach, is described in
detail by Yin (1991). The key elements of considering the whole unit, employing several methods of enquiry to counter-balance error or bias, where respondents are experts and, according to Hartfield (1982), the unit is 'a typical case', could fit well into this study.

However, equally so the grounded theorist approach, promoted by such notable proponents as Glaser & Strauss (1967). Here there are many similarities with the qualitative school of methodology, the central difference being that the results are grounded in some form of empirical data and related to a form of theory. Strauss & Corbin (1998) note this grounding in theory as the crucial difference. Sarantakos (1998) notes that the research is directed by the particular interest of the researcher. Although of course, arguably, most research starts on that premise, it is comforting to note this acceptance of the researcher's personal interest as being permissible in such an approach. Grounded theory is noted as a well used technique in health, education, and, according to Locke (1996), management studies.

Sarantakos' (1998) third form of qualitative field research is ethnography. McNeill (1985:54-55) offers a rather simplistic statement in describing ethnography as "writing about a way of life", the purpose being to describe the culture and life style of a group of people, "not so much to seek cause as an explanation ... but to "tell it like it is" could hide the complexity of debate around this methodology. To begin with it is noted that the foundations of this approach lie in anthropology which is interested in relationships between people and according to Sarantakos (1998:195) "physical, socio-political, personal, cultural and historical aspects of their lives". He lists four main elements in an anthropological study and links those with an ethnographic approach. These elements are namely:

a) Accepting culture as an entity in itself and how it is generated, changed and translated from one generation to another. Culture is the perceived shared system within a group of people and the resultant behaviour, norms and values.

b) The holistic element of this methodology is vital to ensure the whole context in which actions occur are understood.

c) The in-depth nature of the anthropological approach is accepted as a necessity in not only creating a true understanding but in establishing validity and indeed triangulation.

d) Finally the chronological nature of this study, particularly as ethnographic/anthropological studies are taken over time, shows the importance of the historical context as well as the present.

It appears to be accepted by academics in this field that ethnographers are not tied to one theoretical perspective but rather use theories as guiding lights and directional. As such Fetterman's (1989) analysis of static as opposed to dynamic, structural as opposed
to functional theories, show how to build a platform for an ethnographic study. These theories guide but do not confine the ethnographer, they inform but do not dictate, and this sense of the ethnographer picking and choosing what suits his or her study is the central principle. Therefore the use of a static functionalist theory may be useful in creating a descriptive, point in time, analysis of an organisation whilst an innovative theory may help to consider observation if a new concept is introduced.

Zaharlik (1992) & Zaharlik & Green (1991) produced probably the most detailed and complete list of characteristics of ethnographic research.

a) **Social Relationships** - assumption of researcher having long term and diffuse (variety of contacts) relationship with respondents.

b) **Researcher as Learner** - the researcher wanting to gain knowledge from the researched.

c) **First-hand Information** - to help understand the complexities.

d) **Long-term Observation**

e) **Participant Observation** - becoming intimate and part of the communities or study focus

f) **The Ethnographer as a Research Instrument** - the researcher is the instrument of research in themselves.

g) **Naturalistic Observation** - on location, not artificially arranged.

h) **Eclectic Approach** - different data techniques, triangulation and cross referencing to give depth and scope to the research.

i) **Interactive-Reactive Approach** - flexible, re-active methods informed by information as it is being gathered. New information informing knowledge and organically adjusting the approach.

j) **Holistic Approach** - the connections creating the whole.

k) **Humanistic Approach** - geared at humanistic values and concerns reflecting the culture.

l) **Cross-Cultural Frame of Reference** - comparative with other information either in time or location.

It is important to establish the credibility of a study and in this Stewart (1998) helpfully offers a model which supports ethnography as a methodology and acknowledges that ethnography shares the same 'scientific' goal - if via a different route - of seeking the truth in a situation. Stewart's (1998) model matches the three criteria established by scientific researchers - that is of validity, reliability and generalisability with that of ethnography - veracity, objectivity and perspicacity respectively. Stewart notes a number of tactics which can be employed to establish veracity. Muecke (1994) and Ottenberg (1994) are but two writers who support ethnography requiring a long time spent in the field. A longitudinal study therefore helps to establish validity/veracity and this is particularly supported by Stewart (1998). Here as Agar (1996) explains repeated events are of significance as are contrary event. Stewart (1998) notes the use of statistic-orientated interview methods namely those via survey and via written methodologies and structured interviews. This supports the multiple modes of data collection which allow
triangulation of the information. In working towards **objectivity** and **reliability** the established use of tactics such as the description of process, although being careful not to create a prescription, of the research, with details of the ‘trail’ of the research, is useful in order to identify respondents and the network established. The **perspicacity** of the study may, in ethnographic terms, be less important because of the intimate and singular nature of the investigation - how 'generalisable' or transferable is the data? However, it can according to Stewart (1998:47) “aspire to generate insights that can be applied elsewhere”. This is particularly valuable, when considering public sector organisations all facing similar dilemmas and demands.

Three pieces of research show practically how ethnographic studies can work. Deyhle (1998:47) describes an ethnographic study into the Navajo as having no neat clear boundaries but creating relationships, becoming part of, and having the respect of and for the respondents. Deyhle's acceptance was when she dressed as they did. Deyhle's “deep involvement” over twelve years in the Navajo community is, she argues, the only way “to move on the stage with the actors” and to get the real picture of what was occurring. Gamradt's (1998:73) study into the world and work of surgeons shows her difficulties in studying professional organisations, their language and the complexities. She feels these make special demands in terms of gaining knowledge, acceptance, access, establishing creditability and demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the agendas which are vital in any ethnographic study. Gamradt notes the effect on the time of the researcher if they are an outsider seeking an emic viewpoint and that the professionals often have “no time for fools” or those they consider time wasters. Smith (1993:81) names three main points in her study. She underlines the importance and usefulness of having a qualitative enquiring group throughout the process. She further notes the value of the researcher “being a member of the cultural group and is able to use culturally learnt interpretation skills throughout the research process”. Thirdly she notes the effect of research on the organisation's work. It is the second of these which is of particular interest, namely the enquiry group and how one can consider the use of others in research to assist not only in the data collection but in the interpretation of potentially offering objectivity and balance.

**Organisational Research**

Clegg & Hardy (1999:3) in their introduction, either encouragingly or discouragingly, note that gone was all certainty as to how organisations are studied, what is “the place of the researcher, the role of the methodology; the nature of the theory”. They go on to underline that studying organisations is no easy business.
This lack of certainty has arisen from the development of organisational analysis and from changing climates in which organisations exist. Nord & Fox (1996) remind us that traditionally organisations were studied via the field of psychological techniques looking at such aspects as motivation, learning, personality. The Hawthorn Studies undertaken by Mayo (1947) are a good example of a scientific methodology when considering organisational activity in the past. Nord & Fox (1996) explain however that since the 1960s studies have contained a more sociological leaning considering communication, culture, interactions and seeing the organisation more holistically.

There is extensive theoretical debate around organisations. Reed (1996) underlines the "contested terrain" of organisational theorising. It is worth being reminded of the sources and direction of the organisational debate and academic perspectives. Firstly the organisation as a rational construct - with structures, controls, and rules with a level of formality. Secondly the rediscovery of community - the organisation as a social system which integrates individuals and groups. Thirdly the market-place for organisations - the economic environment with its associated moral dilemmas and choices reflecting also Baum's (1996) ecological viewpoint. Fourthly, influences of power - by whatever means. The individual versus the collective, the local versus the global and finally, of course leadership and change theories. Further the feminist approaches to organisational studies as discussed by Calas & Smircich (1996) highlight other aspects of organisational research, such as diversity, which offer useful guidance.

Organisations are a particularly complex phenomena when considering their analysis and study. One of the key distinctions is the variety and depth of layers and inter-related aspects which make their study demand a holistic approach. Rollinson et al (1998) in their introductory chapter, consider organisations from four different perspectives or metaphors. The "Machine Metaphor" - the organisation's purpose, goals, design, rules etc ..."The Organism Metaphor" - the organisation as a system which has different elements connected to form a whole. "The Political Systems' Metaphor" - reflecting the different groupings within an organisation which can conflict, agree or have diverse aims, agendas, or parallel systems. Finally, "The Cultural Systems Metaphor" focusing on the less obvious and less easily measurable but equally important culture, values, beliefs and common understanding of "how things are done around here". If this analysis of Rollinson et al (1998) is further layered with proposals of considering the three levels of individual, group and organisational focus, the complexity of information available begs a flexible and integrated approach in order to gain some true understanding into "what is going on".
It is some relief that in this complexity of theories and studies Stablein (1996:256) offers simplicity and insight. He claims all organisational studies have three common characteristics, namely research purpose, audience and data. He states "organisational research is a purposeful human activity" and that the purpose may be "multiple, changing, emergent, even conflicting". It is as Frost & Stablein (1992) note, a social activity with both internal and external audiences and finally the data links both. The data is selected and relayed according to the audience and how this is done is a particularly insightful and skilful aspect of organisational investigation. It does not mean a distortion of the data, merely a selection of relevant aspects to different audiences.

Stablein (1996) explains how ethnographic methods and data have come to the forefront of the debate on organisational studies since the concentration on organisational culture as a source of research since the 1980s. This is reflected by Martin & Frost (1996) in their analysis of organisational culture investigations detailing the developments in cultural studies in organisations. They underline the methodological preference of qualitative design again emphasising the positives of context – specific, in-depth, rich data collection. The key theme trying to gain an insiders or emic perspective. Horowitz (1997:496) for example, describes how ethnographers can explore the different ways in which people cluster and hierarchically arrange work to "interpret, manage, maintain, circumvent, breakdown and create barriers and boundaries in order to change" and to alter their place or others i.e. mobility and secondly to align and bring sectors together i.e. formation.

The need however for some cultural researchers to have quantitative analysis as part of the study is also evident. Even though the quantitative techniques, say in organisational climate research as Schneider (1961) explains, are very specialist and focused, they still add to the material presented. This may of course be a defensive reaction from ethnographers who are stung by criticisms of their 'loose' collection techniques with rigor and validity again under scrutiny. Martin & Frost (1996) propose a 'hybrid' of qualitative and quantitative techniques and this is supported by Bryman (1988) who considers flexibility of approach led by the subject as the most appropriate direction.

The increase of mixing and matching methodologies is exampled by Elliot et al's (1999) paper in the British Journal of Clinical Psychology. Here Elliot et al (1999:220) provide guidelines where qualitative methods could enhance quantitative data. They suggest that results can be published if the following are adhered to.
A. Publishability Guidelines Shared by Both Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

| 1. Explicit scientific context and purpose |
| 2. Appropriate methods                  |
| 3. Respect for participants             |
| 4. Specification of methods             |
| 5. Appropriate discussion               |
| 6. Clarity of presentation              |
| 7. Contribution to knowledge            |

B. Publishability Guidelines Especially Pertinent to Qualitative Research

| 1. Owning one's perspective |
| 2. Situating the sample     |
| 3. Grounding in examples    |
| 4. Providing credibility checks |
| 5. Coherence                |
| 6. Accomplishing general vs. specific research tasks |
| 7. Resonating with readers |

Kleinman (1992) explains the increasing paradox in quantitative work which displays complex research design and sophisticated statistical analysis which is undermined by limited interpretation and discussion. The combination therefore of the rigour and validity that quantitative techniques offer whilst complementing them with descriptive, interpretative, in depth qualities seems to be the approach which adds most value. “Only by combining qualitative and quantitative data in a balanced way do we come to understand the richness of life in its varied regularities” Van de Ven & Poole (1990:182). The importance and possible dominance of the latter in organisational studies, whilst complemented by other techniques, remains. Silverman’s (1998) ‘organisational science’ emphasises the constricts and contexts and the ‘reality’ as it is perceived as well as the multiplicity of groupings, rivalries and divergence between what is theorised and what is actioned.

This qualitative approach also accommodates the longevity of some studies within an organisational context. The ‘smash and grab’ of Martin & Frost’s (1996) example of short-term, focussed approaches by many writers, can be inappropriate in an organisational research context particularly focussing on the impact of change. Barley (1990) notes that longitudinal field research is probably best suited to work on organisational change, although his work tended to be dominated by an etic rather than emic approach.

McNeill (1995:80) explains that the advantages of longitudinal studies is that they can “study change over time, through a series of snapshots rather than a continuous process”. Hakim (1987:87) describes this type of study’s uniqueness in being able to “answer questions about causes and consequences and hence to provide a basis for substantiated explanatory theory” and time allows methods to change because those under study change.

Meyer, Goes & Brooks (1993:299) add a dimension which is important to at least consider, they analyse “organisations reacting to hyper-turbulence”. They of course
include their dilemmas and problems and how they had to resist their original concepts and research methods but their analysis into the health care industry changed over time and they showed how the levels of environmental turbulence also changed. Meyer et al (1995:314) moves through different methodologies to apply to the initial phase of organisational adaptations, the second phase of organisational disequilibrium and thirdly “metamorphose through strategic re-orientation and finally reaction to hyper-turbulence”. Table 6:1 outlines their approach in a longitudinal study undertaken by them.

Table 6:1 Phases in the Hospital Study

Huber and Van Der Ven (1995) introduce a series of papers on longitudinal field research methods when considering organisational change. Each paper details advice and cautionary remarks when undertaking such a research methodology, but a key theme is that this method can accumulate an enormous amount of data, indeed overload of information. This is important when considering this study and ensuring that there is a level of formality in data collection and analysis. Barley (1990) supports this by underlining the importance of sustained observation in longitudinal studies supported by ‘systematisation’ and ‘explicitness’. This means both having a system and being explicit although he believes this is ‘notoriously difficult’ to achieve. In his advice on data analysis he suggests that this develops through four phases: (a) developing categories
for sorting the data, (b) grouping data, (c) identifying patterns, (d) compiling and contrasting those patterns or 'scripts'.

One of the attractions of course of undertaking longitudinal study is, as Pettigrew (1990) highlights, the very lack of such work, primarily because academics' and researchers' careers are often at variance with a long term study. Being able to view an organisation, its change and the reactions to it is a rare and valuable opportunity. Glich et al (1990) were particularly interested in change management and organisational design and effectiveness. They noted that researchers are often absent when such organisational changes occur and so are seeking retrospective information which undermine the validity of the study results. Research, therefore, into an organisation where the researcher knows that change from the inside is not only unusual but could add some additional insights into the study of organisational change management.

Having considered the over-all approaches used by different schools of academic thought the remaining principles and practices of an ethnographer appear the most appropriate. There appears considerable similarity in academic writing between the ethnographic and the longitudinal research methodologist. The in-depth, flexible, developing, immersed approach getting to the heart and soul of the organisation is complemented with verification from time, other sources etc.

Some Lessons from Organisational Studies
Morrill and Fine (1997) list a number of organisation studies which underline the five main areas of organisational enquiry to which ethnographic work has contributed. These are mainly the informal relationships, the organisational meaning, the environmental factors, the change process and the normative behaviours and ethics.

In relation to uncovering informal relationships, Roys' studies in 1952, 1954 and 1959/60 explore how factory workers adapted behaviours to create for themselves levels of autonomy in a very restrictive, very oppressively managed, internal environment. Roys achieves this knowledge from becoming part of the factory group and Morrill and Fine (1997) are convinced that studies which were quantitatively based would not have acquired this knowledge.

Strauss et al's (1963:428) research into a psychiatric hospital shows how staff "negotiated the means, routines and tacit agreements of work" within a medicalised setting. Strauss et al (1963) find the multiplicity amongst groupings both patient and practitioner, tiers and levels of the organisation, all added to the complexity of how the psychiatric hospital operated. Strauss et al's (1963) research exposed the different types
of employee, the characteristics, educational and social background etc. This has certain parallels to a social services’ organisation, which has a variety of staff levels, academic backgrounds, social groupings etc, which all can lead to different philosophical and ideological stances and internal/external relationships. Goffman's (1961) research in psychiatric hospitals titled “Asylums” gives further depth to this debate seeing organisations “as systems of meaning”. Morrill and Fine (1997:429) term this the “grit of organisational underlife” which encapsulates the nature of informal relationships noted in “Asylums”, and which is transferable to other organisational settings.

A variety of researchers have considered the effects of the environment on organisational studies. Some of these studies are in fields less related to public sector organisations, however Fine’s (1996) work in the restaurants’ industry is one example of how market forces, external cost structures on food, labour costs etc affect management and internal decisions and work patterns. This environmental aspect to organisational studies has become increasing more dominant in the public sector and to any study in that sector.

Change of course brings one of the richest areas of ethnographic studies. Pettigrew’s (1985) work directs us to the methodology of in-depth interviews and interestingly the longitudinal nature of the study is reflected almost solely in the documentary evidence available in the ICI Company, which Pettigrew studied. The public sector’s inherent bureaucracy has an inbuilt documentary process which is a valuable contribution to any ethnographic approach.

Finally, “normative behaviours and ethics” in organisational study are reflected in Jackalls (1988) study into organisational decision making. This study highlights the moral choices in decision making and this, again, is relevant because of the linkages to moral choices and the public care situation. Child protection is a ready example of choices, both of and for, the professional and the organisation, within a political context.

It is within the world of medicine that one sees the greatest shifts in accepting other methods of logical approaches, rooted in a different paradigm, having influence. The traditional quantitative approaches to medicine have now been enhanced with the use of ethnographic techniques in the work with disability, chronic illness and terminal illness. It is no longer research into the illnesses themselves as Kleinman (1992) outlines, but the quality of life issues which surround them that are fascinating. The cancer patient is no longer seen as an isolated clinical case who only becomes part of a wider whole when studying trends in the illness pattern. Patients live in families and communities, they have social structures, they demand change in behaviour, in both self and others and the management of emotions and negotiations with the outsiders to effect appropriate care.
Charmaz and Olesen (1997) explain how ethnographic research has changed perceptions of illness and ill people. Roth’s (1963) personal experience of tuberculosis influenced his research into patients’ reactions to their care. The ‘living with’ the problem, as well as the problem itself, is therefore under study. Glaser and Strauss’s (1965) “Awareness of Dying” encapsulates this mixing of qualitative methods in the medical world. Their work concentrates on the awareness of and the organisational effects of the dying. Mishler (1994) emphasises that this form of ethnographic study allows for the voice of the patient, often silenced in the past, to be redressed.

There is extensive ethnographic work completed in the medical field, no less so in the area of socialisation of professionals into their professional setting, but this has tended to focus on students and newly qualified workers. Charmaz and Olesen (1997) explain how little is written about the ongoing socialisation within organisations and it may be important to give this some thought in considering Children’s Services. Any consideration should include not only the ongoing socialisation, but also the resocialisation of staff, say in response to environmental changes, and the ongoing mental modelling and alteration that needs to occur with workers.

Horowitz’ (1995) study into Social Services is like that of many other researchers including Liebow (1993) and Scott (1996) who study the Social Services from a recipient of the service. Although this is not the main focus of this Children’s Services’ study, there are factors which may have some bearing. Liebow (1993), in her study of homeless women, discussed the fear element from staff towards their client group and in Horowitz’s (1995) study about the suppression of the client’s authority and influence by social work staff, we see the effects of social services’ staff in the potential repression of the very client group they are there to serve. This is important, as the marginalisation of clients shown in these studies, is against the very value base of the Social Service’s Department and social workers. There are clear complexities here and this draws one back to the difference between Argyris’ (1985) proclaimed behaviour and actual behaviours. If this dichotomy is so evident in other Social Service Department research, how can this affect or at least reflect on the Social Service Department’s internal debate. The very creation of barriers by social workers in Horowitz’s study and in Whyte’s study, could be extrapolated to the internal ethnographic study into Children’s Services possibly in the relationships between internal groupings and levels.

Whyte’s (1981) research synopsis into street corner society was, of course, particularly interesting as it was related to the social work intervention and dilemmas in that world. Whyte’s entry into the street corner society and how his observations can be accepted in research terms are of note. However Whyte’s questions in regard to the social work
profession and the question of how it can be accepted if it is in itself allowing into the profession those who come from that very street corner, underline a structural dilemma which arguably remains the case today. On the one hand those who have personal experience first hand may have 'street cred' with clients, but that may only be accepted at one level, whereas in other locations such as Court and the external environment, this level of acceptance within the profession may not be countenanced. This is thought provoking and again interesting research to consider.

Finally Krieger's (1985) study, in which she was deeply involved, advises a method by which to 'separate out' data to ensure reduction of her own bias.

**Organisation Development**

Organisational studies and research have been already acknowledged as often associated with organisational change. Organisation development and change within the broad organisation behavioural approach is presented as a way of challenging inter and intra organisational processes with the aim of increasing organisational performance and effectiveness. Organisation development, although often linked with change management, is quite a specific branch of organisational intervention. Cole (1995:269) explains that "it is an altogether more comprehensive approach to organisational change". French & Bell's (1995:28) definition appears the most widely used by the other organisation development specialist, it is "a long-term effort,..... led and supported by top management, to improve...... learning and problem-solving processes..... with special emphasis on the culture of intact work teams and other team configurations utilising the consultant-facilitator role and the theory and technology of applied behavioural science, including action research". This statement encapsulates a number of key elements in organisation development. Firstly it is, according to Champoux (1996:569), a "long-term, systematic and prescriptive approach to planned organisational change". Secondly it has its foundations based in behavioural sciences such as psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology and thirdly it is, according to Moorhead and Griffin (1995) about improvement of organisational effectiveness. These factors are of interest in this study as its planned, long-term nature fits with the longitudinal approach, further its behavioural sciences complement the organisation's own professional background in social sciences and finally, in an organisation which has so much change demanded of it, and where performance and survival are often synonymous, improved effectiveness fits with organisational aims.

Cumming & Worley (1993) highlight the difference of organisational development from other change methods. They claim that organisation development is a complete systems approach although it can concentrate on sub units or teams. Its behavioural science
foundation ensures that it not only addresses the application of practical changes but takes on the human implications. Although planned it has such flexibility as to adapt to current circumstances or assessed difficulties. In the change management programme it addresses not only the diagnosis but implementation phases of the change process thus trying to create stability within the organisation. Organisation development covers structure, systems and strategic issues with the aim of improving organisation effectiveness. Robbins (1992:288) agrees that organisation development has a flexibility of approach which "encompasses a collection of change techniques or interventions...undertaken in response to changes in the external environment".

The attraction of this methodology in this research setting is that it is so closely linked with what Ellis & Dick (2000:201) term "knowledge based solutions". Additional to the long term issues associated with "complex and lasting change", Ellis & Dick (2000:202) highlight this as "change through a learning process". This process allows "new ideas, beliefs and attitudes" to "emerge which change both the behaviour and the culture of the organisation". Allee (1997) notes that knowledge management is about mechanisms of creating, applying and sharing knowledge which enhance organisational output. This supports Ellis & Dick's clear alignment of organisation development with learning organisations, organisational learning processes and knowledge management, with the acknowledgement that the importance of all these concepts is the increased competitive position of the organisation. Although organisation development is an overall approach, Mullins (1996) recognises the uniqueness of each organisational development programme to individual organisations. Its action-orientation needs to be tailored to suit the specific circumstances. The individuality and uniqueness of each organisation should not however be confused with organisation development being a methodology without logic or intervention boundaries.

As organisation development is closely aligned with change management then the overall learning to change cannot be denied. Change is inescapable but its inevitability does not diminish its complexity. Cumming & Worley (1993:145) present a range of change activities which produce effective change management. "Motivating change" not only establishes a readiness for change but aims at reducing resistance, "creating a vision" provides a direction for the future, "developing political support" engages the powerful player in an organisation, "managing the transition" and "sustaining the momentum" which reinforces new desired behaviour. These change activities help to plan the change process and assist in overcoming Lewin's (1951) three phase process of behaviour modification namely the unfreezing (reducing resistances and identifying the need to change), movement (developing new approaches) and refreezing (stabilising change). Any change process will recognise possible resistances created by fear of loss of status.
or security, fear of the unknown and lack of awareness, but Moorhead & Griffin (1995) also note the institutional/organisational resistances of 'over determination' for example systems and structures created to ensure performance levels that in themselves may be stifling, group inertia, threatened expertise or powerbases and a narrow focus for change.

Schein's (1980) analysis of increasing organisational effectiveness reflects the similar psychological profiling and 'health' of that of individuals. The early theory of organisation concentrated on functional issues but the behaviour science approach of organisation development reflects the understanding of many management theorists of the necessity to engage the 'psychology' of the organisation if maintenance of change is to be achieved. To this end, Schein (1980:232) notes the "organisational coping" through "adaptability, sense of identity, capacity to test reality and internal integration". This increased understanding of organisations as dynamic, coping and changing has led to a range of theories built on Lewin's behavioural approach. Schein's list includes "sociometry", "applied anthropology", "leadership", "organisation structure and design theories" and "intergroup-interorganisational theories". Schein's (1980:244) theory on "planned change" makes several assumptions about the change process. These include change involving learning and unlearning; the necessity of motivation to change; the importance of change being mediated through individuals in the organisation regardless of the nature of that change; the premise that learning and unlearning involve attitudes, behaviour etc and can be powerful and finally 'change is a multi-stage cycle' which needs to be negotiated and managed.

Inevitably undertaking such organisational change can lead to change in behaviour through the process. The close link then between action research and organisation development is noted by most specialist writers in this field.

Schein (1980:241) notes in organisational settings that "pure research models involving control groups and controlled experimental manipulation are neither feasible nor desirable when dealing with human systems". This is understandable as it is difficult to find a 'typical' control group – even within public sector organisations the latitude given to local authorities in organising themselves, restricts such control group comparisons. Schein (1980:241) proposes that, in group or organisational settings, "quasi-experimental models' and action research philosophy can be applied by carefully designing organisational interventions, not experimental treatments, and studying their effects". Schein lists such interventions as "objective observation, interviews, measurements and whatever other techniques are appropriate...". The very action of surveying, interviewing etc is in itself, according to many writers, influencing and altering behaviour itself.
This is the recognition, as Susman and Evered (1978) noted, of those under research not only participating but reflecting on the issues and changing behaviour as a result. Carr and Kemnis (1986) state that action research causes improvement in practice, understanding of that practice and improvements in the situation as a result of the involvement of participants in the action research process. Whyte (1984) agrees that this close link between research, practice and participation is key. Of particular interest here is the value of, as Elliot's (1982) action research cycle proposes, not dismissing the feedback loop to respondents and participants, pragmatically noting the influence of feedback on actions. In this study, the aim is to at least instigate the debate and trigger reflective thinking within different groupings and strata. Heller (1986) approaches this from the point of ensuring that respondents not only have access to the results but are able to "seriously consider" the evidence and be given time and space to do so. Heller (1986) also promotes the ability of participants to decide what then occurs and to implement changes.

The arena of change management is clearly entered here and is promoted as a process rather than a single event. The linkage therefore between organisational development, learning organisations, knowledge management and action research and change models is strong and interrelated. This is summed up by Elliot and Keynes (1991:69) who explain this is "a study of a social situation with a view of improving the quality of actions within" and indeed underline how practitioners can study their own situation and improve it. Although it can therefore primarily be ethnographic, the result of the interaction with the participants in asking questions associated with critical incidents, in itself can provoke change. Therefore the "intent" of an action research model is arguably inherently present. Elden and Levin (1991) argue that this method enhances the ability of participants to feel empowered to think and to act differently.

**Organisation Development Phases**

All this leads to a reasonable conclusion that organisation development, although uniquely geared to each organisation's specific range of needs, must be systematic in order to undertake this complex task. Cummings & Worley (1993) present a general model of planned change and these phases are what Champoux (1996) uses in his analysis and is careful to emphasise these are phases not steps, each creating a flow rather than a stage. Figure 6:1 shows the major activities.
a) Entering & Contracting – This initial phase establishes the client relationship, identifies the organisation development consultant and starts the initial identification of the issues. The ‘contracting’ phase establishes the boundaries within which the programme will operate including confidentiality, ethical issues, resources, expectations etc.

b) Diagnosing – The diagnostic phase is about assessing the organisation by collecting data and then using that data to draw conclusions. Diagnosis in this context is very much seen by organisation development practitioners as a mutual and collaborate process, this in many ways supports the action research nature of this phase. In theoretical terms Burke (1994) presents a number of diagnostic models. Burke (1994:55) argues that such models are useful because they "help categorise data", "they can help to enhance an understanding" and "interpret data" and "provide a common shorthand language". The details of Weisbord’s Six Box Model, Hornstein & Tichy’s Emergent Pragmatic Model and The Burke-Litwin Model are all presented. The accepted areas of analysis between these models address strategy, tasks, people, processes and networks.

Data collection, in this phase, can be via a number of methods. These techniques include questionnaires, interviews, observation focus groups and other appropriate methods which will be noted within this chapter under specific techniques. What is important to note here is that data is likely to be gathered in more than one form and Greenberg & Baron (1997) particularly support this. In order for the organisation development consultant to summarise this information, Burke (1994:54) suggests firstly simply summarising the information with “average responses and percentages from a questionnaire” and secondly “to categorise the data into some organisational framework or model”. The latter has the advantage of rapidity of organising the data – here of course an Eight ‘E’s Model can be not only useful in gathering but also in organising important data. Greenberg & Baron (1997:564) support Burke’s proposals as to the presentation of this collected data. They suggest the “summarising of the average scores on attitudes assessed” therefore reflecting the qualitative content of data collected and a summary of other rankings or averages within a framework.
c) Planning and Implementing Change – Organisational Development Interventions

Robbins (1992:288) emphasises that "organisational development is a term used to encompass a collection of change techniques or interventions" including structural or systems wide issues and "undertaken in response to changes in the external environment". Robbins simplifies the range of interventions into three, namely structural, task-technology and people-focused. Structural Interventions, according to McKenna (1994) involves the possibility of restructuring into, as Robbins (1992), explains, decentralised decision-making and greater autonomy. Task-Technology Interventions consider task design, work methods and what a number of writers, including Greenberg & Baron (1997) term 'quality of work life' (QWL) programmes. These in essence try to create work conditions which enhance motivation and commitment. This may include job enrichment, opportunities for growth, ethical practices etc and People-Focussed Interventions. French & Bell's analysis note a number of people focussed intervention strategies. Those concentrated on here relate to this study.

Firstly Survey Feedback is the collecting of data which is subsequently, after analysis, fed back to participants, this in turn is used to trigger change. The key here is the inclusion of all organisational players at different levels of the organisation. Survey feedback, according to Robbins (1992:293) is co-ordinated with "data from questionnaires tabulated with data pertaining to an individual's specific "family" or team and to the entire organisation and distributed to employees. This data in turn engenders debate and discussion about new behaviour, thus learning occurs. Franklin (1978) suggest the aggregating and summarising of data by unit or team to ensure confidentiality and to create confidence. Triangulation can occur via supplementing the questionnaire with, according to McKenna, the interview process. McKenna further suggests that groups receive information via a series of profiles and here members can discuss the profiles of their team. In such a situation the Eight 'E's Model could be seen as a profiling mechanism.

Secondly Process Consultation which is the method by which the organisation development consultant can assist in identifying, understanding and acting on process events which can include issues about communication, inter or intra team relationships etc. This is not dissimilar to focus group practices but concentrates on intervention and problem resolution.

Thirdly Team Building focuses on assisting team members to work together to identify weakness and build on strengths. The necessity for individuals to face relationships within a team is in order for that team to have better and more effective outcomes, this could include not only the task required but support issues etc.
Finally, Intergroup Development. This according to Robbins (1992:295) is an intervention which is aimed at "changing attitudes, stereotypes and perceptsives that groups have of each other". The methods used here is either the mixing of groups to analyse problems or working initially independently in groups and then bringing them together to resolve conflicts and tensions.

d) Evaluation – The final phase of Cummings & Worleys’ (1993) organisation development process is evaluation and institutionalising of the change. This contains the two elements of feedback and then permanent change in organisational behaviour. Feedback in this context is not only about the research results but the wider subsequent reaction and plan. Evaluation within organisation development is less clear cut and final than that of many research projects as its often longitudinal nature and action research basis means change is occurring during the process and may well also be occurring during the implementation phase.

It should be noted that Cummings & Worley (1993), whilst accepting the need to produce valid and reliable results, do acknowledge that research in organisational settings is less precise and controlled than that of a pure experimental methodology. The very complex nature of these systems and domination by human resource issues, lead organisation development interventions to a more quasi-experimental design. These elements are suggested by Cummings & Worley, firstly longitudinal measurement, comparison units (between teams for example) and the use of statistical input as is applicable in a quasi-experimental methodology. They further suggest the use of multi-measures allowing for triangulation and cross-checking.

Critique of Organisation Development

The central tenet of organisation development as a useful technique is that it is closely aligned with change management and inevitably learning and altering of behaviour. This change is triggered by and solved by the organisation itself with the help of an organisation development consultant who facilitates such a programme. There appear to be two schools of thought in relation to the effectiveness of organisation development. Firstly those managerial writers who have a more generalistic view, Luthans (1995) for example, accept that organisation development is maturing and its new ways of thinking and intervening are useful. However Luthans is cautious about supporting organisation development at a time when research to date is inconclusive and indeed it is too early to determine if such longitudinal approaches are sustainable. Luthans is, despite this, encouraging of new approaches especially in an organisational context. Greenberg & Baron (1997) reflect this view by noting that research indicates a qualified support of
organisation techniques but that findings are yet to be conclusive. Porras & Robertson (1992) when reviewing 49 organisation development studies, do show that overall organisation development interventions have been beneficial but that those studies which utilised a variety of interventions were more successful. Therefore a combination of diagnostic and intervention methods had wider impact than a single approach.

The second school of thought is that held by organisation development specialists such as French & Ball (1995) and Cummings & Worley (1993) who have a much more positive view of organisation development. The inclusive, almost democratic nature of its approach fits with the mainstream human resource theories which promote a wholistic and humanistic interventionist approach. In this social care environment under study, there are additional issues which are attractive. For example, McKenna (1994:519) outlines the individual and group focus which is based on “respect for people, trust, support, participation, open confrontation of issues and power equalisation”. These are very similar to a social work value base and therefore should, in theory, be more acceptable in this setting. Of course that does not take into account the political system, and the risk adversity that may be present. McKenna however does not discourage organisation development interventions in such settings rather advises they must be factored into plans and behavioural solutions. Luthans (1995) firmly links organisation development within the learning framework and these contextual issues therefore cannot be ignored.

Organisation development therefore is presented here as a methodology that fits within the overall qualitative and quasi-experimental range, with methodologies that complement that range. The ethnographic nature of this study, within an organisational context, remains within the organisation development spectrum.

The Role of the Researcher
The qualitative researcher has an intimate involvement with the situation and in organisational research becomes involved in the organisational social complexity. Kirk and Miller (1986:6) note that qualitative researchers needed to have levels of understanding to engage in “interacting with people in their own language, on their own terms”. In any organisation which uses a site specific language known between professionals but not necessarily to the outside world the understanding of such languages and codes of course shortens the entry period into the research site if the researcher has a similar professional background. The inclusiveness of the searcher and the researched is then mutually satisfied, the former having a 'head start' and some knowledge, and the latter informing the viability of the research. Recipients may also be more comfortable in questioning and contributing to it. Conversely, there could, of
course, be suspicion and wariness, particularly if the researcher is a manager and may have influenced the behaviours of those in the organisation already. However, to counter this it is important to note that if the researcher is a manager, it could also be part of an important aspect of helping to develop the very thing that the organisation desires, a more open organisation. An action research approach which could be a vehicle to assist in changing and creating that openness therefore must not be dismissed.

Schein (1987) is especially comfortable with the professional involved with research noting that trained professionals such as psychologist, social workers, organisational development consultants, already have the advantage of a methodological mindset coming from their professional training.

Cassell and Symon (1994:6) indeed emphasise that the researcher is not an "uninvolved bystander" merely observing. "The researcher is a social being who has an impact on the behaviour of those around". The ability of the researcher is therefore to know, not only the techniques of research, but also to use this social interaction skilfully. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that it is inescapable in this type of research not to be part of the social world and not to give acknowledgement to its "reflexive character".

Social research and the researcher's role is, in itself, not emotionally disconnected in these circumstances. In this study it could of course be complicated by the researcher's status and position in the organisation. All social research by its very nature will have agendas within it both from the respondents and the researcher which will affect research and organisation alike. However, rather than being concerned by this, there needs to be an acknowledgement of it. Schratz and Walker (1995) do offer some strategies by which to balance this and include the academic networks and supervisors of the researcher to ensure that the objective exercise checks out the balance and the relationship complexities. Schein (1987) is very accepting of ethnographers using their role as part of the organisation as a reasonable 'entry' mechanism into the organisation and notes that this infiltration can assist in remaining unobtrusive. The ethics of this are, of course, debatable and due thought should be given to the question of being highly visible as a researcher rather than quietly gathering information in a less intrusive way. Barley's (1986) experiences in researching a radiography department, show that becoming known within the department can mean switching in and out of roles from ethnographer to intervener. This particularly interesting aspect of Barley's (1986) research showed firstly when the ethnographer/worker became 'helpful' then the research itself became more acceptable and secondly that existing alliances may affect the research outcome. Kunda (1992) notes the researcher as organisational member does allow access to processes that may usually be denied or unknown to an 'outsider'.

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This issue of whether the researcher is an external agent to the organisation or an internal participant is clearly a complex one and has both possible negatives and positives on both sides. However, it is not an excluding element to any research and that is reassuring. It merely means that one has got to include the importance of this in the research itself. Macleod (1996) encourages this immersion of the researcher into the research site and goes as far as to suggest this should include a complete inseparability between researchers and research site. This encouragement leads to the acceptance of internal staff researching from within. Krieger (1985) supported this when she explained she was most productive in writing her research by re-injecting herself to the organisation where she accessed 'gossip' and became aware of current sensitivities. Mehan (1979) considers concerns are somewhat over emphasised and that there is an 'over abundance of concern' with the 'reflexivity of their work'. However, it may be somewhat self-deceptive, supported by Atkinson (1990) and 'slack' to avoid critically analysing one's self in one's own research as a researcher or as an organisation player.

**The Role of Organisation Development Consultant**

The role of organisation development consultant or practitioner is central in any organisation development programme. This role is distinguished from that of researcher because of the additional requirements of facilitating change within the organisation rather than solely collecting, analysing and relaying data, although these are important skills and activities for organisation development practitioners to have. Schein (1980:247) sums up the role of change agent/consultant as one “to help the system improve in its inherent capacity to cope”, thus helping in diagnosis and selecting responses and strategies to manage the change required. Thus as Schein claims “the consultant must be expert at helping the organisation to help itself”. Cole (1995) agrees that the role of consultant is central to an organisation development programme however Cole also notes a range of options open to the consultant and the organisation in their interaction dependent on the extent of direct intervention required of the consultant. This range of options includes leaders/experts at the directive end of the spectrum or counsellor/facilitator at the non directive end. Regardless of what approach the consultant takes Champoux (1996) underlines three beliefs under which they operate, firstly that the organisation's own knowledge can best solve their problems, secondly that the organisation can be assisted in finding the solutions by the consultants highlighting them as options and thirdly the organisation is responsible for any change and its sustainability.

Cummings & Worley (1993) note that organisation development consultants can be from one of three sources, firstly those who are organisation development practitioners and
secondly those organisation development practitioners with a specific expertise in related issues such as job design, career planning etc and thirdly the organisation development practitioner who is a manager or administrator. Cummings & Worley explain that this final grouping is steadily growing in number. This last group may of course, be internal personnel and here is an area of debate within the organisation development field. Similar to that of the internal/external researcher there are benefits and possible constraints on whether the organisation development specialist is internal or external to the organisation. Cole (1995:271) suggests that most organisation development consultants are external and "less constrained by organisational politics and conditioning". Champoux (1996) presents a balanced debate on this issue and shows the advantages of internal consultants knowing that very political dynamic, the client system and the business arena all of which give an easy entry and informed contracting in the initial phase of a programme.

It may be that the important issue is the conduct and skills of any consultant in these interventions rather their internal/external status per se. French & Bell (1995) investigate the relationship between client and consultant and detail the necessary skills base of diagnosis, analysis and empowerment, with the additional ability to create trusting and open relationships which can present a realistic and honest picture of the organisation. These interpersonal, intrapersonal, including an innovative and flexible approach, good consultation and communication skills, with an in-depth knowledge of organisation development theory, are according to Champoux (1996) minimum requirements of any organisational development consultant. Cummings & Worley (1993) supplement this with the ethical and important professional value base which underpins the skills base.

The role of researcher, in a social research context, has many dilemmas similar to that of the organisation development consultant. Indeed arguably the active nature of the consultant particularly demands a skilled and self aware practitioner who is conscious of the possibly blurred boundaries between consultant and solution giver. These dilemmas are reflected in others who may also collect data or participate in interview or process consultation. Cole (1995) is quite comfortable about the use of others to assist in data collection but again a consciousness of the boundaries of the client-consultant relationship is a pre-requisite on all parties. This should not be interpreted however as not being achievable as clearly the analysis by the writers already noted is that this can achieve positive change.

Specific Techniques
Denzin and Lincoln (1998:3) term the researcher in this context as a "bricoleur", a person who produces a "bricologe", "a pieced together, closely knit set of practices that provide
solutions to a problem in a concrete situation" which, according to Weinstein and Weinstein (1991), changes as new techniques are added. The result is a dense and intensive meaningful reflection of the phenomenon under enquiry. Becker (1989) and Denzin and Lincoln (1998) note the importance of the researcher being contemporary in their use of new techniques and altering as appropriate. This, of course, describes a researcher who is not only knowledgeable, but confident. Rigidity often comes with lack of breadth of knowledge and is a reaction to the confined and narrow thinking which can occur. The ability, as Brewer and Hunter (1989) underline, to be multi-methoded, or triangular, reflects, they argue, on the ability to be in depth and thorough and no doubt then accurate in the studies undertaken.

Frazer et al (1999) describe the development of the social work profession which reflects the very issues of quantitative and qualitative research and the need to be seen as a profession linked with 'science' and evidence-based practice whilst many of the professions members are more comfortable with the grass roots of the sociological perspective. Frazer et al (1999) encourage us to embrace a 'many ways of knowing' approach and it is with this in mind that there is listed below a critique of the key issues to be aware of when using the specific data collection techniques which have been selected for this study.

Observations
Participant observation occurs via the immersion of the researcher in the culture and day to day operation of the organisation or research site. Far from being 'tainted' by such immersion, Fetterman (1989:45) expects the researcher to "internalise the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study". This phase in ethnographic studies can assist in the referring and informing of other techniques such as interview questions, questionnaires, etc. Waddington (1994) terms it inductive rather than deductive. Fetterman (1989) suggests that patterns that can be observed in an organisation can only be noted with living in the environment and seeing over time, indeed years, these patterns and it is this very living in this situation that gives 'validity and vitality' as the researcher becomes unnoticed and participants act 'normally', rather than for the observer. Television programmes such as the modern phenomena of docu-soaps are a good example of how participants in their reflection often claim "I forgot the cameras were there". Observation, Robson (1993) suggests, can be used at various phases of the research. In this research project it is used throughout to support and supplement the other methods used and to complement and to set in context the other data collection techniques.
There are clearly different degrees and forms of observation which, similar to other methods, can align to the paradigms of positivist and phenomenologist, the structured versus the less formal, the former the 'pure' observer, the latter 'the participant' observer. The degrees of participation and the associated labels are debated by various academics, for example Burgess (1984) further developed by Gill and Johnson (1997), the 'complete participant' versus the 'participant as observer' or the 'observer as participant' and the 'complete observer'. These degrees of participation versus observation decide the actions of the observer. In this study inevitably there will be a mixing of shades of observation by nature of the research team's employment on the one hand as organisational players, and on the other hand by recognising they are gatherers of information and observations. However Grills (1998:14) is reassuring that this 'emotional' involvement of field researchers with the social workers they study, provides a rich source of understanding the social world that is relatively unavailable to other researchers.

Observations, when focussed on events and reactions to them, rather than selecting overall impressions by the researcher, reduce the subjectivity and rather than being 'impression' or 'interest led' is 'events led' thus reducing selective memory. This study does not however intend to go so far as structured observations with coding schemes, check lists and categories, mainly because this "softer" information is to supplement an already semi-structured approach via interview, questionnaire and focus group methodology. The association with events led observation allows however for some order to be placed in the data collection and analysis thus allowing some containment of the extent of information which could be gathered. This is often a criticism of participant observation as a methodology when the research on the one hand may be swamped by information and on the other concerned about missing out on not being there at the right time. Pettigrew's (1990:275) description of for example "social dramas" and the studying of the sequence of these may be captured best by the series of events/dramas which are "transparently observable showing reaction, growth, decline, change etc".

Entering the period of participant observation is key and in this study there is a limited impact as all those gathering information are organisational members, however Waddington's (1994) advice once in the field, about how to conduct oneself, is well taken. The positive, non-threatening self image of Waddington (1994) is extended by Fetterman (1989) to include respect, politeness and courteousness. How one acts is obviously important and can affect results if not contained and taken into account, if possible the reduction of the Hawthorne effect on influencing behaviour is eliminated or reduced. Rossman and Rallis (1998) remind us observations also occur in the more structured activities of interviews and focus groups, this offering triangulation and also information to
assist in the design of both the questionnaires and the interview and focus group questions.

Stablein (1996:264) best lists the characteristics of participant observer and sums up the method. These are to "listen, learn, take notes, converse, interview, ask questions, test preliminary understanding, watch, read, count and anything else", to help understand the research site. He further explains that it is multi-dimensional, casual and systematic all at the same time. However as Alder & Alder (1994:382) state, "observation usefulness is that it provides especially great rigour when combined with other methods".

Critical Incidents
The work of Pettigrew (1990) in regard to social dramas leads on to noting critical incident analysis. Hussey's & Hussey's (1997) explanation of this technique claims that many researchers may be using its format without being conscious of it. It is a technique which can be used in an interview setting or via a questionnaire. It was developed by Flanagan (1954), quoted by Hussey & Hussey (1997), and refers to where an incident or activity has clear intended purpose and where the "effect appears logical".

Although used differently depending on from which methodological approach, it is clear from Butler's (1991) work that it is a method applicable to organisational analysis. The central theme in this technique is the overt questioning, normally through interview, about incidents that were 'critical' – the fact that there is a retrospective element to this is countered by the importance or criticalness of the event, incident or activity. Although this is context sensitive it is also subjective to the respondents reactions and feelings. Generalisability, according to Chell (1998) is achieved through multiple interviews across different sites. In this study these will be location and task sites. Repetition therefore of response offering a level of commonality can, according to Chell, allow managerial tactics to deal with different or challenging situations.

Critical incidents in the research are used as foundations to be explored through the interview process. The incidents revolved around repetition of events such as violence to staff, critical court judgements which possibly resulted in defensive behaviour and the collection, control and dissemination of key information. The critical incident technique encourages disclosure of conscious reflection on attitudes, feelings and matters that are important to the interviewee. Good participative observation will then enhance the identification of these incidents. By raising them there is permission to discuss, possibly the sensitive, possibly the taboos or perceived taboos. The ability then to ask a number of persons about these critical events identifies how common views are and what strength of feeling they engender. The benefit of this technique in an organisational
study is its ability to understand detail and the behaviours resulting which reflect the interviewee's reality. As with other techniques, confidentiality and the ethics of the process once reinforced and respected, create confidence in sharing and explaining between the interviewee and the interviewer.

**Focus Groups**

Morgan (1993) suggests the use of focus groups when five conditions exist.

a) When those in powerful positions need feedback from those in less powerful positions, especially if communication systems are poor.

b) When there exists a gap between professional staff and their "publics".

c) When one considers a complex behaviour or motivation.

d) When the level of consensus is being assessed.

e) When the approach needs to be "friendly and non-condescending".

The focus group is a less structured, observationally based technique which enables "initial insight, ideas and understanding about the problem" Parasuraman (1991:251). Its success can be influenced by the skills of the moderator, the composition of groupings, and the atmosphere. Eight to twelve participants are seen as the optimum number with a level of commonality within each group. Groups selected therefore are best with either a lateral status commonality, task commonality or qualification similarity. Parasuraman (1991) certainly emphasises the need to be as homogeneous as possible.

Even though the term focus group has been somewhat highjacked by political leaders, and reported with some scepticism, there remains a valuable role for this technique in data collection. Focus groups allow for "the explicit use of group interaction to generate data ...... focus group researchers encourage participants to talk to one another asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each others' experiences and points of view" Kitzinger & Barbour (1999:4). This technique enables participants to identify and pursue their priorities within a social network, which 'counters', 'supports', 'criticises' and 'assists' through peer communication. It further allows for analysing how opinions have been constructed, whereas quantitative data notes what views are held.

There are many texts on 'how to' conduct focus group research, where advice is given about key factors which ensure the success of the activity. Krueger (1998) and Morgan (1993) separately put together a series of books in six volumes dedicated to the management and successful operation of focus groups. They range from the planning of groups, to developing questions, to moderating and finally to analysing and reporting on group results. These useful texts offer a good guide to a researcher's preparation and design of the focus group process. Krueger (1998:3) indeed devotes an entire volume to
Developing Questions on Focus Groups. He details the appropriate phasing, sequencing and the techniques of probes, follow up and management of unplanned questions. The key appears to be good preparation, clarity, confidence to be 'conversational' and appropriately analytical to reduce bias and subjectivity. The further issues that are important to the success of focus groups include sampling and sample size to ensure representation. Kuzel (1992) describes 'qualitative sampling' which is employed to give the right diversity etc as more structured rather than a random sample. Additionally Kitzinger (1994) outlines the different approaches to pre-existing groups and those put together for the purposes of research.

The research setting being quiet, comfortable and free from disturbance is important. In a geographically dispersed county getting local groupings together may be easily achievable whereas lateral groupings over a large geographical spread is more challenging. 'On site' or 'off site' may also have issues for staff especially residential staff where the workbase may have particular associations. Basic questions and direction to the debate can then be used as a comparator against other groups whilst at the same time open questions included can allow development of other issues. Recording should be agreed and contemporaneous if possible.

The facilitator's skills are critical in undertaking this process. Kitzinger & Barbour (1999) suggest that prior knowledge of the language, gestures, meanings, cultural symbols, innuendos, and agendas 'is crucial'. Farquhar (1996) particularly notes the need for sophisticated skills for 'sensitive' topics or periods within the group. Dealing with group conflict, the balance of the quiet participant against the over-dominant is important, as is managing the process with a 'light touch'. Increasingly the role of the researcher as a participant rather than a more removed observer is outlined by Edwards (1990) and Green et al (1993).

Cunningham-Burley et al (1999) note that when considering focus groups the power and political balance must be considered. Barbour (1995) sums up the difference between working on rather than with people. When effecting change then power balances are not necessarily a negative aspect. For example the groups could be encouraged that those collecting information, because of the position in the organisation, could effect change. The important factor in all this leads us to consider issues and nullifying or managing those aspects which may critically affect the objectivity or honesty of the process. It should be remembered how experience in such a process is in both financial and emotional terms and so the use or misuse of a power relationship is central to the considerations.
Barbour (1990) notes that focus groups are particularly useful and versatile as a method for studying organisational change. Its inherent flexibility is useful as it can adapt according to the need. Vaugh et al (1996) note how focus groups have so much potential in action research and the facilitation of change in organisations. This is supported by Johnson (1996) who explains that the very process of focus groups can in itself initiate changes in thinking and possibly actions and interactions. Indeed Morgan (1998) goes further and suggests that the very mechanism of the group encourages participants to share views and opinions which are probably more difficult to access through other means. Barbour (1990) encourages the use of focus groups in a combination with other methods to help provide the greatest depth particularly when undertaking organisational change studies.

Interviews
Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explain interviews allow one to ask the question – "Why?", which goes beyond the observable and equally important what might happen in the future – a chance to learn what could be seen or determined – a chance to learn ‘beyond’.

Robson (1993:228) simply states that "the interview is a kind of conversation, a conversation with a purpose". But it is obviously not that simple. There are many writers who offer guidelines in relation to interviewing. These guidelines have been particularly useful in considering the fully structured interview, the unstructured or the semi-structured interview, the latter having more flexibility than the former which is a strict standardised schedule of questions and with no discretion. A recording of the interaction and the importance of ensuring that questions are not too long, complex, unclear, biased, appear agreed principles. Robson (1993), and Easterby-Smith et al (1991) suggest a different typology for interview namely respondent or informant interview, the latter non-directive and interviewee led, the former where the interviewer directs the process and the interviewee responds to questions posed. Whichever of these typologies is used the main themes remain and are associated with different types of research categories. For example, according to Saunders et al (2000), semi-structured interviews are used where the research is exploratory or explanatory, the structured interview where it is descriptive and explanatory or indeed as Healey and Rawlinson (1994) state there could be a combination within an interview or process.

King (1994) notes the difference between the qualitative and quantitative interview: the latter highly structured and controlled the former based on the conversational relationship open model. King however notes the third, or mid, way that has an imposed structure, with a balance of open and closed questions. The questions are in a set order but there is flexibility through those open questions. King (1994:16) terms these "structured open
response interviews. This model has many attractions, if some difficulties, in fitting within specific paradigms. It allows both flexibility, opinion, perceptions and fact finding data to be collected through one interview and in this setting allows use of the key tools in the organisations operational activities whilst giving structure and purpose to the interaction. It further assists in designing the template for data results to be formulated and analysed.

Saunders' et al's (2000) checklist for the use of semi structured and in-depth interviews is acknowledged in this methodology especially in relation to what aspects to consider, opening the interview, undertaking it and recording the information. The issues are well known to those carrying out the interviews in this project.

King (1994) suggests that the interview is the most used technique in organisational studies mostly because it is highly flexible. The interview is used as Kvale (1983:176) notes, to see the 'real work' perspective of the interviewee and as such is generally semi-structured, has open questions and has a focus "on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee".

Kvale (1983) helpfully argues that there is an advantage in having different interviewers using the same interview format. It offers reliability to the results because it balances any interviewer bias or blindness. This further assists with validity or in Reason and Rowan's (1981) terms, inter-subjectivity, where a number of people confirm the 'rightness' of the information. The interview is a widely accepted data collection method and regularly used in organisational research especially in complex situations such as a public sector organisation which has possible professional, organisational, task, individual and group contradictions and conflict. These difficulties can be balanced and overcome with the use of co-researchers, a realistic approach with not an over adventurous demand on what is needed to be collected.

Designing the specifics of interview questions is given wide attention by academics, and indeed follows much of that already noted in relation to focus group questions. Developing questions, the pre-interview process of testing and gaining feedback about the balance, sense and understandability of the questions, was helped by the two other interviewers. The aim was to design questions which needed limited prompting or explanation and did not contain confusion or jargon or language which was technical or exclusive to either some groups or strata within the organisation.

Helping interviewees to be at ease immediately is important, explaining the process, its value and their importance to it as well as reinforcing confidentiality of response, to
encourage openness, are all vital components of those initial few minutes. The physical surroundings, timings given well in advance, the practicalities of seating arrangements all must be planned as well as determining whether interviewees would prefer the interview on site or off site. Interviews, similar to focus groups, can have additional organisational benefits to the research focus. They can create a feeling of value and a personal contact especially if the organisation is a 'human' dominated organisation both in its task and resources.

In the 1995 study interviews and focus groups were carried out solely by the researcher. In the 2000 study interviews were shared with two other information gatherers. Professional backgrounds of these three persons are dominated with interviewing, both client interviewing and staff interviewing and in chairing group activities, such as case conferences, development meetings, inter-agency meetings etc. This is therefore a technique which can be confidently used even where there are situations which are potentially difficult. Difficulties may include the guarded, non-communicative or over-communicative respondent and those who are high status amongst the interviewees. The skills of creating confidence, encouragement and managing the interaction professionally are essential. It is important that those information gatherers are not complacent about the skills needed and that the individual styles of each interviewer balance to ensure that the same questions are asked, that where prompts or encouragement are needed or further questions are developed, these are noted. It is important not to confine the interviewee as this may be interpreted as 'very one way'. In order to enable this to be a helpful and constructive process then the respondents must be confident that this time consuming activity is worthwhile.

Pettigrew (1990) gives advice as to how to manage a 'community of researchers' and even though the group is small it still constitutes a 'community'. Pettigrew (1990) raises the six issues of leadership and coherence, standard setting and productivity, team building, motivation and rewards, personal development and the final issue of effective foreign policy which is not relevant to this study but a substitute issue may be effective 'public' management

Leadership and coherence appear to be, according to Pettigrew (1990), concentrated in the selection of appropriate team members. The two staff members here have many important qualities, organisational language and context knowledge, intelligence, appropriately tested skills such as interviewing and group activities and personalities which are approachable, for interviewees, and challenging for the research. Standard setting is made easier by all those undertaking the research not prepared to proceed unless confident in their understanding of the task and the desired output, not outcome.
The ‘team’ has worked together before and is at ease with each other and has completed many work related, if not research related, tasks. The motivation to ‘do something different’, participate in research, and to reflect, was important to all as was the contribution to each ‘researcher’s’ personal development. The research, having an internal and possibly external exposure, also gives status and a profile to the personalities both with colleagues and senior staff.

Michell (1999) used both focus group and interviewing in a combined way thus allowing those who were unable or unwilling to share key information in a focus group setting to be able to do so in a one to one interview. Mitchell’s combination was a dual method used on the same sample group and so it could be argued that this time consuming method may not have been the most efficient use of valuable time and was potentially expensive especially in an organisational setting. In both the 1995 and 2000 study the dual method was not used on the same sample group but on different groupings within the organisation. It is recognised that the disadvantage of interviews is their highly time consuming nature, however the advantage is how it gives depth to the analysis and in this study assists in triangulation. It does allow for those who are respondents to feel that their information, and time, is not merely there to be used, but that they are making a valuable contribution which may reform their practice and the organisation as well as the research.

**Questionnaires**

Questionnaires in many ways reflect the characteristics of interviews but are self administered and written. They can come in ‘fixed choice’ format or with open ended questions. The latter is harder to tabulate but gives qualitative information. Silverman (1993) terms the value of the open ended question as assisting ‘authenticity’ in understanding people’s experiences. Stablein (1996:261) notes that “questionnaires are most probably the most frequently used method of data production in organisational studies”. These self reporting techniques such as interviews and questionnaires use the organisational relationship to gather the views of the respondents. Surveys and questionnaires are often solely used as a method of research although not in this instance. In this work they are used in both cases as primary research with offers triangulation and quantitative information to support and enhance the quality of the sources. They seem best used as techniques when used in combination. Questionnaires are an efficient way of collecting information as the self reporting cuts down on researcher time. The time consuming activity is in the data coding and analysis. Robson (1993) gives cautionary advice in regard to questionnaires and advises that if the open ended questions are used this can be balanced with some form of respondent classification. This led to considering the use of ranking and exploring ways to add
quantification to the open ended questionnaire. This further allowed comparators between sections and some overall patterning of information.

Converse and Presser (1986) outline how to organise the design of open questions and how to enhance these by ensuring that they are as specific as possible, to consider question order, wording etc. The use of sampling is widely explored by academics and clearly influences questionnaire and interview response. The need being to limit bias. In this study in 2000 the interview and questionnaire took place at the same time – the questionnaire completed at the beginning of the session and followed up by the interview – one hopefully enhancing the other and assisting in the mind set of the process – it further reduced self-selection as all participated.

When considering attitude measurements associated with questionnaires then the variety of arbitrary skills, Likert Scales, cumulate scales, etc were explored. The Q-sorts as described by Stephenson (1980) notes the sorting or ranking of a range of concepts in relative position in this case important to the respondent. When considering numerical associations with data the use of ranking (or ordinal) data can precisely define the position of each 'phenomenon' in relation to the others.

Questionnaires can be designed specifically for the purpose or they can be used with already designed and authorised questionnaires and techniques which have been published by others. In 1995 the use of two established questionnaire designs was utilised and subsequently analysed. In addition the use of a computer technique which was designed on the principle of closed questions to a variety of apparently non-related data was used as a technique to gather cognitive style information. The representation of this data was prescribed by the 'package' and results displayed and analysed to a set of formula. This was truly a quantitative technique used in psychological and scientific settings.

In 2000 the questionnaire was designed specifically for the purpose. Hussey and Hussey (1997) described two types of surveys – the descriptive and the analytical. The former being attached to assessing attitudes and the latter determining the relationships between the variables. In this study both types were used.

**Representation**

The accumulation of data which can be ordered and represented can offer objectivity, and in some quarters, status to the results. In this study, the representation of data must be done in such a way to enhance and not confuse or indeed unnecessarily complicate the information. This is especially so when feedback to the respondent will be intensive.
and must be understandable. Differing techniques relate to different data analysis depending on whether they show a trend, proportions, distribution of value or comparing variables.

In 2000 consideration was given as to how to represent descriptive data – histograms represented data which was grouped and where each ‘bar’ represented the frequency of occurrence. Secondly histograms were used to show the ranked material where they note highest to lowest values and where these can be calculated in percentage terms in order to compare across sections or teams. Where data will be compared then cross tabulations – tables showing comparative data – can be used. Multiple bar charts or histograms will be used to compare variables or similar ‘bars’.

Pie charts were also used to show proportions and as Sparrow (1989) explains, the share of occurrences. The pie chart divides into “proportional segments according to the share each have of the total value” as Saunders et al (2000:341) explain, where the data can be categorised this will be done prior to drawing up the chart.

Conclusions

This analysis of research has drawn together a number of key points that will be brought into the research design. Firstly the acknowledgement that management and organisational studies are challenging, and that longitudinal work is less used. Secondly that techniques need to respond to the research site and the research question. In many ways methodology will arise out of knowledge as to the best way to gather the widest and best information, this in turn offering value and validity to the study. Thirdly the researcher or researchers can be internal members of staff as the ethnographic approach supports with thought and consideration to the researcher’s skills, intervention and impact. Bradbury & Lichtenstein’s (2000:552) advice that what is most important “is to develop a host of methodological choices which serves all, needs to represent live organisational reality as it is, i.e. full of interdependence and interrelated richness”, is accepted here. Finally if done well, such studies, because of their less extensive nature really can add to academic thinking and are worth exploration.
Chapter 7

Exploration of Children Services – 2000 Study

Introduction – Methodological Approach

The methodologies used in the 1995 and 2000 phases fit within the overall organisation development approach as noted in Chapter 6. In 1995 the initial diagnostic phase was completed using the McKinsey Seven 'S' Audit, a focus group/team building phase and a standardised audit tool. This invariably addressed the structural and task-technological interventions as noted by Robbins (1992). The 'solutions' noted in the action plan of restructuring, delayering, job redesign within some teams all fit the organisation development range of interventions. The journey between 1995 and 2000 shows the implementation of a large number of those 'solutions' which were proposed at all levels of the organisation. They have had partial success in the institutionalising of the changed behaviour but when linked directly to organisational learning a more people orientated approach may need to complement the original structural and task interventions. To this end in 2000 methodologies concentrated on this element, they include a specifically designed survey or questionnaire, process consultation via a range of focus groups and individual interviews and concentration on survey feedback as part of the addressing of inter group and intra group development. Both 1995 and 2000 follow the phases of entering and contracting, diagnostic techniques (in 2000 via the Eight 'E's Audit), planning and implementing change. In 2000 part of the diagnostic phase was to evaluate the level of institutionalised change.

The research study in 2000 was carried out in three parts. The first provides descriptive data on the Children's Services and records the self perception and image of the members in regard to their learning. This sets a foundation for the other data and can be used to cross-reference with Parts II and III. Part II of this study has been given greatest concentration. This is because it considers a new model of explaining learning from different perspectives. Finally Part III is the qualitative data collected via focus group and interviews. This section allows for the direct engagement of staff which in turn assists in establishing an action research approach and feedback process. Figure 7:1 shows the flow of the research study.

The research results will be presented in three parts. Each part will describe methodology and research objectives.
This chapter will be completed with a summary of key themes which arise out of the data.

**Part I – Comprehensive Staff and Skills Audit**

**Methodology**

The comprehensive staff and skills audit was designed with the purpose of collecting descriptive data. It was distributed to each potential participant with a request to complete the audit. Respondents were offered an interview or focus group time and brought with them their completed audit form. To some extent the organisation was making obligatory the completion of Part I because it formed the introduction of new methods of supervision and appraisal, this did assist in achieving such a high response rate. This however did not 'force' staff to respond as those who completed Part I but did not complete Part II or III were not included in the results.
Research Data Part I – Descriptive Detail

The Comprehensive Staff and Skills Audit – Part I – Appendix 1

Organisational objectives

1. Currently no document exists which is held by the team manager and which can be used to assist the managers in knowing the staff members' education and employment background, their practice interests and the staff members' views of their skills, what they can offer others and what staff see as their training/learning needs. There is no appraisal system, and all staff/personnel records are held centrally. This then creates a working document between manager and staff.

2. Managers, particularly at middle manager level, have had considerable lateral change (swapping roles), thus leaving new appointees managing staff of whom they have little or no knowledge. This makes operational judgement about allocation of tasks and cases difficult. It does not allow or protect against the inappropriate allocation of some tasks e.g. where there is potential violence or a particular case profile which triggers difficulties for the staff member and may indeed elicit defensive or negative behaviours, thus giving the service user and staff member an inappropriate service.

3. The audit can assist in designing the organisation's training plan for subsequent years.

4. Staff often find it difficult to record in-house training events they have attended or information they have read or gathered. This document is to assist them in creating a contemporaneous record and establish a process of reflection with the manager after a training event has occurred.

5. The skills analysis has been cross-referenced with current professional standards in social work – namely the Diploma in Social Work course and the Post Qualifying Award. The core competencies therefore are minimum requirements which all social work staff should be confident in. If staff feel at ease to identify gaps this could be interpreted as having confidence in the process and feeling able to be open and honest with managers and those who are more senior.

6. The interpretation of the skills that personnel feel they can offer gives some indication of the level of self-confidence of members of staff in their own capabilities and expertise. This is particularly important given the extent of experience within the
service and particularly a service which is under such acrimonious scrutiny through the courts, inspections, audits etc.

Research objectives

1. This document gives descriptive information about the organisation in quantitative terms and collects data which has not previously been formalised e.g. the educational background and length of time since qualification will give data on the profile and experience of staff and what previous education and experiences have been accumulated.

2. It endeavors to identify if indeed staff are in jobs and posts that they find less fulfilling than previous jobs and whether talents and experiences which could be useful to the organisation are widely being utilised.

3. The descriptive data will also indicate the type of learning experiences undertaken and how staff 'keep up to date' professionally through reading material etc thus informing the latter parts of the research.

Organisationally and in terms of the staff concerned, this information will be the basis on which initial interviews with managers and staff will occur and can then be built on to assist with the introduction of a new appraisal system. This section of data collection will also allow for the analysis of training needs and inform the departmental and direct line managers as to interests in particular child care specialisations. This then allows managers to match case type with interest and allows for the opening of the debate between managers and staff about skills and interests thus producing an open, healthier, more informed managerial practice. This data is the basis on which some of the other data collected will be compared, cross-referenced and where triangulation can start to be established.

Research Results – Descriptive Data

There were 136 respondents who took part and completed the requirements of data collection. The data accumulated has been clustered into 14 different sections. 6 of these sections represent the District Children's teams, followed by a code number to identify the specific team, thus teams will be labelled District Team 1 – District Team 6. These respondents are grouped via location and are established teams. There are also Residential Team 1 and Residential Team 2 and two specialist teams which have a specific community resource function. These are labelled Specialist Team 1 and
Specialist Team 2; these teams are not situated on one location. The unqualified staff will be presented in three groupings. These will be in task, not location groupings as often there is only one or two staff located in an area. The groupings will be specialist team, resource staff and social work assistants. With each group the staff have common grading and task functions but are based across the county although in all cases there is a local manager. These will be labelled S.W.A. (Social Work Assistant) Community Team, S.W.A. - Specialist Team. The final group was the Senior Manager Group (Children’s).

a) Gender-balance by Teams and Organisationally.

Table 7:1 notes the gender balance in each Team in percentage terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 1</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 2</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 3</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 4</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 5</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 6</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Team 1</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Team 2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Team 1</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Team 2</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers Assistants (Specialist)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers Assistants (Community Team)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>136</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7:1 Gender balance per Team

The organisational balance in relation to gender is a predominance of females especially in lower grade posts such as social work assistants. Residential teams appear to have a higher balance of males; the two establishments have male managers. This might indicate a high level of temporary and sessional workers who are female and did not take part in the research as they were not permanent staff members. Although the senior manager group has a higher proportion of males, the middle manager group – i.e. The
District Team Managers and Specialist Team Managers, have a 50% balance of males and females.

It is of note that some teams are predominately female e.g. Specialist Team 1, Social Work Assistants and Specialist Social Work Assistants. Four District Teams, Teams 4, 1, 3 and 5 have over three quarters of their staff group female. It should be noted that the social work assistants who are based locally increase this gender imbalance in these teams as this group is 100% female.

The gender imbalance at senior manager level is noticeable. The further balance of females at lower grades may encourage the department to consider its balance of service delivery to clients of both genders and further research may be helpful in relation to gender issues in respect of critical incidents, violence, interviewing methods etc.

Qualification Profile

The qualification profile of staff will assist in identifying if some of the preconditions necessary to operate the department are present. For example those with a first degree will have undertaken some level of research however basic. In qualifying courses this is absent. If the department wishes to move towards a more evidence-based, research based practice is there an educational profile which assists this?

The majority of teams have less than 50% of their staff who have a first or further degree. The degrees lists are primarily related to social care issues e.g. social policy, psychology, sociology, philosophy. Only one team had 70% of staff with degree level qualifications, the only other group was the Senior Manager Team, 66% of whom had achieved a Master's Degree. The newly appointed workers' group had a high proportion of degree holders but this group was dispersed around the teams and so cannot be seen as a group in these terms.

It is of interest to note the differentiation between senior managers and staff in the area of qualification and academic background. It would be of interest to explore further whether this differentiation leads to demands and expectations from senior staff that the majority of staff are not able to achieve. Further external settings such as courts may expose the lack of an academic foundation which could assist staff in coping with this level of exposure and critical analysis by others e.g. judges, lawyers, experts which leaves those without a first degree at something of a disadvantage.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Degree Level or Above</th>
<th>Practice Qualification</th>
<th>No related Social Work or other Qualification</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Managers</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 1</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 3</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 4</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 5</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 6</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Team 1</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Team 2</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Team 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Team 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker Assistants (Specialist)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker Assistants (Community Team)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7:2 Qualification levels per grouping

**Length of time post qualification**

This statistic relates to the qualified staff solely and will not include the social work assistant or residential staff group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>0-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>Over 21 years</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Managers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 2</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 3</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 4</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Team 6</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Team 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Team 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7:3 Length of post qualification experience per Team.
There are a number of issues that are worth noting here.

1. Only 10% of staff of all Districts have less than 2 years since qualifying. 90% therefore are 3 years or more qualified.

2. There are no staff working in specialist areas who have less than 6 years experience. This reflects the usual expectation of generic experience before specialisation. Conversely these teams are often marginalised when seeking views and do not have the same operational 'status' or kudos because they do not deal with the 'heavy end' of child protection as the District Teams do.

3. The District Team with the highest proportion of staff qualified to degree level had the least length of post qualified experience and was the only team with no one qualified for more than 15 years. The second team with over 50% of degree qualified also had the majority of staff qualified between 6-10 years with low numbers beyond 16 years. This information provokes the question, do those who enter social work through vocational routes i.e. an extended time as unqualified workers then qualify, remain stuck or longer within the basic grades. District Teams 2 and 3 may suggest this, as these teams have the lower number with degrees but in Team 2 over 40% of the team have 11 years or more experience and in Team 3, 80% have 11 years or more experience. This questions whether experience balances the lack of a degree and if it does what elements may assist newly qualified staff in their training needs. Of the 10% of staff who had been qualified for two years or less, 57% of that 10% did not have degrees.

4. Although 80% of newly appointed staff held a relevant degree – 80% were qualified for less than 2 years.

5. The only group that had both experience of 21 years or more and a first degree or above was the Senior Manager group. The 75% who had both this lengthy experience and additional qualifications were the same personnel.

6. This level of experience, particularly at senior level is very atypical of most Social Service Departments. The current staffing crisis in public sector organisations affects this organisation in similar way. The evidence here however is of a hugely experienced and qualified senior staff group.
Specific Team Data

Senior Management Team

The Senior Manager Team is made up of a staff group where individuals average over twenty years experience each. This team has almost exclusively worked in child care, 30% had had previous careers, all in Education.

The team had members whose experience covered the whole range of child care services. 80% had worked in residential, child care, child protection and specialist teams – this gave this team unusually high level of experience.

100% of team members read around the key government issues in the Department including research material however 85% undertook training offered by the Department for the purpose of the job. 30% of this team belonged to a professional organisation.

All members had been involved in innovative practices and had led training events and courses. This team had a high level of skill and expertise.

District Team 1

This team currently has a reputation for being under stress not only because of staffing vacancies but because of the combination of high staff sickness rates and high workload. The office accommodation is in one location but separated from any other social service office bases.

It was however of interest to note that staff overwhelmingly said they enjoyed their current job or had noted they enjoyed all jobs they had been involved in. No one noted that they preferred a different job although 20% had not completed the section. This is particularly of note as this team has high sickness rates related to stress and is known for high vacancy levels and constant staff changes.

80% of the team recorded that their only training was that provided by their employers with no staff recording different qualifying courses. 60% noted reading documents which had been solely provided by the department. Only 20% of staff noted reading which was work related but generated by their own interest.

The staff profile showed that 70% of staff had always been in jobs related to social work or caring professions. 30% had had different experiences ranging from business to
administration. 80% of staff did not belong to a professional organisation. The tasks that staff enjoyed and found fulfilling ranged over the full children's services remit with long team work, life story work and adoption dominating.

**District Team 2**

This team had worked together for some considerable time. It was based in split accommodation and members are dispersed around a large older rambling building. Staff and Managers commented on how difficult this aspect makes team building and cohesiveness.

50% of this team recorded that they enjoyed their jobs or noted they enjoyed all the jobs they had undertaken. 50% noted that they found a different job more fulfilling or did not complete this section. The 33% who preferred a different job listed the specific task or the status they had as being key. Those 50% who enjoyed their current job were solely task related and client orientated.

91.6% of staff had received training through the employer with 33% receiving training initiated by themselves. 8.3% noted no training.

58% of respondents in this team had had previous jobs or employment which had been social work related with 42% who had had experience as self-employed or in business.

91.6% of staff did not belong to a professional organisation. Again the majority of staff only recorded reading and information provided for them via the organisation with only 25% noting under reading.

Staff listed tasks such as court, child protection, assessments, and long term care as the key elements of the job which were most enjoyable. These are core tasks.

**District Team 3**

District Team 3 is an established team with many long standing members. Their working environment is envied by most other teams as it has very large spacious rooms which had been recently renovated, all staff and managers are in close proximity.

Of the fourteen respondents 78% noted that the job they found most fulfilling was either their current task or listed their current jobs as one of their preferred roles. They listed the
task i.e. working with this client group as the reason for this fulfilment as did the 21% who also listed other jobs as fulfilling.

71% of respondents in this team had previous employment associated with the care professions and linked with social work.

No one in this team belonged to a professional organisation.

14% of the team had undertaken courses outside their employment but the majority 86% had relied solely on training provided by their employer.

The Department had circulated information about national initiatives and change but there was limited evidence of reading associated with keeping up to date professionally other than that disseminated. 21% of the respondents listed other reading outside that provided by the Department.

**District Team 4**

This group worked in a separate building which although seemingly appropriate is a cause of dissatisfaction for the team who feel the unit is badly designed and the ambiance not conducive. The team has had changes of manager and some level of dissatisfaction from staff who have not progressed or had promotion.

54.5% of respondents in this team noted jobs other than their current one as offering satisfaction. Only 36% listed this job as the most fulfilling. Reasons given for the 54% to list other jobs was that those posts included good training, good support, good listening and staff felt respected by the employing authority. This was the only team who noted reasons other than tasks, although task was noted, as satisfying factors.

54.5% listed training events provided by the employer but 27% listed no training profile since qualifying. 18% noted training undertaken which was not provided by the Department but undertaken on the social worker's own initiative and not financed by the employer.

In regard to reading and updated literature 54% only listed that provided by the Department via dissemination with 18% noting other reading and a further 9% who listed no reading, a further 9% listed a professional magazine.
82% of this team were not members of a professional organisation. 27% of this team had previous experience outside the care industry, these being in the police and industry. 81% had solely had jobs related to the care profession or linked with social work.

**District Team 5**

This team, had until recently, been well established and well thought of organisationally. The manager had left and the team had had 30% of newly appointed, but experienced, staff members placed within the team in the past 6 months.

53% listed their current job as fulfilling because of the nature of the work. Although 45% listed different jobs as satisfying which were mostly associated with task, other issues did emerge such as trust, autonomy and staff relationships which is worthy of note by the line manager and may be a result of change and poor induction for the new staff members.

77% of staff had previous jobs related to social work whilst 23% had roles non-related to the profession. 15% belonged to a professional organisation whilst 85% did not.

85% of staff training had been funded by the employer whilst only one person had undertaken studies not provided by the department.

In regard to reading and keeping up to date this team demonstrated a wider range of reading with 50% of staff registering material, a wide range of which was related to professional development. However conversely a further 31% listed no reading or update material thus indicating individual enthusiasms rather than a team approach to learning and professional updating.

**District Team 6**

Of all teams this is the team that had been a unit the longest with their manager long established.

50% of this team listed other jobs as most fulfilling because of levels of responsibility held, management roles, levels of autonomy and task related where there were good outcomes. 38% listed the current job as fulfilling because of the task undertaken.

61% of staff had received training only from the Department whilst 30% had or were undertaking other qualifying courses e.g. in specialist areas such as autism. The
department's dissemination information was the primary source of reading for 92% of the team whilst 38% extended this by their own reading into specialist areas.

30% of the team had experience outside child care or social work. No member of this team belonged to a professional organisation.

Those areas of work which interested these team members were court work, fostering, adolescent work assessment, direct work and adoption.

Specialist Team 1

This is a team where staff are widely spread throughout the organisation's offices but have a central management. The managers have lengthy experience in this field. Communication is achieved through regular team meetings. The length of experience of each staff member has created the ability for these staff members to be relatively autonomous and self reliant.

Specialist Team 1 had a majority of staff who felt their current job was the most fulfilling that they had undertaken. Both in this team and in the previous team, staff members appear to have always wanted to work in this area of practice (the creation and matching of resources for children). This job is clearly less immediately stressful than that of the district teams who deal with child protection, however they have a high political profile and are subject to challenging performance targets.

All members of staff listed courses provided by the department as their current training update with a similar profile in reading provided by the organisation. Only one staff member noted a professional magazine outside the information disseminated by the department.

Only 11% of staff listed other jobs prior to their social work involvement. The 89% who had solely related child care tasks had lengthy experience and this is noted in the post qualified experience chart. 22% belonged to a professional organisation.

Specialist Team 2

This is a long established team and although working together as a team have found themselves fragmented because of split locations and office sites.
88% of the team listed their current job as the most fulfilling. This was because of the specialist area that they felt dedicated to. On the one hand a long established, stable staff group is positive but ensuring new ideas and keeping up to date is generated becomes particularly important.

Training however had only been undertaken where it was provided by the department. No other training was listed. Limited outside reading also occurred with only 14% of the team reading via their own initiative.

All the staff members had previously worked in a child care setting, with one from an education background, but most of the staff's working experiences had been spent in social work practice.

No staff member belonged to a professional organisation.

The danger in this team is becoming a 'specialist' or 'expert' but having that specialism and specialist status undermined if it is only influenced by experience and not by further reading or research.

Social Work Assistants

This section of staff fell into two groups. Firstly those attached to community teams and secondly those who were specialist resource social work assistants. In Part II these will be seen as one group.

Figure 7:2 shows the length of time each of these two groups have been in their current posts. It is of note that in the social work assistant, community and specialists groups the majority of staff, nearly 80% in each group, has been in their current job for over 3 years.
Indeed in each group there was a significant proportion of staff who had had additional experience which was gained in other care related, unqualified jobs. In the community social work assistant group over 56% had eleven years or over experience with 14% of that group with 25 years or over experience.

In the specialist group even more marked longevity of experience is noted. 70% had 6-10 years overall experience with 21% of staff who had 11-15 years in child care related jobs.

Community Teams Social Work Assistants

This group of social work assistants is dispersed across the Department and has no lateral task contact. The staff feel this is not beneficial. The majority of this staff group has limited academic qualifications, only 28% having a minimal qualification at basic grade such as NNEB. This group however is being encouraged to undertake NVQ training but this is currently voluntary and only 7% have accepted the offer and are attending. It is of note that 21% of this group have a social work qualification or are completing one, having entered that qualifying course via a part-time route whilst they continued employment.

The majority had listed their preference for a previous job or had not completed this section. This was mostly because of the nature of their work or because there was more direct work with children in previous posts. This organisationally is an important factor as the social work assistant's job is solely to undertake practical, direct work tasks.

The social work assistants had all participated in some level of internal training but this varied in the level of training input and was said to be a reflection of managers' selection of staff for training events, 37% listed no training on-the-job. This combined with no qualifications is significant. 57% had had previous employment which was solely related to child care or social work.

The tasks that community social work assistants undertook were listed by them as similar to those of social workers, namely adolescent work, direct work, mediation, life story work, adoption etc. From the audit there is no evidence of major differentiations in role and in tasks undertaken except in one area namely court work.

50% of social work assistants read outside the literature provided by the Department and listed research data and social work texts. This was significantly higher than the social work group.
This social work assistant group were long term employees within either this local authority or others, the majority in this local authority.

**Social Work Assistants – Specialist Team**

Although dispersed across the county these staff are in small task teams solely with the function of working with adults to create resources.

Of the 50% who had found other tasks fulfilling these personnel listed the lack of direct work with children as the main source of difference. Although those who found their current job most satisfying listed working in a team and with carers as important elements.

50% of this team was currently undertaking NVQ training although 50% additionally had completed training such as a counselling course, NNEB etc. 80% undertook only reading disseminated by the department whilst 20% read via their own interest and initiative.

50% had previous jobs all related to social work issues whilst the remaining 50% had business, administration or no experience.

One of the most significant elements noted in this group was their inclusion in training activities which, given their educational experience background may have been pitched at a different/higher level e.g. inclusion in Neglect conferences, the Centre for Evidence Based Research workshop considering research techniques. The inclusion in IT training could for example cause confusion as there is a departmental decision that social work assistants are not allocated laptops or computers as their job does not demand such usage.

The majority of staff have over three years experience in their current job with 40% of the team having over 10 years of related experience.

**Residential Establishments**

The residential establishments deal primarily with adolescents and as such have a specific and difficult brief. These establishments also perform a task that most social workers have no experience of or in. It is however of note that over 50% of the current Senior Management Group have the experience of residential services with adolescents. This gives them some level of credibility with this group.
The length of time in current post within groups of residential staff is displayed in Figure 7.3.

![Bar chart showing length of time in current post for Residential 1 and Residential 2.]

Figure 7.3 Length of time in current post – residential staff

Additional to this 80% of staff in Residential 1 had 6 years or over experience in the child care arena, 30% had 16-20 years overall experience. In Residential 2 88% had 6 years overall child care related experience.

These figures show the extent of experience which is clearly extensive in both the unqualified social work assistant group and the residential sector.

Residential Team 1

This residential team primarily recorded their current job as most fulfilling. The 'tone' of responses was that of enthusiasm and the 'vocational' motive of working with challenging and different adolescents.

The team all had experiences beyond that of caring for young people but this was in business, private employment, self employed. Career change had been via the youth service or projects with adolescents then into residential work. This team shows a profile for learning. The majority of staff recorded qualifications over and beyond those provided by the Department or via the NVQ route which is a requirement. These other courses included art, business, engineering, counselling etc. some of which are more transferable to this setting than others. Many were 'late learners' approaching studies via the Open University or other bodies.
Reading was mostly confined to that associated with courses or reading/updating which took place via departmental documents although these had a more limited range than those of field teams.

**Residential Establishment 2**

All respondents in this team noted that residential care was their preferred area of work and although they noted areas within this specialism that did offer different experiences there was in fact limited social work experience outside the setting which could influence practice. This may indicate isolation and a potential danger in lack of understanding backgrounds and needs of children and families which may be gathered from other social workers' locations. Unlike the other specialist teams this staff group almost unanimously had entered the establishment from other careers and stayed within this setting. It is of interest to note that 5 out of 6 men had a forces' background and one could speculate about the institutional nature of both environments which attracts staff particularly males. This may be of note to managers to determine what care models and regimes are in operation and how balance is achieved.

Although all staff noted their NVQ training most members of staff solely relied on Departmental training mostly in residentially orientated issues e.g. COSH, electricity safety, Health and Safety, rather than social work issues. Reading was limited across the group and mostly associated with current NVQ courses or in two cases their qualifying course.

The overall quality of completion was good but confined in that it reflected a very specialist area of work. Unlike the other specialist teams the residential services were not widely informed or influenced and their limited attendance at training may be of concern. The NVQ route of training may further exacerbate this if the assessors are also specialist based and working in the same unit – thus recycling learning and possible modelling of poor learning.

This staff group had mostly worked in other environments and appeared to have made career choices into the caring services and as unqualified workers. This environment is relatively well-paid, particularly for the primary earner, over and above that of other unqualified staff. Staff may therefore find themselves trapped in being unable to move as to go back into training would see a decline initially in salary.
Comments

There are a number of interrelating themes which this data has highlighted.

1. Those district team staff who found their current employment satisfying primarily listed the nature of the task as the key satisfying factor. However where other jobs were noted, the elements additionally recorded were staff training, levels of discretion and status. When these aspects were noted they were on the whole describing other local authorities or employers. It is worth questioning does this have significance in this organisation and what are staff's views regarding feeling supported and valued.

2. The majority of district staff had had previous experiences or jobs which solely related to the care professions. This was a significantly higher proportion than in the residential sector where most staff originated from non-social work/care related jobs. The latter therefore had a higher ratio of staff with a change of career choice whereas in district teams staff tended to have progressed through unqualified ranks, and then qualified, or had entered social work after achieving a relevant degree. There was also an indication of a gender influence in these results namely that male unqualified workers entered residential work whereas females entered field services, although this would need to be explored further.

3. There exists a high level of control by the organisation on new information and ‘learning’, not necessarily a conscious control but the lack of training and updating professional reading generated by the staff unilaterally is low. Arguably this is atypical of most professions where in medicine, psychology, psychiatry etc there is a culture of professional review and updating which is self-motivated.

This has two implications. Firstly the organisation has existing methods of dissemination where information is recorded as being internalized. This especially related to updating initiatives and department developments etc. This indicates a success in communication systems with staff and could be extended to any issue the department wishes to include. Secondly this has an implication, negatively, for the culture of the organization where participants do not appear keen, eager and self-motivated learners where staff do not search out materials which assist them in extending their knowledge base.

The organisation's acknowledgement of this high level of control could assist in designing training, endeavouring to change the culture and for developing strategies in
dealing with staff particularly as all social workers have to undergo additional training by the year 2006.

4. There remains a core group of staff who have listed either no training or no reading and this should create an organisational anxiety at a point in time when external demands for practice to change and develop are so stringent.

5. There was across teams a low membership of any professional organisation. Again this lack of outside influence has the effect of heightening the control of the organisation, limiting questioning of practice within it and indicating a lethargy about practice update.

6. In the specialist teams there was a high ratio of staff satisfied with their current job and finding it most fulfilling. This further reflects the stability in these teams and the lack of staff movement. The caution in relation to these teams is to ensure that they do not only rely on experience to enhance their specialist reading outside that provided by the Department but have methods to support their specialist 'status' and knowledge.

7. There was no evidence of lateral dissemination of information. The department is part of a Research in Practice consortium. Those who had attended courses through this consortium had not produced information to send to other staff thus this expensive resource was not being fully utilised.

8. There was no differentiation in the training offered and recorded by different grades of staff thus social work assistants in the fostering and community teams had the same access to courses as social workers regardless of levels of experience or qualifications or ability to understand the material presented.

9. There was a clear difference in the type of training offered to residential staff and other teams. In residential establishments training experiences were predominantly practical rather than based on care issues. There was limited evidence of those who worked with these units having training in their area of work to create understanding of the nature of this complex group. There was further limited evidence of field staff having residential experience and referral to the establishments may be based on inappropriate expectations. This lack of mutual understanding could create or exacerbate isolation. The only group that had residential, field and specialist experience was members of Senior Management Team.
10. The data provided by the community social work assistants reinforced information that has surfaced via roadshows and other communication systems. Social work assistants have lengthy experience but limited qualifications however currently there is an aim for this staff group to undertake NVQ training. The tasks however that this group listed as most enjoyable were clearly social work tasks, needing a foundation of social work training and appropriate supervision. Activities such as life story books, adoption, assessments etc. are all clearly the preserve of the social work professional. Social work assistants being used for such activities creates confusion of role, resentment as lower paid staff carry out similar tasks and 'dumbs down' the quality of work. The most concerning aspect is that clients may be receiving a service which is not of an appropriate standard.

11. There is a high level of success in the dissemination of information from the Department to staff. The section that lists less access to such material were the resource centre and the residential units although field team and specialist teams demonstrate a good range of disseminated material.

12. It is positive that there is a high level of attendance on NVQ training for unqualified workers and that there is a clear strategy of training being undertaken for the unqualified group. Arguably it should be compulsory for all grades and groups and of similar levels of intensity.

**Knowledge Influences Audit**

**Knowledge Influences Audit - Methodology**

The Knowledge Influences Audit, Appendix 2, was specifically designed for this study to analyse the sources of influence that may affect the ‘intellecf' of the organisation via its members. The model followed the Eight ‘E's of Education, Enforced, Evidence-Based, Expert, Experience, Experiment, Error and Endorsed. Respondents completed a questionnaire and then ranked those sources in order of significance to them in their practice.

**Research Objectives**

1. To test out the Knowledge Influences Audit and in doing so to identify key information in regard to the Eight ‘E’s.
2. To consider both factual information and perception and interpret how this related to day to day organisational activities.

3. To consider rankings in teams and groupings and determine whether there are any correlations or significant evidence.

4. To use the rankings to profile each Team or groupings and to identify in each profile areas of imbalance.

5. To consider whether the design and content of the Knowledge Influences Audit – Eight ‘E’s Model is sustainable.

Organisational Objectives

1. To use the information in the Knowledge Influences Audit to design a Management Action Plan – Eight ‘E’s.

2. To consider team profiles and issues and to encourage teams to use the audit information in their community-in-practice.

3. To use the Eight ‘E’s model as a method of influencing change.

Knowledge Influence Audit – Results

The details of each team or grouping are included firstly in a detailed Team report and analysis contained in Appendix 3 and secondly in a graphic representation which is included at the completion of this Knowledge Influences Audit section. These individual groups will, as part of the feedback process, receive their respective results. The correlations and significant points across the organization are noted as follows as per the Eight ‘E’s categorisation – this reflects the details contained in Appendix 3.

Education

The questions regarding EDUCATION explored which aspects of past education most influenced day to day practice and asked for examples.

The District Team results indicated that there were two main routes into qualifying as a social worker firstly via a degree course and secondly via a vocational route. In the former, staff had completed a relevant degree primarily sociology, psychology or social sciences and had then considered a qualifying course and entry into social work. The
latter vocational group, predominantly female, had started at the unqualified assistant or family aide grades and then gone on to a qualifying course. Members of this latter group viewed their educational experiences as confirmatory. Therefore reinforcing their practice as unqualified workers. This could cause concern if the educational/qualifying process had not offered challenge, new approaches or added value in some measure.

There were a number of dominant themes which emerged.

a) Both degree route and vocational route respondents listed the establishing of a social work value-base as important and gave examples such as anti-discriminatory practice, equal opportunities, women's issues etc.

b) Degree route respondents additionally noted the research, data collection, analytical skills as being helpful to their current practice.

c) Some specific individual respondents noted that their educational experience had provided confidence and support in their current judgements and practice.

d) Of note, and of concern, is the lack of significant evidence of skills based training/education associated with qualified staff. Those who noted communication skills, writing skills etc. did so in the context of other 'educational/training experiences' i.e. attached to other jobs in previous non-care related activities, before a career change into the social work profession.

e) There was a section of staff, across teams, who saw their 'life' experiences as being the 'best' education. This was interesting, in a social care context where anecdotally managers (at different levels) will opt for a 'good' social work assistant (unqualified) above a qualified member of staff who is ineffective.

These latter two points beg the question what difference does a qualification course make in equipping members of staff for their different jobs. Establishing a value base is clearly vital but establishing a skills mix and profile to face the demands of a child care social work post is equally vital. It further provokes the question is there an expectation on, particularly newly qualified staff, from managers that could not be satisfied. The managers being unaware of the lack of skills based activities in a qualifying course.

Specialist Teams, by their nature, are made up of the longest established members of staff, qualified and experienced. These two teams demonstrated different profiles. Specialist Team 1 recorded a high level of individual educational experiences many
reflecting back on school experiences. This team however did list skill based activities such as interviewing, writing etc. In Specialist Team 2 the emphasis was on the qualification and how that had given added confidence and a knowledge base, especially in 'exposed' settings such as Courts, Panels etc.

These two profiles offer a different perspective of the use of education but from different positions. Specialist Team 1 has limited exposure to courts, and formal settings such as child protection etc. Their job is supportive to carers and to other professionals. They work in a less challenging or acrimonious setting. Specialist Team 2 conversely operate in a highly challenging 'political' and legal arena where every action is scrutinised. Education and qualification then becomes vital as a passport to comment and to be professional in a setting and have one's opinion accepted. There was no reference to vocational or additional issues which was evidenced in other Teams.

These two teams are predominantly staffed by those who are qualified under a different qualification regime than those who have qualified recently. The current Diploma in Social Work took over from the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work in 1991. The government's current reforms in qualification courses for those who work in child care may reflect that the Diploma in Social Work does not satisfy the rigours that the task requires. This study may support government action when Specialist Team 1 has 75% of its staff qualified for 16 years or above and Specialist Team 2 has 66% of staff qualified 16 years or above thus both teams dominated by the holders of the previous qualification.

Residential Establishments are predominantly staffed by unqualified workers. In these establishments Education was listed as NVQ training, currently being undertaken or specific training courses which did not necessarily lead to a qualification. Those who were qualified did not make reference to the qualification as offering anything additional. Similarly, those who were social work assistants listed courses provided by the Department or the current NVQ training programme. This style of delivery and assessment was said to help staff to reflect on what they actually did. Residential staff noted a skills based course provided by the Department as being helpful. Training then with this unqualified group was via the NVQ process of accrediting current behaviour. There was however a significant number of staff who had not received any 'educational' foundation in relation to their activities.

Comment

Education across Children's Services was predominantly listed by District Team staff as their qualifying course or their Degree. There was limited evidence of social work skills
except in staff qualified for a considerable time. Qualifying courses were entered via two routes either through a first degree or vocational approach.

Staff in Residential and Day Care establishments had a low and poor educational/qualification base. They may 'suffer' the trap of being relatively higher paid than even qualified staff because of unsocial hours and the ability to supplement pay through sleep-in duties, over time etc. not offered to field staff. Qualifying these staff therefore may be difficult if there is a personal financial penalty. Unqualified staff had received some level of skills training in direct work etc. but this was historic.

Enforced

This addressed what was imposed on staff without their choice that affected the output and execution of their jobs/task.

Legislation and Departmental Policy were listed by respondents in all the District Teams as the most significant factors which were imposed upon staff. Legislation was predominantly The Children Act. A number of staff noted budget constraints, some significant government developments and the imposition of the new computer systems on social workers with the issuing of laptops to each staff member.

The implications for these responses may seem obvious but the fact that legislation is predominantly listed as the Children Act with little or no reference to the other significant legislative and government requirements may cause difficulties. These difficulties arise from the disharmony between legislations which may be transferred into the organisation. Thus a team social worker may act within the Children Act whereas the Youth Justice Legislation or Adoption Legislation may have different, possibly higher demands or based in a different philosophical framework. For example the Children Act requires working towards rehabilitation but the Adoption Legislation demands no delay and permanence as quickly as possible – these can cause conflict in day to day practice between workers.

Field teams, on the whole, found both the legislation and procedures helpful – offering guidance and structure to the task. Adoption and Child Protection were especially useful. It was however also noted that procedures do sometimes conflict, this again may reflect external forces. Legislation was noted as supporting the social work value base e.g. working in partnership with parents. Government initiatives were generally welcomed but concern was that process dominated that quality.
It is important for the organisation to take cognisance of the negative comments about the balance of paperwork demanded against that of practice. The latter being reduced because of the influence of the former. The computer programme should eliminate unnecessary duplication but proper rationalization of paperwork would create space for workers.

The results from the different teams show some variation in responses as far as range of items listed as causing an imposition. This may indicate the influence of the manager in circulating materials or informing staff of new requirements or demands. It was particularly noticeable that Quality Protects – a massive government initiative, and imposition, was not mentioned in some teams.

The two specialist teams again reflected the force of legislation and procedures on day to day activities. However both teams reflected their specialist area. Specialist Team 1 had an overriding legislative demand of National Standards and this reflected in their responses to carers, recruitment, assessment, approval etc. The use of the Childrens Act in this team related to their own specialism and this would not necessarily include the other part of the act mostly used by the District Teams. One can see therefore how conflict arises when each section relates to its own area and does not understand or is unfamiliar with the demands other colleagues have in different teams. Specialist Team 2 listed the largest range of legislation of any team. This may reflect the lengthy experience of workers who had worked in different settings and were therefore knowledgeable of other legislative requirements from previous posts in those teams. This team also demonstrated a detailed knowledge of government and departmental requirements. Policy and Procedural documents in both teams were related to their specialism and both teams, in the main, found them useful as they offered structure and clear expectations.

Residential Teams noted legislation and procedures as the most influential but noted legislation other than the Children Act namely the Youth Justice Legislation. This is understandable as they offer facilities for young persons on remand from the courts. However the Children Act and the strict requirements on residential staff as laid down in this act were not referenced. This again could not only establish conflict with colleagues who have expectations of a high level of knowledge in these areas. This was different to Residential Team 2 where the Children Act was significant. Procedures were seen by both establishments as useful. Social work assistants, from whichever section, all noted procedures as significant guidance and influencing their practice most. This group claimed to use them widely.
Comment

The organisation is heavily reliant on managers to disseminate information and to ensure that staff are appropriately informed. Staff appeared to be knowledgeable about their own area of practice but only one team, Specialist Team 1, demonstrated a wider informed approach. Lack of understanding of the confines and boundaries within which other colleagues work could create conflict or strain and could risk the service delivery to the child, young person or his or her family.

Unqualified workers and social work assistants relied heavily on procedures and to some extent this is positive but it may be useful to explore whether this is to supplement or indeed replace management support or direction. Procedures were generally accepted as helpful to the social work process but it is worth ensuring undue duplication is not occurring. Further more demands of paperwork may indeed be strangling the capacity of workers to do the task required of them. This is somewhat reflected in Performance Management targets and results where the percentage achieved in some areas is not acceptable. In an organisation where staff claim time, or lack of it, as a key component in restricting learning then the rationalization of non client direct work activities such as administration should be contained where possible. This of course may conflict with external demands to account for targets achieved etc.

The lack of wider legislation such as Health and Safety, Personnel and Employment issues etc as demonstrated by managers may also need to be balanced against that of client led legislation.

It is however organisationally reassuring to report that there was wide acceptance of the imposition of external and managerial control such as procedures, guidance notes and legislation and this is of particular note in an organization which has a high level of professional, and arguably independently minded, staff especially so when making professional judgements and forming opinions. The acceptance went as far as reporting helpfulness in procedures and the possible assistance in achieving the social work output.

Evidence-Based

This question explored the extent of evidence based practice used and listed the level of understanding by respondents as to what 'evidence-based practice' means.
Evidence-Based practice is widely promoted within the profession and supported by central government as an approach to social work decision making. It is relatively new 'language' although those longer qualified staff would argue that practice has always been based on such principles.

The six district teams had quite different levels and demonstrable understanding of evidence-based practice. Three teams, to varying extents, noted Community Care, a professional magazine. This would at best be viewed as directional in relation to evidence-based practice, that is, it may contain some limited synopsis of research or examples of practice in such teams. Four teams reflected those research based training events which had been provided by the Department e.g. conferences in relation to neglect and adoption which were heavily research based and relayed implications for practice. The Internet was listed in three teams, one strongly, as were other journals and written material.

One District Team had a more in-depth knowledge of research and evidence-based activities. This may have been because there was a larger proportion of newly qualified workers than in other teams and a number of established team members were currently undergoing study. This team also had a higher proportion of practice teachers – those who 'trained' others. A further District Team had an understanding of research but individuals tended to pursue personal interests and had explored information and research around these issues.

The overall evidence was that there were differing degrees of real understanding of sources of evidence and research and indeed what constituted real research. For example the use of the Internet in itself as an electronic journal does contain research but how is that research interrogated to ensure rigour and validity especially in this organizational context. An example is the field of adoption where research in America in this area of practice is not easily transferred to this country because of legal, cultural and environmental and financial differences.

The evidence in this study showed the high level of control the Department has on this issue as was reflected in Part 1. Many of the examples listed, were provided via training or information dissemination by the Department. Only one team demonstrated unilateral study in this area.

The predominant reason for respondents to explore research and evidence-based practice was that it gives clarity, answers to casework dilemmas and assisted in the presentation of a case in the public arenas such as court and supported the case plan.
In the Specialist Teams each specialism was supported via research in their specific area. These teams considered the literature and research as a way of informing general practice whereas District Teams tended to be more individually case led. The informing of policies and procedures therefore was the result of this research process as well as individual matters.

Residential Staff claimed to use evidence-based techniques but were unable to demonstrate its wide use in practice. The extensive use of the Internet in both establishments leads to the question about the control and management of the information gathered by those who do not have an academic or practice background to be able to filter the appropriateness of the information presented. Not all Internet information is valid or indeed relevant to the organizational setting.

Social Work Assistants again listed the Internet, Community Care Magazine and the Guardian newspaper as evidence-based sources. This again may indicate a lack of understanding of the validity and status of some articles and documents. Many social work assistants, in the focus group, confirmed no use of research or objective information to support their work. There was no indication of evidence-based practices for this or indeed any group within the context of their line management, or via a process of structured dissemination through their supervisor. The 'management' of research information especially for unqualified workers appears to be missing.

Comment

The Department's, and indeed national, promotion of evidence-based practice in the social work field has become dominant in the development of practice especially over the past three years. The evidence here is that these practices are not extensively understood nor is there a commonly held approach to sources of such practice. On the positive side, staff unanimously felt that evidence-based practice was supportive and there was no resistance in moving towards this in day to day matters. Dismissiveness was evident in the social work assistant group where there was a wider held view that other sources of knowledge were more important, namely experience.

The enlightenment of staff to evidence-based practice was clearly present and there were limited numbers of respondents who either did not acknowledge its importance or saw a use for this approach in their work. However, the lack of an overall strategy and detailed understanding of the issues, meant this acceptance was not fully utilised. Indeed the individualistic and uninformed approach of some staff members could lead to the
antithesis of what is aimed at through the evidence-based approach. The inappropriate use of research or indeed the misinterpretation or partial interpretation can be harmful to the very process to which it is meant to add value.

Experts

This question was aimed at determining who respondents felt were experts and why these persons would be categorized as such.

Five out of the six District Teams noted a mix of internal and external personnel as experts. Those who were external experts were mostly determined by their professional background both academically and through experience. They were also considered experts in other 'powerful' situations such as courts.

All teams noted the expertise of the Joint Consultancy Team and particularly the senior psychologist. This multi-agency group is staffed by advisors and offers consultations and advice to all agencies but particularly social services personnel. One District Team almost exclusively noted external experts, whilst one team had a dominance of internal personnel who were considered in this category. In the former team, the question is why this team considered 'experts' as a primarily external phenomena, with limited acknowledgement of expertise within the colleague or management group.

Those members of the Department who were deemed as 'experts' fell into two categories. Firstly those who had positional expertise e.g. in a supervisory or management role. These members were listed as the immediate supervisors (senior practitioners) and local managers, mostly the team leaders. There was little acknowledgement of senior managers as experts. This is of note as senior managers take key operational and client decisions particularly in high risk or highly complex cases. It is also significant as anecdotally staff will 'dismiss' those who are no longer on the 'frontline' as knowing nothing about practice. The potential therefore is for senior managers to intervene and make decisions in cases and this may receive resistance because staff see the conflict centering around the immediate evidence in the case without the wider academic and holistic experience of the senior managers. Senior managers remain the highest academically qualified group in the Department and with the widest experience in both range of activities and depth of knowledge. They however are not recorded as 'experts'. They further have organisational responsibility for risk management decision making which may not be fully acknowledged.
The second internal group listed as having expertise are those with specialist knowledge. These included, for example managers within the adoption, youth justice, child protection specialisms. These personnel had knowledge not possessed in the more 'generic' childcare teams. They were also listed as approachable and assisted in moving a case forward.

In the two specialist teams those considered experts were from external sources. These experts, however, were not those who were local, accessible and case orientated as with the District Team. These experts combined the status of 'known' experts in a wider context such as having published material, commented via research or were government policy makers. The expertise therefore was detached and 'objective' and not single-case orientated. They further had the specific status in the area of specialism and had a focused expertise. This is different to the expertise listed in district teams where specialists were more accepted for their ability to comment widely. Therefore psychologists and psychiatrists were perceived as being able to comment on a relatively broad based set of issues. In reality many 'experts' are classified as such because of their general qualification rather than a detailed expertise in one facet or confined area.

In residential services one specific individual was listed as the central expert with other known personalities with established relationships as deemed important, e.g. a local psychologist. Credibility was achieved by these experts because of their ability to understand the context of residential work and its difference from other services. Living with clients, especially those with behavioural problems, demands quite a different service from the expert. The desire is to assist practically with the management of a client. In a district case the demand of the experts is for 'predictive' advice. For example the likelihood of progress, the likelihood of a rehabilitation package working given the client's difficulties.

In the residential services the immediacy of the demand is of a different nature than that within the overall assessment of a district case. Each however seeking answers from the experts. There is limited note of 'internal' members of staff having expertise. Only one record of the Youth Justice Team – again a service which has direct practical impact on the unit which recorded this expertise.

There was no response from any section which stated that colleagues in other teams had expert knowledge. Expert Power therefore was dominated by either specific knowledge or position (i.e. supervisors). Colleagues who were in a lateral position were not respected mutually as having expertise.
Residential staff again did not record managers and senior managers as experts. This is of interest given that, especially in the senior manager group, over 50% of the members had extensive residential experience including the management of adolescent units similar to that on offer in these establishments.

The unqualified social work assistant groups recorded primarily external experts. Although one group noted internal supervisors, one group of social work assistants only noted external sources. These again were non social work professionals but had expertise via child psychiatry or psychology. It is of concern that social work assistants are not more widely accepting the expertise of the social work professional and manager. Even when prompted, one group did not acknowledge these professionals as experts. This may reflect the lack of clear distinction between social work assistants and social work tasks and a possible scepticism by the unqualified group as to the difference between them and their qualified colleagues. Indeed in one social work assistant group when this question was posed the reply was ‘no difference only they get paid more’.

Comment

The issue of experts is an important one in an organization where the focus is on social care. This is a profession undermined by the external environment, the media, courts, public inquiries etc. The activities of court cases are a good example of the reinforcement of social work as ‘secondary’. The almost automatic and extensive use of ‘experts’ in courts undermines the very system because the weight given to ‘expert’ opinion is disproportionate to their involvement in a case. Secondly these ‘experts’ have limited accountability as their evidence is ‘opinion’ based and therefore less easily challengeable and because there is no long term responsibility.

The evidence shows that staff predominantly listed external persons as experts, these tended to have the two features of professional status e.g. via a psychology or psychiatry qualification and who had experience. However where qualification and experience were present in the department these were not listed as ‘experts’. There was limited evidence, only listed by individual respondents, of social workers as experts. They were not so viewed by colleagues in field, specialist or residential teams and not widely by social work assistants who are supervised by social workers in case matters. The organisation may wish to address if social workers do not see themselves as ‘experts’, will any other body or forum? The Department should further explore whether staff are converting that advice from experts into decisions. If this is so, what is the accountability? Without the proper consideration of this expert advice one may consider that workers are seeking guidance because of a lack of such direction internally.
Senior managers showed scepticism in regard to 'external' experts whilst other staff did not. It would be interesting to explore further whether this may reflect the differentiation between those who considered academic qualification and experience internally and those who did not have a first degree and who had followed a vocational route into social work. Being dazzled by the external 'expert' who could put forward a convincing 'academic' argument may then be understandable. Senior managers' qualifications and experience are at least equal to those of the external personnel and therefore they may be less in awe and more questioning of such 'expertise'. Senior Managers may also wish to consider if they do not do justice to themselves because they take less time to explain their 'thinking' on decisions and so others find their rationale unexplained.

**Experiences**

*This section noted which key experiences had most effect on current practice and how these were shared with others.*

Respondents in the six District Teams noted similar characteristics in regard to experiences, namely that incidents tended to be case related. From the positive aspect, these experiences had been built from outcomes of cases, for example the closing of a case without a re-referral or without further intervention being necessary. The case outcomes had led to personal growth and the further application of the techniques on other situations.

All teams noted positive experiences but also those that had been personally challenging. These challenging experiences were not noted negatively but as ways of reinforcing practice and of developing skills. Case matters, court experiences, difficult issues had been informative to practice and had assisted the learning process. There was however, clear evidence of not only challenging but traumatic events which had been experienced and continued to have a significant impact on a number of individuals in four out of six district teams. In the recording of these incidents two features stood out. Firstly that violence from clients was prevalent and secondly that the incidents were historic but clearly still vivid for the members who recorded these incidents.

There was a significant recording of court-attendance within all teams as an experience which had influenced practise. Five out of six teams listed this in their responses and further noted it as a negative experience. This supports the Departmental anxiety about court as a critical event which may result in defensive activities from staff if the past court experience is not dealt with appropriately.
Staff noted across the teams that these experiences were shared with others within a supervisory process or to a lesser extent in a team meeting. The evidence showed however that this was not widespread but sporadic and tended to reflect individual teams' approach. There was a lack of lateral sharing between teams, and in some teams within the team. There was indeed evidence of no sharing of experiences by and between individuals.

District team members approached the issue of experience from individual, case related issues. There was limited sharing of such experiences even within the confines of the confidentiality rules. Where that did occur it tended to be informal and locally based. There was no evidence of cross-team or wider departmental learning from others' experience. Evidence showed that negative experiences, particularly traumatic events, had equal if not higher impact on staff members. Members from four out of six teams specifically listed detailed negative events and some respondents solely noted negative events.

Specialist Teams however had a different profile in their responses. In Specialist Team 2 there was an overwhelmingly positive approach to experience with formal structures such as Court, Panels etc. seen positively as part of the learning experience. In Specialist Team 1 there was a high recording of traumatic or difficult events, these included incidents which had resulted in staff feeling threatened and fearful, court experiences were also noted.

These results are particularly interesting as Specialist Team 1 has no current exposure to traumatic events. There is no necessity to be involved directly with violent or aggressive clients, no court demands and no formal processes in which to present practice and expose one's work to the same extent as other colleagues. This team however is almost exclusively staffed by those who have a residential or child protection background and who have moved out of that practice area some time ago. This result could again suggest that in this group the longevity of the consequence of traumatic or difficult events is significant. Conversely those within Specialist Team 2 have high exposure to formal situations such as Courts, Panels etc., they have however had limited experience of threatening or violent behaviour in either the past or in their current positions.

These two specialist teams showed little evidence of structured communication outside the team and in Specialist Team 1, there was no evidence of sharing even within the team.
The two residential units recorded a heavy reliance on experience as a learning source. Both units outlined experiences which were incident led and which had been negative. In the discussion groups these tended to be incidents where situations were difficult or there was violence and aggression. The units appeared to work in isolation in these experiences even though they have similar client groups and similar situations to deal with. There was no sharing between units and staff acknowledged they did not communicate between establishments. Both units outlined that incidents and learning events were primarily shared with colleagues ‘on shift’ and in team meetings. The nature of this sharing however tended to be as a relaying of the events and a dissecting of the incident. Staff in one unit wanted to move on and ‘forget’ the event. The danger of this occurring is that negative incidents are shared in an emotional rather than in an analytical process and therefore appropriate learning is not occurring. There was no evidence of supervision as part of the process of considering incidents and experiences. Indeed when supervision was raised within the groups, as a prompt, staff claimed a limited individual system or a system just being introduced, the main debrief occurring via team meetings. The quality of such a debrief must be in question given the experience and lack of qualifications within a residential staff group to comment critically on such events. Organisational defensiveness thus can occur and be reinforced.

In the social work assistant group experiences were eclectic. There was a heavy emphasis on experience both personal and work related. Indeed many of the respondents claimed to rely solely on their experiences. Mentoring or working with others and training courses were cited as other methods by which staff learnt in this category. This group felt that their experiences outweighed other impacts on their practice. There was little evidence of this unqualified group sharing experiences with others except if there had been joint experiences such as co-working a case.

Comment

The use of experiences to inform practice indicate a number of issues that the organisation may wish to explore further. There are the indicative responses which show the longevity of violent, aggressive and therefore fearful experiences. The very reporting of these incidents, some considerable time after the events, as shown by the Specialist Team 2, may point to inappropriate or inadequate debrief or post incident discussion and support. Similarly incidents which are acrimonious may demand different immediate and structured responses to assist the staff member. It may however be that further exploration of the data can clarify whether there is a difference between past events and current support. If current staff members recorded these incidents less significantly this may indicate methods have developed and are now satisfactory.
The individual profile of the staff member may also influence such perceptions on incidents and experience. The mixed responses within District Teams where some respondents found court challenging but positive and where Specialist Team 1 exclusively found these formal processes positive learning experiences. It would be of interest to explore further whether there is a psychological or experiential profile of a staff member who is more or less likely to use these experiences in a positive or negative way.

The unqualified staff, both within the residential sector and the field teams reported limited sharing of information and little analysis of events. This exposes these staff to the potential of repeating inappropriate as well as appropriate behaviour but not knowing the difference. The lack of full analysis may create unsuitable actions in what is in essence a high, politically risky, area of practice.

This latter point gives emphasis to the results in Part I of this study. The potential danger in social care and social work practice is the lack of differentiation between unqualified and qualified intervention. The lack of structures around those interventions and actions which analyse and support or discuss experiences can heighten this danger and undermine the very profession that is at the heart of the organization.

Errors

This section was designed to question how, and whether, errors were acknowledged and to identify if there were restrictions on that acknowledgement.

The six District Teams showed a high level of commonality in response. Error identification appeared to be initially through self-analysis, self-appraisal and then, to varying degrees, this was processed via a supervisory or management structure. The latter was not always felt to be satisfactory. The second identification of error was via formal intervention such as external audit, court judgements, complaints procedure etc. and through non compliance with policy and procedures which was then identified via deadlines not met etc.

Error appears to be mostly case related and incident led such as the exposure of poor recording or inappropriate written material. Such written material is often under scrutiny in formal processes and is seen in these settings as having a higher credibility than verbal evidence. Such failures, therefore, can be costly in terms of the local authority case within e.g. Court or Panels.
There was limited evidence of fear or reluctance to accept and share errors and mistakes, only in four out of six teams did one or two respondents record such a fear. The fear was the perceived consequence that would result from the acknowledgment of such an error.

The majority of staff noted an openness and acceptance of identifying those issues which had gone wrong and an ability and confidence to share those with managers and supervisors. However this tended to be via a confession model. This is the self reflection by the member of staff and not through a manager or supervisor-led process therefore there was a lack of a clinical approach to the analysis of case matters. The dominance of case matters may be reassuring or concerning. It may mean that in the wider context of employment for example language, attitudes, conduct is exemplary and does not need challenge or adjustment. It may however indicate that behaviours are going unnoticed or unaddressed. It may be useful for the organisation to assure itself that organisational behaviours are “error free” or “error addressed” and that systems exist which identify and process such behaviour.

The majority of respondents across teams identified personal incidents for which there was no overall theme. The aspect which was however significant to personnel was the visibility of the mistake. This meant high exposure and potentially high criticism situations. The self identification of the mistakes may therefore be an unbalanced perception. The acknowledging of mistakes within the organisation may also result in potentially very public exposure via external sources, thus identifying failures – apportioning blame. This, coupled with the staff concern of limited time to reflect and poor analytical structures, such as supervision in the organisation, could create defensive behaviour possibly unconsciously, with both staff and managers.

Those aspects which restricted the acknowledgment of error were dominated by the themes of pressure of work and lack of time to reflect. It may be important for the organisation in such a case to ensure supervisory process are ‘protected’ time and that they have a high priority thus allowing reflection to be formally built into processes. In discussion and via this audit there is limited evidence of this occurring.

The specialist teams noted a different interpretation of ‘error’ namely that a formal judgement or Panel decision may imply criticism in relation to professional intervention. Such single-case analysis comment is then translated into wider practice, thus making a generality out of a specific. The implications of implied criticism can then influence policy or proceedings by default.
Both residential units explained a different process of error identification from the field teams. Staff members were primarily always on duty in pairs or threes and so there was always a witness to each others behaviour. Team meetings were then used in both units as a way of analysing mistakes or errors. On the surface this appears a positive way of ensuring mistakes are acknowledged and adjusted but there are a number of additional issues in residential units which may in fact lead to this method being insecure.

Firstly the high level of unqualified staff within the establishments necessitates the shifts being staffed by experienced but unqualified staff. Although NVQ courses will assist, there remains the question of the ability to identify properly and then analyse inappropriate behaviour. Secondly residential establishments are a highly visible service given national child protection enquiries into establishments in Wales and other places in England. Thirdly the lack of one to one supervision loses the opportunity to decode and reflect on incidents personally. The group supervision method via team meetings cannot offer this analysis and can have the consequence of under-emphasising or over-emphasising staff behaviour. It is however useful to use learning communities such as team meetings if the right level of input is available. The use of the senior psychologist was not noted under error or mistake but the Expert category. In these results the sharing of errors with the senior psychologist as a 'given' may need to be established thus extending their role, from exclusively with children's and young people's behaviour to, staffs behaviour.

Finally there was no evidence of mistake sharing outside the unit for example with the senior manager responsible for the service. The potential for collusiveness therefore could exist especially if the senior manager is not a regularly accepted part of the residential structure and not therefore seen as someone to contribute or approach if difficulties arise. On the positive side the level of candour, in one unit's response as a group to this question, was encouraging. There appeared an openness and humour when this question was posed and in how participants responded.

In the unqualified field group the social work assistants reflected similar responses to their qualified district team colleagues. The high level of unsupervised work carried out by this group necessitates consideration of how work is supervised. This group reported a willingness and openness to share errors but again this appeared to be self-generated in most cases. This staff group is unlikely to have their work exposed via formal processes. Indeed Part 1 of this audit highlighted that the main difference between the social work assistants' group activities and the qualified group was their lack of participation in courts and formal panels etc. If the latter was a primary source of error identification in the qualified group, there is no similar process for this unqualified group. The social work
assistants' group has lengthy experience, their approach in responding to the question of examples of error was the least specific of all groups and as such provokes the question of their acknowledgement of error in their work.

The unqualified staff in the resource settings again claimed an openness and acceptability of sharing mistakes. There was no indication of fear and reluctance to share mistakes. Indeed in these groups, examples were freely given in the focus groups which indicate insight and lack of concern about owning that inappropriate actions had occurred which were not helpful or acceptable.

Comment

There was no widespread concern recorded that errors could not be openly discussed and shared with managers. The evidence shows that there is extensive self generated acknowledgement of mistakes but the examples given indicate that there are external forces which make this more powerful. These forces could be so strong as to create defensive actions. To reduce this, a rigorous supervision structure could be put in place.

Residential services used a group method for analysing mistakes. The potential flaw in solely relying on this as a model is a concern but there are ways to supplement this and to reduce possible collusive behaviours.

The unqualified field group although displaying similar responses to the qualified workers had less opportunity to have mistakes identified. This positively would reduce the potential for extreme defensive behaviour or it may, negatively, heighten the potential for defensiveness if there is a lack of calm reflection and ongoing analysis.

Experimentation

This section tested out the level of new ideas and experimentation within the organisation and how that is shared.

This section was the least completed by the field teams. Indeed in all teams there were differing percentages of non-completion of this section. In two out of the six district teams 50% of participants did not respond and in the others approximately 25% did not respond.

Those who responded, noted individual experimentation which was case related. New techniques were tried after gaining advice from other sources such as experts. In the sense of pure experimentation this indicated a limited understanding of experimentation
in a wider context. The sharing of this experimentation was not extensive and if it did occur tended to be casually or via team meetings.

There were, within each team, individual staff who had created a new initiative or designed a new process and then implemented this in the Department. These examples were at all levels and not restricted to management staff. There was however limited knowledge of who had created such initiatives, thus individuals did not get the appropriate level of credit. Further there was limited or no sharing of the new initiative across the organization in a structured way. Knowledge appeared to be shared in an informal or linear way, via managers, but with no lateral exchange.

Specialist Team 1 recorded the ability to try out new ideas via a team method. This reflects the nature of a team that is creatively marketing itself to entice members of the community to become carers. There was however no evidence of sharing this experimentation outside the specialism. This is particularly relevant to Specialist Team 2 who, as part of their remit have a marketing demand. In Team 2 experimentation was via case material with the team members having different perspectives as to levels of permissibility or capability to experiment. The Specialist Teams are both at the cutting edge of developments in practice, possibly above that of the other teams. Any innovation appears confined to the related team and not shared.

The focus groups indicated an ability to try out new ideas within both teams. These examples tended to be case related. The teams expressed the need to constantly change practices and try out new approaches in order to deal with the increasingly demanding and challenging client group of difficult adolescents. There was however no sharing of these new practices between units even though they offered services to the same relatively specialist client group.

Experimentation was described in relatively confined terms both in the practice examples and the ability to spread these techniques outside the units. It was noted by both teams that change was acceptable within the organisation and was achievable because time was available. This freedom of activity was noticeable in these two units but there was an impression that these approaches were not widely known outside the units.

Comment

There were isolated but limited initiatives across the organisation that could be termed experimentation i.e. the trying out of new ideas and their review and development. There was no one group, other than senior managers, who had extensive experimentation,
however in the examples listed within the responses it was evident that the individual initiatives came from all sections and layers of the organization. Therefore social workers, specialist teams, residential staff had all discussed 'interventions' which had been new to the organisation.

The Department however does have to consider how to encourage the extension of new ideas and new approaches and how this can be generated within the organisation. The second challenge is then how to share and extend new initiatives if they are positive and can enhance the service delivery. There is currently no evidence of lateral sharing of new ideas and limited linear knowledge. Most teams and especially specialist teams, including residential and resources, had different approaches which were exclusively kept within the teams.

The organisation may wish to ask where new thinking is generated. To rely totally on senior managers may restrict good ideas elsewhere. Additionally new members of staff appeared to have little impact on bringing in new approaches and there was no difference in their recordings than other staff except within the residential units.

If experimentation was encouraged this may create less resistance to new ideas and underline for staff how difficult it is to impact on traditional practices with colleagues, thus helping staff to understand senior managers' difficulties in the challenges of change management. Further it would assist in the self-organisation and improvement of staff at all levels.

**Endorsed/Evaluation**

*This section relates to those mechanisms which reinforce behaviours. Endorsed in this context means giving feedback on performance and actions and in essence is the evaluation process.*

The six District Teams listed common themes as mechanisms by which they received feedback on actions. The majority of team members noted supervision by managers as the process most used internally, second to this team meetings and informal discussions with colleagues. The responses in relation to supervision were not wholly supportive, with staff members noting it with dissatisfaction. The more formal response mechanism tended to be via external sources. Client feedback was noted within most teams but not by most respondents. Complaints, budgeting reports, statistics and formal forums were all seen as methods of feedback on performance. Power and status within the
organisation as well as experience were the key determinants to accepting such feedback.

The majority of respondents felt that if their activities were not supported then they would ask for detailed feedback or for fuller explanations by their managers. However approximately 30% of respondents recorded that they would feel demoralized or would give up. This response to feedback is concerning as it indicated either a reluctance to accept a critical approach or a sensitivity which could establish defensive behaviour.

The District Teams did have common themes but two teams stood out as qualitatively different. In Team 3 there was a strong sense of independence and individualistic approach above that of all other teams. Responses therefore were diverse but in depth. There was a high critical and negative reporting of internal support networks such as supervision. In Team 4 the impression was one of cautiousness or reluctance to respond. Recording on this question was sparse and lacked depth and detail. This may indicate a concern for processes and a lack of confidence either in themselves or in this process to share that concern.

In Specialist Team 1 feedback was predominantly through supervision and to a slightly lower extent, team meetings. This is particularly interesting as this is a team subject to high criticism from other teams especially about the lack of suitable resources. To have no reference to such feedback from colleagues outside their team indicates a separation and potential isolation from the mainstream activities even though this group is core to assisting those mainstream activities.

Specialist Team 2 recorded the most significant sources of feedback as via the external ‘powerful’ sources such as court and panels above any other mechanism. Both Specialist Team 1 and 2 had highly individualistic responses to feedback which was not supportive of respondent's activities. This included carrying on regardless, feeling undermined, trying to negotiate.

The residential sector noted supervision as the most important source of feedback. However, in reality, the units explained that they were both experimenting with supervision and acknowledged they need training in this management technique. The reliance on supervision, almost to the exclusion of all other feedback processes, places a high responsibility on such a process to ensure safety in their environment. When this is cross-referenced with the responses to ERROR then there is limited correlation between responses. Thus mistakes may not be formally addressed but the units may perceive there are mechanisms by which this is achieved.
The social work assistants' groups predominantly noted supervision as their prime feedback mechanism. Supervision in the social work assistant, unqualified group would organisationally be seen as positive as long as this included an in-depth approach to actions and behaviour. For this mechanism to exist solely without 'secondary evidence' e.g. via joint visiting, observation or other measurable outcomes then the supervision may be merely a response to the social work assistant's claimed actions.

Comment

This organisation is inundated with performance management statistics and is under scrutiny from multiple external forces, complaints process, courts, panels, Social Service Inspectorate, Joint Audit Review etc. Specialist Team 2's activities have been subject to two national audits within the previous 12 months. It would be of interest to know how extensive the management use of this information is within the supervisory approach.

The comments in relation to supervision as an unsatisfactory process are a concern. Dissatisfaction may be in relation to either quality or quantity and regularity. Research into the Social Service Department shows that supervision is a protective factor and one method of staff retention and the reduction of stress. In light of this evidence it may be useful to analyse dissatisfaction and satisfaction rates.

The striking result in all teams is the lack of feedback from other teams and especially those colleagues who are jointly interfacing on cases, for example, in a residential unit. There exists within the organization high internal criticism between Field and Residential Services. The lack of acknowledgement of staff from other disciplines may be an oversight at best, at worst a dismissal of this feedback.

The reactions of staff when their activities were not supported were important, especially where there were those who were rejecting of any criticism or lack of support for the respondent activities. In an organisation which relies on compliance to ensure equity and balance in service delivery and at a time of increase in litigation it is important to ensure that staff do not continue inappropriate behaviour. Similarly for those who recorded being demoralized and undermined by such processes then reactions may exist. This may be in response to the style of feedback or a more general defensiveness. All of these reflections of non-support for activities should cause some reflection in the organisation.

The dominance within this section of external forces which influence practice via feedback needs acknowledgement. Informal feedback via team meetings and colleagues
was noted widely in all groups except the social work assistant section. This again could be a supportive approach to colleagues especially if feedback is negative. However teams and colleagues may inadvertently reinforce poor behaviour by inappropriately supporting behaviours which are not acceptable. Managers should determine this and work with teams as learning communities to look 'clinically' and objectively at actions in order to learn and support the right behaviours.

Knowledge Influences Audit

Rankings and Representation of Data

Each respondent who completed the Knowledge Influences Audit either through the individual method or via the focus group was asked to rank in order of influence each of the 'E's from the one which had the most influence to that which had the least influence on them in their current day to day practice. The rankings were 1 to 8, 1 being the most significant or influential. Representation is via two methods. Firstly histogram representation and secondly pie-chart representation. These are presented in Appendix 4. In the histogram representation each respondent ranked their preferences. The scores were then accumulated against the maximum number that could have been achieved per category. These scorings were then converted to percentage figures in order to compare accurately between teams and between segments in the organisation. The resulting scores were then represented in a histogram. In the pie-chart representation each proportion of scorings per team according to their ranking was then accumulated. For example under each of the categories i.e. Education, Enforced, Evidence-based etc. the proportion of respondents who ranked each category 1, 2, 3 etc. The pie-chart graphically and easily demonstrates the balance within the teams or segments as to preferences and rankings.

The following observations are made of the data represented. Triangulation and cross-referencing are offered via the other data collected in this study.

RESULTS

Education

Education was clearly ranked highly in most qualified staff teams. Within a professional organisation this may not be unexpected. A number of points however emerge from the ranking results.
The pie chart shows that in District Team 1, 78% ranked Education as either strongest or second strongest influence with the remaining 22% ranking it third highest. This, cross-referenced with Part I of this study, shows this team has one of the highest percentages of staff educated to degree level, 35.7% holding a first degree or above. Further this team had 7.1% of 'newly' qualified staff i.e. between 0-2 years, the majority qualified 6 years or more. The longevity of the impact of the educational experience may then be more significant than other influences such as Experience etc.

In District Team 2 there was 14% of respondents who ranked Education as the first influence but 58% ranked this as middle or low between 4-6. Two features were evident from the staff profile. Firstly there as a high percentage of newly qualified staff in this team and secondly the lowest percentage of staff qualified to degree level.

District Team 2 is the only team to rank Education lower than Enforced or Experience. This is particularly interesting as this team had one of the lowest percentages of staff with first degrees.

District Team 4. Education ranked higher in the histogram profile than any other influence. 60% of this team had been qualified for less than 5 years so their educational experience was relatively recent. Secondly 70% of this team had at least a first degree and this was significantly higher than all other district teams.

District Team 5 had the second highest proportion, 53.8% of staff with first degrees and 92% of staff qualified between 3-15 years with 53.8% of the team having 6-10 years experience. This team on the histogram representation ranked Education and Experience as equal. In the pie chart representation however, one can see that Experience on the whole was more widely represented in the upper rankings of 1-4, whereas Education was clearly significant to the majority of staff, 57% ranking this as their highest influence. The qualitative responses in this team indicated that Education was significant because it established a value base which subsequently influenced belief systems and had been a way of gaining research skills etc. The longevity of the educational experience is of note given the length of post qualifying experience which exists within the teams. This may correlate with the higher educational degree level.

District Team 6 again ranked Education as their highest source of influence. This is most striking in a team where 83% of the team are over 6 years qualified and where 45% had a first degree. The longevity of the impact of education on this team is of note.

Both Specialist Teams again ranked Education highest as shown on the histogram representation although Specialist Team 1 had a wider ranking range than Team 2 as shown in the pie charts. In Specialist Team 1 the qualitative responses showed
educational experiences going back as far as school experiences and wider than qualifying input to other non certificated training events – this is the only team to note this. Specialist Team 1 also noted skill bases such as interviewing, writing etc which were not typically noted elsewhere. This when correlated with the length of experience of this group again shows the longevity of the educational experience.

- The Senior Manager Group was the only team to note Education as lower than any other team. This is interesting, as in their qualitative responses they relied less on their qualifying training and more on their academic or management training. This team had a clear divide where 42.8% ranked Education as their first influence but 57.2% ranked it between 5 and 8 the lower influence range. This dichotomy may influence behaviour in relation to strategic planning in training and expectations of staff.

- The Residential and unqualified social work assistant groups all ranked Education in the middle to lower rankings. This may seem understandable given their low qualification or training base. The current training strategy of NVQ appeared in the qualitative data to have little impact on educational influences.

- The lack of educational influence in the residential settings particularly may have influence on standards of practice, understanding of district and specialist team request and may be in itself a separating factor because of lack of common knowledge, skill and significantly value base.

Enforced

In an organisation such as Social Services the importance of working within regulation, procedure etc cannot be overstated. The qualitative data lists those factors which were considered as imposed on staff and compulsory. These scores then reflect what influence staff consider that such activities have on them.

- District Team 1 showed in the pie chart that 68% of the respondents ranked this as first or second highest. Of note however is the number of respondents who ranked Enforced as low as 6 and 7.

- District Teams 2 and 3 had a mix of rankings across the spectrum. This may indicate an unclear organisational or line management message in regard to the importance of policy, procedures and legislation. It could indicate an 'independent' spirit of some team members and this is important to explore. In both teams 61% of staff ranked Enforced in the top three most influential with 30.7% noting it as low influence between 5 and 8.

- District Team 4 acknowledges Enforced as the second most influential characteristic. 71.4% ranked Enforced as either 1-3 as most significant to their practice. Only
7.00% noted any lower rankings. This may indicate within the team a high level of compliance with both legislation and procedures. It might also indicate a highly mechanistic team. Both of these could be cross-referenced with performance data and other characteristics or influence to consider whether this is in balance.

- District Team 5 in the qualitative data noted aspects beyond procedures and legislation namely budget, technology etc. This group ranked Enforced within the histogram as lower than Education and Experience and had a wide range of variation as to individual ranking responses. This may indicate an 'I know better' or individualistic approach and this may need further exploration.

- District Team 6 was the only team to note the negative and restricting aspects of enforced requirements. The rankings indicate a not dissimilar profile from other Teams where although most staff ranked Enforced in the high influential bracket there is a residue of staff who ranked this between 5 and 8.

- In Specialist Team 2 the high scoring of Enforced may reflect the external exposure of this team and its work to contentious situations especially within formal processes. There is a high reliance, in this very technical area of practice, on guidance and legislation and this may reflect the scoring by staff. Further there is extreme critical scrutiny of practice and again the high scoring may reflect this.

- Specialist Team 1, although having a different focus, ranked Enforced again most highly. This may indicate a response to the length of post qualifying experience and length of time in the Department. Compliance therefore, not only influenced by the exposure to the environment but to organisational knowledge and loyalty. The qualitative data did show a high understanding of legislative and procedural requirements.

- Senior managers noted the statutory and legislative framework within the Enforced sector as dominant. This was broad based and in turn influenced practice via the mechanisms of policy and procedures. This would be the expected flow of managing factors imposed on the Department. The increased performance requirements were not recorded as positive across respondents in this group.

- 50% of the Senior Management Group ranked Enforced as the second highest influence on practice with the majority of the remaining ranking it 3 or 4. Those who ranked it lower were the consultant or expert personnel in the group. These results are not surprising given the highly bureaucratic nature of the organisation, the power of the external forces and the position of this group in the Department. The consultant rankings are also not unexpected given that performance and accountability is individual and personal and not managerial.

- The differentiation in results between Residential Team 1 and 2 is striking. The former with the majority of staff ranking Enforced in the lower groupings between 5 and 8. As this group listed legislation and procedures within this category this
scoring may raise some concern to managers in regard to how this establishment works within the legislative and procedural framework.

- Conversely Residential 2 had the highest ranking of Enforced than any other source. The pie chart shows over 55% ranked this category as their first influence.
- Within the unqualified social work assistant group, the results showed that the majority of staff ranked Enforced in the lower influence bracket namely 5 to 8. This unqualified group had noted in the qualitative responses a reliance on policies and procedures and had also in Part I and Part II noted how they worked independently and unsupervised. This indicates a lack of rigour on the part of the organisation in exercising tight boundaries and control on the behaviour of ancillary staff. The low scoring in relation to Enforced in this group is concerning as it indicates a possible arrogance and dismissal of the 'rules' of the organisation.

Evidence-based

Evidence-based practice is an increasing demand on the organisation from National and Local political/legislative quarters. The following results were evident in the rankings.

- In Team 1 Evidence-based was ranked by the majority of staff in the middle sector namely between 4 and 6. However District Team 2 showed a higher ranking in regard to Evidence-based with 42.8% ranking this between their second and fourth influence on day to day practice. A further 42.8% ranking Evidence-based in the lower category of 5-7. This is interesting when cross referenced with the written data which shows staff having a more qualitative understanding of Evidence-based practice than any other team.
- In District Team 3 Evidence-based was ranked by 69% of respondents as fifth to eighth influence thus in the lower influence group. This scoring reflects the written responses which note non-specific research documents and where a professional magazine was classed in a research category which in reality it is not. This scoring in Team 3 therefore indicates a lack of real knowledge and confidence in Evidence-based practice.
- In Team 4 the qualitative record indicates the interpretation of Evidence-based is that from internal sources such as staff training and key events which are practice related. Although the use of the internet was recorded extensively, the qualitative responses showed limited evidence of how this had influenced practice. The predominant point recorded was that the organisation had provided the Evidence-based experience. Team 4 had a high ratio of recently qualified and therefore recent educational experiences within this group and had a lower proportion of overall post-qualifying experience. One therefore may have expected that Evidence-based practice would
have scored in the higher rankings given its more recent demands within the social work context and within training. This Team however did not show an overall scoring significantly higher than any other team but did have 50% of respondents ranking Evidence-based in the higher groupings of influence namely 2 and 4. This is a slightly higher proportion than one other team and a significantly higher proportion than the remaining four District Teams.

- **District Team 5** within the qualitative data responses indicated a limited understanding of its concept and its influence in practice. This Team however did have the second highest proportion of staff with a first degree but the gap between this educational experience and the developments of Evidence-based practice may have some significance. 64% of respondents in this Team ranked this category in the lower groupings of 6-8 showing that this had not impacted on the Team as it had in other Teams. This scoring may reflect the necessity for this Team to have a more balanced approach within the overall Team in regard to this category.

- This scoring was similar to that noted in District Team 6 where 66% ranked Evidence-based in the lower influence groups, namely between 5 and 8. However, atypical of any other Team, a recording in this Team of Evidence-based being the first influence on some members of staff was noted. This is the only Team that showed evidence of this. The majority however noted non-specific Evidence-based sources and those provided by the Department.

- The District Teams all of which had common purpose and common practice areas, showed that Evidence-based was generally ranked either in the middle rankings or within the lower rankings of influence. This is of interest for the Department to note in order that it can consider strategies which can move Teams more consciously into an Evidence-based practice mode which reflects a national and local demand.

- Specialist Team 1 listed journals and specific research data as their Evidence-based source and also reflected this group's wider experience in other past teams. Evidence-based within this specialism, of recruiting and supporting carers, is somewhat limited and therefore in this context the lower ranking of responses in regard to Evidence-based may not be unsurprising. With current government requirements this scoring may increase over time as awareness has heightened in this specialist area. However in Specialist Team 1 Evidence-based practice ranked primarily sixth or seventh influence on staff members.

- Specialist Team 2 however who operate within a highly specialist area of practice, exposed to external sources, not surprisingly, rank Evidence-based as the highest influence compared to other practice teams such as the District Teams. There has been additional training in regard to research and this training may also have raised awareness in this specialist grouping. No respondent ranked Evidence-based lower
than 6 with the majority of staff ranking Evidence-based either as their second or third influence.

- Senior Managers reflected in their responses a sophisticated understanding of the use of Evidence-based and again this group demonstrated a wider detailed range of sources and reference to data and information was accurate. This group ranked Evidence-based as predominantly higher middle ranking with 50% of respondents ranking third or fourth influence with the remaining 42% between 5 and 7. This again may influence the academic backgrounds of this grouping plus the expert consultant rules contained within it.

- Within the Residential services, members noted a relatively high ranking of Evidence-based. This is particularly striking in the rankings which noted Evidence-based as their third highest influence only second to Endorsed and Experience. Education and Enforced ranking lower. This is an interesting ranking particularly given the low educational base within this establishment. This may indicate a unilateral approach to undertaking activities and as such may be creating some dangers within the establishment for members of staff who may not be able to analyse what is appropriate Evidence-based material and what is not. The fact that 50% of staff ranked Evidence-based in this Team as either their second or third influence is striking and is worthy of further management exploration.

- Similarly in Residential 2, Evidence-based again ranked highly with 50% of members ranking it between 2 and 4. However in this Team, Evidence-based ranked below Enforced and Experience and marginally below Education. The diversity between these two Teams with similar client bases and practice expectations is worthy of note and further exploration.

- Within the other unqualified social work assistant groups Evidence-based practice ranked for merely 70% of respondents in the lower half of the rankings, namely between 5 and 8. Again this is not surprising given the educational background of these workers tend to be via the NVQ route and there was some reference to this in the qualitative data.

Experts

The perception of who was an Expert and their influence was noted within the qualitative data and the following observations are made from the rankings.

- Across all District Teams Experts ranked higher than Evidence-based, although in some Teams this is marginal and in others more significant. Five out of six District Teams ranked Experts higher than Endorsed. Only one Team, Team 2 noted Endorsed as marginally higher. These combinations make it important for the
Department to explore whether there is a reliance on expertise from other sources, primarily external, because of a failure in either the feedback processes under Endorsed or via the use of skills on Evidence-based practice. Therefore the reliance on others in essence to undertake the professional task that workers should be completing themselves.

- In District Team 1 there was a higher reference to internal personnel as Experts and this scoring may indicate levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction regarding this internal group. 57% of this Team ranked Expert as between 5 and 8.

- District Team 2 reflected a split within the Team with 53.8% ranking Experts between 6 and 8 in influence, and 41.6% ranking Experts as highly influential between 1 and 3. This may reflect the mixed written responses which although predominantly noting external Experts also noted internal supervisors. It would be useful to analyse this scoring for further correlation between the expectations on internal Experts/managers and whether in fact they correlate with the lower ranking score.

- District Team 4 note approximately 70% of respondents ranking Experts in the higher bracket of 1 to 4 with the majority of staff (over 50%) ranking 3 to 4. When this data is in the context of the written responses it may indicate confusion between supervision and Expert advice. The overall percentage scorings in Expert and Endorsed within the histogram is relatively similar and this Team may wish to reflect whether there is confusion between these two roles. It may also be that the individuals are able to seek advice from those they deem to have confidence in or who may reinforce their view rather than a structured approach.

- Within Team 4, 50% of staff ranked Experts as either 3 or 4, thus at the higher end of influence. The qualitative responses however noted that Experts were seen predominantly as internal managers but not necessarily within the line management structure. More often senior managers were noted as experts and were equivalent to other specialists or consultants or solicitors. This is of particular importance given the significantly low scoring in relation to Endorsed. This scoring is therefore worth further exploration as to why there are members of staff who are seen as having expertise, knowledge and skills but these are not necessarily via the immediate manager or supervisory structure.

- Team 5 has an overall higher percentage ranking in relation to Expert than any other Team with over 42% of respondents noting Experts in the highest grouping – namely 1 to 3. Again this team noted internal staff as having a particular expertise but these were not necessarily Team members but those with additional knowledge. This does question whether the Team views itself as Expert and whether gaining expertise, and influence, comes from outside the immediate members of staff.

- In Team 6 however, Experts were predominantly seen as external to the Team and had particular specialisms such as psychology and psychiatry. They were noted as
giving confidence and self-belief in their work and therefore were seen as a supporter. Experts were most predominantly ranked in this Team as third or fourth influence. This ranking in light of the qualitative information does suggest that staff are seeking the influence from outside the Team in regard to their practice.

- Experts within the Specialist Teams were seen almost exclusively in Team 1 and 2 as external and very specialist. Therefore they had been recognised within other settings for their research or position. This was quite different to the Field Teams who tended to see Experts in relation to case matters and to provide support. This when cross referenced with Evidence-based category becomes more significant because expertise in these Teams was determined similarly to that of expertise which in other Teams may have been recorded as Evidence-based. For example in the District Teams articles and specialist writers would have been listed under Evidence-based, but in this Team they were listed under Experts. This different classification is of interest particularly in Specialist Teams and may be worth further exploration. Overall Specialist Team 1 classified Experts within the middle rankings of 3-5 whereas Specialist Team 2 ranked Experts slightly higher with 50% listing 2-3. This again, given their task areas, is not unsurprising.

- The most striking result however, is within the Senior Management group where the qualitative data include persons who were deemed to be impressive or who were in a group or type of Expert e.g. psychologists. This group did not widely recognise social work practitioners or peers as Experts. There was however concern in the qualitative data that Experts had acquired this label through other sources such as authority via the courts as opposed to being Experts in the true sense of the word. This group above all groups ranked Experts as the lower overall influence with all respondents noting Experts in the lower rankings of 5-8 with 86% ranking Experts as either 7 or 8, the lowest or second lowest influence on a day to day practice. These rankings are demonstrated specifically in the histogram representation and do reflect an attitude within the senior management group in regard to Experts, mostly seen as external and not held as high influence.

- Within the Residential establishments, Experts were predominantly listed as those external to the unit with limited evidence of colleagues or social work professionals or managers seen within this category. This regard for other colleagues and internal expertise does cross reference with the endorsed section where the lack of communication between the ‘purchasers of these services’ may have influence. In Residential Team 1 there was a split within the Team with nearly 50% of members ranking Expert in either the 2 or 3 categories with the remainder listing 5 or 8. Residential Team 2 however had a wider variation of scoring with the majority of respondents listing Experts in the 4 to 6 category. Both Teams however noted Experts lower than Evidence-based and similar to that of Endorsed. These results
do indicate that managers may wish to look at how Residential establishments are accurately receiving views from outside their establishment. It may also be useful to determine within Residential Unit 2 whether the differentiation in scores in the use of Experts has been influenced by either status within the Team or impact in regard to client activity. This would reflect then the historic culture of respect for others who can 'do the job', as well as advise on it.

- The high scoring of Experts through social work assistants was again noted as external to the service or were high status members within the organisation. Expertise therefore was associated with position or qualification base. This ranked equally as high as the supervisory or endorsed process. Social work colleagues were not noted even though they are this group's direct supervisor. This may reflect the unclear demarcation of tasks between these grades. The high ranking of Experts outside the team colleague, given the rankings within this group, may be of concern to the organisation as primarily there may be influence which is unknown to the supervisory structure. Nearly 70% of social work assistants listed Experts in the higher four rankings with over 50% listing this influence as 2 and 3.

**Experience**

- Within the rankings of Experience there does appear to be a correlation between the overall ranking of Experience and the length of time post-qualification. In District Team 1, for example, 71% ranked Experience in the top four with 78% of staff in Part I of this study with six years post-qualification experience. Similarly in Team 2, 66.6% ranked Experience as one of the most significant influences on their practice and again over 50% of this Team had been qualified for six years or more with 33% practising for over sixteen years or more. In District Team 3, 84% of the Team had between six and twenty years Experience, with 23% between sixteen and twenty years Experience. 69% of respondents noted a high ranking scoring of between 1 and 3. The significant factor in Team 3 was the recording of traumatic or difficult situations within this category and the length of influence that those experiences had.

- District Team 4, however, had a slightly different profile in that Experience in this Team overall ranked lower. There were within the responses a similar proportion of Experience rankings between 1 and 5. This may reflect the diversity of Experience within this Team and may reflect that this Team had a higher proportion of newly qualified staff than other Teams. They were also less responsive in the qualitative analysis and this again may reflect the lack of Experience.

- District Team 5 ranked Experience similar to that of Education in being the most influential but unlike their colleagues in Team 3 they made no reference to traumatic or difficult events but to positive events such as practice areas, training etc. It may
not be surprising that given the reference to training that Education and Experience ranked similarly in the overall scorings.

- District Team 6 however had a mixture of responses both in regard to the challenging and negative Experiences and also the positive effects of Experience in dealing with highly risky or challenging behaviour. The rankings of this Team noted 75% of respondents middle ranking Experiences between categories 3 to 5. Given the length of Experience of the majority of the Team this ranking is interesting and may be worth further exploration particularly in relation to the Education scoring and rankings.

- Specialist Teams 1 and 2 had similar linking of Experience with the post-qualifying period. However it is of note that in both Teams the rankings for Experience were lower than those of both Education and Enforced meaning that these other two factors had more influence than Experience on these members of staff. This was not similar to the District Teams where Experience was either similarly ranked to Enforced or was slightly higher.

- Within the Senior Management Team Experience was the overall highest influence on this group. The data showed that Experience in a rounded sense, was reflected on and then affected future policies and practices. This showed some indication of completing of the learning cycle. Only two other groups had a similarly high profile for Experience and this was the social work assistant group and one Residential establishment. The picture of these two latter groups was the lack of balance elsewhere in their profiles namely in the educational foundation or in the feedback (Endorsed) mechanisms. In the Senior Management group, 71% ranked Experience as either the highest influence or the second highest, with the remaining respondents noting it as the third or fourth influence. The evidence from this and the qualitative data is that Senior Managers are not only able to have the Experience but to reflect on it.

- The difference between Residential Unit 1 and Residential Unit 2 in their profiles is marked. Residential Unit 1's Experience is by far the highest influence with over 75% ranking Experience as their first influence. Residential Unit 2's Experience is ranked lower but the Part I of the descriptive data will show that there is a lower range of Experience within this group. What is of note in Residential Unit 1 is the imbalance of the Experiential category over and above any other category and significantly so. This imbalance may need to be explored further, particularly in relation to Education, Enforced and Endorsed. This is especially so as in both Residential Unit 1 and Residential Unit 2 Experiences were mostly listed as internal events.

- Again within the Social Work Assistant group the highest ranking of the majority of staff was Experience. This tended to be case related. In the qualitative data this
staff group were not clear on their differentiation between their Experiences and that of qualified colleagues. They were unaware of recent developments and had not participated in courses. This made this Experience ranking a potential concern for the organisation.

**Error**

The dominant theme from the qualitative data is that Error identification was mostly triggered via a self-appraisal process with the formality of external processes such as courts and internal audits as a secondary influence. The rankings showed the following.

- In District Team 1, 66% ranked Error in the lower half of influence – between 5 and 8. This may indicate that self-identification and reflection is not widely adequate and that formal processes, unless debriefed appropriately, may again have a less than positive outcome. In this Team there may be an interesting correlation between the rankings of Error and Endorsed.
- In Team 2, Error again was mostly ranked in the lower groupings of influence namely between 5 and 7. This may be relevant to cross reference with the supervisory process under Endorsed. The scorings reflect the qualitative responses which indicated a split between those who were satisfied with the supervisory process and those who were not. There was limited evidence within this Team of fear or reluctance to share mistakes.
- District Team 3, from the qualitative data, did show a healthy analysis of learning from Errors and through identifying Errors via supervision and discussion and through self-evaluation. This for a significant number of the Team who ranked Error at 6-8 did show that learning from Errors was less influential than other methods. This may reflect the balance of experience within the Team given that the pie chart shows the use of Error across Team members. This is a particularly interesting scoring, given the ranking of Endorsed which is particularly low within this Team.
- In District Team 5, the qualitative data shows that Errors can be accepted and shared. The recordings show that formal processes tended to dominate Error identification. It is therefore not surprising that the rankings may be in the lower groupings namely between 5 and 8, where there is no formal identification of Error except through potentially acrimonious settings such as courts. This may mean a potential defensive reaction to Error identification and analysis.
- Error in District Team 6 was ranked low with the majority of the Team at 84%, ranking Error in the lower grouping of 5-8 with 33% ranking it the least influence at 8. This does lead to question how openly identification and processing of Errors is within this Team and whether there has been time to admit and scrutinise errors and
mistakes made. This is a particularly interesting scoring given the rankings of the Endorsed section but may be less surprising when that Endorsed section mostly reflects external feedback as opposed to internal critical analysis via supervisors.

- In both the Specialist Teams, the identification of Errors was within the qualitative data seen as less satisfactory with poor identification of Errors via the supervisory mechanism with an inability to analyse or have a 'post mortem'. This may reflect the rankings mostly in the lower rankings between 5 and 7 in both teams. This lower ranking may indicate a difficulty within the structure where both Teams have sections off site from their manager. Given the length of experience of members of staff in both Teams there may also be a limited challenge of activities which may or may not be appropriate.

- The Senior Management group recorded no structural reluctance to share mistakes or Errors. Only one person reflected a personal reluctance because of embarrassment. This group had predominantly noted Errors in others rather than themselves and did not note how Senior Manager Errors were identified by others. Errors tended to be identified by self-awareness. They were ranked by 85% within this group as middle influences of 4-5.

- Within both Residential Unit 1 and Residential Unit 2 there were similar patterns of Error identification via self-analysis or with others who were on duty with them. Error identification ranked higher than both Education and Enforced in Residential Unit 1 but not in Residential Unit 2. However the cross reference with the Endorsed score may have some relevance given that the feedback scoring was ranked higher but tended to be in the qualitative data externally sourced.

- Within the Social Work Assistant group, Errors tended to be addressed via the supervisory process and predominately in this section was ranked in the lower groups of 6-8. When this is cross referenced with the Error score, it does indicate a level of behaviour within this group in regard to their experiences, their ability to learn from others and to learn from themselves when making mistakes. This ranking is worth further exploration with this grouping.

**Experimentation**

The low response to Experimentation across all groups is of significance within their responses and does confirm the rankings when cross referenced with the qualitative data.

- The majority of staff across all District Teams ranked Experiment as the lowest influence on their practice. This category across the District Teams had a more common profile of responses as is shown by the pie charts than any other categorisation. This is particularly interesting as there have been a number of Teams
where there have been new members of staff from different organisational backgrounds and profiles. This may reflect the bureaucratic nature of the organisation per se and the lack of Experimentation which may often be associated with risk taking.

- Where Experimentation did occur it tended to be on a case basis and where this was scored within this section there tended to be confusion between the Evidence-based scoring and that of Experimentation. This may show a lack of understanding in terminology and would confirm the other results in regard to the understanding of research and Evidence-based practice.

- Only Team 4 demonstrated true Experimentation within the organisation where two members of staff had undertaken innovative and new work which had then been translated into organisational practice. There was however limited demonstration of these innovations being communicated across the organisation. The Experiment had been communicated but the lack of identification of its source had meant that the innovators had not received due credit for the innovation. The highest proportion of staff in this Team, however, still ranked Experimentation as either 6 or 8 and therefore had also not had a vicarious benefit from the others Experience.

- What is striking within the District Teams is that level of respondents who listed no Experimentation in their work in the qualitative analysis and this would correspond with the low ranking score.

- It is clear from Specialist Team 1, that Experimentation was ranked higher than most other Teams. Respondents did list specific developments within the specialism and their activities and task area do allow for the undertaking of innovative ideas and new approaches particularly in the recruitment of carers. However the pie chart still indicated a wide difference between members of staff in regard to Experimentation with managers ranking the ability to Experiment more highly than members of staff who ranked it in the lower groups of 6-8.

- Within Specialist Team 2, Experimentation would be expected to be of a lower ranking because of the highly regulated and statuted area of work where there is less potential for creativity and flexibility.

- It was surprising that within the Senior Management group again Experimentation was ranked in the lower influence brackets to 5 – 8 with 57% ranking Experimentation as either 7 or 8. Experimentation in the overall rankings was therefore only marginally higher than that of Expert and these were both significantly lower than any other influence. This is somewhat surprising given possibly the expectation within the Senior Management group of implementing new and innovative ideas. The influence appeared to be visioned however by others, mostly the Director, but then defined and detailed by this group. Experimentation and new ideas were then widely spread throughout the organisation. This was the only group
where this was evidenced in both the linear and lateral way. However it is clear that Experimentation still tended to be directed by others.

- Experimentation within the Residential Units tended to be mostly client based and even with that, members of staff ranked Experimentation in the low categories. This is again reflected within the Social Work Assistant group but their restricting factor tended to be lack of time. The Social Work Assistant group saw themselves therefore as restricted by the conditions of their job rather than limited by their ability either personally or organisationally to Experiment.

**Endorsed**

The Endorsed category reflects on the level of feedback which is given to staff either via structured methods or via other sources.

- Within District Team 1 the diversity and range of responses reflected that of the qualitative data. The latter showing opposing views especially regarding the value of supervision and feedback. There was a range of feedback mechanisms listed both formal and informal but supervision was most consistently noted by respondents as positive or negative. The fact that over 60% of this Team ranked Endorsed in the lower influencing brackets between 5 and 8 is of some note and does cross reference with both the identification of Error and raises the question as to how the high ranking of Experience is analysed and dissected in order to complete the learning cycle.

- District Team 2 shows the middle ranking of 3 – 5 from the large proportion of respondents. This ranking in the overall histogram representation shows a balance between Evidence-based, Expert and Error identification. This may lead one to question whether there is confusion between these sources of influence indicating a chaos through lack of structure with staff being able to pick and choose their sources of influence. This may potentially diminish some of the influences and enhance others. For example, seeking advice from an expert when indeed the answer should lie within the supervisory process.

- The low scoring of Endorsed within Team 4 is significant with 85.7% of respondents ranking Endorsed in the lower groupings of influence between 5 and 8. The organisation may be particularly anxious when this is cross referenced with the qualitative data which records that this Team almost unanimously noted supervision as a main mechanism for feedback. This is further relevant because of two additional features, firstly this Team's extensive exposure within the court process over and above other Teams and secondly within the individual interviews this Team indicated most wariness in regard to supervision in management mechanisms.
There is further conflict in this data when in Part I of this analysis the majority of the Team noted satisfaction with their current jobs. These responses show they need to be further explored.

- Again in Team 5 over 50% of staff noted Endorsed in the lower groupings between 5 and 8. When this is cross referenced with the qualitative data the Endorsed was primarily listed as association with supervision and position power in regard to influence on feedback. It is of note that the Expert grouping ranked higher than that of Endorsed and this could suggest a failure within the supervisory process in this Team. If influence is being gained from those external to the Team and therefore ranked higher such as Experts this would be important for the managers to note. It is of further note that this Team particularly had a higher ranking in regard to Experts when cross referenced with Evidence-based and again this would question the over reliance on other professionals for social work answers.

- District Team 6 showed a high ranking in regard to Endorsed but noted this as mostly via Experts and through supervision. This does give some validity to the rankings when cross referenced with the Experts scoring and supervision. Supervision in this Team ranked highly over and above other Teams.

- Within both Specialist Teams 1 and 2 there was within the qualitative data a record of supervision and group meetings as the prime source of feedback. Within Specialist Team 2 there were further formal processes such as courts. There was however dissatisfaction about the supervisory process and its regularity and this may have influenced the low rankings of the Endorsed process below that of Errors and Expert and only higher than Experimentation. In regard to Specialist Team 1 the question however may be the quality of supervision occurring with very experienced Team members where the majority of staff have been qualified for more than 16 years. This should not negate the necessity for appropriate supervisory and feedback processes but may indicate a failure in the quality and challenge of that supervision within a Team of this profile.

- Within the Senior Management group the mechanisms for Endorsed were listed as primarily external through formal processes such as audit, complaints, court, other agencies etc. There was a lack of detail in respect of internal supervisory processes and some dissatisfaction in relation to this. Enforced was ranked very differently and individually in this group from the most influential to the second least influential. There were 3 equal groupings of 28% of respondents for Enforced of either 1, 3 or 6. This will reflect in the overall profile of feedback to both Error and Education all ranking similarly in the histogram representation.

- In Residential 1 Endorsed was marginally the second highest ranking on the histogram to that of Evidence-based although both came significantly lower than Experience. When these are cross referenced, one has to question this experience
within the Residential establishments without the presence of appropriate feedback mechanisms. The supervisory process was noted by Residential Unit 1 as not occurring successfully and the majority of staff in this grouping ranked Endorsed as the fourth influence. These scorings, in this Team, indicate a very internal and potentially introspective approach to work and also a potential failing when cross referenced with the Experience ranking. This situation when outside the context of departmental Endorsement or through Expert advice may therefore be a real concern. There appeared therefore to be unilateral action via the gathering of Evidence-based practice and via group processes.

- Again in Residential Unit 2 there was within the qualitative data dissatisfaction with Endorsed methods which were mostly seen as the supervisory process. Again the significant dissatisfaction with this process is indicated in the ranking where 50% of respondents noted this category between sixth and eighth influence. This again may be of concern given that Experience did rank highly although the high categorisation of Enforced, therefore working within legislation and procedures, may somewhat balance this. The similar ranking of Experts to Endorsed may again confuse the appropriate supervisory structures with that of Expert advice.

- Within the Social Work Assistant group the ranking of Endorsed is similar to that overall as Experts scoring and the pie chart show a not dissimilar ranking between Expert and Endorsed. This does beg the question whether the supervisory process is being supplemented by that of external Experts from this group and whether indeed there is in effect a supervisory mechanism for the Social Work Assistant section. There is limited evidence of Experience being put in the context of analysis either through Error or Endorsed. These tended to be related to ongoing case matters as opposed to looking at Experience in a wider context.

**Lateral Groups**

There has additionally been placed in the appendices the accumulation of data into three lateral groupings. The first is that of Managers which includes all those who are managers of District Teams, Specialist Teams etc. Secondly there is the profile of the Children’s Management Team and this is the accumulation of the above group of Managers plus the Senior Management group. Thirdly there is the accumulation of all of the countywide data. The following is of note:

- There is clear similarity between the direct line managers and that of the countywide profile. This is namely that Education, Enforcement and Experience are the three highest ranking categories although there are marginal differences between the
ranking of Experts and Evidence-based between the Managers and countywide most of the profile is not dissimilar against all categories.

- However, when the Senior Management scoring is imposed on the Management group, there is clearly quite a significant change in the profile and this mostly influenced by the Senior Managers' profile and the extremity of it. For example, the sequence of influence for the Children's Management Team becomes Experience, Enforcement and then is equally balanced between Education and Endorsed. In addition the influence of Expert becomes seriously reduced.

Conclusions Part II for 2000 Study

The data collected indicated a number of interesting features.

1. Education was predominantly recorded as useful in creating a value base for social work practice. There was limited skills-based evidence within the educational response. Education was also seen by practitioners as a way of establishing status and assisting in areas which were particularly challenging such as courts. There were two key routes that personnel used to access information and these were two distinct categories of personnel. Firstly there were those who had entered education via an academic route and then progressed to social work qualification and the second group who had progressed via a lengthy unqualified route entering social work firstly when they were older and secondly when they had already practised within the social care field. Given the evidence within Part I of this study that Social Work Assistants did not see significant differentiation between the tasks that they undertook and that of a qualified social worker there are serious dangers that qualifying via a vocational route may be a confirmer of practice and may not extend knowledge to the extent that Managers may feel it is being established.

It is also clear within this study, that Senior Managers are by far the most academically qualified of any other group within the Department. Their scorings therefore in regard to education are of interest given that this is proportionately lower than any other group within the organisation. It may be that Senior Managers have higher expectations of the Educational process than in reality may be occurring and this difference in expectation and reality may in fact cause some conflict in regard to expectations on qualified staff.

2. It was clear from the qualitative data that there were different sections of the organisation relating to different parts of legislation and different policies and procedures. This lack of general understanding between colleagues could create a lack of mutual understanding and lead to conflict. Further the range of policies and procedures which
would then support that legislative requirement again lacked harmonisation and reinforced potential conflicts.

Within the rankings in relation to Enforced it was clear that there is a wide variation not only between groups but within groups in regard to the status of Enforced as it relates to day to day practice. It may be that this Department would wish to be clear as to the message of the importance in regard to Enforced and what influence it should have on its personnel. The wide variations between Teams would indicate that Team Leaders and Middle Managers are influential in the level of importance given to those activities which are imposed on the Department.

3. There was some considerable variance between the espoused theories in relation to Evidence-based practice and that of the reality of the information presented. It would appear that members may be responding to the Government’s and organisational objectives for increased Evidence-based practice without real knowledge as to the expectations of such a practice base. This research showed that there was confusion in relation to language and understanding and this increased the likelihood of inappropriate use of poor ‘evidence’ resulting in chaotic interventions which affected outcomes. What understanding that did exist, was exclusively reached through the Department’s training input and this supports Part I of this study which indicates that there was a high level of control and input into the understanding of members of staff thinking in relation to practice issues.

The rankings in relation to Evidence-based practice are particularly of note in those areas where there is low academic qualification and where in fact the increased misuse of evidence could be increased by the inappropriate application of it in day to day practice. This is particularly of note in the unqualified and residential sectors.

4. There was acknowledgement within the organisation of internal Experts but these were mostly immediate supervisors or line managers or those who had a particularly accepted knowledge or expertise. There was no acknowledgement of Senior Managers as Experts even though in Part I they were the most highly qualified and most experienced in all areas. External Experts tended to have a higher dominance in all teams and these tended to be identified as psychologists and psychiatrists. Expertise was deemed to be because of increased knowledge base and experience.

It is of concern within the Expert categorisation that experts and advisors may be inappropriately used when cross referenced with the category of Endorsed. It may be because of the considerable dissatisfaction within the Department in regard to
supervisory structures that members are looking to other Experts outside the line management structure for guidance and support.

It was clear from the evidence, that Experts were used for two purposes. Firstly to assist, primarily within high risk areas such as field teams and residential units, as an advisor for difficult situations on a case to case basis. Within the more specialist teams however, Experts were used as a way of looking more at service delivery in a wider context and the development of policies and procedures.

It was noticeable that within the Senior Management Team, experts were not deemed to have high influence and this again may reflect a superior knowledge within this group and also less reliance on those who are advisors and more reliance on each other as a group. This however may cause conflict between senior managers and operational staff when there is a reliance on experts to assist in case matters and this may in fact be undermining the proper line management structure as supported by senior managers.

5. Experiences were noted by the majority of staff as relating to specific cases. There was a core of staff who had experienced traumatic or difficult events which appeared to have a significant 'life'. The debrief system around experiences was therefore vital in order to ensure that matters, whether positive or traumatic, were being dealt with in a constructive way. There was little evidence within this data to show there is a completion of the cycle of learning as associated with experiences.

This was particularly noticed within the unqualified social work group and within the residential sector. There appeared to be significant influence in regard to experience but limited feedback and conclusive processes by which to analyse and dissect such experiences. This in practice therefore possibly creates partial or inappropriate learning.

The lack of appropriate debrief systems could therefore be increasing the risk of the repetition of inappropriate behaviour and magnify the possible defensive actions in the avoidance of difficult or traumatic events.

6. In regard to Errors there is a high level of acknowledgement that mistakes or errors were permissible within the Department. These tended to be identified through self-analysis and with immediate supervisors. The supervisory process was recoded as secondary to the initial identification by the staff member. If this is the case, then it is reactive to identification rather than proactive in the analysis of Errors. Errors within residential establishments tended to be identified by other, similarly qualified members of staff on duty. These members did not have additional expertise or qualifications to help
dissect or challenge such matters. In such settings this may need to be addressed within the organisation.

The identification of Errors across the organisation was also noted via formal and possibly acrimonious situations. In such circumstances the identification of Errors can create defensive reactions and without proper supervisory or debrief processes this could again create defensive reactions. Most teams had a team profile where Errors did correlate with the Endorsed scoring but this was often low and may indicate dissatisfaction in not only the identification of Errors but the supervisory feedback process.

7. Limited Experimentation across the Department was mostly noted as a lack of time but the evidence also showed through this data that Experimentation was often not widely dissimilar to that of the Evidence-based categorisation. There appeared to be the permission to experiment and this was evident in sporadic instances across a variety of teams. Experimentation tended to be listed as trying out new things on individual cases but there were instances of where Experimentation had occurred and had been integrated into the Department. In these instances there was limited sharing and limited acknowledgement of the innovators in actions. These conditions may discourage those who wish to impact on practice.

Experimentation across all teams was ranked the lowest and this correlated with the qualitative data. However what is most noticeable is the low rankings in the senior management group, where expectations may be that this group was the innovator and driver of new thinking within the organisation. In reality this may occur but this group clearly did not identify that function within the balance of the team responses.

8. Feedback mechanisms were primarily noted through the supervisory process or from external forces. There appeared to be limited analysis of other information which is in reality in abundance in this organisation, namely performance tables, social service inspection reports, joint audit commission reports and other management information. The lack of this use of performance data may mean that each team does reflect a very isolated approach to performance, feedback and to behaviour which is endorsed through formal processes.

The supervisory process was only considered partially as positive and there was a significant proportion of staff who were dissatisfied with either the quality or quantity of that feedback. This in reality crossed all team groups. This may reflect the disappointing scoring within the Endorsed section within each team. Where feedback was given and not accepted by the respondent there was approximately 30% of staff who felt that they
would unilaterally act or be undermined or demotivated by such criticisms. When this aspect is cross referenced with the poor identification of Errors via the management process and where there is a high reliance on self-analysis, this lack of satisfactory supervisory mechanisms could be detrimental to a learning organisation.

When considering the data across all teams it was clear that the range of difference between teams including those who were meant to have similar functions, such as the District Teams and the Residential Services, indicated that there was a high level of discretion exercised by the manager and the team in regard to the activities and influences within each team.

The longevity of the impact of the educational experience proportionate to any other influence remains significant particularly when there is such a low post-qualifying update of information. When this is cross referenced with Part I of this data, where the majority of staff are qualified for six years or more, this impact of the educational experience does mean the Department should ensure that it is confident that the educational process equips staff to be 'fit for purpose' and that it is continuing to develop to meet contemporary demands. This clearly also has implications for ongoing training input to enhance that educational experience.

**Part III – Interview and Focus Group Data**

**Introduction**

Part III of this research concluded the data collection process and was focussed on interaction with staff which could be the foundation of feedback and which could also act as a direct method of explaining the research.

**Research Objectives.**

1. To collect data which offered triangulation for both Part I and Part II of this study.
2. To engage staff in a process of action research.
3. To increase the value of the research with a participative and direct data collection model and to encourage completion of other objectives of the data process.

**Organisational Objectives**

1. To engage staff in discussion about key issues.
2. To identify barriers and resistances inherent in the organisation and identify inconsistencies and tensions in that data.
3. To consider positive actions which the organisation can pursue and where staff can see the value of participation.
4. To be particularly inclusive of isolated and disparate groups.
Methodology

Part III was completed via two qualitative data collection processes. All qualified staff in district and specialist teams and their managers were individually interviewed. The process was semi-structured in that there were a number of set questions which were a mixture of open and closed questions – Appendix 5. The interview also allowed for staff to contribute issues which were relevant for them but may not have been raised through the interview process. Responses were recorded contemporaneously, and accumulated with team responses and then across the organisation. This allowed for relevant team detail, through the feedback process, to be described in locality groups and allowed for practices or concerns to be addressed as necessary. This reflected the fact that many issues can be resolved locally as well as organisationally.

A focus group approach was used for residential and social work assistant groups. It was widely known that some of the lateral groupings in the department felt isolated and somewhat detached from the field staff and from management. Social work assistants were a physically disparate group who had common concerns but who were in such small numbers within a team that their collective voice expressing concerns had not been heard. These were staff who are relatively powerless in organisational terms. They carry out activities which are, whether accurately or not, seen as low status and easily replaceable. In reality they have lengthy experience and have localised knowledge which is often irreplaceable. The residential section offered a service that was alienated by two factors, firstly lack of personal knowledge from the majority of colleagues and secondly a challenging and difficult client group namely disruptive adolescents. To hear from these groupings is clearly important, as is increasing their visibility and participation within the organisation. Accessing their views therefore via a group method could encourage verbalisation of difficulties and increase understanding of their perspectives, and give support to those who may feel organisationally detached or undervalued.

The design of the questions was led primarily by organisational relevance and value. They, however, in research terms fell into critical events or issues and therefore the organisational need and research interest harmonised. The critical events or issues were identified by senior staff. The questions also formed the basis of aspects influencing the Department either internally or externally which demanded change or altering of behaviours in individual, group (team) or organisational terms. The same questions were posed individually and in groups with the latter having a more organic and less defined or structured approach. This allowed for the dynamic of many staff contributing. Therefore the issues were commonly raised but retained an ability to cross-reference and compare
the data whilst being carried out through subtly different styles. The focus groups were all facilitated by the researcher with one of the assistants note taking. 24% of respondents participated in focus groups.

The interviews were carried out by the research team, made up of the researcher and two assistants: the population of respondents were divided between these three for interview. The latter had substantive positions in the Department which allowed them to assist legitimately with the research without a conflict in undertaking the activity. Their participation also allowed for respondents to be clear that the activity was organisationally owned and that information, in general terms, would be fed back. The process was not therefore research 'protected' although individual responses were confidential and this was agreed with Senior Managers prior to the 2000 study.

All three interviewers had skills and backgrounds which added to and enhanced the project. All had first degrees and post graduate management qualifications. They are experienced managers who have an extensive practice background in social work allowing them to be confident in their interviewing skills. All three have an open relationship which is challenging and this allows for the reduction of collusion and any hesitation to disagree or participate when not in agreement. This challenge is vital especially as the researcher is a long-standing member of staff. It offers triangulation to the qualitative data and protects against the trap, in a longitudinal study, of selecting information merely to support hypothesis.

The researcher designed the information requirements and methodology and then had a variety of discussions about the reason for the data collection, the methods to be used and the approach to be executed. This was to ensure each of the three team members collecting the responses had a common view about how and why data was collected and for what purpose it was being used for and what were the rules on confidentiality, audience for results etc. Whilst increasing the triangulation and validation of the results produced, it clearly also increased the risk of variety of approach and style. These initial discussions were to reduce that difference as much as possible. The fact that the three personnel had previously worked together and knew the organisation, assisted in increasing a common understanding of language, agendas and subtext that may be occurring and be sensitive to those.

The further benefits to using two other personnel were practical in terms of being able to collect views more widely and extend the range of respondents and to support not only results but action plans which may be designed. The progress of such work in
organisational terms therefore, did not solely rely on one person but on three personnel who could lead change and development.

Results – Part III 2000 Study – Qualitative Data

There were critical events and issues explored with staff and managers. The results will be structured in response to each critical issue with a brief introduction as to the relevance of the issue to staff and the organisation. There was a high level of commonality of results between teams and as such only significant differences in groupings will be noted. The results will be reported therefore primarily across the Children’s Services as a whole unless otherwise stated. The percentage of respondents refers to the ability to quantify the interview responses. Reference to focus group results are made in general terms.

1. Communication

The Department is concerned, at a time of great change, mostly imposed by the government, that staff receive information quickly, therefore questions in this section centred around the best forms of dissemination for staff, how to address problems, how effective current methods were and who were responsible to meet government targets and demands.

The District and Specialist Teams identified common difficulties and solutions to the issue of dissemination of information. The most favoured and effective method of sharing information was via team meetings and group discussion. Across all District and Specialist Teams 37% of respondents noted team meetings with a further 17% noting information via the management roadshows. These group methods were therefore seen by the majority of staff as most useful and do support the academic advice about the strength of learning groups, communities or teams.

However the irregularity of team meetings or attendance at them was seen as disruptive and frustrating for members. The second most favoured approach with 37% of respondents was via written information where individual copies, memos or circulars were circulated which allowed staff to retain and make further reference to the document. The other examples given to assist information flow included a nominated filter person in the teams, E-mail, computer and via the supervisory process.

Difficulties tended to be dominated by two themes. These were time, (to include workload), and information overload leading to the inability to prioritise and identify the
most relevant information and act upon it - all teams noted these two factors as the most
dominant. Those teams which were located on split sites, particularly noted the
incoherent and inconsistent nature of dissemination. This lack of filtering of information
was most evident in these teams but noted in all teams as a difficulty.

Roadshows had been seen positively as a method of communication between senior
managers and staff although their style was criticised as being ‘top down’. The self
exclusion of residential and resource staff is a cause for concern as this group was
usually less represented in attendance. Although the practicalities of shift work did
influence some of this there was within the focus group responses a ‘separateness’ from
the rest of the children’s services staff. This could hamper learning and exchange of
learning and experiences. The level of discretion particularly by those who were in
unqualified grades did indicate in some a possible level of arrogance where there
appeared to be choice in attending a roadshow with the Director or Deputy Director when
in reality there should not have been.

Staff were asked in this section about responsibility to meet targets which were externally
set and processed via the communication mechanisms. 85% of respondents felt that the
responsibility for targets rested with them as individual professionals responsible for a
case, with 27% noting this as a joint responsibility with the organisation and its managers,
the latter relating to making it possible to meet targets and balance workloads.

2. Compliance

*The Department is concerned about the level of non-compliance in relation to policy and
procedures and to the completion of audits.*

The most common reasons given as to why non-compliance may occur was the level of
workloads without protected time to complete audit requirements. Staff felt that
understanding the reason *why* an audit was necessary would assist in engaging staff in
the completion of the task. Including staff members in the design of data collection;
having specific times when data was collated; the reduction of paperwork and the wider
use of administration to assist, with the prioritising of work, i.e. casework against audit
demands, were suggested as methods to engage personnel. A number of respondents
however felt that non-compliance was not the correct terminology. Non-compliance was
seen as negative and resistance whereas staff saw non-completion as relating to factors
such as time, workload and lack of understanding and clarity as to task.
This supports anecdotal and sub-cultural information which indicates a lack of obvious consequence for behaviours which are inadequate. The lack of management feedback to staff on results of audit was noted by respondents as was the lack of consequence of non-completion. This supported responses to other questions where staff did not know that there was in reality a high level of inaccurate data recorded by staff in audits completed by them. This lack of feedback and incomplete internal use of management information may lead to audit being seen as a one way process for external sources rather than assistance to team performance. This assistance may help respondents not only to understand the reasons for data collection but could encourage staff in its completion.

77% of respondents in the District and Specialist Teams knew where procedure and policy books were held and that same percentage found them helpful when consulted. This figure reduced however when noting regularity of use. 32% used the procedure books regularly with the remaining mostly consulting procedure and policy books 'as and when' or irregularly as little as twice or once yearly. This may be of concern in an organisation which is constantly updating procedures to reflect new demands and central government guidelines. When this is further cross-referenced with the question of how staff are made aware of changes to procedures there was a large diversity of responses not only between teams but in teams. The lack of an accepted process by which procedures are updated and those changes notified to staff, could lead to inappropriate actions being taken by staff who may not know of updates or alterations. Inappropriate activities therefore may be misinterpreted as a conscious non-compliance rather than a system's failure.

The two specialist teams recorded additionally more positive responses in that procedures were regularly used and helpful. The reason for non-compliance in these teams were not deemed to be the time restrictions listed by District teams but a cultural resistance – an 'us and them' between staff and audit section. Again lack of clarity and understanding as to why data was required was evident. The use of technology was deemed to be helpful in this process.

It is important to note that management perception may be of a staff group which does not respect or adhere to the requirements of either managers or external audit. The evidence however is that staff accept their responsibilities for audit and targets but that there are failures in engaging staff in that process. Clarity of the task and, understanding of the process and why information is necessary, with feedback on results would all assist the internalisation of audit and compliance as an organisational feature.
The unqualified group of staff had diversity in their group responses. The residential sector considered that they were not fully utilised in assisting their colleagues in the field to complete necessary audit and performance targets. This group claimed they were rarely asked to participate even though they may have the information more readily at hand as they cared for the child or young person. This highlighted the gap between different aspects of the department and was supported by information collected in Part I.

The social work assistant group highlighted that they felt under-valued. The Department’s official stance is that this group should not hold cases and therefore would not have prime responsibility for completion of audit details. However middle managers allow this to happen, giving this responsibility to this unqualified group. Social work assistants perceive the ‘organisation’ that is, Senior Managers, as not valuing or trusting them as opposed to the accurate reason of not asking them to do tasks they are not qualified to perform. The power and influence of the middle manager in this instance is underlined and could be portrayed as subversive in achieving the organisational demand. Non-compliance may be therefore supported by middle managers as acceptable as they allow it to occur. This not only affects individuals but other teams and grades.

3. Induction

At the beginning of this process there was no induction programme for new members of staff. This did risk new staff not changing or altering their ‘mental model’ of what should occur. Thus many staff referred back over a protracted length of time to their experiences in previous authorities. This was additionally difficult for newly qualified workers who had no previous reference point. The lack of induction arguably therefore made the creation of an appropriate mental model difficult. The ‘how we do things here’ tended to be on an incident to incident basis and for both experienced and inexperienced staff entering the Department the lack of a foundation via an induction made the process of integration difficult.

All respondents contributed positively to the prospect of an induction programme. 41% of staff specifically suggested a formal process with protected time to gather information about the department. Issues for an induction programme included understanding policies and procedures, “Who’s Who” especially in respect of the Senior Managers, the available resources, political structure and maps of the area. There emerged the need for two phases of induction. Firstly into the department as a whole and secondly locally into the team. In the latter shadowing other staff or having a ‘buddy’ would assist in getting to know the team style and ‘etiquette’ and the office systems.
Those who had recently entered the department were very frank in their criticism of their ‘induction’ or lack of it. They described this as a negative experience and new members noted feeling ‘dumped on’ especially with large caseloads. The delay of allocation of a caseload or at least a slow allocation of cases would aid integration at a time of personal change and high learning curve. Members of staff recognised the Department’s need to offer an immediate service to clients especially if there had been vacancies. However a negative entry into the organisation had long lasting effects on staff. New members of staff therefore felt dissatisfied and this initial poor experience was seen as detrimental to an ongoing relationship with the Department.

Residential staff had felt excluded from an induction programme and did not know that they could attend. When considering what contribution could be made to an induction programme, this staff group felt it was necessary for two aspects to be covered. Residential staff should understand their field colleagues activities and boundaries and field staff should ‘do a shift’ to know how to care for a challenging group for ‘24 hours a day’. This way Residential staff felt mutual understanding could grow as could respect of each others function.

4. **Image and Value**

*The current image of social work is in external fora such as courts, the media etc. sometimes confusing and leading to ridicule.* Staff were asked how this could be addressed.

Respondents were constructive in their comments as to how to address the undermining and devaluing of the social work profession. Although a small number of respondents (3%) did not agree that there was a difficulty in the valuing of the service, 97% offered methods and mechanisms which could be useful. It is interesting to note that the majority of the responses suggested internal changes in all parts of the Department to work together productively to achieve a more supportive reaction from other professionals and agencies.

11.8% of replies suggested the active involvement of senior managers educating other bodies especially the judiciary as to, not only social work staff qualities, but the constraints within which officers work. This may reduce the use of external ‘experts’ who were seen to add little but were a symbol of lack of confidence in the social work process. 7.9% commented on the lack of support from the department’s own legal team in the court context. Thus other parties were defended in these settings but the department’s officers, in this acrimonious and difficult environment, were not.
23.3% of staff made proposals which they themselves could address. These were regarding the quality and standard of their work being evidential and 'doing a good job'. The need to challenge and not be subservient to inappropriate views of others plus higher self esteem and better self image were seen as important as this would lead to being more confident and self assured. This would be assisted according to some respondents, by positive/constructive feedback. This supports the evidence in Part II of this study in the Knowledge Influences Audit were endorsed i.e. feedback processes were seen as important but currently inadequate.

The media image and negative portrayal of social work was seen by 13% as being countered by better P.R., the wider use of the press officer and positive publicity locally. A further 13% noted the reward factors which would increase any self image and status if pay levels were increased. This would allow social workers to feel more valued and in turn more confident. 13% also noted a need for more training for both social workers and other agencies. This concern about the need for training is important to note.

5. **Personal Development**

This section of questions explored how staff 'kept up to date'. This allowed triangulation in relation to the Knowledge Influences Audit which considered, as this section does, what staff read, those sources whether evidential and valid and whose responsibility it is to update this. The question as to how confident staff were in evidence based practice was also to cross-reference with other sections and to determine levels of understanding.

73.6% of respondents reported that they considered they were personally responsible for their development. 39% considered that it was a joint or sole responsibility of the Department. 44.7% recorded that they had a personal development plan with 51.3% noting that they had no personal development plan.

Staff kept up via a variety of different means. The largest proportion of staff, 31.5%, listed a professional journal as their main method of update with a further 14.4% noting journals and 14.4% articles. 31% listed specified books, 6.5% research documents with the remaining suggestions listed by 5% or less e.g. the Guardian, T.V or Radio, the Internet or training events. This record indicated a high level of 'reference' or directional material, synopsis of works or short articles. There is limited evidence of detailed reading in research. Books tended to be in relation to specific techniques or professional academic writings. 71% of respondents claimed that they primarily undertook such updating in their personal time with 26% listing an ability to update information in work time.
The intention of social work practice to progress to a more evidence-based model is a national and departmental intent. The expectation may be that this can occur automatically. The collecting of evidence, the use of research as evidence and the production of evidence-based practice are not easy or automatic skills to acquire. Further when one considered the qualification base of the respondents the majority of staff do not have first degrees and there is limited research methodology tried and tested by students on a Diploma qualifying course.

In these results 77.5% were confident in their understanding and use of evidence-based techniques. 20% were not confident in these skills. This is a significant proportion of front line staff and managers. When asked what could assist staff in using evidence-based techniques, although 77.5% had noted a confidence in their use, 45% sought more training and guidance. 18.7% considered time as a key factor in assisting the use of and confidence in evidence-based practice.

These factors were the most statistically dominant in responses. It may be important to ensure that staff are able to use such techniques and this should be determined through supervision and training. It is however curious to have a significant section of respondents seeking time to undertake such work. This presupposes evidence-based work is an addition and time-consuming rather than an alternative working method without necessitating increased time to do a task.

Residential centres' and resource centres' team meetings were the main source of updating in these settings. Responses were confined to issues of information passed to the teams such as new procedures and key developments. There was limited evidence of practice updating in these environments. The only exception in the unqualified group was those who were undertaking the NVQ training. Here these officers recorded updated learning in regard to their activities. The resource centres further noted other agency contact which is significant plus library, documentaries and text books.

The group that recorded least updating was the social work assistant group within the field teams. Their limited learning coupled with a view that it was unnecessary, may be of concern especially, as is already noted, the level of latitude given to their activities and the lack of supervisory context.
6. **Shared Learning and Methods of Learning**

The sharing of information on events, experiences or research is important in any learning organisation. What mechanisms are in place to share information and more importantly to avoid repeating negative critical incidents across the Department. Examples of this may be events in court from one office repeated by another yet the court remains the same and may question why there is a repetition. Secondly identifying the methods best suitable to learning is also important.

In regard to sharing experiences and information with colleagues the overwhelming method of exchange was informal. 73% of respondents undertook informal discussion within team rooms, over lunch or with colleagues. 33% noted the only formal route was via team meetings. Colleagues did not share, through any system, information of a developmental nature between offices. Those contacts which existed, centred around staff retaining links when they moved offices. These links tended to be socially, rather than formally based. Learning from others therefore is not explored or experienced in any meaningful or extensive way.

Sharing information on crucial events laterally across the districts and teams was limited. 41% noted that this did not occur, whereas a further 20% stated informal contacts such as friendships in other teams, meeting at training events etc. 9% noted consultation with colleagues in other teams through case transfer.

Methods of sharing information with management appear to be associated with position and relationship. 53% of respondents noted supervision as the main or sole method of sharing. This means that sharing tended to be with immediate supervisors who regularly met with them. For those managers who were not regular contacts then informal methods such as 'as and when' or through development days or roadshows were the main avenues.

This information supports that collected in both Part I and Part II of the 2000 study. There appears limited linear sharing of experiences, events, learnt material etc with the primary method being with immediate managers via supervision. Moreover senior managers have no common, regular or recognised method of being informed, although memo was noted as a mechanism by approximately 12.8%.

Those learning methods which staff found most useful ranged from experience, listed by 43.5%, to 26.9% for both reading and training events. Case related practice was listed by
17.9% and discussion following that practice by a further 17.9%. 5% of respondents did not note learning from mistakes or trial and error whilst a further 5% noted reflection.

The link between practice experience and the practical application of information appears to be the most positive method. This links with the Department's main method of learning, namely dissemination of information and training events which then can be used in practice. Ensuring these are directly linked is important. This reflects back on the previous data about completion of audit and performance targets where if the demands are made relevant, and feedback given which relates to practice, this could encourage compliance and desired behaviour.

Sharing information within the residential service tended to be internal and via team meetings. There was only limited lateral communication and this was via residential managers’ meetings which was confined to a small number of personnel. There was no evidence of lateral communication outside the specialism other than as a case to case basis and no linear communication with more senior managers. This meant that establishments struggling with the same management issues of a difficult client group did not share new ideas or proven techniques. Social Work Assistants also reflected this insular and inward looking approach with communication outside the teams being via supervision.

7. The Department as a Learning Organisation

The crucial question as to whether the Department was or could be a learning organisation was explored. What aspects of the department's current activities supported it becoming a learning organisation and what barriers remained which hampered or restricted the organisation's ability to achieve such a state.

A) Barriers

65.3% of respondents noted lack of time and workload levels as the main barrier to the Department becoming a Learning Organisation. Insufficient or inadequate training was noted as the second most significant issue by social work staff at 20.5%. A range of issues were further recorded which were of lower significance namely communication and resources. Lack of support, and poor supervision are important to highlight as in combination these two factors are noted by over 21% of the respondents. It is of interest however that fear or blame had a lower level of reporting as did stress and staff sickness. This information reflected that recorded in The Knowledge Influences Audit and in Part I of The Comprehensive Audit.
Staff found it easy to criticise readily or identify inadequacies and barriers. These tended to be identified as either systems or individual failures or other failures e.g. managers. There was limited self analysis about individuals’ own actions and no reference to personal influence on a learning approach in the organisation as a whole. This disconnected approach, which has a high level of detachment, may explain some cultural issues in the organisation but is concerning when trying to establish a learning organisation.

Residential staff listed poor communication not only organisationally but blockages between field social work colleagues as ‘99% of the problem’. Staff ‘bucking’ the system and a lack of ‘pulling together’ were deemed important in hampering developments. The competing tensions between teams and groupings were seen as widespread between specialist groupings e.g. fostering v residential, residential v field staff, resources v field staff etc. This lack of co-operation resulting in tensions and conflict between teams was central to the residential staffs’ concerns because the different staff groups had different philosophical starting points. These conditions did not assist learning. Social work assistants noted constant change, lack of communication, lack of clarity, too much paperwork, lack of staff and not listening, as their list of barriers to the organisation developing towards a learning approach.

B) Positive Behaviour

When considering those aspects which exist that support the creation and maintenance of a learning organisation, social work staff may reflect the culture of an organisation which is heavily inspected and heavily scrutinised by external forces. The fact that these forces rarely praise and commonly criticise – a feature of their raison d’être – may indicate defensiveness and a staff group and organisation with a poor self-image and limited self-confidence. Given the high level of the department’s resources dedicated to the employment of staff this may indicate a ‘depressive’, somewhat flat and self-critical mindset which is hard to address. The psychological health of the organisation and its personnel therefore, may be being exposed here where little self and organisational and external approval exists.

Communication improvements were listed as the most significant benefit to the establishing of a learning organisation. 50% of respondents noted these improvements and they were further ranked as the highest influence. 14% further noted the newsletter as a positive enhancement to communication. Training was noted by 33.3% as an important influence and having altered positively in recent years. The very fact of this
audit was noted by 11.5% as an important sign of commitment and a further 6.4% noted management behaviour. Staff commitment, the library, the current information technology, through the allocation of individual laptops, were further listed as key features. 14.1% suggested that they did not know what occurred to help the organisation develop.

These results indicate a dichotomy within the respondents in the social work teams and with their managers. On the one hand training was seen as a significant barrier whilst also being recorded as a positive feature. Communication was listed as a barrier, although of less significance, whereas the responses to the positive features noted communication via the roadshows and newsletter as not only widely popular and positive but ranking highly with training as the most significant impact on assisting the organisation to become more orientated towards a learning philosophy.

The social work assistant group considered there was a more unified approach especially within the localities, and the department wished to raise standards and that providing training via the NVQ route was positive. Residential colleagues again concurred with the view that the training strategy was positive and that progress had been made within the past two years.

8. Staff Issues

Social work staff and managers were asked what issues were pertinent to them that had not already been raised. These issues were to be both positive and areas of concern.

Workloads and a lack of time aligned with reports of anxieties regarding staff sickness levels and stress. These latter aspects related to the nature of work and task focus and there were concerns with not only the difficulties in working with child protection etc but the environment in which such work had to operate. The increasing inspection, scrutiny and perceived inevitable critical mindset of others made this difficult, ironically often to the detriment of the very client that others claimed to represent and 'protect'.

Lack of supervision, and a reflective process had led to management feedback being dominated by case management. Personal development was not recorded as an important factor, this linking with a lack of feedback. These views reflect the audit in Part II which recorded dissatisfaction in both supervision and feedback processes. This may link with the anxieties of staff regarding too few managers and lack of their availability. This concern increased staff's feelings of vulnerability and lack of support.
The view of the role of administration was curiously divided. A section felt that administration had a disproportionate level of power whilst others felt that this group was not utilised to its full potential. Particularly at a time, when as reflected in Part II, there was 'paperwork overload' staff considered the review of tasks as important.

The role of other support networks such as legal services coupled with the lack of managerial availability was significant, as this left staff feeling unsupported and seeking 'advice' elsewhere.

The evaluation of work was seen as important but its current methodology of 'tick box culture' was deemed unhelpful. The widespread implementation of computers for staff was recorded as positive - although at the time of this study it was not fully implemented. The use of computers was seen with resistance by some, although the majority of respondents were supportive of its potential and long-term benefits.

The structure of the organisation was not widely commented on although there were questions around systems and decision-making, flexibility and creativity. This was further noted by some respondents as lack of resources and systems by which to access those.

On the whole, respondents in this section listed issues which were wide ranging and disparate. There was no overwhelming issue listed and no clear theme which dominated. Respondents also noted that they had no issues to raise that were additional to those already noted in the audit.

The residential and social work assistants in their focus groups had specific points which were important to them. All groups felt isolated with little contact with either workers outside their teams, or in the case of the dispersed social work assistant group, each other. Residential staff were critical of the isolation they felt. This was heightened by the client-group they served and others' lack of understanding of their needs.

The social work assistant groups again demonstrated rivalry between similar graded staff in differing specialisms. This was mostly sourced in the different NVQ levels offered to different groups. Although the differentiation was understandable, conflicting messages had created suspicion and unease. This group further felt unsupported by immediate managers through lack of regular supervision and feedback. There was also a strong sentiment of not needing to know more than they already did. On the one hand they felt they were doing the same tasks as social workers but "got paid less" but on the other hand they thought they knew all that was needed and did not need updating, training etc.
This may increase risk in practice because of the failures of 'endorsed' or feedback processes.

**Feedback on Audit Process**

Respondents were asked to comment and evaluate the 2000 audit. There were significant comments made which were positive in nature. The process was described as 'fine', 'interesting', 'straightforward', 'excellent', 'good', 'demanding', 'valuable', 'thought provoking', 'informative', 'therapeutic'. The negative comments were that it was 'rushed', 'not enough time to reflect', 'an additional demand', 'some points repetitive', 'an interruption'.

The majority of staff recorded positive views on the study with some seeing it as an indication of managers wanting to change and do things 'better'. Residential, resource and social work assistants particularly found not only the study useful, and the reinforcement of managerial interest in them, but found the process of the group discussions helpful in meeting colleagues and sharing ideas.

**Conclusions – The 2000 Study**

Correlations have been made at the end of Part I of this study and Part II. These further conclusions are in addition to those already recorded. Part III of this research concentrated on a number of critical questions which were designed to offer triangulation to the other data and also to engage members of staff in preparing for feedback for this process therefore enabling an action research model to be established. The following conclusions are noted:

The two main unqualified groupings of staff had particularly interesting features. There was significant length of child care related experience and a pattern of stability in current posts. This can be positive as experiential learning can be established as experience grows. If however the experiential cycle of learning is not complete then this longevity of experience could be dysfunctional and inappropriate.

The dichotomy of educational qualifications between those with a university education and those who have followed a vocational route to social work has a number of possible consequences.

- Higher expectations from one educational background on the other – this is most noticeable from Senior Staff who have higher academic qualifications than any other group.
Those following a vocational route may have this learning experience compromised by their non-qualifying experience especially if they view qualification as confirmatory to current actions and behaviour.

The range of aspects listed by respondents as imposed or enforced showed again the potential for conflict and lack of mutual understanding, each subset within the organisation working to a specific set of 'rules' and laws. The lack of a proper induction to assist the creation of a common mental model may affect these results. This, when linked with the focus group results on compliance, again emphasises the need for this organisation to be clear about the organisations demands, especially those that are externally imposed. These external expectations, such as performance requirements, have implications for organisational success and sustainability.

Part II of this study showed that there was a lack of sharing of experiences across and between teams. This was confirmed in Part III of the 2000 study which detailed respondents' acknowledgement of lack of communication. Sharing tended to be through personal relationships built on a common case and it was ad hoc. Individuals recorded that the most favoured method of learning was via the group process and this reflects the academic advice on communities of learning and communities of practice. In order to create a learning organisation this would need to be addressed. It was evident that respondents' preference for group learning could be built on positively.

The evidence in Part III shows that respondents did experience better linear communication with senior managers and that roadshows, newsletters etc. had assisted with this. However Part II showed that even with this increase of contact between senior managers and staff, there was still a separation between expectations in regard to expertise and management. In other words, on case matters other experts were noted whereas senior managers as practice experts were not. This of course could lead to discontent or conflict if management decision-making on complex cases was not respected and managers' knowledge accepted. There is some anecdotal evidence of this being the case.

The failure of the organisation through either induction or supervision to be clear about expectations can lead to a perception of lack of compliance. The evidence shows a high level of acceptance of the necessity to comply but a lack of detail as to what that entails and more significantly why.

There was a lack of management feedback, both evidenced in Part II and Part III. This has a variety of consequences. There is a lack of understanding of expectation without
explanation, thus leading to misunderstanding and a perception of persistence. Furthermore the lack of debrief or supervisory process can lead to incomplete reflection on events and incidents. In the case of a violent client this clearly had a long term impact on staff which in some cases appeared unresolved. This can create organisationally defensive behaviour which is hard to break.

Part III showed staff recording that 73.6% considered personal development an individual responsibility with 44.7% reporting a personal development plan. This was not evident in Part I and Part II where two issues were prevalent. Firstly the dominance of learning opportunities as provided by the organisation and the extent of control this established. Secondly the longevity of impact of original qualifying educational experience and the lack of current learning recorded. This has implications for training programmes and the importance of accredited learning events or processes.

The benefits of a comprehensive induction can assist the organisation in transferring the departmental messages to new entrants. Thus the promotion of evidence-based practice, the acknowledgement of error, the encouragement of innovation and experiment can be laid as a foundation. Such permissions are important to promote widespread common goals and practices.

Part III considered image and value yet in the Part II results it was shown that there was a lack of recognition of status and expertise of colleagues. Thus respondents were positive of their own professional value when asked in interview but recorded differently in regard to other staff and managers in the questionnaire. This may show evidence of staff being unclear where they really fit in the 'expert spectrum'.

The results in relation to evidence-based practice may indicate a conflict between individuals ‘theory in use’ and their espoused theories of action as described by Argyris (1990). Thus respondents say they undertake such practices but Part II indicates a lack of understanding and lack of application.

Part III explored this further in the interview and focus group. It was confirmed that respondents listed documents as 'evidence' which would not be accepted as such. The keeping up to date tended to be via directional documents or professional articles. This evidence indicated the organisation may wish to train and enhance the skills of staff in this area, again to ensure that expectations can be met. Current skills base in this area appears low. The rankings within residential and unqualified workers in regard to evidence-based practice again showed a lack of skill and understanding – this was
significant in a group with no training or academic base for such technical areas of practice.

The respondents had reflected positive moves between 1995 and 2000 in regard to moving towards a learning organisation. However time and new behavioural patterns, such as new computers implemented throughout the department, reliant on social work staff and the performance requirements, had in many ways restricted any further developments. Part II reflected this especially in the experience category where extensive action occurred but there was little reflection and adjustment of behaviour accordingly. This was further undermined by the lack of feedback processes which evaluated action.

The Department had appeared to have at least raised the profile of learning and communication between 1995 and 2000. This new analysis could help in specifically concentrating on issues other than those which had been promoted by management experts in the past.
Chapter 8

Conclusions

Introduction

This study is focussed on change within a public sector organisation. It explores a variety of techniques with which to assess, diagnose and plan change within this setting. The fact that this study has taken place over a span of five years has provided the opportunity to examine accepted methodologies of exploring and implementing change under the overall umbrella of organisation development theory. It has further allowed the ability to develop and test a new approach which can complement other organisation development interventions. The close linkage between change and learning has allowed for learning to be used as a conduit for this study and one on which to concentrate this research. Focussing on learning within an organisational context has led to the new approach exploring sources of influence which impact on individuals within their professional or organisational practice.

This PhD therefore firstly considered what constituted a learning organisation and how that differed from organisational learning. In 1995 the academic and management advice given was used to assess and implement changes within the organisation under study. Reflections on that period and on the changing environment of the public sector led to a new way of considering these issues. These have been explored in this study and the conclusions are now presented. The 1995 study was the foundation for the development of new ideas such as Ferris' Eight 'E's Model and the associated Knowledge Influences Audit and its conclusions were the embryonic phase of a new technique. This innovatory approach was in response to some of the academic demands for new ways of thinking and so inevitably acknowledging that study and period in the organisation's life cycle has been important. It is particularly relevant in offering an argument as to why a different perspective may be necessary.

The Learning Organisation

The thinking around learning organisations is aligned with other developments in management thinking. The increased emphasis on the 'soft areas' of management practice particularly the human resource initiatives, organisational development movement and change management, indicates that the principles of learning are at the heart of these academic proposals. The premise of organisational life is not merely to survive but to constantly move forward to meet new demands. In doing so however the
key undertaking for organisations to concentrate on learning is not as Pearn (1992) explains, to learn for its own sake but to enhance the operational output by increasing the ability of its members to problem solve and to progress in an ever turbulent environmental context.

Over the period from 1995-2000 it is clear that there has been an increased managerial acknowledgement of, not only the issues of change management, but also managing that change within complex environmental settings. The external environment for both public and private sector organisations has become based on multiple interactions, often creating non-linear relationships and mixing different organisations' mental models, design, cultures etc. The globalisation which has faced the private sector inevitably establishes new demands, where an organisation may operate differently in different countries. The public sector also faced the inevitability of new demands with the mixing of different organisational approaches with the move towards a more multi-agency approach. This invasion of professional territories between the key agencies of Social Services, Education, Health, Police and the Voluntary Sector has been pronounced. Couple this external complexity with Daft's (1992) analysis of complexity, internally sourced in an organisation, from the vertical, horizontal and spatial dimensions and one can predict the managerial skills necessary to achieve learning and change in such an internal context.

The developments within strategic management and economics, as noted by Tsoukas (1996) and Nonaka (1994), lead on to the development of knowledge management and organisational learning, concentrating on the social aspects of learning through the infrastructures of individuals, groups and the organisation. There is potential within this latter point to trespass into the debate on organisational learning as the issue of knowledge management clearly straddling the two concepts of learning organisations and organisational learning. The initial analysis in this study however in relation to knowledge management concentrated on how it advanced the debate on learning organisations with the aim of showing systematic, structural, observable characteristics that could be used to describe what a learning organisation may look like to internal organisational players and the external observer. This is a particularly useful approach for public organisations which are subject to an extraordinary level of analysis from external sources and therefore is a useful way of trying to describe, for both managers and inspectors, what a learning organisation might look like.

In 1995 there was in reality limited academic models offered to describe the format of a learning organisation. It was for this reason that the author attempted to determine the characteristics of a learning organisation by using McKinsey's (1982) Seven 'S' Audit as a
template by which to assess the organisation. The following is a brief summary of the movement and the extent of change within this organisation between 1995 and 2000.

**Structure**

Decentralisation, local decision making, flexible working practices and self-regulation are commonly accepted as the key structural elements of a learning organisation. A team focus, flexible and organic structure which had a high level of horizontal interaction between departments, was promoted by key academics when describing a learning organisation. Jones & Hendry (1992), for example, claimed flatter structures allowed change to occur more rapidly and positively and Pearn (1992) suggested a delayering process allowed for better communication and decision making between the top and bottom of the organisation. Therefore enabling structures reflecting a participative management style, with a network of communities-in-practice, were key features of a learning organisation.

The development within knowledge management shows an increased level of sophistication when considering the structure of a learning organisation. The two main developments were those noted firstly by Prusak (1997) who suggested that flat organisations did allow for better communication and supported the earlier thinking in regard to downsizing and delayering to ensure that the organisation was not 'clogged'. Prusak however highlighted the importance of not stripping out of the organisation those who were in fact the knowledge holders. In many cases the delayering of middle and senior managers inevitably reduced the knowledge capacity of the organisation because these members tended to have longer experience and a more mature reflection on the organisation. The very personnel therefore who should have been retained were often, through a delayering or downsizing, made redundant and the knowledge 'made redundant' with them.

The two central themes which emerge out of the academic analysis are summed up by Jones & Hendry (1992) who conclude that learning is impeded in an organisation when two features exist. Firstly where there is fragmentation of functional teams with no horizontal connection and secondly where the different strata of the hierarchy have poor upward and downward interaction.

When Children's Services was assessed in 1995 against the structural characteristic noted for a learning organisation, the evidence presented in the primary research led to clear observations. The structure was highly specialist and functionally separated in many instances. The structure itself had many advantages which also needed to be
recognised. It had allowed for, in some instances, the creation of close teams, although this was not widespread, and had allowed for a significant level of protection for specialist areas. These areas previously had been negatively affected, when all functions were together in generic teams, because they regularly took ‘second place’ to high risk areas such as child protection.

A segregated structure in itself may not be a major concern, but in 1995 two factors had affected it severely. Firstly the co-ordinating point between the specialisms was at too high a level with too many layers in between. This meant a possible disconnection in learning terms between decisions and staff actions. The second effect of the segregated structure were limited mechanisms to underpin and reduce the negative consequences of its segregated nature.

Between 1995 and 2000 the Children’s Services firstly delayered removing two strata from the organisational design and secondly it reorganised the functional departments to reduce segregation and to rebalance the equity of service.

By 2000 these structural changes appeared to have made a significant impact on the organisation and its players. There was no evidence at this time of inter-team rivalry although there remains the key feature that teams tended to be isolated within their own geographical area. The functional segregation therefore was translated into a geographical split with limited communication laterally. This is evidenced in Part III of the 2000 study when, via the interview and focus group process, it was acknowledged that there is rarely the transfer of key learning material between teams apart from where it occurs through individual contacts. There was a lack of organisational mechanisms for such transfer.

The delayered structure has had contradictory outcomes. On the one hand in 2000 the contact between senior manager and staff has been seen as positive because of the ability for closer more immediate contact. The conflicting evidence in 2000 however is that this senior group is still not acknowledged for practice expertise and not noted as knowledge holders. The organisational design in 2000, which resulted out of the 1995 study, was not recorded negatively. It is important to note in both structures the power of the middle manager group. The delayering process in 1995 had merely transferred behaviour to others. This group’s capacity and engagement remain key to the transferring of knowledge. It is unfortunate that in 2000 the same potential for blockages at this level remains.
It is acknowledged that delayering can have the detrimental effect of removing key knowledgeable staff from an important area. Although in operational terms this may not have had significant impact, certainly in capacity terms, this potentially has. The capability of the reduced layers to have time to effectively communicate is worthy of further study. Delayering therefore can restrict the capacity to communicate. In 1995 the capacity may have been present but not used to its full potential. By 2000 the question of capacity is crucial. It is also important in delayered structures to ensure that those layers that then take on the responsibility for such communication are firstly aware of those responsibilities and secondly have the skills and ability to do so. Delayering in itself and altering functional structures does not automatically create a better learning state.

**Style**

The collaborative and delegated style of management associated with the learning organisation allows for decision making to be empowered at all parts of the organisation and allows knowledge and experience to be associated with all dimensions regardless of status or position. The prevalent style therefore of a learning organisation is one of employee involvement, personal initiative, confidence and co-operation which leads to a dynamic approach from whatever part of the organisation. This dynamism goes beyond that of looking at merely the organisational tasks to establishing within all personnel a self-managed and energetic approach to learning and development. In the debate on knowledge management this goes as far as to celebrate the achievements of those who are learners and innovators within the organisation where such organisational players, regardless of position, are celebrated for their expertise and knowledge base.

In 1995 the Children's Services style was identified as reactive and often crisis led. This may to some extent have reflected the nature of activities and tasks associated with the Children's Social Service Department. The reactive style however did not appear to be countered by a reflective or proactive approach and so its dominance may have become imbalanced.

To be reactive is not a negative, although as Jones & Hendry (1992) note in regard to Japanese companies it is more appropriate to be adaptive than to be reactive. It is argued here however that it is necessary to retain a reactive approach, and have such potential, especially given the demands of the service requirements. Unless this service and its members can quickly respond and effectively intervene then the safety of the service is arguably in question. What was clearly needed in this reactivity was a balance of reflective mechanisms to track back on events and to debate and review.
These mechanisms need to be part of the normal procedures to give them not only status but to ensure they occur.

By 2000 the environmental changes which have occurred within this public sector organisation have reduced the critical observation, by staff, of the predominant management style being reactive. It is clearly a protective factor in today's environment that managers are able to respond rapidly to government demands which are often short timescaled and highly demanding. It was clear from the focus group and interview data that the reactive style previously criticised in 1995 was seen as a positive feature by 2000. This change of style in an organisation, and the acceptance of that by its members, is an important issue which shows that such a change can be imposed on personnel by the very nature of the environmental context.

Staff

Human resources within any organisation are an important source of competitive advantage particularly when other margins are being restricted. The public sectors have always had a strong human resource reliance as the service delivery is predominantly through the personnel who deliver directly to the client group. Pfeffer (1994) shows that human resources remain the one abiding source of differentiation in any organisation as they give the organisation the individual and unique feel which is, additionally, hard to copy. The other difference with this particular asset is that it can depreciate if not managed appropriately and if it is not allowed to mature and become enhanced within the right conditions. With the right input therefore human resources can increase in value.

Throughout the learning organisation, at whatever level, all personnel will be challenged to change their mindset in order for a learning organisation to be achieved. All members would be encouraged to be democratic in their style regardless of their status in the organisation and this remains so throughout the layers of the organisation. Staff are also described as keen on their own development and their own self learning and wish to use that development to contribute to the organisation. Such demands on staff extend to ensuring that defensive practices are reduced and that openness to criticism is present throughout the organisation and that dissent is dealt with in a constructive manner. Mayo (1993) further suggests that such continuous improvement and learning establish a skilled workforce which reduces its reliance on experts creating expertise in each part of the organisation, here internal members are supported and valued as important contributors.
Staff at all levels, at least on an intellectual level in 1995 accepted the need for mutual support within the department with both colleagues and managers. The critical mindset, the lack of mutual understanding was recognised by all groups but each group also contributed to those behaviours and to a certain extent continued to maintain them. This of course, in practical terms, is easy when a culture exists that is based on a fragmented structure and when workloads and the 'nature of the job' lead almost automatically to a survival mentality.

In 1995, there was confusion between qualified and unqualified tasks. There was identification that the increased bureaucratic demands deflected from operational direct activity thus creating unclear demarcation between different levels of skills and the expectations on certain posts. Thus skilled staff were not considered as deployed on the right task. Unqualified workers undertook some tasks that traditionally would have been done by qualified colleagues. This qualified group, similar to other public sector workers such as the police and teachers, considered their time was inappropriately used on unnecessary paperwork and the mechanism of accounting. By 2000 the unqualified group continued to note the similarity of tasks to those of their qualified counterparts. When managers tried to address this by rationalising tasks between 1995 and 2000, evidence in 2000 showed that this experienced group felt undervalued and undermined.

The army of advisors, present in 1995, was described as causing difficulties and undermining the 'executive' role of the manager. Therefore the anomaly existed that to ignore 'advice' became unsustainable especially if a problem arose. The undermining of professional and managerial expertise occurred through the 'advisory' role of legal, personnel and consultant posts. What was clearly required was a shared understanding of these roles and responsibilities and the advisory status, thus ensuring that advice did not become executive decision making by default with advisors being therefore hugely influential without the attached accountability and potential consequences. In 2000 the power of the advisory or expert group remained. The evidence at this time is that this group may be used to supplement inadequacies elsewhere mostly in the supervisory process.

Swieringa & Wierdsma (1992), along with a number of other writers, support the building of teams and learning communities. Tsoukas (1991) explains that learning is not individually based but is via a 'community' and Lave & Wenger (1991) propose a framework of communities-in-practice. In 1995 there was limited evidence of such communities of learning and again limited evidence of synergy between staff groupings. Learning and experience were rarely shared, except on an informal basis, and critical events were often not learnt from, indeed more concerningly, they were repeated. Links
tended to be socially rather than formally based. By 2000, although there was a clear management group structure by which to meet and share, the segregated nature of learning had not reduced and the outcomes show that sharing knowledge had not increased.

Although dissemination linearly was clearly successful between the organisation and its members, there was no evidence of lateral dissemination of information or sharing between staff members thus assisting in each other's learning. This extends even to the local groups where teams also tended to learn on an ad hoc and individual relationship basis rather than through the group or community-in-practice as an entity in itself. Part III of the 2000 study showed that staff saw three key elements as being detrimental to effective communication and therefore learning. Firstly capacity and time were not built into the process of the task and therefore people were working at full utilisation. This may be a real reflection of the impact of environmental demand on social work and other related practitioners. The accountability for time has become so tight that without allowances for reflection this can be a difficult and unobtainable aim. Secondly staff found they had an inability to discriminate due to the information overload which was occurring. Therefore they were not able to tell what was the most important key information that needed to be selected out of the myriad of disseminated communications which arrived with them. This had led to the consequence that, in the mass of change in policies and procedures for example, staff often had not been selective about that information and therefore had not kept up to date with departmental requirements. This was potentially interpreted as non-compliance, when in fact it was about information overload. Thirdly the irregularity of team or group meetings was detrimental firstly because the team did not establish itself as a community of learning and secondly because the membership was also ad hoc and irregular therefore individuals within the group changed when team meetings occurred.

The barriers which existed in 1995, as perceived by members of staff, to the Children's Services becoming a learning organisation were dominated by the specialist structure, poor communication systems and the current hierarchy with a poor co-ordinating system. By 2000 these balances had altered with no reference being made to the structure of the organisation but a dominant barrier being time and workloads and resources.

In 1995 there was a request from staff to have more delegated responsibility, particularly in issues of finance and discretion in regard to managerial issues. Although in 1995 there appeared to be a high level of discretion on case matters there was limited financial delegation. By 2000 all Team Leaders and District Care Managers became budget holders for the major part of Children's Services budget and became accountable for its
management and usage. This has in many ways created the confidence within those
team managers that they craved for in 1995. This has further changed the balance of
their role both in relation to Senior Management and to their own staff when now they
have got to be accountable for the organisational spend and for restrictions of payments
when they cannot occur.

In a learning organisation the human element is central in achieving knowledge workers.
The evidence in 1995 did not indicate a purposeful or intended knowledge hoarding or
indeed a critical mindset in regard to others, and any rivalry tended to be structurally
based. By 2000 this pattern remains with learning taking second place to the business of
day to day activities with little time or energy to reflect, think and learn. In order then to
become a knowledge worker, the pace of the organisation, the space to learn and the
relaxed frame of mind to do that would appear crucial.

Skills

The most important skills within a learning organisation are those which centre around
communication and social skills and secondly the ability to analyse, to a real depth of
understanding, activities and experiences - this meta-analysis aligning with Argyris &
Schon (1978) single-loop and double-loop learning model. It is commonly accepted by
academics that communication skills are essential to ensure that there is a real dialogue
which includes not only negotiating, relaying and sharing this information but the vital
challenge which is needed to ensure that this occurs. These skills when considered with
the level of meta-analysis used to dissect experiences will of course demand of personnel
self-criticism and the ability to cope with others dissenting from the view held or the
actions taken.

When one considers the developments within knowledge management, there are clearly
new skills demanded of staff in the communication of more than just information and data
but of the knowledge which they hold which is not only explicit but tacit. An individual's,
especially a supervisor's, ability to translate his or her accumulated knowledge to the less
able or experienced member of staff is important in order that the accumulated
knowledge base can be passed on to the other organisational family members so that
they too can grow and develop that expertise.

In 1995 there was a perception that this staff group was highly skilled and that this was
one of its compelling advantages. In hindsight this perception of skill should have been
examined in more detail. By 2000 the analysis carried out firstly via the descriptive data
collection and then the Knowledge Influences Audit shows that in fact there is a real gap
within the staff grouping particularly around those key skills needed to establish a learning
culture within the organisation. In 2000 it is clear that the skills base is somewhat
confused particularly between the qualified and unqualified groupings of staff. This is
heightened by the ad hoc nature of training particularly for the unqualified group. The
introduction of accredited training such as the NVQ, the Diploma of Care Management
and the Child Care Award should establish a clear differentiation in operational skills base
which in turn will assist with the skills base for a learning organisation. There is limited
evidence of the overt transfer of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge and the
subsequent modelling of that for others in a systematic way. There are however pockets
of such behaviour through the supervisory process.

Communication skills particularly for the qualified group and the senior management
group of this professional organisation should be sophisticated and well honed. This is
after all the central issue within this professional organisation in dealing with its client
group. The skills however which appear to be mostly associated with those of a higher
educational background are the presence of analytical and reflective skills. These have
tended to be mostly demonstrated within those staff who have entered social work
qualification via a degree or higher degree route. Qualified members of staff who have
attended Diploma courses have not been exposed to the rigour of analytical and critical
skills analysis which is important in a learning organisation. This will hamper the meta-
analysis needed in single and double-loop learning.

Strategy

In 1995 the academic advice was to ensure that organisational learning was at the heart
of any corporate strategy. Although learning for its own sake is not an organisational
benefit in itself, as Jashapara (1993) explains, it can enhance the competitive nature of
the organisation and give it a significant advantage. Strategies need to be adaptable and
flexible with attainable and challengeable goals. In order for this to be the case they must
be able to not only scan the environment, but be able to convert that easily into an
understandable map for the organisational members to follow. The very strategy
therefore to enhance innovation, to see change as a positive, to have a method of
adaptive organisational direction, is implicit when discussing learning organisation design.

Earl (1997) puts knowledge at the very core of strategy and in effect suggests it is
strategy itself. Any strategy for an organisation ensures that procedures and law, policies
and probable events as well as observations and predictions are all aligned to a co-
ordinated and cohesive strategy which can assist in achieving a learning organisation.
Here the public sector organisations have quite a unique and different approach to
'knowledge as strategy' to that of their private sector counterparts. For the latter the protection of intellectual property rights and brands is a strategic consideration, however in public organisations innovation and new ideas are supported by central government but only under the conditions that such learning can be shared amongst the voluntary and other public sector counterparts. Here therefore 'knowledge as strategy' is used as an issue to see the organisation as helpful and contributing to the public as a whole rather than specifically as a competitive advantage.

In 1995 there were strategic documents written by central senior staff with limited dissemination. The result of having no visible and owned strategy in 1995 was that there was the very individualised and personalised nature of team approach which allowed the protectionism of the team's resources. In 1995 there was certainly no evidence of a perception by individuals or teams of seeing themselves as part of a whole organisation. The lack of mutual understanding of other parts of the organisation led to the supporting of close and possibly collusive groupings which were able to have high local discretion in operational matters, if low discretion on financial matters, thus potentially offering inequity of services and a confused directional approach.

By 2000 this had clearly changed, mostly led and driven by external forces such as the Department of Health, Quality Protects Initiatives, bi-annual position statements, and other major localised initiatives such as Sure Start, On Track, Children's Fund etc. The Department was forced into achieving a clear identification of its 'market segment' and where it fitted with other statutory services and with the voluntary agencies who were now in many ways invading the Department's territory. Such strategic changes were further demanded because of the change in inspectorial demands from, for example, the Social Services Inspectorate. It was evident that this Inspectorate extended its remit from considering client performance to those issues within the organisation which would enhance service delivery. A strategic development therefore became important not only as it was accountable but because it would be inspected to determine whether the organisation was fully conversant with that strategy with all working towards the same aim.

Strategic development has not only occurred within the department but organisational managers have also been participating in the strategic development of multi-agency projects such as the number of government initiatives. This has demanded quite a different strategic skill and has further demanded that the Children's Services are clear in regard to their place, their responsibility and their boundaries within such multi-agency strategic development.
Within that there has been some level of acknowledging a learning strategy as part of strategic development. This again has been primarily promoted by the Department of Health Quality Protects initiative which in year one demanded each organisation to consider its human resource element and how a learning organisation could be achieved. However the lack of understanding the language of this and possibly a perception of central government promoting a concept on superficial levels has led to welcome but partial movement. Although it is clear that this still remains a complicated area which needs skilful handling at least attempts have been made to address this strategic need and on an anecdotal level there is clear evidence of the use of language within the organisation in regard to debrief, the closure of events and the learning that results from that in order to inform a more strategic development.

Shared Values

Shared values refer to in essence the culture of the organisation. When considering shared values it is clear that this is the moving away from a very individualistic approach to that of groups and sharing. Shared values are at the centre therefore of learning organisations and in turn organisational learning. Such shared values range from the acceptance of mistakes, the openness of cultures, the ability and willingness to change and the acceptance that knowledge once shared can not only multiply but is significant for the greater good. Of course organisations are full of primary and sub-cultures and here lies the importance of ensuring that each segment of the organisation works in a common direction and has shared principles particularly around the issue of learning which enhances practice and service delivery. The requirement is the acceptance of the terrific potential of knowledge workers, the importance of knowledge work, i.e. work done by all knowledgeable operators, and within that context the knowledge organisation which accepts knowledge as a competitive advantage to be exploited to the full. In principle the shared value to share knowledge is at the centre of establishing organisational learning and learning organisations within any segment.

Shared values in 1995 in the Children’s Services, seemed to be strong in certain functional areas such as child protection, adoption and residential services but were absent across the interacting areas. This was demonstrated in 1995 by the lack of mutual understanding of each segment’s operational requirements and needs and indeed this separation was often exploited by those who felt more comfortable in smaller specialised and segregated units.

The creation of a strategy has clearly advanced the establishing of shared values within the children’s sector organisation and by 2000 it is evident, particularly in Part III of the
data, that staff and managers have more common values than were previously evidenced. For example, staff's acknowledgement of their responsibility in the completion of performance data and in the necessity for compliance in this organisational setting. Staff were clear of their responsibilities to audit and achieve targets but in 2000 it was evident that there were reasons for what was interpreted by senior managers as non-compliance. Staff firstly claimed a lack of time and resources and equally emphasised the lack of understanding as to the requirements. The interpretation of this resulting in non-compliance goes to the heart of much of the debate around learning organisations in relation to staff and change. Staff need help to understand the reasons for change, the requirements that such change will bring, expected outcomes and outputs and consequences if this is not achieved.

The delegation of all budgets to middle managers and frontline staff by 2000 has increased the understanding of financial boundaries and has also seen a shift in senior managers' behaviour over particular individual critical incident cases. It is almost that by freeing senior managers up from the day to day activities of financial management that they have moved closer to shared values on client input and staff have moved towards a clearer understanding of financial restrictions.

The progress by senior managers to try to establish learning systems within the organisation has not wholly been shared by that of frontline staff. Although clearly it is important to debrief and to close activities, particularly those that were critical incidents, this has not happened in practice. The permission therefore for this to occur has been confined by the operational staff. This may be because of the overall impression within the social work group, shared by most field staff, of time and workload pressures and the inability to have time to think and reflect. Permission therefore given has not been accepted at these lower levels as priority tends to be given to the next activity rather than completing the last. Until there is a shared value of the reflection and completion of events at all levels this will not occur. This may mean senior managers accepting the frontline pressures whilst operational managers accept the senior managers' view of learning from critical events.

Within the informal culture of the organisation in 2000 there is no doubt that the language of learning has become much more evident over the past 5 years. However with that has been the increased defence routines which occur particularly around incidents to do with difficult experiences such as courts. The next step in this development will be to establish practices which enhance the shared value that learning activities do need appropriate analysis and scrutiny from which to address in a detached way the key learning issues and to then benefit others from such learning.
Systems

Systems within an organisation are there to ensure that, whichever structural design the organisation embarks upon, the structural blocks are co-ordinated via a variety of different integrated systems. Between 1995-2000 the need for development in most organisations has been that of the multi-agency nature of the activities that are now undertaken. Systems therefore which deal with the complexity of managing the external/internal interface have become much more prevalent and important in this ever-changing world.

In 1995 there were systems which existed within this bureaucratic organisation which were primarily systems to hold officers and individuals to account rather than enable and enhance the organisational output. Systems tended to be prescriptive and control related particularly in trying to reduce the issues of risk and harm not only to the individual but to the organisation as a whole. Management information systems were unsophisticated and indeed this information tended to be retained at high levels within the organisation. Technology was not used to enhance management information systems.

In 1995 the Department had no appraisal system and therefore personal objectives and activities were not co-ordinated against the overall departmental objective. Feedback mechanisms tended to be via a supervisory process which was often seen as inadequate and therefore there was limited review of operational practices and personnel intervention. The lack of systematic approach to information in 1995 meant that much of the information and knowledge within the organisation continued to be retained by the individual thus creating large banks of tacit, protected knowledge. Organisational information was contained within procedural books and policy documents but active and critical information was rarely disseminated in a positive way which allowed for the analysis of such information and for conclusions to be drawn and actions to be taken.

By the year 2000 there has been significant shift in the systems approach within the Children's Services. Management information and information systems had become particularly sophisticated with the accumulation of data, mostly for external source consumption. All performance management data was relayed to the Department of Health in a set format and via electronic processes. This had enabled the use of technology in a much wider way than was possible in 1995. Technology in 1995 was possibly seen as a luxurious item at a time when staff redundancies were imminent. The government demand for E-government has meant the shift towards the use of technology in a more extensive way. By 2000 all social workers were allocated laptops on which they complete their operational activity. The information was then accumulated and data
used not only for supervisory and feedback processes but also as a management and performance process. The extensive use of technology enhanced the operations particularly of managers and information is fed back on an accumulated basis to direct line managers who now are responsible for not only finance and budgets but also performance of teams. Information, in 2000, was used in a comparative way to rank teams in relation to government demands. This had the disadvantage of possibly creating rivalry and discontent among some teams but overall it increased performance and output for clients and service delivery.

Since 1995 there has been an acceptance of the need for an appraisal system for personnel and indeed the 2000 study has been used as a launch for the appraisal system within Children's Services. Part I of the Research Data was redistributed to individuals and their managers in order that it could be used as the foundation for an appraisal system. All members of staff have been trained as appraisors and appraisees and there is a general acceptance of the value and importance of appraisal systems within the Department.

Although debrief systems have been implemented, they have limited learning impact on the organisation in a widespread way. This conversion of detail into explicit knowledge is restricted, as is the reduction of defensive reasoning. This reflects the dilemma for senior managers, with most knowledge and experience, chairing such meetings and these being perceived as a method of management control and accountability rather than of learning.

**Review of impact of 1995 Recommendations**

There was, between 1995 and 2000, some movement within the organisation which developed out of the conventional thinking of the change in relation to learning organisations. It was evident that structural changes had reduced rivalry between groups and that linear communication had improved, although the functional separation had to some extent been replaced by geographical isolation and separation. However the delayering had removed a level of intelligence within the organisation which was hard to replace.

Strategically the impact of external requirements had the benefit of offering a template for the organisation to consider, and then present, its objectives and associated action plan. However this national document had little flexibility and its highly prescriptive nature could be considered as fettering creativity and indeed learning. The style of the organisation in 1995 had predominantly had reactive traits with limited reflection and theoretical perspective. This was at that time seen critically but by 2000 such reactive traits were
reinforced by central government's change programme and resultant organisational demands. This, on the one hand, reduced internal dissatisfaction with such reaction, where this style became associated with survival and good management. However the very fact of externally driven change and the level of accountability marginalised the time to reflect and could inadvertently reinforce the predominant organisational style, particularly of the more powerful managers.

There has clearly been positive movement within the department at a time of massive change. However such partial development may be because other aspects of the organisation have not been assessed or received attention. Further the power of external stakeholders and the environmental conditions on a public sector organisation have an impact that is not being acknowledged. It is with this in mind that in 2000 other dimensions were explored and a new model – Ferris' Eight 'E's was tested.

**Why a New Approach?**

The analysis on organisational learning showed a number of important issues to consider when addressing organisational learning and in turn enabling those processes to enhance the establishing of a learning organisation and to support the management of change. Firstly there is the influence on individuals of their past experiences and their established patterns of behaviour as a result of classical conditioning which refer to stimuli and response. Finchman & Rhodes (1994) explain both this and operant conditioning which can either stimulate and replicate positive behaviour or create patterns of escape and avoidance when events have been difficult or painful.

The functional analysis of what goes on before and after a task and the systematic evaluation of results tracking back to base, are important elements in deciphering particularly negative and disabling events. Seligman (1975) notes the importance of this to ensure that 'learned helplessness' is not established in individuals where avoidance of subsequent similar events can occur. This learned helplessness is particularly important when considering a segregated structure with work elements which are very functional. Therefore practitioners do not see the beginning of the process of the work or the end – only their point in the intervention and not the possible consequences of their part in the whole process.

By 2000 the structure of the organisation reduced the disconnected actions between functional teams and child care workers followed through the whole process. It was however evident that what needed exploration was a deeper analysis of the success of such structural change and whether that had reduced 'learned helplessness'.

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Secondly the instituting of such behavioural patterns in turn creates preferred ways of dealing with events and issues. The complexity of sifting, sorting and then categorising information is practised to the extent that new information is then selected into a preferred structure for the individual concerned. The skills theorist such as Gibson (1968) recognises that the increased complexity and analysis demands more skill and is likely to be associated with the more knowledgeable. Unskilled workers, on the other hand, are at risk of confusing information and then responding inappropriately. This analysis also showed that such preferences extended to learning style as based on Kolb's (1984) learning cycle. In essence these writers proposed that having an experience on its own was not enough, it needed to be reviewed or reflected on, then concluded and finally subsequent new approaches were planned and then implemented. In 1995 the techniques used, successfully identified learning preferences but did not show what evidence there was for the completion of the learning cycle by event. Thus individuals own experiences may be incomplete and these processed, not identified.

Thirdly there is the recognition within knowledge creation of explicit and tacit knowledge and further the motivation by which these two knowledge types are shared. This moves to the heart of much of organisational learning. How do knowledge and learning flow from the individual to the multiple. Lave & Wenger (1991) consider this is through community-in-practice and this is reflected by Tsoukas (1994) who supports groups as key to workplace learning.

Learning in such group settings can be direct or vicarious therefore individuals are not only sharing their experiences and learning but are learning from others. Thus the individual's own experience expands beyond that expected of a single event. One can see from this very process how groups are also potential creators of organisational defences before even an event occurs. Thus story telling can be such that it can potentially over exaggerate trauma. This goes back to the individual debrief setting from the psychological perspective. If this is not dealt with appropriately then it grows out of proportion and begins to be relayed to the newcomers and recruits. This is evident within this organisation in both 1995 and 2000 where there is a level of anxiety established about certain processes. The repeated individual incidents can then become a group and organisational defence by default because it has not been managed in an appropriate way to detraumatise each individual incident. Here then the social codes begin already for those who may never experience a difficult situation but may create resultant and avoidant behaviour because of others' activities and experiences.
The power of teams and groups cannot be underestimated and in itself is a particular collective skill. The managers and leader role within it is important in scene setting and engaging the rest of the group in the organisational process. Tjosvold (1991) emphasises the importance for such groups to have a controversial and critical nature in order that there is an exploration of new ways of thinking and ideas. The intention is to constantly search for a new and stimulating state within the organisation, creating possibly higher morale and strengthening working relationships. Of course controversy or as Senge (1990) terms it ‘dialogue’ can be personally challenging and can in return create avoidance from staff members who may find teams and group meetings particularly emotionally draining. It seemed then important to try to explore how this organisation did share information, how feedback and ‘controversial’ ‘dialogue’ occurred and what organisational defence state may arise out of that.

In order for the individual, group and organisation to learn, completion of a learning process is necessary. In order for these processes to be positive there needs to be an acceptance that learning will change and alter behaviour. These changes can be at different levels and this is where Argyris & Schon’s (1978) single, double & triple-loop learning is particularly relevant. This addresses, not only the outcome of an incident and whether it was a mismatch to expectations, but also the deeper level of considering the values behind that intervention and outcome and the insights that gives. Ultimately considering the questioning of the very principles on which an organisation is built can occur.

It is this latter point that brings together not only the internal organisation but the external environment, as Lam (2000) explains the societal level can influence this very questioning of the principles on which the organisation has its foundation. One has only to consider the public sector and the influence of the external sources to acknowledge the importance of this aspect.

Public sector organisations and specifically Social Service Departments were considered in some detail in Chapter 4. The professional bureaucratic nature of such organisations as described by Mintzberg (1979) has given way to developments as noted by Laffin & Young (1990). They argue that professionalism within such organisations is on the wane and that such a unique aspect to this type of organisation has reduced. Such reduction has in many ways clouded the differentiation between public and private organisations. Stewart & Ranson (1988) continue to emphasise the differences between these organisational types and Rose (1999) supports the distinctiveness which exists within such organisations as those in the public sector.
The Social Services is a good example of the sector type. It is heavily controlled by state, highly accountable, likely to be less risk-taking and likely to have some level of defensive patterning. In addition, it is exposed to extraordinary societal conditions with such challenging forces as the media and a battery of solicitors, and where strategic control and planning is reactive to the political and financial vagaries of the day.

Why is this important to note? The answer lies with a number of writers who emphasise that a new approach is necessary in order to cope with the above. Ranson & Stewart (1994) particularly note how such organisations are grounded so firmly in politics indeed more strongly than economics and Balloch, McLean & Fisher (1999) enhance this argument with their analysis of social services departments. They explain how, even within the public domain, there is further differentiation with these departments. It is within this context that the research in 2000 explored a new approach – a different way of considering a complex problem.

Knowledge Influences Audit – The Eight 'E's Model

The Eight 'E's Model endeavours to consider learning from a different range of issues than that previously noted in other text. The Eight 'E's, as identified, are those influences which impact on the individual and which subsequently encourage them to share both explicit and tacit knowledge in order to convert that individual knowledge into a shared knowledge base and consequently achieve organisational learning.

Education

It is clear from the Education analysis that education as such has a number of key additional elements other than that of merely passing on explicit knowledge to those who are going to become or are organisational players. The analysis in Chapter 5 showed that the linkage between education and the social need and expectation is deeply interlinked. This returns us to the analysis by Lam (2000) where clearly societal factors do influence the organisational learning through those who are individually trained. The labour market, in relation to Social Services, is such that there is a desperate need for qualified social workers with a lack of appropriate entrants to this field. This is very similar to other public sector domains. This somewhat places a different emphasis on education than that of the initial analysis, by particularly Watts (1983), who sees education as a real source of selection for those who may then become organisational players in the future. This places a need on organisations and how they use education as a source of conditioning for members of staff moving into the Department.
The research in 2000 showed that personnel in this department entered qualifying education via two routes, namely an academic route or via a vocational route. The academic advice in relation to adult education is of interest here. Tett (1993) explains the dichotomy between those adult learners who have had positive school experiences and those who have not. The latter are likely to be more restricted or defended in their learning capability. Tett (1993) further notes women, older persons, ethnic minorities and long term unemployed are underrepresented in the adult education experience. This is of interest in the social care field where much of the workforce in direct service delivery tasks are women, possibly older and with gaps in their employment record.

This employment and education mix is important to acknowledge given the drive to recruit to qualifying and professional ranks via the ancillary or support route for example classroom assistants becoming teachers, social work assistants to social workers, nursing auxiliaries becoming nurses etc. These individuals have overcome their previous conditioning and cultural issues which have constrained them. They have been supported by encouragement from their employer but it remains that this complicated mix may have quite different educational outcomes.

Those members of staff who have entered social work via a degree route had quite a different view of their educational background than those who entered via the vocational route. It was clearly evident that they had a wider range of skills and ‘knowing how’ as described by Eraut (1994) of acquiring knowledge, skilled behaviour, deliberate processing, giving information and meta-analysis. It was also evident from the demographic information that those who had attained their qualification via a degree route were likely to be higher ranked within the organisational structure and because of the demographics of that structure they were predominantly male.

Those who had progressed to social work qualifications via the vocational route noted the importance of their educational basis in giving them a confirmation of the practices that they had used as unqualified workers. This is a particularly interesting aspect when considered against the academic advice of the use of Education being a way of critically analysing behaviour and redressing those issues that may be imbalanced. The danger therefore is that the majority of staff were already conditioned into an organisational mental model and had a predominant cognitive style before entering their educational base. This may have an effect on the value of that educational process because of the dominance of their already existing mental model. If the organisation is dominated by, as has already been accepted, a limited approach to single-loop and double-loop learning this process may be difficult for those who have become members of the organisation and progressed to social work training via a vocational route. It could be predicted that
these officers may have less ability to consider double-loop learning if they are already pre-conditioned into an organisational mindset which does not practise such a level of challenge.

It therefore becomes important to recognise the difficulties that occur when the labour market is in such a state that entrant requirements for courses become flexible to the extent that it may in fact damage the learning process. These members of staff therefore may not be receiving the range of skills, through the educational process, necessary which are over and above that of merely relaying explicit knowledge through the course material. Therefore for example the additional criteria of socialisation, orientation and preparation, as noted by Watts (1983), have already occurred prior to the Education process and not as part of it.

The initial endeavours therefore to ensure that Education is a way of instilling work ethics, achievement, behavioural collectives and social team skills may for a significant portion of staff have been aspects which have been programmed into the individual prior to entering the educational process. The educational input therefore may be subject to the very selection, avoidance, and defensiveness because of the trainee's past experiences – a real example of possible defensive routines.

Ranson (1994) explains how education is also aligned with the hierarchy of opportunities within the organisation. If the predominant staff group is those who have entered learning later in life and who may therefore not proceed through the hierarchy of opportunity then there is not an inherent reward system within that educational system to encourage learning. It was clear from the evidence in this study that there was a high level of vocational staff who had remained within their current jobs for a significant period of time. It was also evident that those within the hierarchy who had progressed to management status had a wider educational base and earlier educational experiences. They further had used their education as a method of achieving status and promotion.

Knapper & Cropley (2000) note the importance of creating, within the organisational structure, not only an ability to learn, such as thinking processes etc, but establishing a willingness to learn, a motivational attitude and learning for its own sake. If those who entered the vocational route merely saw this educational experience as a way in which they reinforced their existing behaviour as lower grade social work assistants and as merely a method by which to gain rightful recompense for those duties, then this willingness to learn will be restricted. There is clear evidence from the interview and focus group process that the social work assistants felt strongly that there was a lack of clear definition between their own role and that of the social work role. This is further
shown in the demographic information collected in Part I where social work assistants and social workers were both receiving similar type training from the organisation again with little differentiation.

The changing labour market and the use of education within the public sector therefore has become a more complicated relationship than that previously identified. The expectations on the employer's part is that education will establish a level of competence from which to operate. It is clear from the educational analysis that there is a gap between that expectation and reality. The evidence showed respondents listed their educational experiences as having limited reference to skill based activities. This identification is crucial in order that the organisation can supplement the educational process where gaps may arise.

If the education process is also there to allow for the creation of social groupings and to establish controversy and, as Senge (1990) suggests, dialogue, then the style of the course delivery becomes important. This is cross referenced with the government's demand for trying to achieve as much flexibility within the education delivery as can meet the diverse needs of those who seek to be educated. The consequence however of a very individualistic route dominated by distance learning may be that some of those additional team skills necessary for organisational learning purposes become much more threatened. There is evidence within this study, that team meetings are not a strong source of either group work or group learning. It could be speculated that this may reflect on course delivery style and may be a key issue for employers to negotiate with those who are course deliverers.

There is no doubt from the evidence presented that education has been used by this group of staff, who are under significant social pressure, as a defensive tool particularly when exposed to acrimonious situations. There is however little evidence that the skills presented on the course in fact did establish practices which in themselves could help the individual to be more defended. Having the qualification therefore was a defence in itself, as opposed to the qualification creating skills establishing good practice which would then be unquestionable. This may to some extent reflect the gap between the academic institutions understanding of what is needed for social work today and that of an organisation that is experiencing rapid change.

If Education is as Colletta (1996) suggests, a 'deliberateness', a 'structuredness' in regard to the content and role, then it is important that those who are purchasing from this educational model are receiving the skills and educational base that is expected. This
may be difficult if the expectations of those who had received qualification via one route are not met by those who are now receiving education via another.

This leads very clearly to the demand for both the employer and the academic institution to work closely together in course design and in practice elements. Teichler (1995) promotes the need for a joint curriculum designed by both academic and employer. This should reflect the course's pace and the identification of those areas which the course in itself cannot meet. Employers may need to note explicitly their expectations of qualifying training and work together in partnership with academic institutions to achieve this. An internal training plan can then reflect particular need or continued gaps.

The evidence presented showed that education must be constructively addressed particularly when the results of the ranking of Education show what a powerful influence it is on individuals and how long education is sustained as an influence over the career of a professional. This may reflect the lack of a continued professional development programme or it may reflect the demographic information that there is heavy reliance placed by individual members of the organisation on their first qualifying training. This is disproportionate and does not reflect Becher's (1996) observation that rarely are universities used for post-qualifying study and this tends to be satisfied through other more experiential routes. The 'extended life' and influence of education on a staff group, that has the demographic profile of this organisation, is frankly staggering and organisationally must be considered given the long-term effects that the educational input has on those who are practitioners.

It is also worth noting within this organisation that there is a large number of members who are unqualified and where the departmental programme is for them to progress through certification via the NVQ route. There was limited reference from this group of the value of the NVQ training or indeed the educational process. This is important to note for the organisation particularly where there is an expectation that such a route is satisfying the educational needs of those staff members in those particular settings. This coupled with the concern that minimal competence programmes such as NVQ can confine learning and merely acknowledge existing skills, is worthy of action and challenge.

The education results show a number of key features. Firstly, there may be a conflict of expectations arising out of educational experiences, thus senior managers who were more qualified and had a more sophisticated skills base may expect of others similar abilities. Secondly, as Tett (1993) reflected, women and older persons may have more restricted use of adult education. In this study these late entrants remained in the lower
ranks of the organisation post qualification. Thirdly the difference in skills base, especially conceptual and analytical skills may affect the ability to progress organisational learning and a learning organisation.

Enforced

Chapter 5 explored the reasons behind and the extent to which enforcement occurs in the public sector. It acknowledges the political links to delivery of public services and the extensive reliance of politicians on success and performance in this area. Joyce (2000) explained the political leaders' response to local demand and so established their raison d'être for political selection and survival. Prince & Puffitt (2001) note how, the central mass of the public, influence their elected representatives and they in turn make change happen through legislation and statute. This is why Ranson & Stewart (1994) emphasise how important public sector organisational learning is influenced by societal learning. Possibly, the greater the lack of confidence in the public sector the greater the demand for control.

Dawson & Dargie (2002) see this as having resulted in the new public management which curbed self-regulation and increased independent review. The extent of control from central government has by default arguably resulted in direct management where in reality the independent actions of professionals is limited. Change and learning in these circumstances is different but no less powerful in their impact. It may however have an effect on how it manages the transfer of tacit knowledge.

It is obvious from the analysis that the public sector organisations are strongly influenced by the impact of those expectations which the government imposes on them. The level of enforcement is significant and is demonstrated through the variety of legislative and statutory instruments as well as guidance notes disseminated from central government. This means that there is a high expectation to act according to others' demands, and where such demands are placed on the organisation, to control behaviours. The analysis of organisational learning will show that individuals best learn when they, as Kim (1993) explains, not only 'know how' but 'know why' expectations are set and behaviours demanded. Imposed change can clearly elicit strong resistances and these resistances can often be interpreted as non-compliance as opposed to non-comprehension. If the ownership therefore of the necessity to change has not been established, avoidance or adverse reaction can occur.

In 2000 there was limited evidence across the organisation of understanding holistically the demands that the government places on public sectors. Within the middle manager and practitioner groups this was primarily confined to practice issues and did not include...
the wider perspective of performance requirements, personnel legislation, human rights legislation etc. This lack of wider acknowledgement does cross reference with the results which show that organisational members are not resistant to compliance with expectations from government but that they may have had limited knowledge of those expectations.

Prince & Puffitt (2001) noted that non-compliance often arises out of deficiency in knowledge, resources, support or intent. It appears here that there is deficiency within the service primarily in knowledge and support. When considering the series of stimuli and response it is clear that, both in the classical conditioning and operant conditioning parameters, the length of time between a stimulus and a response can result in avoidance or adverse reaction to events. The length of time between performance measures and government response is so great as to make this linkage weak.

The second avenue for performance compliance is that of internal expectations through policies and procedures. On the whole legislation and procedures were found to be helpful. This was different to the evidence presented in 1995 where procedures particularly were found as confusing and labour intensive. This may reflect the organisational environment that now exists around key decision making where having procedures often offers guidance and structure and is a protection and a defence.

It is of interest to note that in regard to policy and procedural documents unqualified staff tended to more regularly use those documents and they were described as particularly influential. This may indicate a reliance on such procedures by unqualified workers in the absence of other appropriate advice and this is important for the organisation to note.

The evidence in the 2000 study further shows that in the arena of enforcement, there is impact for the educational programming which may not reflect the societal and governmental changes which have occurred. The necessity of understanding control and accountability issues goes beyond practice referrals and may need to be built into the educational process in order to avoid a negative response to the managerial need for such adherence. There are therefore implications for educational output and course design.

There is no doubt that managers with a professional background working in professional organisations, can assist in the enforcement debate. These can be the translators for the organisational members of government demand. This may be more difficult where there is a clear dichotomy between the management and professional staff. In this organisation however this dichotomy does not exist but there does appear to be a lack of active
promotion of performance demand which in reality may only reflect good practice. It may be important therefore that managers become more aware of their duties as transmitters of that intent and try to achieve better performance through greater understanding.

Managers will be aware that in order for enforcement to occur in a positive and integrated way then Kim's (1993) three systems of procedural, behavioural and interpretative systems must be in place in order to ensure that those demands are embedded in the organisation. The rankings as shown in the evidence of the 2000 study in the Knowledge Influences Audit indicates in general a wide acceptance that those issues imposed on the organisation have a high priority. Although clearly these mostly relate to practice legislation there is however an understanding particularly amongst field teams that those issues enforced have powerful influences on their own actions and behaviour. It is however of concern to note that within the social work assistant group and one of the residential establishments, where there are high levels of unqualified staff, that enforcement was ranked significantly lower than other sources of influence. This technique allowed the organisation to identify which teams may need to have a greater understanding and acceptance of the importance of those issues which are placed as requirements on the organisation and the need for compliance.

Evidence-based

It is a governmental and managerial expectation that social care and health care practitioners move towards an evidence-based approach in their practice. Gomm & Davis (2000) support the move of both the government and professionals on insisting that practice has firm foundations in an evidence-based application. Evidence-base has some significant benefits for both the organisation and the practitioner and as Muir-Gray (1997) notes professionals can equip themselves to undertake best practice by including in their armoury evidence-based practices and ultimately decision making. In an organisation that is predominantly risk adverse then evidence-based practice is a way in which to reduce that risk taking and as Beck (1992) and Dunnant & Penter (1996) suggest this scientific approach is a way of reducing the 'age of anxiety'. Further as Giddens (1994) suggests, evidence-base almost 'promises' the reduction of this by the very fact that an objective and systematic process has at least been gone through. The aim in evidence-based practice is to increase certainty as far as possible and to at least inform those more difficult and complex decisions in as complete a way as possible.

Bury (1998) extended an evidence-based analysis to consider the other aspects of organisational practice and included not only client choice but evidence-based management, evidence-based commissioning and purchasing and evidence-based policy all leading to an evidence-based organisation. The same tests of evidence apply in the
formulation of policy, commissioning, management etc, in the identification of the best possible objective sources to inform those key decisions whether that be in one aspect of the organisation or another. Sachett et al's (1997) description of the “conscientious, explicit and judicious use” of evidence covers all these categories.

The need for sophisticated critical appraisal skills is particularly important in this area. Research should not be accepted as such unless there is a real examination of the validity and relevance of that research base. Dawes (1999) does suggest journal research and articles are often of insufficient quality and that discrimination is particularly important when dealing with research material. It is clear from both the evidence in the Knowledge Influences Audit and in interviews that there was an inadequate understanding of evidence-based practice and what in reality this meant. There is a necessity for critical appraisal skills and a clear understanding of this important source of influence on knowledge. If this does not occur then there is the potential for chaotic and inappropriate information to be operating within the organisation without proper scrutiny.

The evidence however also shows that the organisation has a high level of control over the disseminated information which occurs. This has happened by default and mostly reflects the lack of independent activity almost widespread throughout the organisation by its managers and practitioners. The information which does occur and is disseminated from senior managers is of high quality and supported by such mechanisms as the Centre for Evidence-Based Practice and the Research in Practice Initiative. Both of these being Local Authority and Government sponsored. This appears a ‘safe’ way of filtering research and establishes common approaches amongst the organisational players.

The analysis of evidence-based practice shows the national view of social work practitioners being reflected within this organisation. It is a sad reality that Brown & McCulloch’s (1975) research is supported as late as 1995 in Sheldon’s work and in this study. There is a clear lack of reading unilaterally in the organisation outside case and policy documents and a lack of organisational framework to achieve this. Additionally, as shown by the research at that time, and again reflected in this research, social workers are very susceptible to the last article and the latest trendy fad. Brown & McCulloch (1975) and Sheldon (1995) evidenced the lack of critical appraisal skills making discernment difficult within the social work practitioner group. The evidence from this study reinforces that information and shows a continued lack of appropriate use of evidence-base within practice. Trinder (2000) further acknowledged the difficulty of establishing evidence-based practice in social work because of the highly complex mix of qualified and unqualified staff within a social care organisation. This again is reflected
within this organisation. Indeed Trinder notes that up to 80% of social work agencies are staffed by those who have received no formal training let alone are able to exercise critical appraisal skills.

Tozer & Ray (1997) and Sheldon et al (1999) noted the difficulties of the lack of an evidence-based culture within an organisational setting. This is not reflected within this organisation although some of the mechanisms which could assist are not fully used. Teams and groups are not evidenced as sources of discussion for research material. Further complex and difficult documents are not always translated into understandable material.

Walsh & Ham (1997) note that there are four important aspects for an organisation to consider when moving towards an evidence-based approach. Firstly establishing a scientific culture, secondly managing knowledge in a systematic way and disseminating it appropriately to the right people at the right time; thirdly that there should be systems of audit and review before further research is implemented and finally there should be an incentive to perform. The evidence within this organisation shows that there is a partial scientific culture mostly led by senior managers who have a more academic scientific background. However there is limited evidence that there is an organisational culture which has taken on the clinical nature of research and maturely placed that into practice. Further, knowledge is not currently systematically disseminated to the right people and this is evidenced by inappropriate personnel at inappropriate levels receiving detailed and complex material where they may not have the skills to analyse and appraise that information. The evidence also shows that workers are in themselves poor active readers and as such are not generating information for themselves in a way which will expand their practice and academic base. Systems for audit and review of research information are not currently present although there are systems for audit and dissemination which could be used if research was more fully integrated into the organisation and practice. There is additionally no extrinsic reward to encourage people to change behaviour to a more evidence-based model. It is however the case that there is intrinsic motivation through the use of such information to defend one's practice and to avoid ridicule and embarrassment.

In summary, this organisation appears to have a number of key positive features which will encourage evidence-based practice. Firstly there is a general acceptance at all levels, including the leadership of the organisation, that it should be encouraged but with that encouragement there should remain the professional judgement about what is right in individual case matters. Secondly the organisation has good dissemination methods and this is evidenced by the level of control within information sharing in the organisation.
It is however the case that evidence-based practice is not well understood and that the current skills to make this happen are not present. There is a lack of critical appraisal skills and further there is a lack of confidence evident in being able to discriminate about the use of evidence in specific client issues. Therefore the responses particularly for the field teams were that evidence-based practice was possibly used as the answer to some critical incidents as opposed to a process to inform key decision making.

This organisation could clearly use such mechanisms as team champions to encourage within the team setting critical analysis of research findings. It may be important to try to generate within the team structure research evidence which can then be used as a ‘controversy’ and a technique to spark critical debate.

The rankings within the team also show Evidence-based as being middle ranking for the majority of staff with some members ranking it the lowest influence. Managers may want to consider the scoring and determine whether this does identify the need for additional training and explanation. It is also important to record that the two residential establishments had relatively high Evidence-based scorings over and above that of Education, Endorsement and Evaluation. This would tend to indicate an inappropriate understanding of evidence-based practice in relation to the other categories and would question the appropriate use of such information in unskilled hands or may indicate a search for solutions which were not satisfactorily met internally.

Expert

The categorisation of Expert is more or less commonly agreed across the academic disciplines. Hall & Smith (1992) notes the key qualities of special knowledge and particular experience allowing for individuals to be seen as having expertise in a particular area. Those within the legal context would see qualifications and experience as the key attributes needed for those who can be acknowledged as expert in his or her field. Simon & Chase (1973) are but one set of writers who acknowledge that experts have a different cognitive quality which makes their abilities in perception and knowledge organisation particularly helpful in the selection of information which may build on previous experience and knowledge. These specific cognitive abilities add to not only Education but also Experience and they allow the Expert to use those qualifications and experience more productively. They can assist in interpreting what may appear to be surface data in a more meaningful way because they place it in a system of representation. Zeitz (1997) notes experts have a different way of organising knowledge and have a greater ability to reason, abstracting more from given information.
Impacting on this mix of cognitive, educational and experiential background, is the social context of those within the organisation who accept these individuals as having expertise. Those who have the competencies already noted should then have the support of others in order to create that status. The group accepts that these individuals have something extra to offer to the context at large. Feltovich et al (1997) note that experts often receive their status from others. Firstly when the task is recognised by others as needing particular skills and secondly where individuals are accepted and authorised as such by the group. The social context of the expertise, of course, links with that of the organisational context and issues around expert power within the organisation.

Part of the restricting or undermining element of experts within an organisation is the willingness to share particularly tacit knowledge. Experts are the embodiment of both explicit and tacit knowledge but is the latter shared freely and willingly and not held back as a status symbol. This is what really makes an expert useful within an organisational setting. Otherwise he or she can hold this tacit knowledge and only deem to share it at times when it is advantageous to themselves.

The evidence presented in the 2000 phase shows that there are a number of features accepted by the majority of organisational players which complies with the academic advice. Those who were deemed to have special knowledge and experience were listed but they tended to be persons from external sources mainly psychologists and psychiatrists with internal expertise mostly being those in immediate supervisory roles. This complies with Bachman, Smith & Slesinger's (1966) advice that experts have a particular position of influence in a supervisory relationship and that organisations need to manage such relationships to survive. They should complement rather than conflict with the main structural activities.

When one considers the other two main perspectives of expertise, namely additional cognitive abilities and the social context, then this becomes especially interesting. In regard to experts having particular cognitive abilities or the specific competency of scrutinising information in a specialised way this was not acknowledged across the organisation. Experts instead tended to be from particular professional backgrounds or to have had a particular decision power over the individual. There also tended to be within the responses an element of absolute acceptance of the expert's view rather than the critical appraisal of that position against the rest of the organisational or managerial view. This is clearly a risky strategy given that experts are mostly used in an advisory role rather than in an accountable process.
The second aspect which is of note, is the lack of internal acknowledgement of either social workers as experts or the senior management group as such. In regard to the first segment of the organisation this has real questions for the self-image of the profession and how staff see their own members. Therefore the social context may be heavily impacted on by environmental conditions which place such professionals under threat. This lack of personal confidence may therefore be supported by the social context. Secondly it was particularly of note that the unqualified group did not see their social work qualified colleagues as having expertise.

The lack of acknowledgement of expertise within the senior management group is particularly fascinating. Here is a group that the demographic information shows, has both extensive experience and is more highly qualified academically than any other section of the organisation. It is especially interesting to note that there is a tendency to be dismissive of senior managers because they are not deemed to be 'current practitioners' within the social context. In practice this is inaccurate but the perception of workers is one which can easily create conflict with the lack of acknowledgement of expertise at this level. Therefore when in 1995 there was unilateral decision making without consultation, this may have promoted particular resistance among the social work group. The fact that social workers have been included in key critical decision making in the interim has not however diluted the dismissal of senior managers as having expertise. The interesting fact is that some of those listed as experts are significantly less qualified and less experienced. The social context of expertise is shown here to be very powerful.

The Expert category under the Eight E models was ranked by field teams as high over, and above that, in some cases, of issues such as Endorsement, Error and Evidence-based. This indicates that the organisation may be relying on experts to satisfy some of those key organisational functions which should be in place for organisational members. Therefore experts may be used as part of the feedback process to help in key decision making whereas the supervisory process should be triggered. Further the use of experts to filter evidence may again be a method by which to manage evidence-based practice but this filtering does not establish skills in others and so confines expertise and learning. It is of interest to note that the management, and particularly the senior management group, had a significantly low ranking in regard to experts. This would tend to support Jamieson & Thomas's (1994) work which showed that those with a higher educational ability were more dismissive of experts than those who were less qualified. This is in line with that result.

The use of experts is further complicated by the two issues of explicit and tacit knowledge and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. It is clear that experts within this organisational
setting not only hold considerable sway but are in financially secure positions through the purchasing arrangements within the organisation. There is therefore an inherent motivation to retain the status of expert and this may in turn undermine the process of encouraging sharing of tacit knowledge. Therefore the expert knowledge might only be shared in such a way as to reinforce the personal status of the expert rather than to enhance the learning of the organisation. It is important that the organisation does consider the position of those experts and how it may try to encourage the greater use of the tacit knowledge known by the expert players.

Experts, as with others, may need to be included in the organisational mental models so that they, and others, can be clear regarding their position and accepted level of influence and that advice is acceptable with a highly accountable organisation. Further the distinct split between the view of experts from senior managers and frontline staff may need to be resolved so as to ensure that this is not disruptive or undermining. This organisation may also want to consider its own self-perception. As a professional organisation if it does not consider itself as such, for whatever reason, then others may not. Finally the similar ranking of Expert with Evaluation may indicate a failure of the latter, especially the supervisory process, and the supplementing of this by the Expert grouping. This may need to be readjusted to protect organisational accountable decision making and may also reflect on current purchasing arrangements with Experts. Scrutiny of such arrangements and purpose may need to be more vigorous.

Experience

The importance of experiential learning within the organisational context cannot be overestimated. It is commonly accepted across all disciplines whether that be the psychological or sociological perspective, that learning from experience is highly powerful both from a positive and a potentially negative dimension.

Kolb’s (1984) work shows that learning is a continual and fluid process which helps to either reinforce or alter previous behaviour when further experiences occur. It is however accepted by, for example Hutton (1989), that having the experience alone is not adequate in ensuring that the experience is fully utilised and that the right aspects of it are replicated in future events. Kolb (1976) presents a learning cycle which includes not only having the experience but being able to reflect on it to formulate concepts and generalisation and then to test out those concepts in new situations. Kolb’s model does highlight the need for learners to possess a number of key abilities in order to become effective learners. They must firstly undertake the concrete experience then have the reflective skills to consider the event and then judge theoretically implications for the
future and to actively experiment beyond that. This is clearly a complicated process and must be managed in a complete holistic way in order that the experience can be fulfilling.

The psychological perspective of stimuli and response does show that learning needs to be closely linked with the activity and it is important that not only time is allowed for that but that there is a relatively short space of time between the experience and the reflective process. This ensures that as the layers of experience build up, each is examined in relative time in order that the proper debrief process has occurred before subsequent events may alter the experience without it having been managed. Therefore as Aitchinson & Graham (1989) suggest the experience has got to be arrested, examined, analysed before it can be suggested that it becomes part of knowledge. It has also, as Bond et al (1993) suggest, got to be holistic in nature not only dealing with the cognitive but the effective and psychomotor parts of the learning process. Further when this individual psychological perspective is placed in an emotional context then the social reaction to the experience also triggers a process which may affect that experience in a less than objective way. This is particularly important when experiences are discussed within a team or group setting and when this method is used as the debrief process.

In reflecting on experience then, this should not be dominated by the outcome of the event but the process through which the event travelled. Hutton (1989) explains how this is particularly important. Learning from experience has, according to Boud et al (1985) four components that make that learning a valuable and informative attribute to both individual and organisational learning. Boud et al (1985) suggest that experience links new data with that of the old and there is clearly association being built: either that which reinforces an event or challenges it. Integration then is established between such data and further validation of that information is reached and the internalising of the learning occurs. Clearly if the association and integration is not dealt with in a reflective and critical manner, having gone through a systematic and objective process, then validation and internalisation could be severely compromised and negative or inappropriate learning result.

The Experiences listed in this organisational setting show that experience is one of the most dominant sources of influence on organisational players at all levels of the organisation but especially the senior management group and the unqualified group. These two groups’ profiles however were very different – one having highly sophisticated academic and critical skills, the other having neither. There were limited reflective processes which balanced this gap. It was also noted that there are two factors which also are significant in the respondents. Experience tended to be outcome led and mostly in relation to individual case matters and secondly that any experience gained was not
shared either on a localised basis or in a wider context. It was also evident that there was no proper systematic debriefing of that learning event and therefore the experience was highly subjective and reinforcing of potentially previous prejudices.

Although supervision was present, when this was cross referenced with the endorsed/evaluation segment of the sources of influence, there clearly was a failing in this process and there was limited evidence that experience was being constructively dealt with through Kolb's learning cycle. This may also be influenced to some extent by the results shown in the evidence-based section where the lack of critical appraisal skills was present when determining the issues of valid research. The same skills, if not present when considering experience, may also leave a significant gap in the learning process.

The impact of traumatic incidents in a number of sections was noticeable, particularly one grouping showed the extent of the effect of traumatic events on individuals. It was clear that, although there had not been recent traumatic events, past historical incidents which had not been dealt with appropriately, were still very much alive and influential on these individuals. This shows the potential extent of individual defence mechanisms which in turn may have been reinforced by organisational methods. This lack of a debrief process had made the outcome and the event led process dominant within that incident and the individuals concerned had not reflected on the process in a constructive way both to deal with the defences and for any potential learning from the incident. The lack of critical review in this area of work is something this organisation may wish to address.

The unqualified group almost solely relied on experience as their primary learning method although it was evident that there was limited sharing of experiences and again no systematic process by which these were analysed. This lack of challenge meant that the experience was solely being undertaken but the rest of the learning cycle not completed. It also meant that the social work assistant group may misinterpret the additional qualities needed to differentiate their actions from that of the social worker. This could be very undermining of the social work expert position if the unqualified group considered the experiences that they had were similar to that of the qualified group.

Boud, Keogh & Walker (1985) have highlighted the influence of the accumulated past on individuals and their subsequent ability to look openly at experiences. Managers however, according to Boud et al can create systems by which the reflective process can be attached to events which in essence forces employees and their managers to address issues. Such detached processes as debrief meetings, factual chronologies, recorded accounts by a number of individuals etc can be used. This organisation may wish to
implement such processes in order to complete the learning cycle. Any implementation of such devices may need to be introduced, as with other change issues, in a co-operative and consultative way, selling the benefits. This hopefully would increase confidence with members of staff so that experiences can be dealt with in a detached, non emotional way which allows honest reflection and unpacking of events without undue fear of consequence.

Error

Error has been separated out from general experience because of its potential powerful implications for the organisation and individuals. Hammond (1990) notes that error is inevitable but the reactions to it and the real or perceived consequences which grow have potentially great effect whether that be positive or negative.

In human terms each of us makes judgements which have been socialised into us as part of our growing up. Further as Baron (1998) explains, there may be ingrained beliefs which intuitively lead us not to take an action when in essence we should have dealt with the event on the facts. This leads us to the clear understanding that judgements are based on two forms of cognition. Firstly that which is explicit and is the result of a logical conscious and defensible process and is known as analysis and secondly that which is not observable or quantifiable and is more linked with intuition. It is likely that when considering knowledge types that the first is more likely to be that which is based on explicit knowledge and the latter that which is based on intrinsic knowledge gained from a variety of experiences.

Reason (1990) lists three sources of error detection, these are firstly self awareness and self identification and this is the initial most dominant detection method. Individuals have an almost automatic self-corrective process which tries to help them avoid error or mistakes. What of course is important to note is that such avoidance is not in essence adding to that mistake as opposed to avoiding an initial rather than more serious later consequence. Error identification via self analysis has the benefit of the immediacy of response but does engage reflective and critical skills. Secondly Reason identifies the environmental 'error queuing'. This is where something stops an action occurring and thirdly where error is detected by others. Reason explains the more complicated the issue the greater the likelihood that it will be exposed or identified by others. Similarly when considering experience, the immediacy of identifying error and the ability to correct that, is a key defence in error management and this cannot be over estimated.
Certainly when considering contemporary issues, it is clear that the error repetition within the public perception is much more damaging to the public sector image than that of individual error base. In organisational terms therefore it is important that two types of error are not established. Firstly a systematic error which has occurred because of a lack of a systematic approach to reflect on and address actions within the organisation; secondly, institutionalised error which in essence is about the rules based level within the organisation – the principles by which the organisation works and operates. These fundamental, ethical questions are at the centre of public organisations and it is important that they are addressed by each department. Therefore strategy, culture, structure, organisational processes should all have checks and balances which ensure that either organisational or institutional failures are not being created and sustained.

Argyris & Schon (1978) outline the effects of error within an organisational setting. The effect of trying to identify error may be complicated by the social context. The depth of avoidance and the ultimate desire to survive, may minimise error identification. Argyris & Schon (1978) explain that organisations are poor at establishing systems for error identification. This may be because of the sophistication of individuals' 'defensive reasoning' and this shows the extent to which individuals can compromise actions in order to avoid public exposure. Errors then can often go undetected.

In the organisation under study, it was clear that the main source of individual error identification was that of self-analysis. This fits in with Reason's (1990) proposals that most error identification starts with self-identification. There was very limited evidence of any reluctance or fear of acknowledging errors and this was accepted by both individuals and managers alike. It is also obvious from factual evidence that there are limited consequences to errors that occur within the organisation other than to learn from those on an individual basis. There is therefore not a culture within the organisation of exposing individuals to ridicule or embarrassment where error does occur. The supervisory process is clearly one of the best organisational methods by which to address error, in the confidence of a manager/employee relationship. Hopefully such relationships are built on trust and confidence. However the fact that this is not widespread in nature may mean that the organisation should address the supervisory processes to ensure that they become more widespread and integrated. This of course is a key part of Reason's (1990) approach to error detection where error is identified by others. It may be that, in such supervisory processes, there needs to be more joint working, mentoring and other observable methodologies which help to review practitioners' actions.

In organisational terms however, it was noted that errors are mostly identified through some external process or to a lesser extent the supervisory process. Error identification
from an external source has predominantly been in critical incidents where embarrassment or threat may have been established e.g. Panel or Courts. Here however the irony is that error may not have occurred but the 'court game' creates a perception of that for the individual under attack.

There was a clear lack of individual review of practice within the residential and non-qualified segments and here the importance of error detection and identification is important particularly for those not widely equipped through other sources of knowledge. This is particularly important, given the dominance of experience within the self-reporting of this group of staff.

There was no evidence across the organisation of institutional concerns about principles and ethics. This is not surprising however in an organisation which has a high level of trained staff whose professional background is based on key value principles. In other organisations however it is worth managers ensuring, through an audit process such as this, that the three grades of error detection are present. Firstly individual error, secondly organisational error and thirdly institutionalised error. Organisational error will include an analysis of whether the department's members have a heightened potential for error occurrence because of structural aspects of the organisation, for example either the design of the department, the amount of time devoted to tasks and activities etc.

In this research, error identification across the teams was middle ranked by most field teams and often corresponded to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the level of the evaluative processes, particularly the supervisory process. This ranking particularly could identify for the organisation those teams which may need to redress the issue of both evaluation and error identification.

The contemporary environment within which public organisations work is obviously affected by high profile public scandals. It is therefore beholden on such organisations to identify and correct error. This organisation, as with others, may wish to consider a system to identify, analyse and address errors and to create a culture where such analysis is welcomed. The creation and sanctioning of peer monitoring may be an example of such good practice.

Experimentation

The key issue in regard to Experimentation is whether public sector organisations feel free or are free to experiment with the public whom they serve. The analysis presented shows that considerable experimentation already exists within the public services
particularly in the field of medicine. However within the academic analysis little reference within the social work section to research methodologies in this area of practice. This does lead one to question whether on academic courses, or through the educational process, social workers are being programmed to understand experimentation and to be encouraged to be innovative.

It is accepted by academics that experimentation within the public sector is achievable as long as the methodologies are appropriate and that there is some management of that process. The management of this process must be visible and vigorous in order to establish public confidence in those who do undertake such experimentation. It is true however that having a truly scientific approach in such settings may not be appropriate but there are other quasi-experimental methods which can be applied.

The second aspect considered was that of innovation and here innovation was very clearly segregated from that of creativity. Innovation was seen as a systematic, well thought through, conscious process. Innovation is not a solitary activity within an organisational setting but is about the common agreed identification of difficulties and the generation of answers in consultation with others. More importantly, in order to innovate and sustain that innovation, there is a need for teamwork and the participation of other organisational members. This therefore is a conscious and purposeful act which will obviously need organisational, financial and environmental support. King & Anderson (1995) outline the importance of this as a social process demanding the involvement and advocacy of others to achieve such innovation.

There are different levels within the organisation which have got to be considered when looking at innovation. Firstly, as King & Anderson (1995) explain, there is the individual level where those organisational players participating in such activities are more likely to have creative personalities but this should be balanced by being able to measure outcomes and implement activities. Secondly they tend to be more confident, resourceful and less cautious and submissive. The group profile within the organisation is likely to again be accepting of innovative ideas and of creative individuals within the team. Under the organisation's umbrella both the individual and the group of course become subsumed. The organisation as Trott (1998) explains, has got to have a number of characteristics. It should have a growth orientation, be constantly vigilant to the external impact and have a commitment to cross-functional co-operation. Clearly such organisations are those which have a capacity and the culture to innovate and to think, and this will assist in new ideas being receptive to others.
Within the organisation under study, it was clear that experimentation was very limited and tended to have two features. It was either identified as being case orientated or tended to be very isolationist in its approach. In regard to the former, the analysis showed that there may be a misinterpretation as to the understanding of experimentation vis à vis that of the use of evidence-base provided by others, namely experts. Therefore respondents under the experimentation category listed trying out new ideas in cases which had already been relayed to them by others, mostly those deemed to be an expert. Those instances where innovation had occurred tended to be very locally based and organisationally these members did not have widespread credit for such an innovation.

It is evident that there may be some restricting factors on this organisation namely the time to reflect and to experiment and possibly the skills, abilities and knowledge to do that. This is in an organisational context where to innovate may demand a level of confidence which does not exist. In addition in a very bureaucratic organisation, heavily accountable to the government, there is little time or space to have innovation or experimentation actively promoted. This is one of the serious consequences of an organisation which is so highly interlinked to its external paymaster’s expectations. Performance management therefore if imbalanced can stifle and strangle the very creativity which is necessary within the organisation.

There are however a number of positive features which should not be underestimated. The very fact that this research and that of 1995 has been supported over a lengthy period by key top managers, in itself shows that the organisation is open to scrutiny and also open to experimentation. There appears to be a level of trust that those who are experimenting will do so in an ethical and appropriate way.

If the organisation were to encourage experimentation and innovation in a wider context then it would be useful to create mechanisms by which this can be managed and investigated, for example by implementing a research or ethics and management committee. This would allow for experimentation not only to be validated but to ensure that there are no inappropriate actions occurring on an individual basis.

The rankings in regard to experimentation do tend to reflect the respondent's qualitative data. Experimentation has lower priority as a source of learning than the other areas. This is particularly surprising in the senior management group, where in fact there is clear evidence of innovation at the top level of the organisation particularly in such key issues as technology and some practice issues. The lack of acknowledgement of that experimentation may again be symptomatic of the distraction with the level of
accountability to external stakeholders rather than a resistance to innovation within the organisation.

Chapter 5 examined whether experimentation was firstly possible and secondly welcome in an organisation which has a ‘right first time’ expectation. Public sectors, in essence, are no different from their private sector counterparts in that they do need to innovate in order to learn. A stale organisation in this dynamic environment is unlikely to flourish. Unlike the private sector which uses innovation and experimentation as a competitive advantage to keep ahead of the game, public sectors are expected to share innovation for the greater good. This is laudable but when all other performance indicators are about compliance and lack of flexibility, the expectation from the Department of Health to be creative is restricted. Innovation and experimentation appear to have become associated with government led initiatives where status is given to those outside the statutory sector.

Public sectors are however ripe for new experimentation particularly as they have large organisational memories through their bureaucratic processes and their clients tend to have long term interventions. If such research were to occur, and it is argued here that it should, then as Wilson-Barnett (1991) emphasises it needs to be a systematic evaluation of causal relationships which has appropriate boundaries and permissible structures within the organisation through which this can occur. This organisation may wish to consider creating a culture which accepts such innovative thinking and action and then allows it to happen with the appropriate ethical and managerial surveillance.

Evaluation

Evaluation, in truth, happens all the time. Humans are constantly analysing data, making judgements, and forming conclusions in order to take action. Øvretveit (1998) describes evaluation as a complex system of gaining the right information and using it in the right way to ensure that judgements are useful and valid.

It would be easy to confuse the categories of Enforced and Evaluation as each is closely associated with performance expectations. It is however important to note that Enforced is those requirements placed on the organisation and Evaluation is the review of those expectations and whether the desired outcomes are met. Evaluation is the process of collecting relevant data and summarising it in order that decisions and judgements can be made and actions subsequently taken. This issue of collecting data and then attributing merit to that data is at the heart of an evaluative system. Evaluation has become particularly key in the public sector because of the political agenda of the current government and because evaluation is about public accountability and public scrutiny.
The fact is, that the evaluative process currently may be considered to be over dominant because of this need to be seen politically as being successful. Therefore new initiatives and new finance are heavily mandated with an evaluative process which often becomes strangling of the very process that it is there to enhance. There is also potential within an organisation such as Social Services, with such an array of separate performance indicators, to have direct service delivery dominated by indicators that must be met.

Performance evaluation as described by Torrington & Hall (1995) emphasises the cyclic nature of the performance process. Here traditionally in most other organisational settings performance management cycles are internally determined, with staff supported and managed through that process. The public sector clearly has a new relationship with performance management which is not only a relatively new concept comparative to private organisations but it is an imposed performance structure. This requires that this structure is managed in quite a different way. Performance management within the public sector has the additional feature of mostly occurring via the independent inspection of others. The high level of external scrutiny on organisations in the public sector means that such performance management is often exposed well before managers can redress difficulties.

Performance management is to some extent clouded by the competitive and comparative data published by bodies such as the Department of Education and Employment and the Department of Health. This in many ways can potentially create an environment of conflict between managers and practitioners which can undermine the value of performance data. Everitt & Hardiker (1996) are concerned that the associated performance control that comes with such accountability can have an effect on practice issues and quality, where the recorded outcome measure is at variance with professional judgement. Practice evaluation is clearly important within this professional arena and this practice evaluation reflects the other evaluative methodologies, that is that evaluation should be systematic, explicit and involving independent judgements. Wallace & Rees (1984) underline the importance of client feedback in any evaluative process particularly in that of the public sector. This is often difficult with highly vulnerable clients, but within the current expectations of evaluation, this is very clearly a demand.

Within the Children's Services organisation in 2000 it was clear that the dominance of the responses from organisational players in response to evaluation fell into two sources by which their activities were either endorsed or under critical review. Their performance tended to be assessed either through single client episodes under the client supervisory process or via external exposure. It is clear from this analysis that there was some significant level of dissatisfaction in the supervisory process thus leaving individuals to
search around for endorsement or evaluation of their activities. Evaluation tended to be dominated by practice issues where either other professionals unilaterally outside a system or the client themselves fed back to the operator as to their actions.

Performance management within the surveyed group was only minimally noted by a few respondents. There was no widespread acknowledgement or use of performance data that was collected centrally by the organisation. Therefore this could lead to a disconnection between the expectations on the department and compliance. This ties in with the information collected in the interview process where individuals were accepting of their role in collecting data but were unaware of its extent and feedback. The department may therefore wish to reconsider its evaluative processes and how the organisational players receive systematic feedback on the actions that they take. There is already a significant amount of organisational data collected, but this is not being disseminated on a widespread basis throughout the organisation. Further, in those key practice evaluation issues, the supervisory process is less systematic both in quality and quantity and the extent to which it operates across the department and the organisation may need to be reviewed.

The fact that external feedback from situations such as complaints, courts etc was so dominant may lead one to assume that these events are holding significant sway on organisational players. However the feedback from these processes is not then being translated into an experiential process in order to decode the feedback given.

The rankings across the department within each team show the significant differentiation between some teams in the acknowledgement of the evaluative processes. This seems to indicate that there is a very individual and personality led process occurring at the team manager process, with some teams more satisfied with the practice and supervisory feedback than others.

Managers within the organisation may then wish to consider two things. Firstly the creation of a culture which accepts performance and works within its confines. Secondly the plethora of information already gathered, needs not only to be collated but judgements made, actions taken and most importantly outcomes disseminated and ownership enhanced.

**Reflections on the Eight ‘E’s Model**

The Eight ‘E’s Model is an innovative consideration of certain organisational phenomena as it applies to organisational learning and the creation of a learning organisation. It was
evident that those issues addressed under the McKinsey Seven 'S' Audit have had a useful impact on the organisation but that there were different dimensions within the kaleidoscope of the organisation that needed to be assessed and considered. The academic analysis does support each of the areas identified in the Eight 'E's Model.

It is clearly important that the educational background of the organisational players is assessed not only in demographic detail but in identifying how that educational process has equipped staff for the job and tasks they undertake. It was argued here that it is important for the professional work situation and the academic institution to work in harmony to identify the current environmental demands that are placed on organisational players which in turn become demands on the academic institution. Without such a conscious acknowledgement of the education process these would not have been identified.

The extent of the impact of those issues which have been enforced and imposed on the organisation again is quite a new dimension to that most usually assessed within an organisational audit. It seems important however to understand the level of integration and internalisation of those new demands on the organisational players. It was of note how those issues which were enforced tended to be practice orientated and did not reflect the new demanding environmental situation which now engulfed the organisation. There appeared a need for concentration on helping those organisational players look more holistically at their own practice and how that operated in context.

Anecdotally the organisation was concerned about the impact on and use of experts in the organisation. Clearly identifying their influence on organisational players was important as was who were identified as experts and where personnel considered themselves in that expert arena. It is with some concern that the issue of experts identified not only their potential power within the organisation, which may not be being controlled but also identified the self-image of those workers who are internal to the organisation.

Evidence-based practice is an organisational desire as well as an expectation from the variety of different publics with whom the Children's Services operate. It seems necessary to understand the extent of not only use of that language but clear comprehension as to the requirements of evidence-based practice and the skills that are necessary. It was obvious that there was a clear dichotomy between the language used around evidence-based practice and that which was operational within the organisation. Therefore that gap can be not only identified but appropriate actions taken to redress it.
Experience is one of the main ways in which humans learn. In doing so it is important that this does not become disconnected or fragmented process but completes the learning cycle which considers the review of that action, the generalisation of the activities and then the readjustment of activities. This analysis had allowed for two key aspects to be identified. Firstly how were people analysing and reflecting on their experience and secondly how that was then shared across the department. The lack of sharing of experiences throughout either local teams or in the organisation as a whole clearly again reflects the disconnected nature of experiences and the very isolationist approach which to some large extent was reflected in the 1995 study. The identification within this audit of the unqualified groupings is particularly important and is unlikely to have been picked up through any other audit process particularly under McKinsey’s (1982) Seven ‘S’ Audit.

This section and that of the education section also shows that in 1995 under the McKinsey Seven ‘S’ Audit there were key acceptances of such respondent data as the appropriate skills and staff ability. This was mostly picked up by members commenting on themselves and their colleagues. When this question is asked in a different way and is placed in the more neutral arena of listing experiences it becomes clear that possibly there are some significant gaps in reflective skills and also in those other skills not addressed by the educational process.

When explaining the issue about evaluating activities, gaining feedback or how the organisation uses evaluative material then it was evident that the dominance in the organisation is that of practice evaluation and not considering the more holistic data which is collected. This is important not only to heighten awareness within the organisational players but also the managers to ensure that the full range of evaluative perspectives are included such as strategic performance management and cost and finance. The levels of satisfaction/dissatisfaction of organisational players need to be acknowledged and in order to address gaps or feelings of discomfort or unease.

One of the key criteria to become a learning organisation is that its organisational players are able to innovate and to experiment. Clearly these more creative skills which tie into this systematic process are important to continue to generate not only new ideas but enthusiasm within the organisational members. Asking questions around experimentation has helped to identify how limited this is within the organisation at all levels and how the department tends to rely on very senior officers to have not only vision to progress but also the permission to undertake experimental designs.

Error in this model has been separated out with very good reason. This is to acknowledge the very special status that error has within the organisation not only to
consider it at an individual but at an organisational and institutional level. The academic analysis will support error being considered much more widely than that of just single human error which can be dealt with in different ways. The internal culture of the organisation can often be identified by how willing people are to express concern or to own up to mistakes that have occurred and this in fact indicates that this organisation is indeed a healthy one.

The model which was proposed in 1995 has clearly become more sophisticated in the intervening years with additional academic advice and further reflection. Some of the language is clearly different for example Extracted has been replaced by Evidence-Based and Endorsed has been replace by Evaluation. These terms both reflect the current developments in the external environment and add weight to the model’s design.

The additional requirement to ask respondents to rank each of these eight aspects in order of significance or preference for them has had particular influence when feeding back the team profiles to organisational players. This has, if nothing else, allowed teams to start to debate the wider issues. This has been a useful process in asking teams to consider where there may be gaps or where they may have to redress some individual and group behaviour.

It has further been useful to use the technique similar to that of Belbin’s team member profile where a variety of different members make up a good and well balanced team. If for example the team was dominated by Educational influences and not considering the other seven aspects then that may cause an imbalance within the team setting. Having team champions for each of the different areas may be useful within the team to ensure that the balance of the Eight ‘E’s sources are at least acknowledged within the team process. This would assist group and team learning and ultimately organisational learning.

Undertaking this extent of data collection in the current Knowledge Influences Audit design is clearly a large and significant piece of work for any researcher. However if it were to be used as a management technique this would become much more manageable at a local level and would be informative to team managers about their own team profile.

Those managers who undertook the audit have also expressed a desire to use it within the selection process for the organisation. The initial completion of the Knowledge Influences Audit would then be followed up at interview when questions could be asked about experiences, education, how people feel about owning mistakes, how feedback and evaluation is used etc.
This model was primarily designed to fill a gap within the organisational literature particularly in respect of public sector organisations. How could those organisations in the current environment with staff potentially under threat, look at organisational learning and change in a non-threatening way. The categories selected are all relatively neutral in approach and were not seen by any respondent as sensitive or inappropriate.

On reflection however it is arguable that this technique could be used much more widely and not only considered within this organisational setting but within any organisational setting. It can be used in such a way as to firstly be undertaken by the senior management group who then could select and identify for the organisation those sources of learning which may need to be actioned as a priority and those that may be sources for further development. The organisation then could use the model to determine the key direction and action plan for whichever organisational setting. Obviously those settings which required more Experimentation would prioritise that higher than possibly the Evaluation or Error categories.

When reflecting on the design and potential use of the model, it is suggested that the model has a demonstrated utility supported by academic advice, that in practice it has operated across a significant section of a large Social Service department and that it has been useful in that organisational context. Its usefulness may be demonstrated by some of the changes that have occurred in the organisation since the completion of the data collection and the initial feedback stages to both senior managers and to staff.

**Developments since 2000**

The following developments have occurred since the completion of the data collection. Data was analysed and fed back to key organisational players and an opportunity given to all respondents to attend team feedback seminars.

- **Education**
  There has been close working between the qualifying courses and the Department in not only course design but also the selection process onto the qualifying course. Key senior officers are involved in that initial decision making about those who would be offered a place on qualifying training courses.

  The children's services has taken a lead in the development of the new Child Care Award course and as such have been key players in the academic and practice design. The aim has been to make the academic input more in touch with the changes that have occurred
in the organisational setting. This has led to the organisation designing and organising a key conference for all participants within that educational course. Further there is an extra reward associated with the completion of the child care award through higher gradings, thus recognising and rewarding learning. This has allowed for the status for learning and education to be increased within the organisation and there has been a clear demand for greater educational support for organisational players through key leaders and managers.

- **Enforced**
  This organisation has become one of the leading child care services in the country and this is evidence of its ability to take on new demands and to ensure that practitioners are operating those demands. This has been supported with key reinforcement from senior managers and middle managers in the dissemination of requirements and the explanation of those requirements to frontline staff.

- **Experience**
  The Department has created a series of systematic debrief meetings under the umbrella of learning from critical events. Although these initially had a slow start they are seen as positive in both practitioners and managers views and often include external personnel who may also have been influenced in the case. This therefore makes it a much more positive process and less defensive in placing all the responsibility on one person. This type of group learning has been useful and outcomes and learning points are recorded and then accumulated and disseminated. The unqualified group is now required to complete accredited training which is equivalent to their task and which is based on analysing experience and practise.

- **Experts**
  The issue of experts within the organisation has significantly moved on to where the organisation has created a specialist psychological team which is under the management of the Children’s Services and who are there to work as organisational players. They attend induction and management meeting, this assisting in the creation of common mental models and an understanding of organisational and governmental demands.

- **Evidence-based**
  There has been extensive training across the organisational players on critical appraisal skills which has been led by a local university. This coupled with more widespread use of the Research in Practice workshop has meant that evidence-based practice is at least becoming more actively noted within the organisation. This has been further complimented by the department establishing an evidence-base practitioner group whose
membership is made up of different team champions and which is under the supervision of the social work consultant. The aim of this group is to consider Evidence-base practice and research and to look at how that can be internalised into the department more positively.

- **Experiment**

It remains the case that experimentation is limited although there have been key innovative programmes which have been organisationally supported and supported nationally. An example is the innovative behavioural model for children which not only attracted government finance but significant finance from other key agencies such as Health and Education. The acceptance and now mainstreaming of this innovative programme has encouraged others to consider innovations or to at least suggest innovations to organisational managers. It is obvious that innovation is accepted within the organisation but that there remains restrictions, mostly related to time constraints.

- **Error**

There was not a concern for the identification of error at the time of the 2000 study. The creation of a series of debrief meetings and the visible support of senior managers when considering individual mistakes in a calm and reflective way, has reinforced the organisations desire to see errors and mistakes for what they are – human. The significant delayering of the organisation which occurred between 1995 and 2000 no doubt had some assistance in this. This has progressed in the intervening time between 2000 and 2002. Error identification is assisted by the technological systems now placed around practice and directly linked to managers, this then analysed in supervision.

- **Evaluation**

The significant dissemination of not only budget but management information, on a regular and timely basis, has ensured that frontline staff are receiving up to date performance. This is not only data in respect of their own team but comparative data with other teams. Further strategic evaluations are occurring through multi-agency forums such as the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership. Strategic evaluation has been a key competitive edge within this organisation and now this is more widespread in its dissemination.

It would be inaccurate to claim that the creation of this model had undue influence in the changes that have happened within this organisation. It has however potentially highlighted for both senior officers and for organisational players the importance of the eight aspects which are contained within the model. It is when addressing these issues
that an organisation such as a public sector can in fact measure its progress and consider an action plan in accordance to its demand.

**Review of 2000 Research Methodology**

The research in 2000 was undertaken in three parts. Across those sections there was a variety of methodologies used reflecting the need to mirror the needs of the organisation under investigation. The organisation has strong influences from interpersonal interaction and so the use of qualitative style assisted in gaining information and engagement. The focus group methodology and the interview process engaged staff and contributed to an action research model. The descriptive data collection in Part I allowed for the aggregating of factual information and further was returned to staff to assist them and their managers in their day to day practice. This again enhanced an organisation development approach. Part I of the data collection coincided with the appraisal system which was necessary to complete the Investing in People status. Again the organisational relevance of the research methodology meant it gained support from organisational leaders.

The Knowledge Influences Audit used qualitative and quantitative investigating techniques. This allowed for detailed information to be gathered via questionnaire but the questionnaire process had enough structure to make comparative comments between individuals and groups. The questions had been tested and were answered with limited clarification or assistance. The rankings of the categories of influences was particularly helpful in firstly ordering the data, secondly establishing some comparative process and thirdly by offering an opportunity to visually present data. This latter point was particularly evident when giving feedback to teams. Teams were interested in their profile and this sparked debate. The negative feedback which has been collected tended to be around the expectation of the completion of another task when asked to participate. However the feedback process to teams at the end of the research was received well and may have reduced some of the initial resistances.

The amount of data collected has been extensive. The analysis of 136 respondents over three parts has been a task which has demanded much perseverance. However the results have been interesting and the endeavour worthwhile. The descriptive data for example highlighted anecdotal information in that it patterned gender balance within grades, recorded experiential backgrounds and noted self analysis skills identification. This data helped to highlight the confusion of roles between staff grades and the heightening of that confusion through attendance at training courses. Further the
demographic and descriptive information offered triangulation with the Knowledge Influences Audit and assisted in raising questions between the two data sets.

The Knowledge Influences Audit was lengthy to complete, although all the data was informative. It allowed for both individual profiling and group profiling and also identified the amount of sharing which existed. This in turn helped to assess the organisational profile. The massive amount of information in the Knowledge Influences Audit may be off-putting in a large sample study, it is however easily manageable on a team base and a comparator between a small group of teams. It is argued here however that the wide range of grades and team profiles, which then could be explored across the organisation, was particularly useful and so the whole organisation under scrutiny was valuable. An organisational analysis, under an organisational development programme, could effectively apply the Eight ‘E’s across the entire organisation. It may be that update studies could be less intense with a revise format and this is worth further exploration.

Part III of the study was useful in the collection of information in order to show movement within the organisation between 1995 and 2000. It is however suggested that Part I and Part II was particularly complimentary. Part III may not have been necessary if this PhD had only considered the Eight ‘E’s model outside the wider context of a lengthy study with its foundations some five years before and where its focus was more widely on change.

Further Study

The model has been extensively tried out within one department and across a variety of different teams with different make ups and is demonstrated to have utility within that organisation. It remains that this model could be tested out in other organisational settings who operate broadly within the public sector or possibly where those organisational settings have a different environmental context.

It is also possible that this model could be tested out more extensively as an interview and selection technique for members of staff entering the organisation. This would allow for the initial understanding by the selection panel of the individuals mindset as regards to their own learning and how they have either facilitated that or used this in the past. This endeavours therefore to identify and promote the sharing of tacit knowledge and a willingness to do this. As organisational learning starts with the individual it is important that there is some technique by which the organisation, on selection, can at least form a view about the learning potential of that candidate.
Social Service Departments are being increasingly thrust into a multi-agency arena and one of the major concerns in organisational learning in those settings is that players come from quite a different educational and experiential background and where their mental models and cognitive styles are significantly different. This may be a helpful technique in some of the initial team building for those multi-agency groups. It could be tested out to determine not only the identification of difference but help participants to understand those differences and how they affect the future. An action plan therefore could be drawn up by the multi-agency group which could reflect that diversity and look at a common need.

Reflections and Contributions

This PhD has made a contribution in a number of areas. The fact that this study has concentrated on the public sector draws attention to a very important section within the range of organisational types. This hitherto less extensively studied area has much to offer to the debate in regard to organisations. As a sector, public organisations particularly can comment on the impact of environmental conditions, the implications of tight external controls, the political and social influences on operational activity and the management of volatile and time limited budgetary and financial cycles. In addition some public sector departments have especially sensitive profiles that link them to societal acceptance and political success. These tend to be in services which offer safety to the public, protection of the vulnerable, services to those who are ill and the development of the young. This study has been able to highlight what Friend (1988) noted was the inherent complexity of the public sector. It has underlined the demands placed on managers in these settings and emphasised the high skills base needed to, not only survive, but to progress. Many organisational experts have limited experience in, and knowledge of this arena, the aim has been to redress this.

The longitudinal nature of this study has again added to a relatively confined number of extended studies into organisations. The very practicality of remaining a researcher in one organisation for this number of years does restrict such studies. Further organisational studies are time consuming in nature and the necessity to demonstrate direct organisational value can reduce the possibility of such work. This is particularly so in organisations within the public domain where time and resources are often so confined. This PhD offers a relatively unusual, if not unique, opportunity to consider such organisational issues over an extensive period of time. There is a further complication to carrying out research in contemporary public settings, this was especially a risk in the 2000 phase. The extraordinary level of evaluation and examination, for accounting purposes, could have an adverse effect on the willingness of organisations, both at
management and personnel level, to give permission for research or to participate. The openness of responses and acceptance of this study therefore places added value on this organisational investigation.

This investigation has also been during a period of considerable environmental and consequently, organisational change. The historical and contemporaneous record of this change is, in the public sector, rarely a matter of accurate documentation. This record, noting the views of personnel facing such change, over a period of time gives an exceptional perspective.

This research explored change in the public sector and used learning as a channel for that investigation. This use of learning had two advantages, it firstly allowed focus but secondly learning, as a subject, conversely also allowed vicarious association with other organisational theories. Learning, inherently, is pervasive and has an intimate relationship with change. Its very nature then makes it ideal to use when assessing, diagnosing and planning within organisations.

Organisational learning theory closely meshes together adult learning, individual learning and social learning theories. This study has been able to make comment on the complexity of learning for individuals and especially those who are adult learners. The impact particularly of past experiences on the individual and the longevity of such experiences have been noted in this study.

Social learning theory emphasises the power of the group and social experience in the learning process. This study provided evidence of the consequences of not using such group or social processes to the full. The repetition of costly negative incidents is an example of such evidence. The power of mentoring, modelling and the reproduction of behaviour was also evidenced. The use of experts particularly shows this as did the staff dissatisfaction with the gap in appropriate feedback or endorsed activities.

This study has offered an extensive analysis of an organisation. In 1995 accepted and well used methodologies were used to examine issues. This study however used these techniques in an inventive and less typical way. For example the McKinsey's Seven 'S' Audit, used as a diagnostic tool for organisations, was restricted to diagnosis from the perspective of learning. Therefore the Seven 'S's were overlaid with academic advice in regard to learning organisations. This unique way of using the Seven 'S', Audit does allow consideration of other organisational theories being analysed in such a way. Further the Seven 'S' Audit was used as a method of structuring the collection of
information from participants and so again its use was extended to part of a research methodology.

Whilst this study does support the accepted theoretical base it also contributes to that by offering a new model by which to consider learning in an organisational setting. This model starts with the influences on the individual and takes into account educational and experiential learning. How often does such analysis occur within the selection, and the integration of staff into organisations? Yet here lies much of the restricting or supporting influences on an individual's ability and willingness to learn. This then ties in with the individual and adult learning theories examined here. When considering experimentation or evidence based influences then the objective systematic analysis of information and data complements the personal individualistic impacts of, for example, error. The gap between perception and objective reality is of interest here. The social learning via evaluation or expert mentoring or advice reinforces the impact of the context within which individuals operate and have their actions dissected and analysed. Finally the societal linkage with external forces which impose behaviour must be acknowledged and managed in order for survival to occur.

Ferris Eight 'E's Model whilst reflecting current theoretical perspectives does emphasise a deeper level of knowledge about organisational personnel than that traditionally expected in organisation selection and team management. Although many organisations use staff profiling such as psychometric testing this is rarely used as a way of balancing teams and is often skills or attitude based. This model centres on the actual influences on individuals within the organisation and how they and the organisation ensure these are harmonised to match organisational objectives.

This model not only stands up to academic scrutiny but, when researched, has application. It is shown to be 'organisationally friendly' and has the ability to engage personnel in not only its completion but in the feedback as a springboard for further debate and action.

This PhD was based within an Organisation Development framework. Research remains limited in the Organisation Development field. This primarily may be because of time and resource restrictions or because Organisational Development, and associated techniques, remains to be further developed. This study then adds to that body of knowledge which is supportive of using such techniques and interventions in order to measure or record organisational change. Organisation Development allows for the use of a range of methodologies by which to diagnose organisational issues. This study shows how such techniques can be used to diagnose the readiness to become a learning
organisation and issues in regard to organisational learning. This reemphasises the accepted position that learning and change are interrelated and often interdependent. It adds to this bank of tools with the contribution of the Eight 'E's Model and the associated Knowledge Influences Audit. This model can be practically translated into an audit tool for managers and, as has been in Chapter 5, a management action plan can be devised. This whole process of management self-diagnosis and planning, and using it as a development technique for senior or other teams, is significant. This model further is adjustable for use as in a questionnaire format, interview or focus group methods. It has been shown here that it can be used flexibly as long as the facilitator, researcher or consultant is skilled in these applications.

This study has many particular contributions to make. Its longevity adds to a limited range of longitudinal organisational studies, its use of learning as a channel to follow organisational change is unusual and its use of organisational development to enhance organisational learning is an advance on previous practises. In addition this study offers an innovative model which is unique in its analysis of influences on organisational players in their employment context. This model can be more widely explored in a variety of issues – staff selection methods, team profiling, team building and objective setting, and when repeated as an organisational measure of change and development. This model is adaptable enough to be a practical organisation development tool for teams and organisations or as a research methodology for organisation development consultants or researchers. This study gives a comprehensive foundation for further work and it has enthused the author to explore and develop this model further.
Comprehensive Staff Audit

Part I

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Audit Complete March-April 2000
EMPLOYMENT RECORD

TITLE OF CURRENT POST: ________________________________

DATE APPOINTED: ________________________________

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT RECORD:

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APPENDIX 1

WHICH AREA OF CHILD CARE PRACTICE do you most enjoy?

WHY?

WHICH AREAS OF CHILD CARE PRACTICE are you most interested in?

Are you willing to be part of a reading group in these areas: Y / N

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EDUCATION AND SKILLS AUDIT

CERTIFICATED EDUCATION – related to current job:

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EDUCATION – unrelated to current job, but which you think has been useful:

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Please **UPDATE THIS SHEET** on attendance at a Training event.
List all READING MATERIAL, including RESEARCH, DEPARTMENTAL DOCUMENTS, HANDOUTS etc, which you have read in 1999:

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## SKILLS AUDIT

Please tick appropriate box below

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<tr>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>By what method did you gain these skills e.g. Training Course, experience, qualification etc</th>
<th>I am confident this is one of my primary skills</th>
<th>I feel this skill is under-used</th>
<th>I need update training in this area</th>
<th>I feel I need detailed training in this area</th>
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<td>Comprehensive Assessment Skills</td>
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<td>Direct Work with Children</td>
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<td>Undertaking Direct Work with Adults</td>
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<td>Case Work Evaluation Skills</td>
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<td>Child Development Skills (analysing children's needs in relation to their experiences to achieve optimum outcomes)</td>
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<td>Risk Assessment Skills</td>
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<td>Assessment Skills re Carers (Foster Carers, Adopters)</td>
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<td>Working with Disabled Children</td>
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<td>Presentation Skills, e.g. Court, Conferences etc</td>
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<td>Report Writing, e.g. Court, Conferences etc</td>
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<td>Case Work Recording Skills, e.g. Recording &amp; Analysing of Information</td>
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<td>Data Collection Skills – Audit completion</td>
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<th>SKILL</th>
<th>By what method did you gain these skills e.g. Training Course, experience, qualification etc</th>
<th>I am confident this is one of my primary skills</th>
<th>I feel this skill is under-used</th>
<th>I need update training in this area</th>
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<td>Computer/IT Skills</td>
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<td>Self (Time) Management Work Planning Skills</td>
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<td>Development (Learning) Skills</td>
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## APPENDIX 1

### MANAGEMENT/SUPERVISORY SKILLS

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<th>SKILLS</th>
<th>By what method did you gain these skills e.g. Training Course, experience, qualification etc</th>
<th>I am confident this is one of my primary skills</th>
<th>I feel this skill is under-used</th>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<td>Processing of Information etc</td>
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<td>Organisational Skills- Managing the Work of Others, Prioritisation etc</td>
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<td>Strategy Planning Skills</td>
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<td>Policy &amp; Procedural Analysis &amp; Formulation</td>
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<td>Management Report Writing e.g. Committee Papers etc</td>
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<td>Motivational Skills</td>
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<td>Budget/Financial Management Skills, Contracts etc</td>
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<td>Systems Design Skills, e.g. Office Systems, etc</td>
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<td>Supervision Skills</td>
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<td>Personnel Issues – Disciplinary, Capability</td>
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SKILLS AUDIT
Please list any ADDITIONAL SKILLS & EXPERTISE which have not been listed

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<th>I am confident in using this SKILL with clients</th>
<th>I am confident in sharing these SKILLS with others, e.g. co-working, Training</th>
<th>I feel this SKILL is under-used</th>
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SKILLS AUDIT
Please list below those skills/work related areas you need to develop

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KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES’ AUDIT

The purpose of this Audit is to determine what influences day to day practice. There is no right or wrong answer so please answer fully and honestly. This Audit will enable the Department to design methods of learning and communication to progress the development of the Department’s objectives and, from that, assist you in your job.

Thank you for completing this Audit.

1(a). List which part of your EDUCATION has had most influence on your learning:

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1(b). Give an example of how this influences your practice today:

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2(a). List those issues, which are IMPOSED upon you, with which you have to comply, that most influences your practice, e.g. Legislation, Departmental policy etc:

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2(b). Give examples of where this has altered your day-to-day practice:

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3(a). List those **SOURCES** of information which are **EVIDENCE-BASED**, e.g. research studies, journals, Internet etc, from which you have extracted information in the last twelve months:

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3(b). Give specific examples of which information you have extracted and then how you have used it in your recent practice:

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3(c). What made these sources have particular influence?

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4(a). List those that you see as **EXPERTS** who influence your practice, list their specialism:

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4(b). Why do you see this person as **EXPERT**?

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5(a). In your past practice, what EXPERIENCES have particularly influenced you?

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5(b). Why were these experiences significant and how did you share those experiences with others:

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6(a). If an ERROR occurs how do you and others identify and learn from it:

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<th>ERRORS</th>
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6(b). Give specific examples of learning from your mistakes:

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6(c). What restricts learning from error in your day to day practice?

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7(a). If you have implemented something different or new, or carried out research in your Social Work practice, can you describe the EXPERIMENT and what occurred:

7(b). How did others know about your work? Or, if you have not experimented, what stopped you implementing something new:

8(a). Who or what process gives you feedback or confirms your activities and practice:

8(b). What makes these persons or processes significant:

8(c). What do you do if activities are not reinforced or supported:

9. Are there other processes by which you gain information/knowledge which influence how you do your job:

Please RANK by INFLUENCE ON YOU in the shaded boxes which of the above has had the most impact – 1: being the most influential and 9: being the least.
‘KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES’ AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments of Team 1.

**EDUCATION**

**Those aspects of Education which most influence day to day practice**

In relation to education, 9 out of 14 Respondents saw as significant their qualifying Social Work Course that was either the Diploma of Social Work course, CQSW. Other single courses which were particularly relevant were Relate and the Psychology and Sociology elements of their Degree course. There was some note of self-education, and an inspirational teacher was also of significance to one Respondent.

In respect of how that has influenced practice today the emerging theme was that the theory led to informing practice and that link in the cycle of learning was important. It gave a wider breadth of knowledge and an ability to access information. Particular skills noted were those which were listening and thinking and reasoning skills.

**ENFORCED**

**Those aspects imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines, etc**

In regard to those issues which were imposed on individuals in the Department, it was clear that the Children's Act was the predominant influence. Policies and Procedures were the second aspect which had most impact although significantly less so than the Children's Act. In relation to how this had altered day to day practice, it was accepted that there were positives in regard to putting some structure into activities which were not restrictive and that this can give a focus to the work and to the reduction of drift. However, it was noted that some of the strains were that it increased form filling and the amount of paperwork and that multi-agency practice was sometimes in conflict with the principles of confidentiality.

**EVIDENCE-BASED**

**What Evidence-based research is used within practice**

The predominant source of information was 'Community Care' where 9 out of 14 Respondents noted it as a source of evidence-based. The next most influential area was research studies. Individuals noted both Adoption Research and the Internet as sources. There was a non-consistent theme in regard to how this information was then used but a general view was that information was used to put organisational changes and demands into a context, for example in relation to neglect, adoption and audit. What made these sources have a particular influence was that they were short, that they had facts and figures, that there was a link into supervision, that it was relevant to the job and that it was 'real information'. There tended to be a view that it encompassed theory in a reflective way in relation to practice.
EXPERTS

Who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as experts

Those who were seen as experts by the Team were predominantly external members of staff and these tended to be 'JCT' or individual psychologists who had been involved in cases with individuals. It was noted that Senior Case Practitioners and Managers were seen as a source of expertise within this Team.

The common theme for why these people were seen as experts was in regard to the knowledge base and experience although it was also noted that there was a perception of expertise given that they were 'paid to be' experts, eg JCT.

EXPERIENCES

What Experiences have had most significance

In regard to the use of past experiences, individuals tended to site those issues which were practice based such as direct work, the use of Policy and Procedures, group work or court experiences. It is interesting to note that 9 out of 11 Respondents were positive about the use of their experiences and that 4 out of 11 Respondents noted that their personal lives had influence on their experiences within their work. It is noted that only 1 person associated experience with a negative experience and that this was very much a personalised circumstance. Therefore experiences tended to be generally positive and client based rather than associated with trauma.

These experiences were seen as significant because they were able to create change and they positively reinforced situations or identified a need for change. Although there was limited response in regard to how these experiences were then shared it was noted that Team Meetings, co-working and the importance of good communication were needed to give a clear message.

ERROR

How are Errors acknowledged and learned from

Error tended to be identified and then learnt from either through personalised supervision or through structured professional meetings such as Case Reviews. It was noted by 2 Respondents that they were self-questioning of their practice and that is why they tended to identify error.

In regard to examples in respect of this, two themes emerged i.e. learning via formal process such as adoption or the court process. It was noted by Respondents that there was an open and tolerant immediate management service and that in only 1 case, which was related to a specific personal circumstance, was there fear noted as a restrictor to learning.

The main restrictor to learning appeared to be time to reflect and this was almost unanimously noted.
EXPERIMENTATION

**Those examples of Experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues**

6 out of 11 Respondents had experimented and either had implemented something in regard to Policy or to individual practice, eg the use of CEBBS workshop. 2 had noted that they had not experimented. The remaining Respondents had noted activities which would be seen as normal practice within a social work caseload rather than the direct experimentation of new ideas.

Others were informed of the work that the 6 Respondents had carried out via managers bringing it to other meetings through other agencies, but primarily through Team Meetings.

The evidence from Respondents was that it was mostly a localised sharing of information rather than across the county.

ENDORSED

**How is feedback given and from which source**

Feedback and evaluation of the Respondents' activities was predominantly carried out by the supervisory process. Team Meetings were also noted as was client feedback. One Respondent noted court judgements as an influence and the use of the legal department. These persons or processes were seen as significant because they held respect, they were primary players in the organisation or that they were from some form of accountability for the department, i.e. via the supervisory process. The Team and peer involvement tended to be more as a support rather than as an investigation of the activity.

If the activities were not supported, there tended to be 2 main themes within the Team. There were those who would discuss and revise their view, there were others who would either proceed anyway, persist and complain until they got their way or continue to challenge. This tended to be less positive in their approach.

ISSUES ARISING:

In regard to other processes by which the Team gained information these tended to via either government policy or co-working.

There are other things that we would wish to note:

Does team culture reflect on the use of experiences and errors and that is the comparison between Team 1 and Team 6 in relation to the negative experiences and errors.

Whether there is influence in relation to professionals coming late into learning and therefore seeing their qualifying course as the predominant source of their education.
'KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments of Team 2.

EDUCATION

Those aspects of past Education which influence most day to day practice

This Team had a wide variety of approaches to education which had particularly influenced Respondents. This ranged from Degree courses, post-graduate courses to qualifying courses. There was, however, a feature in the Respondents of this Team which showed that there were influences on their learning from their early education, both primary, secondary school and their 'A' levels. 4 Respondents out of 13 held a First Degree, one of those persons studying for a higher Degree. The remaining 8 Respondents all possessed a qualifying course, 7 of those had qualified for 10 years or more. 4 Respondents, specifically, noted their qualifying course. This was, compared to other Teams, a lower number who recorded the significance of their social work training course. This Team had a wider variety of individual responses than other Teams, with very individualistic items of study being important.

The influence of life experiences was noted and also the benefit of learning from social science degrees which give a degree of analytical skills. Of the 13 Respondents the general theme tended to include the understanding of self and situation and again the reflection of theory into practice. Reasons given for how educational experiences had influenced the Respondents were very individualistic ranging from giving confidence to practice to being self-analytical and reflective of their own actions. 2 Respondents noted the value of practice – teacher training and the importance of having students to keep up with learning. 2 further Respondents noted a "women's way of working" as of significance in their personal thinking. The influence of sociology and psychology in helping with the understanding of situations had also added value, specifically, to these Respondents.

ENFORCED

Those aspects Imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc

There was a dominance in relation to the use of the Children Act and legislation which influenced the Department's practice. However, there was also a variety of responses in relation to the use of time scales, the Quality Protects programme, the use of budgets and the constraints that the Department works within and the importance of Policy and Procedures. 6 Respondents out of 13 noted the Children Act legislation as being the most significant imposed influence. 1 noted other legislative requirements. This Team responded with only 3 members noting Policy and Procedures as influential. 4 noted constraints and limitations in resources as influential and beyond the Respondent's influence and control.

The legislation and other influences were recorded as having an effect on day to day practice in working in partnership, being inventive with resource confines and to the personalisation of work. The role of staff as corporate parents was noted in 2 instances. 4 Respondents out of 13 noted specifically the different aspects of those matters enforced on staff, namely access to files, timescales, Level 3 Procedures and one person did not feel imposed upon.

There was no one dominant theme as to how practice had been altered by the legislation, departmental policy etc. There was an equal reflection that procedures were seen as positive, on the one hand in creating structure and using it to support practice but on the other hand being confining, particularly due to budget restraints. Time was seen as a significance in the ability to look at practice particularly around paperwork etc.
**EVIDENCE-BASED**

*What evidence-based practice is used within practice*

In regard to the sources of information which are evidence-based a wide range of documents were noted such as specific journals, Department of Health documentation, research journals, Messages from Research etc. There was a qualitative difference within this team as to the depth and type of evidence-based studies which were being used and indeed community care was only cited by 3 Respondents as a directional document.

This may indicate a relatively newly qualified Team and a Team which has more experienced members of staff who are undergoing training. The depth of the type of evidence-based research information was evident through the type of specialist journal material. The specific examples in which information was extracted and useful did range in relation to those behaviours which were useful for practice, such as statistics in relation to neglect, children's behaviours, long term consequences of actions, drug and alcohol abuse etc. However, there was also reference to Department of Health documentation, Quality Protects and Best Value influences, and practice teaching influences were noted. In regard to what made research particularly prevalent, was the links between the organisation and the practice reality. It was clear that this Team on balance found the impact on current practice important when looking at any evidence-based research. Only 1 person noted the Internet as a source of evidence-based information.

This Team were able individually to list specific examples of information used which was evidence based. The Team range of specialist topics was impressive, namely from Autism, Child Protection, Adoption, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Quality Protects. Information seems to be generated by individuals themselves rather than, with some other Teams, via Department training processes.

**EXPERTS**

*Who are seen as Experts and why are they perceived as Experts*

Experts were those perceived as experts from an external source. 8 Out of 13 Respondents only noted external sources of which 6 noted no internal source of expertise. This included JCT, social work consultant, service users, Local Authority solicitors, expert witnesses, lecturers and GaLs.

However, out of 13, 7 Respondents also noted there was expertise within the Department, 6 citing internal experts who were particularly linked to a specialism and 1 person noted that they considered themselves an expert. Those who noted internal staff members tended to have lengthy social work experience. The more recently qualified members of staff more generally noted external sources of expertise.

The criteria by which experts were judged was experience and knowledge, training and background, respect in their field or approved via a process which gave them expertise, e.g. the court process. There was however a relationship between the logical and a clear link between actions and the understanding of the research and the influence of practice, therefore the acknowledgement that things were clear and could be related to particular experiences.
**APPENDIX 3**

### EXPERIENCES

*What experiences have had most significance*

Experiences were reflected on the positive and poor outputs in practice and there was a response in relation to experiences in the courts and the positive interaction of being well managed. There was a significant number whose experiences were positive in relation to outcomes in cases and there appeared to be a lot of learning from those positive experiences, particularly through co-working and examples by others.

3 Respondents noted court experiences as a positive experience to ensure good practice occurs. Only one example was given which was a difficult instance where learning had subsequently occurred but was individually testing for the member of staff.

3 Respondents noted training experiences as learning from experience. 10 Respondents out of 13 noted social work experiences which they had been involved with personally and where they had learnt directly from the incident.

These experiences were obtained but shared on a limited basis, mostly through discussion and supervision. They were seen as useful because they expanded value bases and because they had an influence on personal growth, application to practice, and the use of language in social work. However, a wider sharing of this experience did not appear to be evident.

### ERROR

*How are mistakes acknowledged and learned from*

When the Respondents considered learning from error there were 2 particular approaches within the Team, firstly that of self-appraisal and self-reflection and secondly the formal and 'external' processes of complaints procedures, internal audit, disciplinaries etc. The former group tended to use informal discussion and to follow up self-appraisal and self-reflection with discussions through supervision. The latter mainly through the formal processes of complaints, internal audit etc tended to do that through structured processes.

In regard to specific examples of learning from mistakes, these tended to be associated with courts and court judgements, recording and written communication. There were personalised examples of learning from mistakes which tended to be about practice, picked up through a consequence occurring. For example, missing a deadline, not completing paperwork etc.

Those aspects which restricted learning from error within day to day practice within the Team, tended to be focused more on time to reflect and not enough review of work. There were only 2 Respondents who noted either fear of a person getting it wrong or the consequences of that. 8 Respondents specifically noted time as a barrier to learning from error – time to reflect.
Those examples of experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues

4 out of the 13 Respondents had not completed this section. Of the remainder, 4 had responded in relation to casework matters, 1 had implemented and designed Procedures and the other Respondent had specifically looked at practice areas such as sex offenders, etc. Most of the Respondents who answered this question implemented techniques or projects established elsewhere and were introducing that in a local context or case matter.

How others knew about work which had been created or innovated into the Team had limited response. Casework tended to be via the casework process and other discussions tended to be via Team Meetings or supervision. The Respondents however tended to suggest that this was ad hoc or by default and limited rather than in a structured way.

How is feedback given and from which source

In regard to who and what processes give feedback there was a list of those who were either peers via the Team, via supervision, service users and via budget printouts etc. External agencies were also cited as mechanisms by which feedback was gained, e.g. the court process. Feedback tended to be both via an informal process and via the formal structure, supervisory process, through mentors or through self-reflection.

4 Respondents noted clients as sources of endorsing practice. 6 Out of 13 Respondents noted supervision whilst the remaining 7 did not note supervision or, specifically, were critical of the process and noted that it was lacking. 7 members of staff noted the support and feedback from colleagues. This is significant as this could establish the risk of endorsing activities without full analysis.

Why those processes were seen as significant again brought a mixed response and reflected inconsistency across the Team. Systems tended to highlight performance, i.e. through budget control, complaints procedures etc or via the management process within the office. There were limited responses to this question, on the whole, which were individualistic and appeared ad hoc. Only 1 response was in depth.

If activities were not supported or reinforced 4 Respondents said that they reviewed and revised, looked at themselves and their practice, tried again and reflected and analysed. There was also however a view that this did create drift or unilateral action on behalf of the respondent. 4 Respondents replied in a despondent, demoralised way. There tended to be more acceptance of activities and lack of questioning which had not been supported without challenge.

Other sources of information tended to be via the television or out of county training but there were limited responses in regard to this question.
'KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following are the accumulated comments of Team 3

**EDUCATION**

Those aspects of past Education which influence most day to day practice

There were 13 Respondents who completed the Knowledge Influences Audit. Of these 13, 5 Respondents held first degrees, the remaining were a combination of Dip SW CQSWs and CSSs. In relation to those who had undertaken degrees, there was a strong academic background including subjects such as psychology, sociology and applied social science. The education of those 5 Respondents all appear to have significant influence on their learning and practice.

This Team appear to fall into two categories in respect of their education. There were those who had entered the social work profession having already undertaken other experiences. Education for those people was a reinforcer of the activities which were already known to them. Some had been previously care-led experiences and had then sought education and the qualifying course as a "confirmer" of that practice. Others had entered into education for academic reasons and had then gone into social work subsequent to that as opposed to starting off with social work as a first course. Social work placements were seen as part of the education process as important.

In relation to examples of how education has influenced their practice today, 5 out of 13 had a philosophical aspect to their learning, namely that it had given them a non-judgemental attitude towards client groups and this was very much related to their value base as social work staff. This was quite a different theme to any other Team where the predominance in other Teams tended to be the translation of theory into practice. It was also noted that analytical interpretation of data and information was important and critical evaluation skills had been significant. It was noted that education had led to a self-analytical approach to work and some were led in their use and transference of education into their practice, although this is less significant in this Team than in others.

**ENFORCED**

Those aspects Imposed upon us via legislation, procedures, Government guidelines etc

For those aspects of the work environment which are enforced on staff and by which they have to comply, two central themes dominated, namely legislation and departmental demands. Unusual to other Teams, these two aspects were central with limited other references to examples. 8 Respondents out of 13 ranked this highly in the social work staff grouping. Where these had altered day to day practice were answered very individually. These ranged from putting a structure into the process which in itself may slow that process down and that it instigated thoughtful processes and decision making. There was a criticism and concern in relation to whether there was, because of legislative demand and departmental demands, less time for work, accountability becoming more significant than quality and quality in itself affecting performance. There was a negative response in most cases to how those issues which had been imposed had altered practice and it could be noted that there was, within this Team, a struggle between performance demands, legislative and departmental demands against what these Team members saw as quality work. It is important to note this as a struggle which could result in resistance if not appropriately managed and acknowledged.
**EVIDENCE-BASED**

*What evidence-based practice is used within practice*

7 out of 13 noted the use of Community Care as a source of evidence-base and this was more dominant than in most Teams. There were, in most responses, limited detail as to the use of evidence-based research and there were non-specific examples given, e.g. DOH. 4 Respondents out of 13 specifically noted training but again were non-specific in their response. The examples of where information had been extracted from evidence-based research and used in practice 7 out of 13 noted a specific conference. Most of the examples listed had been provided by the department and had not been read independently outside that which had been offered via either training or as part of the departmental involvement. There were clear indications of very individual approaches to the use of information, those who gave a specific response to this question tended to reflect the balance of their own caseload or individual interest.

The reasons that this research was seen as important were because they were new and well written, that there were general themes which the caseload could use, 9 out of 13 Respondents noted that the research enabled the casework to be easier and that it was practice-related. 1 Respondent noted that evidence-based research was of particular interest because it was stimulating and interesting.

It would be interesting for this Team to ask whether the research which was being sought was in relation to finding support for casework dilemmas or support for particular views given that the research tended to be very focused on individual interests or was part of the departmental training strategy.

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**EXPERT**

*Who are seen as Experts and why are they perceived as experts*

5 Respondents out of 13 saw JCT as being expert and this was namely the medical practitioners or the psychologist. 6 Respondents out of 13 noted either Senior Managers, District Care Managers or Senior Practitioners, those who were in a supervisory or managerial role. 3 Respondents noted the legal department and 3 noted external psychologists or specialists. There were 3 Respondents who left the question blank.

10 out of 13 saw these persons as expert because of their knowledge and experience. 1 Respondent felt that it was also because of their professional qualification and another because senior managers, particularly, make things workable and that was their influence and power.
APPENDIX 3

EXPERIENCES

What experiences have had most significance

5 out of 13 Respondents noted case orientated difficulties which they had learnt from but 2 had noted personal traumas which had not been resolved for them. 3 Respondents out of 13 noted that their experiences of supervision and management had been of significance to them although not all of those 3 had seen that as a positive experience. 5 Respondents out of 13 specified experiences which were specific examples of practice which they had learnt from and a further 4 had noted more general experiences which they had seen as a learning process. It is interesting to note that 7 out of 13 had seen traumatic or difficult case matters or personal trauma as having particular significance as this would lead one to particularly ensure that the supervisory and management process is therefore in place in order to offer appropriate support.

These experiences were seen as significant to these individuals as they had learnt from the traumatic or difficult experience and that their experiences had influenced how they practised and they had become more confident or what they had learnt had then become much more integrated into their day to day practice. In relation to how this had been shared 6 out of 13 had shared these experiences in supervision, 4 out of 13 with their colleagues and others. This Team may wish to consider what structures they have in place for sharing difficult experiences or experiences by which they can learn. The answers to this question tended to reflect a very individualistic type of approach.

ERRORS

How are mistakes acknowledged and learned from

Errors tended to be identified via either supervisory or management meeting process for 5 out of 13 of the Respondents. A further 5 noted that this was via self-analysis as opposed to through discussion and support from other mechanisms. 3 Respondents noted that they discussed situations with others although the others were not identified and 4 noted that they identified problems via some structured process such as courts, meetings etc. The responses in this section tended to note a lack of satisfactory process in which errors could be identified because it again tended to be through a variety of different sources with less than 50% being through the supervisory and management process.

The examples from learning from mistakes tended to focus around casework issues and were dominated by casework examples. This meant a high diversity in the responses. 2 Respondents however noted that record keeping and writing had particularly been examples that they had learnt from and 2 others had noted that thinking, planning, reviewing and trying to think ahead were now ways in which they had tried to influence doing a task differently.

3 Respondents out of 13 noted that time was one of the restrictors of why error was occurring. Only 1 member of staff out of 13 noted that there was a fear of acknowledging errors. 3 Respondents felt that the culture and structure did not allow for this to occur, e.g. the lack of opportunity via the supervisory process.
**EXPERIMENT**

_Those examples of experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues_

In relation to the ability to implement or to experiment, 3 out of 13 left this section blank. 2 Respondents noted true experimentation where they had implemented something new. All other Respondents noted activities which could be noted more under experience than under experimentation so, for example, people tried different things and different techniques in relation to their cases which they had learnt from others but had not necessarily integrated something completely new into practice. Others tended to know about the experimentation where either it was case-orientated or via Team Meetings, memos or supervision. In relation to those who had experimented, this had been then embodied in policy and implemented via a management process.

**ENDORSEMENT**

_How is feedback given and from which source_

Endorsement tended to be either via supervisors or senior managers, court, clients and in 2 cases setting goals for oneself or via external agencies. 2 Respondents felt that there was unsatisfactory feedback processes and that evaluation was lacking.

These processes and persons tended to be significant because there was a respect for skills and knowledge, there was a power in their position or to influence resources, or there was a link to specific value bases or similar knowledge bases. 3 Respondents felt that this was a dysfunctional and unsatisfactory process and it was noted that the supervisory process was failing. When activities were not reinforced or supported then 6 out of 13 respondents felt under-valued and gave up, and did not pursue the matter, or did not understand the reasons for the lack of reinforcement. 3 felt that they would try again or try a different approach.

** ISSUES ARISING:**

There was within this Team an overall approach of a high level of self-sufficiency and a group of individuals working, and it may be that the Team needs to look at how they can particularly consider the use and value of supervision and the sharing of activities and the support of each other. The other process by which individuals in this Team gained information and knowledge tended to be via politics or the media. Friends and partners were also noted and 2 persons noted that other persons in other places in other authorities had remained a continuing influence on them and that their past history had continued with them in this local authority.
'KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments of Team 4.

EDUCATIONAL

*Those aspects of past Education which influence most day to day practice*

In this Team there were 11 personnel surveyed. This Team had 7 persons who held a First Degree, of whom 2 noted this as their most significant educational experience. 5 Persons noted that the Diploma Course was the most influential educational experience. There was, however, more so than other Teams, a reflection of vocational and non-related work issues which were significant to those Team Members, namely those related to life chances of members of staff etc.

The link between theory and practice was the central theme in why a course or theory input was relevant. This formal education was seen as a reinforcement for members of staff as a confirmation of the practice carried out. This may also reflect the significant number of personnel in this Team who had entered education and diploma in social work training as either a second career or as a return to work. This was 7 out of 11. Therefore, they had previous experiences on which to build.

ENFORCED

*Those aspects imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc*

In regard to those issues which were enforced on the members of staff, the Children Act was by far the most dominant feature, indeed all 11 members of staff noted legislation and the Children Act as being most significant. However, there were also reflections in regard to CP Procedures, LAC Procedures and there were 3 personnel who mentioned Quality Protects and Best Value.

4 persons out of 11 noted that of significance of timescales placed via policies and procedures or legislation. There was, however, limited response as to how these experiences related to day to day practice. There was one note of the use of this information within staff supervision but limited other links between any influences in regard to day to day practice.

EXPERT

*Who are seen as Experts and why are they perceived as Experts*

In this Team those who were seen as expert were more dominated by internal members of staff than externals. Senior Case Practitioners, District Care Managers, Divisional Managers, were listed as internal experts along with the Social Work Consultant and Solicitors. 6 out of 11 members of staff noted these personnel. In regard to external sources of expert, Health Visitors, local Psychologists, expert witnesses, JCT, were listed as influential. This can be interpreted as positive as this Team viewed internal expertise as important as, or as significant as, external experts and this was not reflected in other Teams. These staff were viewed as having expertise because of their knowledge and skills. There was an assumption within the responses that training and background and experience offered the main criteria by which to determine expertise. These members of staff were seen as enabling other members of staff to view things differently.
What evidence-based practice is used within practice

This Team tended to use the Internet in significantly more numbers than any other Team, in this instance 7 out of 11 members of staff. There was a limited number of staff who referred to Community Care. This was different from most other field Teams. The evidence-based research tended to be about common central themes such as attachment, neglect, working together and adoption and not necessarily about research in relation to less mainstream issues.

Where information had been extracted and was used in recent practice. 4 members particularly noted neglect, attachment and 3 adoption. Assessment, Quality Protects, adoption and domestic violence, care-leavers and other single issues for members of staff made up the other points of using evidence in practice but the main examples of how information was extracted which was then used in day to day practice, focused on neglect and attachment.

These sources were particularly of influence to members of staff because they linked the theoretical perspective with the evidence in regard to outcomes. In regard to neglect there was a development of ideas and there was a view that the evidence gave confidence to practice.

Those examples of experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues

In respect of experimentation the Team almost exclusively noted that it was aligned with day to day practical work. This meant for example the Assessment Group Bungalow work, the non-abuse pack and direct work with children. This may not be seen as experimentation in the true sense of the word which is the implementation of something new. However, it was clear that standard techniques were being used within the Team and that experimentation for individual members of staff was on an individual case level. 6 Out of 11 members of staff noted no experimentation, 1 member of staff had experimented in relation to bullying and had then implemented that via appropriate structures and mechanisms attached to a Female Study. These examples of individual practice and the work which had been cited as experimentation were generally noted through colleagues etc.

1 member of staff had initiated the setting up a Bungalow for a teenager and that, clearly, had been very satisfying for the individual and for the Department. That was then analysed via the Internal Auditor, this being useful in creating consultation papers and in further identification of this type of work for other children. This was a good example of experimentation and implementing into the Department new ideas and practice.
EXPERIENCES

What experiences had had most significance

In regard to experiences the Team reflected on those which were mostly to do with day to day practice such as working in partnership, working together, adoption etc. These experiences tended to be shared via a Team Meeting and individually. It also appeared that there was communication of experiences via supervision. It was noted that 1 member of staff in this Team did have particular expertise and had looked at bullying and it would be useful to know whether that member of staff had relayed that study within the Team Meeting. Their educational experiences and this was untypical to other Teams. The remaining 8 members of staff referred to negative experiences which caused trauma and a further 4 to specific cases, 2 of which were through the court process.

ERROR

How are mistakes acknowledged and learned from

There appeared to be a healthy analysis of learning from errors, having some self-evaluation of work but primarily identifying errors through supervision and discussion. On two occasions this was noted specifically as the District Care Manager. It was noted that the outcomes of cases in itself was indicative of what had occurred and analysis followed after those so this was evidence based on an individual case to case basis.

In learning from mistakes, the Team tend to consider that the use of Policies and Procedures was effective and there was a general theme that it was appropriate to identify one's own mistakes to be self-critical and to act accordingly. There was no indication of a reluctance to acknowledge mistakes or to share that with either colleagues or managers.

In relation to those factors which are restrictive of learning from error in the day to day work of individuals, the most significant feature was time. 6 Out of 11 members of staff specifically mentioned time and 2 further members of staff noted pressure of work. Further to that, individuals listed particularly what they found as restrictive, these were namely individual perspectives, eg that the structure in itself can restrict learning, 1 member of staff felt there was not an acknowledgement of error, that it was important to think through problems and to be accurate about the information. It was also noted that it was important to have the commitment to learn from errors and have the ability to share that.
ENDORSEMENT

How is feedback given and from which source

The process of endorsement which confirmed activities and practice, almost unanimously, was noted as supervision as the main mechanism by which this occurred. The other mechanisms were via discussions with colleagues, through meetings such as legal advice meetings or courts, through statistics and 3 out of 11 members of staff noted clients.

These persons and processes were noted as significant because of their level of experience, their position in the Department, the power and position that they held and there was respect for their opinion. There was variance in regard to the feedback and whether in fact that was always positive or not.

When activities were not reinforced or supported, then two strategies appeared to be main themes. The first was an open and honest discussion with others and a consideration of how to look at things differently, or to seek out via supervision how that could be better. 8 Out of 11 noted this type of analytical, critical approach. 6 out of 11 noted a constructive, self-analysis with colleagues. 2 Out of 11 felt that they were undermined by the process where activities were not reinforced or supported and they felt under-valued or lost confidence.

In regard to those other processes by which one can gain information, personal life experiences, again, seemed to be a predominant theme.

ISSUES ARISING:

This Team's responses were, compared with others, less detailed and less in-depth. It was evident that this Team operated in some different ways to other Teams in the sense that they were very individual in their backgrounds, views and experience. There were different levels of depth in response and it was difficult to draw out themes within the Team. It may therefore be that this Team would like to consider how they can look at the learning process in a more structured way to include the different themes and backgrounds of members of staff. It may be that they would wish to have discussions about the use of experience and evidence in their Team and also how to use feedback and supervisory methods and how to share outside the office as well as within the office.
‘KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES’ AUDIT

The following are the accumulated comments of Team 5.

EDUCATION

Those aspects of past Education which influence most day to day practice

There were a significant number of the Team who had returned to education at a later date in their lives, having either completed life experiences or other professional work experiences. 2 Respondents out of 14 noted that their experience and experiential learning had been most significant.

Of the 14 Respondents, 8 had first Degrees, as well as professional qualification. The remaining had CQSWs, CSSs or Diplomas in Social Work courses. The lack of an overall theme and the lack of particular relevance to educational qualification was significant in this Team, above other Teams. Respondents tended to look at very specific parts of the courses which had been of use to them. Only 3 of the Respondents noted that their professional qualification as such had been significant to them in their learning process. The majority of Respondents noted specific experiences such as role play, assessment, organisational constructs, general life experiences, etc.

There was a range of diverse responses as to how education had influenced Respondents' current practice. 3 Respondents out of 14 noted that it had encouraged empathy, 3 further Respondents noted the use of research. 1 Respondent felt it particularly important to explore that research was valid before its use or misuse. 1 Respondent had felt that university had been a thoughtful time to explore whereas another had used the understanding of organisational activities and how they influence practice and belief systems. 2 Respondents had noted that their courses had allowed for the gathering of information and the transmitting theory and method and applying it to practice. 1 Respondent had noted how education had given confidence to the practice undertaken.

ENFORCED

Those aspects Imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc

In relation to those issues which have been enforced 9 out of 14 Respondents had noted legislation and departmental policy as those issues imposed. In most cases the legislation was identified as the Children Act. However, this Team also had a variety of other issues which they felt were imposed upon them, which made significance to their practice. These included in 4 Respondent's budgets and financial restrictions, in 2 information technology and the use of computers etc. 2 other Respondents noted new Government initiatives such as Quality Protects and Best Value whilst 3 other Respondents noted court pressures such as time tabling, demands etc. 1 Respondent noted the pressure from other agencies in regard to assessments. A further Respondent noted housing and legal regulation in regard to that whilst another noted race relations and equal opportunities.
EVIDENCE-BASED

**What evidence-based practice is used within practice**

Those sources from which information is gained which is evidence-based was noted by this Team as follows: The general themes were the use of either 'Community Care' or via training days which had been put on by the Department or via other internal mechanisms. 8 Respondents out of 14 noted community care as a source of gaining information. 2 Respondents left this section blank, 1 member of staff noted the use of the practice teacher route to assist with research and 4 members of staff noted training days in relation to neglect workshops and adoption. 1 member of staff noted 'Messages from Research' and 2 members of staff noted the cognitive behavioural approach listed by CEBBS. 1 member of staff noted JCT and 1 a national paper. Line managers were noted by 1 member of staff and the use of the Internet by 1 member of staff. The specific examples of information which were used in recent practice range from 2 members of staff noting that they used research as a general reference point. 1 member of staff specifically noted the use of research in court work and 3 members of staff noting that the adoption and the neglect workshops looked particularly at changing attitudes and encouraging a re-framing of some of the debate particularly around adoption not being the last resort. These sources were seen as having a particular value because of the relevance of the topic in relation to 'live cases' and in assisting with the assessment and planning of those cases. 4 members of staff noted how important it was that information was easily read. 2 members of staff felt that the discussion with others or the directives via others, especially managers, also had made evidence-based particularly significant.

EXPERTS

**Who are seen as Experts and why are they perceived as Experts**

6 out of 14 Respondents saw experts solely by listing external experts such as psychologists. However, of the remaining 8 there was a balance between managers, colleagues and social work specialists in other teams, such as adoption. It was also significant to note that this was the only Team who noted the Police service as having a particular expertise and 4 out of 14 noted solicitors as being experts. In general, this Team tended to note internal experts more than other Teams and tended also to list managers, particularly DCMs, and colleagues as having particular expertise.

The reason why these persons were deemed to be experts tended to focus on their knowledge and experience and particularly the fact that they had a specialist in their particular subject and therefore had a different framework or perspective on issues. Qualifications, studying longer was also noted as a positive to these individuals as experts.
EXPERIENCES

What experiences have had most significance

On experiences that had particularly influenced members of staff, 3 out of 14 members of staff noted personal experience which had particularly influenced their practice. The remaining 11 Respondents tended to note those experiences which had had particular reference to the outcomes of cases, either in relation to their own persistence in work and tried techniques or where the department's actions or previous case work had mishandled a case and they had learnt from it. 12 members of staff noted their education and courses as their most positive experiences. There was no reference in any of the responses to traumatic or difficult events as there had been in other Teams and Respondents had tended to look at cases where there had been professional actions which had taken place which they had learnt from in what appeared to be a positive manner.

These experiences were seen as particularly significant because they tended to have an influence on outcomes which had then been learnt from and decisions had been made which were clearly understood. In 2 cases, Respondents felt it allowed empathy with what had occurred. In relation to how these experiences were shared, 8 out of 14 Respondents noted no sharing of experiences. Those where experiences had been shared tended to be via the supervisory process.

ERROR

How are mistakes acknowledged and learned from

13 Respondents appeared positive in their acceptance of errors and were able to share that with either their line manager or others, with the Team or via a structured process such as review of cases, etc and there was 1 reference out of 14 to concerns regarding a blame culture.

1 member of staff was concerned that there was not enough evaluation of work which was reflected in policies and procedures.

5 members out of 14 Respondents noted the value of being self-critical and some of these 5 noted that as their primary source of identifying errors or mistakes. In general, there appeared to be appropriate openness in relation to errors and people were clear that they could share that with their line managers or others knowing that the response would be non-judgemental. Specific examples of learning from mistakes, the general theme that came out from the Respondents was in relation to outcomes of cases which had not gone as well as anticipated, i.e. returning children where there was a subsequent breakdown. The second most significant theme was using learning from mistakes via the use of a new skill such as computer work.

The main aspect which appeared to restrict learning from error in day to day practice was most predominantly time. Time to reflect and time to think about work was also a key theme although 2 Respondents did note that nothing restricted learning from day to day work. 2 members of staff noted poor quality supervision which a further 2 noted no restriction. 1 Respondent noted having a good manager.
EXPERIMENT

Those examples of experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues

7 out of 14 Respondents had not experimented in their work or carried out research into social work practice. These 7 Respondents had left this question blank. Of the remaining 7 Respondents, 4 had used techniques which were practices used by others or which had been learned via supervision. 1 member of staff had devised new direct work technique assessments and was using that within their caseload. 2 Respondents were non-specific as to what particular experiment had been tested and how that was used. Others knew about experimentation either via consultation or via the management process. Those who had left the previous section blank had noted a lack of time and a lack of confidence in carrying out experimental work and a feeling of being unsupported. Team discussion was of significant assistance to those who had implemented something new and there was discussion with a colleague. 1 Respondent noted that the experiment was written up and distributed through other agencies and one restriction was noted as the lack of money.

ENDORSED

How is feedback given and from which source

12 out of 14 members of staff had recorded that they had received endorsement and confirmation of their activities and practice from their managers or via supervision. 2 out of 14 had not responded to the question. 7 Respondents sought reinforcement from colleagues and 4 from families or clients. 1 Respondent noted responses to the court process or through the complaints process and 1 through outcomes. Those 13 out of 14 persons who responded to this question of what makes these persons or processes significant tended to reflect the importance of having someone either reinforce or value your work and that this is done from a position of experience. It was noted that scrutiny of practice was important and 2 members of staff noted particularly the importance of client feedback given that it was these persons who directly experienced the practice. 13 out of 14 responded to the question about what occurred if activities were not reinforced or supported. Of the 13 Respondents, 9 out of 13 Respondents said that they would seek validation of the reasons why and question and consider alternative ways of and of checking out what had occurred, and question oneself and others. 2 Respondents felt that they take no direct action but may leave the matter unprogressed.

ISSUES ARISING:

A number of people responded to the question about other processes by which to gain information which influenced practice and these tended to be via learning opportunities and training courses or via work with other colleagues or professionals and through life experiences. The media was listed and also self-motivation about wishing to learning and to use opportunities as learning opportunities.
KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments of Team 6.

EDUCATION

Those aspects of past Education which influence most day to day practice

There were 12 Respondents in this Team, 7 of whom noted their qualifying course as significant in their education. 4 Out of the 5 persons who held First Degrees recorded these as important. 1 Respondent noted a Practice Teaching course and another a specialist Child Protection course. The remaining Respondents cited individual influences related to past experiences unrelated to social work.

These educational experiences influenced today's practice for 5 out of 12 Respondents because it related to their value-base, particularly in relation to equal opportunities and other anti-discriminatory practice. 5 members of staff noted how their educational background had enabled an enquiring, questioning approach to their practice which helped them, particularly in the collection of information and the assessment process.

There was sensitivity in 3 responses to the empowerment of those who are Service Users but the prevailing theme was the linking of theory into practice.

3 Respondents noted specific skills in their responses which had remained with them. In these instances, they were skills unrelated to social work but had been transferred from previous experiences in other settings, e.g. telephone skills, writing skills.

ENFORCED

Those aspects Imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc

In this section it was important to note what was imposed upon staff from what source and how that affected day to day practice. 6 Respondents out of 12 specifically noted the Children Act as their sole legislative influence. A further 3 Respondents cited legislation or the law, in general. 3 Staff recorded Departmental and Government Policy whilst a further 3 specifically cited Adoption and Looked After Children Procedures. The new Care Management structure imposed on staff via the Department was listed by 2 Respondents.

This Team had a more broad approach to this question where some other Teams were more specific in their responses.

There was comment in relation to the alteration in day to day practice of activities which had been imposed on staff and this was namely that in regard to the Children's Act. It had assisted staff in working with adults and giving more thought to partnership with parents. There was, however, some concern that Procedures slowed down the process as did the new lap-top requirement and that there was a potential for blocking initiative and creativity which could create frustration. The dominance of paperwork was noted by members of staff and that this had the knock-on effect of having less direct work with clients. The fact that this was compounded by more assessment work and court work and that other inter-agency procedures could also cause delay, eg Police procedures was listed as a frustration.

The effect of more senior manager's intervention with different priorities was also noted as restricting.
What evidence-based practice is used within practice

In regard to evidence-based influence on practice it was noted that there is a variety of sources that social workers have found beneficial. The use of Community Care as a source of evidence-based was recorded by 60% of respondents. The two most significant additional evidence-based information was gained from the recent Neglect Conference and the 'Adoption Now' presentation. Messages from Research, via the Dartington Project was also noted. Those who participated in the Post-Qualifying Course felt that that had assisted them in looking at evidence-based practice as had the cognitive behavioural training via CEBBS. In giving specific examples of where information had been extracted from Research and influenced practice this has tended to be very much practice based although there was one reference to the use of Quality Protects MAP in relation to the expectations of performance on the Department.

2 members of staff noted the internet as a source of evidence-base and 3 members of staff noted a wider selection of journal articles, books, BASW publications, or specific reading in relation to an area of interest such as Autism, adolescent behaviour, etc.

The specific examples which were useful to members of staff tended to be individually based and it would be interesting to know how those individual areas of development such as work in anorexia, domestic violence, adolescent abusers etc, are then managed within the work context and how the manager or supervisor assists in using that information in that context.

These sources of evidence-base were particularly interesting because of two themes. Firstly, it was an answer to current case matters or a particular interest and, secondly, because the presentation generated enthusiasm and interest.

How are mistakes acknowledged and learned from

If an error had occurred, 7 members of staff out of 12 noted that it was identified via discussions, although with whom this was non-specified. The majority of Respondents identified that there was a process by which errors were at least acknowledged and the important process of them being able to evaluate mistakes. There was a view that time was necessary to reflect on these areas in a supportive environment and that discussions should occur which could allow for the admission in relation to errors being made and then appropriate examination of that via the supervisory process. There was no indication in the responses of reluctance to either acknowledge or share errors but there was no clear evidence of what the structure was through which Respondents were able to process the analysis of errors.

Those examples of where errors had occurred, 2 Respondents out of 12 cited individual case matters whereas 3 members of staff noted mistakes made via not following processes or being able to learn to be more assertive in processes such as legal advice meetings, use of experts, etc.

What restricted errors in day to day practice ranged from 8 out of 12 Respondents noting pressure of work or time as being the greatest restricter of learning from errors. 2 members of staff were cautious in admitting to errors in the current climate of being under scrutiny or being fearful of the consequences of admitting error.
Those examples of experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues

10 out of 12 Respondents in this Team had listed some experiment in which they had been involved and which they had implemented into their day to day practice. These tended to be individualistic and were case orientated. The examples ranged from arranging residential assessment places, working with specific techniques such as parallel stories for children, life story work, applications for specific grants etc. 1 member of staff noted the implementation of structures and processes which were new to the Department. How others then knew about these experiments tended to be either via word of mouth or discussions with colleagues or managers and via Team meetings. In 1 case it was fed back structurally via the Deputy Director. There was, however, in 3 instances, an acknowledgement that information was not shared as time restricted that occurring or that there was not necessarily the structures present by which to assist that being processed. It is clear that the majority of Respondents in this Team were able to identify new pieces of practice which they used in their day to day work and these techniques were new to them as opposed to necessarily being experimental. Therefore, it was experimental on an individual basis but not on a structural basis.

How is feedback given and from which source

In respect of feedback and evaluation processes, and how staff have confirmed their activities or have them endorsed, these were listed as via experts and other colleagues, via clients, via Team Meetings etc. 9 out of 11 Respondents noted supervision as the feedback mechanism for themselves and 4 out of 11 used the Team process to do this.

These people or processes were deemed as significant because they were key in the organisation, they had personal respect, that service users were seen as important in keeping social workers focused and that others often were able to give a new perspective to members of staff.

In regard to whether activities had not been enforced or supported then 7 out of the 11 Respondents felt that they would ask for a re-think or a re-examination or consider alternatives in trying to do things further. 4 out of 11 Respondents felt that that would be under-mining, that they would not pursue the process and would be concerned about it.

In respect of other processes by which people gain information this tended to be via reading, life experiences, other agencies and other professionals and a significant number of respondents noted public opinion via the media, television and the public view of social work professionals.
**EXPERTS**

*Who are seen as Experts and why are they perceived as Experts*

It was clear that the majority of experts were external to the social work teams and had a particular specialism such as Psychology, Drug Abuse or the Child and Family Services. There was significantly less acknowledgement of internal expertise in this Team, 2 persons out of 12 Respondents noted colleague expertise, 1 noting that in a specific area of work. In regard to those who were external experts to the Social Services Team, the reason they were seen as experts was that they had good communication skills that gave confidence and self-belief in the work that was being carried out. They had a greater experience and knowledge-base and helped move cases which potentially were 'stuck'. There was an acknowledgement that they had respect within other forums such as courts and that they had specific knowledge as opposed to social work practice which was more broadbased. The second theme was not only having the greater knowledge but the ability then to actually communicate it effectively.

Those 2 member of staff who noted internal experts, 1 noted that it was a social worker who could achieve results and who demonstrated best practice whilst the other respondent noted that the expert has knowledge the staff member did not have.

This Team predominantly saw external experts and these ranged from those who worked within other social work fields such as the voluntary sector or who worked in the psychological or psychiatric services.

Those listed were deemed as expert because they had discreet bodies of knowledge, they had greater knowledge and 'more power' in external processes such as the court.

**EXPERIENCES**

*What experiences have had most significance*

Those experiences which had particularly influenced staff were given as a wide variety of individual instances which had particularly proved beneficial. These tended to be working with difficult and challenging cases, where there were either dangerous clients working with high risk situations, or with offending behaviour. There was however in 4 instances references to negative experiences which potentially were traumatic, ie assaults or where there was aggression or something negative had occurred.

Experiences were seen as significant because they had helped to reinforce messages particularly in relation to skills-based activities, eg the ability to protect oneself, the reinforcement of how to deal with situations, informative to practice and where it assisted learning in order to enable other activities to occur. This had helped to plan work and to focus on it. In regard to those traumatic or negative instances, there was a view that being wrong or having something negative happen creates a more cautious practitioner, that emotionally the instances were draining and there was the reinforcement of personal safety and skills in the assessment of risk etc.

There were only 2 Respondents out of 12 who noted how these experiences and how the points that had been learned had been shared. This in both instances had been shared via the supervisory process. There was no evidence of sharing more widely either via the Team or across Teams, indeed 10 out of 12 did not note any sharing of the experiences learnt.
'KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments of Specialist Team 1

EDUCATION

Those aspects of Education which influence most day to day practice

There were 9 Respondents in this Team. 2 Respondents noted that their degree and further education experiences had the most significance and 2 noted their diploma in social work or qualifying social work course. 3 however, recorded either a teacher at school or experiences in their school life, prior to further education and 1 noted that a previous professional experience had been as useful as the social work course. 1 Respondent noted that a specific part of training had been useful, namely that in relation to mental health and psychological aspects. It was generally noted within these 9 Respondents that there was a wider range of other influences on education and proportionately more so in relation to school experiences. This was not reflected in other Teams. In response to why these examples had been of particular influence, generally responses noted the underpinning of knowledge to practice, the establishment of a value-base and working with individuals. However, there were also skills based activities, such as interviewing, looking at a situation in non-prescriptive terms, considering the use of research and writing skills. It was noticeable that there were other aspects of education which had been beneficial, namely putting structure into work and gaining confidence through the activities by having some academic or education base.

ENFORCED

Those aspects Enforced upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government guidelines, etc

6 out of 8 Respondents noted legislation specifically noting the Children Act. However there were further to that, 4 Respondents who noted legislation in the context of the National Standards for care. Policies and procedures were noted in 5 instances out of 9 Respondents and training was also noted. The significant difference in this Team to other Teams were the particular features of this specialism which is reflected in the responses e.g. the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management etc of carers. Only 1 member of staff noted issues which were outside the Specialist Team's remit such as working with families and multi-agency work. 1 Respondent noted the Quality Protects document, there is no reference to other aspects of the work. The implementation of NVQs for direct carers has also had a significant effect. This team had strict regulatory influences which impacted on day to day activities such as visiting patterns etc.
APPENDIX 3

EVIDENCE-BASED

What Evidence-Based material is used within practice

3 respondents noted the use of community care as a source of evidence-base. Some were non-specific in regard to their journals and books whilst others were specific about the type of child care journal and research papers. 1 Respondent noted the use of the Internet and the use of BASW and 1 noted the DOH guidelines. The greatest theme however was in relation to the statistics, either journals or via the National Standards or research in relation to this service, such as Berridge. 1 Respondent also mentioned the use of feedback received from carers and the use of 'evidence-based' from that source. Training events had also been cited as useful, particularly those in relation to neglect and adoption.

The theme which was predominant in the 9 Respondents was the recruitment and support of carers via the National Standards, Choosing to Care or the Government guidance. The reason that these sources were seen as having a particular influence were that they were undertaken by acknowledged researchers or practitioners and that they were based on current information and were presented in such as way as was easily accessible and that the indications could then be defined into local relevance and were produced in respective journals. There was an example of where other information had been gained which was of use, namely that of the Youth Justice system. 1 Respondent noted the use of the course on neglect and the help for foster carers to understand the life experiences of neglect of children.

EXPERTS

Who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as Expert

2 Respondents noted their immediate line managers as experts. The remaining Respondents noted those who had written books or those who were seen as experts in a particularly confined field. CEBBS was also noted in regard to evidence-based research as was the NFCA in 2 instances. A member of JCT was noted in 2 instances. The majority however of this Team referred to outside experts and those who tended to be seen as definitive experts in their field via books or research. There was limited acknowledgement of expertise outside this very specialist field and this may indicate some isolation within the Team and the limited use of others to help inform this specialism. These persons were seen as experts because they had published books and papers which were recognised. They had life long experiences or were professional bodies dealing with the issues of carers. For those who were internal managers, they were seen as experts because of experience, usefulness and approachability.

EXPERIENCES

What Experiences have had most significance

3 out of 7 had responded to this section noting experiences which had been difficult or threatening to them personally or which had engendered fear or concern in relation to their work, such as being threatened by violent clients. Further to this, 3 out of 7 Respondents noted court work as experience which had particularly influenced them. 3 members of staff noted experiences which had been particularly useful to them such as outcomes of work. 2 particularly noted the benefit of having had residential experience. 1 member of staff noted the importance of working with external agencies. These experiences were deemed as significant as they had influenced and engendered feelings of confidence or they had noted experiences which had not been previously experienced by the member of staff. Experiences were generally shared through discussion or via the Line Management process. In 2 out of the 7 Respondents there had been no sharing of the information.
APPENDIX 3

ERROR

*How are Errors acknowledged and learned from*

6 out of 7 Respondents positively responded to the identification of errors by sharing those with managers and trying to resolve issues. There appeared to be in most cases, a general acceptance that errors could be shared openly and positively. It was also generally noted that this is dealt with in a positive way for those concerned. 1 Respondent however felt that there was not enough reflection on errors and that this should occur more often. In relation to examples of learning from mistakes, there was a significant number of people who had noted the importance of notes and recordings in relation to file entries and how important it is to ensure that this is accurate. 2 Respondents were non-specific in their response. 5 out of 7 Respondents were able to give specific examples of learning from mistakes, 1 giving more a general response and 1 did not respond. 1 Respondent thought that there was nothing restricting learning from error and 4 Respondents felt that time/work load was such that it was a restrictor on the ability to learn from day to day mistakes.

EXPERIMENTATION

*Those examples of Experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues*

6 Respondents were able to list examples of specific developments mostly in relation to initiatives that had occurred within the specialism. 1 Respondent had not had an opportunity to undertake experimentation. It appears that there was an ability to put things forward and to try out new things within this group of staff. Others knew about these experiments via Team Meetings and managers. There was a lack of sharing of these initiatives outside the specialist group as noted in these responses.

ENDORSEMENT

*How is feedback given and from which source*

Endorsement was almost exclusively via supervision or via the steering group meetings that feedback occurs. 1 Respondent did note feedback from carers and another the formal panels. These persons were deemed to be significant because of their position and because they were an effective means of communication and because the feedback was constructive. In general, if activities were not supported, then there was a diversity of responses from carrying on anyway with the course of action regardless and asking for support or explanation, trying to resolve it with managers or feeling undermined. There was no general theme which came out of the Team in regard to a reaction.

There were other processes or persons by which information was gained which influenced the job was in this instance almost exclusively feedback from either carers, colleagues or others who were related to the job, such as other local authorities etc.
'KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following are the accumulated comments of Specialist Team 2.

**EDUCATION**

*Those aspects of past Education which influence most day to day practice*

There were 8 Respondents in this Team, 6 of whom noted that CQSW or qualifying course was the most significant to them. 3 Out of 8 held Degrees and noted this as most significant to them. This Team, unlike some of the other Teams gave most emphasis on a formal education either via a degree or qualifying course. Less emphasis was placed on vocational type courses or on specific named aspects of a course.

The importance of this type of educational background to the respondents was that it supplied a knowledge base and gave confidence within court or panel or other formal processes. Education was noted as allowing for the investigation of the wider perspective and the more structural aspects of what occurred within society and organisation and practice. Psychological and sociological theory and the ability to link skills and to use them in a practical context was noted. The organisation of work, counselling skills, the ability to search for information were all parts of how current practice was supported by the Respondent's educational background. This Team, it was noted, was more analytical in its approach to the questions and demonstrated intellectual depth in their responses.

**ENFORCED**

*Those aspects imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc*

In regard to those areas which were enforced on staff members all 8 Respondents noted the specialist legislation as the primary statute and the Children Act as the second piece of legislation to take into consideration. It was noted that Quality Protects, the Human Rights Act, Government legislation, the impact of the Department of Health, Procedures, were all significant and indicated a wide understanding of issues. There was a wider and more in-depth understanding of the complexity of those issues imposed on the Department than in most Area Teams. This is interesting given that it could be seen as converse to what would be expected of a very specialist Team. The influences that altered day to day practice were the demands of Procedures, the demands of court and pressures in relation to paper work etc. Use of Procedures was seen as a positive and helpful guide into day to day practice. The respondents highlighted the dilemmas posed by conflicting legislation e.g. Children Act.
What evidence-based practice is used within practice

This Team indicated a wide range of detailed information from different sources which were evidence-based. 7 Respondents noted Messages from Research, the use of Family Law Journals, the use of BAAF, legislation, PPIAS, the Internet, contact issues etc. 1 Respondent noted no reading had occurred. There was knowledge of evidence based work within this Team and a confidence within the responses which showed that this was used in practice. Examples tended to be used in court presentations, via supervision, looking at attachment issues, considering precedents that are established within the court and within court applications. It was evident that this helped to inform practice and helped to inform how the service was delivered. These sources were of particular influence because they were based on direct research, it was up to date, relevant and respondents could use the research in a practical way. There was also evidence of the use of single case design, eg case studies as a useful source of evidence.

EXPERTS

Who are seen as Experts and why are they perceived as Experts

Those who were deemed to be experts in this area were almost exclusively external and very specialist in this area. 2 members of staff noted other internal members of staff and 1 noted themselves. The specialists were the Department of Health, and recognised researchers. Clearly, these external specialists held some considerable weight with staff members. They were seen as important because they were honest and open about research, they were reliable in their information, had vast experience and made the presentation interesting and the information easily understood. Their position was seen as also important. 1 member of staff felt that there was also a confirmation process which occurred with these experts which reinforced practice. They showed a wider picture and a depth of experience of knowledge and were able to be compared with other agencies. It was also noted that they were able to say and discuss controversial issues in an open way.

The Department supports this openness to discuss key issues in relation to adoption as positive. There was no evidence of restricting debate and the Department appeared to support openness in relation to specialist research.

EXPERIENCES

What experiences have had most significance

In regard to using past experiences which have particularly influenced members of staff noted how the panel, the court process and contact with senior managers had influenced their practice. Other members of staff were very individual in their response. 2 members of staff noted their Childcare Team experiences and how that was relevant and used. 1 member of staff noted a case which had "gone wrong" and another a contested matter. Another noted their first Care Proceedings. The main theme which predominated, was the use of experience via direct practice and less so via structural activities such as courts, supervision etc. It was noted however that these experiences tended to be exclusively positive and that learning from experience clearly occurred.
APPENDIX 3

ERRORS

*How are mistakes acknowledged and learned from*

Members of this Team tended to note similar types of errors made, mainly incidents around learning from work with service users. 3 members of staff felt that they were able to analyse and reflect on mistakes and to revisit events looking back with the benefit of hindsight. This tended to take place in a variety of semi-formal or formal situations, such as supervision, court, work with colleagues or where other decisions had been superimposed by those mechanisms. 1 member of staff felt that there was limited time to look and learn from error.

Those events which restrict learning from errors tended to be dominated more by the structure of either supervision or an inability to have a post-mortem. Time and work loads were noted in 3 instances and in 1 instance there was a fear of a complaint being made. The overall impression however from this section was that supervisory process was key to whether learning from error could occur and this at times was failing thus hindering the learning process.

EXPERIMENTATION

*Those examples of experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues*

Most members of this Team tended to note experimentation in relation to case work rather than to implementing something more widely into the organisation e.g. liaison with other agencies, managing work in a different way, implementing different packages. 2 members of staff felt that there was no availability to experiment and there appeared to be a mix of interpretation in relation to what experimentation is in this context. Others tended to know about new work or experimentation via either Team Meetings or via the Team Leader. There seemed to be a split in relation to the Team in responses to this question in that there were 2 who noted dissatisfaction about the inability to have time to experiment or to try new things while others were positive that that could happen within the Team.

ENDORSEMENT

*How is feedback given and from which source*

Processes confirming social workers’ activities tended to be via either semi-formal or formal situations, such as supervision, court, work with other professionals, panel, senior managers, work with other colleagues and Teams, etc. 2 persons noted that clients give them feedback and that that reinforcement of activities was via casework. 3 members of staff noted that supervision was dissatisfying for them and its lack of regularity was undermining the process of considering feedback in a positive way. Those processes which did reinforce activity tended to be seen as significant because they facilitated practice or they had an inbuilt status and respect anyway, ie the court or panel process.

When activities were not supported there was no general theme in relation to the overall responses from this Team. It tended to be very individualistic as to the approach in respect of not having activities reinforced. The other processes by which persons gained information tended to be via personal relationships, general life experiences and the media featured strongly in their responses.
The following are the accumulated comments of the Social Work Assistants Part I (E)

**EDUCATION**

*Those aspects of past Education which most influence day to day practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There was the unanimous response from this group that the training regarding direct work with children, held some years ago, was influential in their day to day work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was debate about the NVQ training. New workers found this helpful in being able to reflect on practice issues and to have a practice supervisor challenging their work. With two members of the group there was disquiet, as neither had their NVQ assessor in place in order to progress this training. They found the process, therefore, unhelpful and frustrating. There was no evidence of formal learning outside that provided by the Department.</td>
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</table>

**ENFORCED**

*Those aspects Enforced upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines, etc*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This group's primary compliance, which influenced their practice, was departmental policy and procedures. These gave them a good guideline and boundary in which to work. Two people in the group felt that departmental policy could be written in a &quot;friendlier way&quot;. There was no reference to any other enforced activity although SWAs said unanimously they were unclear when and how they were updated.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH**

*What Evidence-Based material is used within practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The issue of research was connected by the SWA, in discussion, to the NVQ training. There was also comment that some workers read Community Care and the Guardian on a Wednesday. Within the specialist service there was information that had come from the specialist social worker in relation to specialist areas of work. In a more general sense the social work assistants within the local teams felt they would not be using research within their work but all members of this group felt it would be interesting to have more information. There was a comment about the difficulty in accessing information as the Training Unit and Library facilities are central.</td>
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</table>

**ENDORSED**

*How is Feedback given and from which source*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The group felt that supervision was extremely beneficial and most workers said that they had supervision on a monthly basis. There was considerable discussion about the way the social work assistant role had changed and particularly in relation to the access service. There was also discussion about the fact that there was not so much preventive work taking place. Endorsement and feedback appeared to be via the supervision process although this was limited to case matters.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EXPERTS**

*Who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as Experts*

The Experts suggested by this group were the local Child Psychologist as significant above all others. Health Visitors, Solicitors, Juvenile Justice Team, on a secondary basis. Even when prompted, internal experts were not noted.

**EXPERIENCES**

*What Experiences have had most significance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group forwarded particular experiences that they felt had influenced them:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) A practice (child and family relationship) issue where a member of this team talked about listening to a client.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) There was a comment about how visits were normally made in a planned way and how on one occasion visiting unannounced made a difference in relation to understanding family needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Learning from other colleagues i.e. joint visiting and how joint visiting expanded one’s own knowledge and gave insight into the way we could work and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) It was noted that the neglect conference had brought alive the issues of neglect and had enabled workers to reinterpret their own understanding of what neglect really was to the individual and the client.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiences were best given by this group as specific examples which were all practice-based.

**ERRORS**

*How are Mistakes acknowledged and learned from*

There was no reluctance stated within this group to let managers know that they had made an error in their work. There was discussion about it being easier to let managers know this straightaway and certainly one person was very clear that it was easier to do it on a face-to-face basis. Errors were said to generally be identified by the individual.

**EXPERIMENT**

*Those examples of Experimentation in practice and how these were shared with colleagues*

There was a unanimous comment that there was no time to experiment within work. The group did not proceed with any discussion about experimentation, feeling it did not, and probably would not, centre on them.
APPENDIX 3

KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments for the Social Work Assistants Part II (N)

EDUCATION

**Those aspects of Education which most influence day to day practice**

In relation to issues in respect of education that influenced the social work assistants practice the main feedback was in relation to training that had been undertaken some while ago, in respect of direct work with children. There was also positive feedback in relation to CAMAT training although this was followed by discussion about confusion as to which people actually are entitled to undertake this training. There did not seem to be consistency throughout the county, with some social work assistants being told that this was not for them. There was no evidence of training or education which was not provided for by the Department.

ENFORCED

**Those aspects Enforced upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines, etc**

It was evident that the procedures, when used, were said to be useful but that the understanding of procedures in terms of following the format of these was at times confusing. All the social work assistants were knowledgeable as to where the procedures could be found. There was then further discussion about the fact that there needs to be further training in relation to assessment, the lack of ongoing training in this area, lack of confidence, the specialist social worker assistants who were asked via Procedures to carry out a task they did not feel confident about.

EVIDENCE-BASED

**What Evidence-Based material is used within practice**

Specialist social work assistants used the Internet in obtaining evidence to support their practice and reading Community Care. The SWAs who were part of the local teams used the Intranet in order to access information in relation to particular cases, medical issues etc. SWAs generally said they felt confident about leading and using research although they acknowledge they had not been given training or supervision in this.

EXPERTS

**Who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as Experts**

In this group, the social work assistants named two members of the JCT who had social work and psychology expertise. These were seen as very useful experts who they would go to freely. Members of the legal team were also noted. There was discussion from the social work assistants in the fieldwork teams that they would use senior case practitioners, district care managers or social workers particularly if co-working cases.
**EXPERIENCE**

*What Experiences have had most significance*

The main input in the discussion was in relation to violent incidences. There was also acknowledgement that 2 workers who talked about these issues had had support with this. The specialist social work assistants talked quite openly about situations where there had been an allegation of abuse and how their role became less defined and particularly difficult because of this. It was felt quite strongly that there needed to be specific training about this matter. SWAs all felt they had extensive experience and that this was useful to pass on, particularly to new members of staff. They said they were good resources for practical issues but felt they knew their boundaries.

**ERRORS**

*How Mistakes are acknowledged and learned from*

When it came to errors all members of this group said that they felt it was easy to say they had made a mistake and there were no issues for them about this standing in the way of their own personal development, or how they saw themselves within their work.

**EXPERIMENTATION**

*Those examples of Experimentation in practice and how these were shared with colleagues*

All the social work assistants who were in this group said they felt open to experimenting within their work but the reality was that there were such time limitations that they in fact tended to go down the same route and to undertake tasks in the same way that they had always done.

**ENDORSEMENT**

*How is feedback given and from which source*

Social work assistants in this group said they had supervision on a regular basis. Other feedback rarely happened. Elsewhere, except with some individual client’s case matters, there was not an opportunity for personal development or indeed time to discuss the emotional impact of their work.
The following are the accumulated comments of Residential Establishment No 1 (part of Staff Group – 9 staff)

EDUCATION

Those aspects of Education which most influence day to day practice

Two members of this Residential Team were undertaking the NVQ Training which encourages them to be valued as workers and also enables them to think about why they work in a certain way in terms of their day to day practice. There was however comment from one member of this group that the NVQ did not actually provide a theory base from which to work. One member of this group listed the in-service course which spanned approximately a year – a day a week – looking at different aspects of child care. This was forwarded as helpful and influential in terms of that worker’s current role. Reference was also made to the specific courses that members of staff had undertaken in the past and an acknowledgement that this had not continued. This course was noted as useful because it allowed workers to act on their practice as well as giving practical guidance on day to day working.

ENFORCED

Those aspects imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc

There was general recognition about where Policy and Procedure books were kept within the establishment. One member of staff files the procedures. There were a range of responses about referencing Policies and Procedures, from this being almost a daily task to this being something that would only be undertaken as a last resort. All workers suggested that Youth Justice legislation rather than the Children Act was more pertinent to their work than any other but that this was an area where as a Team they felt they did not have enough input in terms of learning, partly because of the significant changes in this area. Therefore, continual legal updating was important and also the need for continual building of relationships particularly those between magistrates, the Youth Offending Team and residential workers.

EVIDENCE-BASED

What Evidence-based research is used within practice

Some members of this group were confident about getting in touch with research information, using managers and the Internet and also reading Community Care. Two other members felt that, other than looking at particular information in respect of, for example, a particular child having a difficulty, this was something they had little confidence in.
### EXPERTS

**Who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as expert**

There was unanimous feedback that the senior psychologist's visits on a monthly basis were seen as invaluable to all staff members. It was also acknowledged that in the past there was good input from the consultant child psychiatrist but this is something not ongoing at present. There was also recognition that the Team have a good relationship with the Juvenile Justice Team and would look towards persons with specialist knowledge in their field as being expert. Some members of this Team noted members of JCT as being experts, particularly in relation to CAMAT training.

### ERRORS

**How are Errors acknowledged and learned from**

Feedback from the Unit’s workers showed there was little difficulty for them to acknowledge that they had made an error. Most workers suggested that they learnt from 'incidents', some of these were good incidents but mostly they were negative ones in relation to some difficulty with a young person they were looking after. The group felt that they learnt collectively and they did discuss things as a group especially in a Team Meeting. The workers felt they were readily able to challenge each other and there was an acceptance that all workers do have different levels of experience and therefore there was no expectation that any one person would know everything.

### EXPERIENCES

**What Experiences have had most significance**

Most workers suggested that they did learn from 'incidents' and the Team had built into their staff meeting an incident discussion which was an opportunity for staff to discuss and learn through their experiences. The staff in general felt they relied on their experience rather than relying on their education in terms of their day to day practice. The group generally felt they were learning all the time. There was also some understanding that as a group it is helpful to have somebody from outside to check things out and challenge their views and collective responsibilities – the senior psychologist was named as one of these people. There was also discussion about learning from Team building and acknowledgement that the Team do things together socially as well as work closely together in the Residential Unit.
How is feedback given and from which source

Supervision was seen as fundamental to workers being able to do their job. Until recently, supervision was undertaken by the manager and deputy manager but a new system of supervision is now being tested out. There were some issues presented in relation to whether or not the person in a supervisory position should have had some training in order to undertake this task. The group generally felt that they would be able to ask for supervision if it was not scheduled and they would also ask for help and assistance from other workers outside supervision times. There was reference made to a specific book that was used in the Unit giving opportunity for client and staff feedback. A general comment from most of this staff group is that there needed to be further clarification and discussion about the use of supervision, its role and training issues so that a better standard could be set within the Residential sector and how to gain feedback from other sources.

EXPERIMENTATION

Those examples of Experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues

The Team generally felt they enjoyed change and there was certainly a view that they learned from new people who may contribute and challenge their normal working practice. The group felt they did experiment in their work as they were always trying a new approach to any difficulties and situations. In so doing, the group felt they were learning all the time and making decisions based on outcomes of their experimentation work. A new member of the Team certainly felt able to express his views and ideas without any feeling of coming up against barriers. There were however no specific experiments that were forwarded as an example of this area of their work.

ISSUES ARISING:

1. The group felt it was good and positive to be able to sit down in this way and have a discussion.

2. The lack of training opportunities was raised and discussion about lack of feedback if people had requested to go on a course (i.e. "I heard nothing"). It would be helpful to have some further input in relation to the wider picture, particularly in relation to the Quality Protects Management Action Plan. There was an acknowledgement that some workers felt disconnected with the overall work and direction of the Department.
APPENDIX 3

'KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES' AUDIT

The following is the accumulated comments of Residential Centre, No. 1 (Part Staff Group – 4 Respondents)

EDUCATION

Those aspects of Education which most influence day to day practice

This group was slow to respond to this first question but two members of the group forwarded some training that had been organised by a previous Principal Officer, looking at issues such as court skills etc. There was comment about a portfolio/folder that then was produced for members of staff to keep training events in and to build-up their own resource bank around training issues. One member of this group talked about the in-service course which lasted approximately 12 months on one day per week basis looking at different aspects of child care. This was forwarded as helpful and influential in terms of their current role.

ENFORCED

Those aspects Enforced upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc

There was a general recognition about knowing where the Policy and Procedure books were kept within the establishment. One member of staff files the procedures. There was discussion about the legal changes in relation to Youth Justice and that this is one area where the team felt they did not have enough input in terms of learning. There was discussion about needing therefore continued legal updating in respect of Youth Justice Legislation and an acknowledgement that it is then difficult to look at how the Children Act "cuts across this". The discussion was dominated by Youth Justice Legislation with limited knowledge of the Children Act or its statutory requirements.

EVIDENCE-BASED

What Evidence-Based material is used within practice

There was the general consensus that members of this group knew how to get research information; there was discussion about using managers and the Internet and also reading Community Care.

EXPERTS

Who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as Experts

There was discussion about the Senior Psychologist being "fundamental" to the overall knowledge of this team and also reference to CAMAT training and a DOH free course that had been very helpful to workers.
APPENDIX 3

EXPERIENCE

What Experiences have had most significance
Most workers suggested that they did learn from "incidents" some of these were good incidents but mostly they were negative ones. The group felt that they learnt collectively and they did discuss things as a group. There was also some understanding that as a group it is very helpful to have somebody from outside to check things out and challenge their views and collective responsibilities – The Senior Psychologist was named as one of these people. There was also discussion about learning from team building and how as a team they do a lot together socially as well as working closely together in shifts, so they had had a team building day at a local facility; they had also spent time go-karting, ten pin bowling and going out in their more social general sense for drinks and meals.

ERRORS

How Mistakes are acknowledged and learned from
This group suggested that it was acceptable to make mistakes and that this was something that was held throughout the team. It was also stated that there were actually no worries about telling managers about mistakes that had been made. The Respondents also felt that they witnessed each other's behaviours on shift together and that they were likely to challenge other's behaviours or mistakes or ask for help if a mistake was made or advice was needed. Issues would then be raised in the Team Meeting. Staff also felt the NVQ course identified errors or events to develop.

EXPERIMENTATION

Those examples of Experimentation in practice and how these were shared with colleagues
The team generally felt that they enjoyed change and there was certainly a view that they learnt from new people who may contribute and challenge their normal working practice. It was acknowledged that within this group there was one new worker who certainly was able to present his views and ideas without any feeling of being ostracised. There were however no specific experiments that were forwarded as an example of this.

ENDORSEMENT

How is feedback given and from which source
Supervision was seen as fundamental to the job and until recently supervision was undertaken by the Manager and Deputy Manager of the Residential Centre. There was also an understanding that the Manager has been trying to undertake personal development but discussion too that it would be very helpful to have some supervision training so that there could be a better standard set within the residential sector.
‘KNOWLEDGE INFLUENCES’ AUDIT

The following are the accumulated comments of Senior Managers
There were seven respondents in this group. All respondents are experienced
members of staff.

EDUCATION

Those aspects of Education which most influence day to day practice

Only one Respondent has undertaken formal training through an educational process
within the last five years. Five out of six Respondents who completed in detail this
question noted other aspects of their education than that of their social work training.
One member of the group was not social work trained but trained in psychology. All
others noted either a combination of personal interests or initial training such as teacher
training, or the management training process. The distinct lack of noting the qualifying
course for this group was noticeable and quite contrary to any other Teams.

The common theme from Respondents as to how these educational experiences
influenced current practice were reflected mostly in the analysis or structure of work.
Therefore, current practice was assisted either through the theoretical basis for the
course or through the structure and organisation of work, the meeting of objectives etc.
There was therefore limited reference to direct activities with either adults or children who
received a service. Skills were mostly reflected analytical or organisational aspects of
practice.

ENFORCED

Those aspects imposed upon us via legislation, Procedures, Government Guidelines etc

This group all noted the influence of legislation with only one Respondent noting
specifically one piece of legislation. All other members looked at statute in the widest
sense, not only including particular pieces of children's law but Government guidelines,
employment legislation, modernisation agenda, Best Value, etc. This group therefore
demonstrated the widest range of impositions on the organisation from external sources
and was not confined, as other Teams were, to specific pieces of legislation in relation to
children. Departmental policy was noted by two Respondents within this group.

Responses to the reasons why these were given as examples as to how this altered day
to day practice, were primarily in relation to the demands of timescales and targets.
These were noted both in a positive and a negative context where timescales were seen
as ensuring and monitoring work but also seen as too heavy an imposition in relation to
expectations, particularly in regard to the monitoring of children’s cases. Legislation had
also influenced this group by the development of services such as specialist services, of
Leaving Care, Fostering and the care management system which is imposed on the
organisation. These all responded to national guidelines. There was further note of
external sources, such as courts, where decisions made then reflected on practice and
were imposed on the organisation which may not have received organisational support.

The dominance in this group is the influence of external rather than internal sources and
this is seen both negatively in the context of the control of aspects of the work which may
not be deemed as necessary or as appropriate. On the positive side, the development of
services and practices for the client group was supported.
EVIDENCE-BASED

What Evidence-based research is used within practice

The sources of influence which were listed by this group were wide ranging and reflected a clear understanding of both evidence-based practice and research aspects. These were primarily through Department of Health research documents such as "Me Survive Out There", Adoption Now, Child Protection Working Together, etc. This group was heavily influenced by Department of Health research documents with all Respondents noting aspects of Department of Health Guidelines. One Respondent who listed other aspects was primarily within the psychological field. Only one Respondent in this group noted Community Care – the Social Work magazine as a source of evidence. All other Respondents in this group noted definitive research documents.

Those examples of information which had been extracted and are now used and influence practice mostly informed either advice given by managers or had influenced practice at a more macro level. Therefore, the shaping of services, the decision in relation to clients or more widely in relation to practice. The over-riding response was in regard to under-pinning development and see evidence-base as a foundation for development.

Only three Respondents out of seven noted why these sources had a particular influence. All others left this blank. Those who did respond noted that the Department of Health Studies were generally an accumulation of intensive studies and had an authority from a Government source. There were further clear conclusions and recommendations which could be acted upon. Therefore the consistent and logical approach to decision-making via these sources and this data was of note.

EXPERTS

Those who are seen as Experts and why they are perceived as expert

This group responded to experts in two ways. Firstly, there was a group who noted internal experts who were deemed to be useful. They included senior management colleagues and internal social work practitioners. The reason they were deemed to be useful experts was that they "appeared good at their job" and were good role models. They were therefore seen as experts with specific knowledge and skills which were useful, given a situation. Those who answered in a wider context noted that experts as having a specific technical knowledge and those who were outside the organisation, such as paediatricians, pathologists, etc. This group therefore saw expertise as specifically adding value to a particular aspect which was over and above that of others. This could therefore have been either an internal or external person. Three respondents noted specific personnel who were deemed to have specific personnel who were deemed to have specific expertise. Further, two Respondents noted groups or types of experts such as psychologists, paediatricians, foster carers, social workers etc. However, three persons out of the seven Respondents noted the inappropriate designation of expert. Therefore, the automatic viewing of some groups of professionals as experts was not accepted within this group.


**APPENDIX 3**

**EXPERIENCES**

What Experiences have had most significance

The Respondents in this group noted experiences which had been personally satisfying to each if them. The general theme however was the outcomes of actions which had occurred. This was noted specifically in 4 out of the 7 Respondents. These outcomes could either have been positive or negative, both for children or for the personnel involved. Experiences for this group appeared to be those incidences which could be learned from and of this group members are the most experienced within the organisation. There was less specific response than in other groups, incidents intended to be in regard to types of incident which had led to types or structures of outcomes.

These experiences were significant to those who were shared because there were instances which could be learned from via either the supervisory process and where these influences were now passed on to more junior members of staff under the management of this group. There was therefore via supervision and the management of others these issues which had been learned were passed on in order for those members of staff to learn also from the incident.

**ERROR**

How Errors are acknowledged and learned from

Members of this group noted errors in terms of analysing circumstances either by self-analysis or looking at the errors that had been created by others. This group, unlike other groups, was identifying primarily errors in others rather than in themselves, leading to the analysis or amendment of behaviour. Examples of learning from mistakes tended to be in regard to specific incidents which had been difficult, wherefore recording fostering issues, court cases etc. This group noted two aspects of learning from mistakes, one which tended to be more structurally based in regard to the Department and the organisation which then led to the altering of organisational activities and also personal mistakes which then led to the altering of behaviours and individuals. 5 out of the 7 Respondents noted the latter combination with the other Respondents solely noting more organisational or structural issues.

What restricts learning from error in day to day practice was predominantly lack of time to properly analyse and to look at issues, therefore things progressed and reflecting time became less. Only 1 Respondent noted their own insecurities about being seen as less capable because of making mistakes but added that owning up was acceptable. There is no evidence in this group of not being able to own mistakes or share those with more senior officers.
EXPERIMENTATION

Those examples of Experimenting in practice and how these were shared with colleagues

All members of staff within this group were able to note and specify specific experimentation which they had either instigated or had a significant lead in.

These experiments were shared by Senior Management Team, Children’s Management Board and disseminated via the organisation through both structural meetings and supervision and team meetings. There appeared, therefore, within this group a high ability to try out new ideas and to instigate practice and to share that via the Department. All personnel in this group were able to particularly indicate examples of this.

Those areas which had been listed as experiments had been carried out by this group but many of the incidents had been generated elsewhere either strategically within the Department or influenced by outside practice.

ENDORSED

How is feedback given and from which source

In regard to feedback processes, Respondents were very individualistic on their approaches to how feedback confirmed activities. There were those who noted the ad hoc and limited nature of, for example, supervision, where others had found that helpful. There were Respondents who noted structural feedback such as the Social Services Inspectorate or through formal processes with external forces such as the Department of Health and the Joint Audit Review. Others noted consultations with staff and young people and other agencies or external forces. Those listed were seen as significant because of either a power relationship or they were essential to the position that they held within the organisation, therefore Respondents tended to respect either the position of those who were giving feedback or because the structure of the organisation made those outcomes important for survival e.g. a legal or policy requirement. There was limited reference to supervision within key members of personnel in this group and where noted, it was with a lack of satisfaction. External structural feedback held more weight than internal processes.

Where activities were not reinforced, or selected, respondents tended to try again or analysis of how to look at the aspects again. There was no indication of either disillusionment or undermining via this process. This tended to be seen as an appropriate process by which to persuade others to get their support and, if not, there was an appropriate review of that mechanism. In regard to those other processes by which people gain information, this tended again to be general life experiences through a variety of different processes which was outside that of professional life.
Team 1

Education

Enforced

Evidence-Based

Experts

Experience

Errors

Experiment

Endorsed
Team 2

Education

Enforced

Evidence-Based

Experts

Experience

Errors

Experiment

Endorsed
Team 3

- Education
- Enforced
- Evidence-Based
- Experts
- Experience
- Errors
- Experiment
- Endorsed
Team 4

- Education
- Enforced
- Evidence-Based
- Experts
- Experience
- Errors
- Experiment
- Endorsed
Team 5

- Education
- Enforced
- Evidence-Based
- Experts
- Experience
- Errors
- Experiment
- Endorsed
Team 6

Education

Enforced

Evidence-Based

Experts

Experience

Errors

Experiment

Endorsed
Residential 1

Education
- 30%
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

Enforced
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

Evidence-Based
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

Experts
- 40%
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

Experience
- 80%
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

Errors
- 20%
- 10%
- 0%

Experiment
- 40%
- 20%
- 0%

Endorsed
- 70%
Social Work Assistants
Countywide

Education

Enforced

Evidence-Based

Experts

Experience

Errors

Experiment

Endorsed
Managers

Education

Enforced

Evidence-Based

Experts

Experience

Errors

Experiment

Endorsed
CMT
Specialist Team 1

- Education
- Enforced
- Evidence-Based
- Experts
- Experience
- Errors
- Experiment
- Endorsed
Specialist Team 2

- Education
- Enforced
- Evidence-Based
- Experts
- Experience
- Errors
- Experiment
- Endorsed
Specialist Team 2
APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

NAME:

1. We have to be able to get information to staff quickly in order to meet targets placed upon us, eg QP, DOH etc. What is the best way of informing you of the actions you need to take?

What are some of the problems and how can these be addressed?

What do you see as your responsibility to meet these targets?

How many of the three Information Roadshows have you attended?

If none, why not:

What would help you attend?

If yes, how can we improve them?
2. The Department, as an organisation, relies heavily on Policy & Procedure Books.

Are you aware of where Procedure Books are kept?  

How regularly do you consult them?  

Do you find them helpful?  

How do you know of changes in Policy & Procedures?  

3. We are all facing massive changes. We know already that these demands (eg completing Audits, meeting deadlines, complying with Procedures, A & A records, Review dates etc) have met with some resistance and there is a significant level of non-compliance. Have you ideas about we can address this with staff and do things better?

What do you see as your responsibility in the Audit process?
4. We are keen to help new staff in the Department, either experienced or newly-qualified, to understand how we operate and how we "do things around here". What do you see as the most helpful and important information to relay to newly appointed staff?

It is felt that there is a devaluing of the Social Work role in, eg Court processes etc. How can we redress this in practice?

5. How do you, personally, keep updated, read around the job etc?

When do you do this?

Do you have a personal development plan?  

What do you see as your responsibilities in keeping up to date?
6. The Department wishes to progress evidence-based practice.

Are you able and confident to use these research/evidence-based techniques?  

Y/N

What might help you to develop the skills necessary to achieve these?

7. If you have learned something important in your practice, maybe through some important incident, how is that shared with others?

a. Colleagues in office

b. Colleagues in other offices

c. Managers

What do you personally find are the best methods by which to learn?

Have you any further comments you would like to contribute to this Audit?
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