'The impact of individual and contextual factors upon experiential learning team events: a case study'

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(i) Abstract

 Whilst much focus in recent years has been given to the learning process involved in Experiential Learning (ELT) and related Action Learning (AL) theories, very little academic study has been given to the contextual elements that surround them. Using the practical setting of an experiential learning team event, this thesis considers the academic ambiguities relating to such contextual elements, and examines the possible impact these can have on the overall development experience.

Experiential learning team events are primarily designed to provide a series of action centred challenges which can support both individual and team development. The research firstly considers ELT together with AL and their relationship with related theories including: humanist, team, personality, cognitive and social. From this broad-base review, four contextual factors emerge which were considered suitable for further study: sponsor role, subcultures, facilitation and personality profiling.

The empirical study focused on a three day residential experiential learning team event, with six teams of eight managers taking part. The managers were all from one company, a petrochemical organisation employing 3000 people, based in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Data was collected from a series of questionnaires, observations and focus group sessions. Findings identified that the sponsor role can prove to be a strong influence, particularly through attendance of events and supporting follow up actions. Subcultures proved to have a positive effect, which was in contrast to the more negative impacts highlighted by the majority of academics. Using individual personality profiling to provide a balanced representation across teams proved insignificant. Comparing teams with a balance of personality types with those of a more unbalanced composition revealed that individuals can adapt their personality preference to match contextual requirements. The role of the facilitator and the style they adopted in supporting the event proved to be a strong influence. The empowering style was seen to be particularly effective in supporting the principles of ELT and AL.

Given the findings of this study, the implications clearly indicate that for future ELT and AL research: the sponsor role can prove a strong contributory factor to the learning experience and should not be ignored; the diversity of subcultures can be used in a constructive way given common purpose and values are in place; the facilitator role can prove a positive influence provided the style of support is in keeping with the principles of ELT and AL for individual empowerment.
(ii) Acknowledgements

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(v) Abbreviations

AL  Action Learning
CIPD  Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
DC  Delegate Comment
EL  Experiential Learning
ELT  Experiential Learning Theory
ETEA  Experiential team event activity
HE  Higher Education
Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

1.1.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the question: ‘How might individual and contextual factors influence the experience and outcomes of organisation-focused experiential learning team events, and what are the implications for the theoretical foundations of such programmes?’

Originating from early armed forces training programmes, experiential learning style team events have been promoted as an effective tool in motivating individuals to take part in a shared development experience, thereby helping to support change and improve organisational performance. Academic review in this area has centred largely on the validity of John Dewey’s (1938) experiential education theory and later experiential learning theory (ELT), as an effective alternative to mainstream formal education methodologies. Advocates of Dewey’s original work, notably Lewin (1948) and later Kolb (1984) have since championed its benefits as an effective social interactive form of learning. Founded on the principles that learning is derived from synergetic interaction between the individual and their environment, it provides opportunity to express opposing views and develop new ways to resolve issues (Kolb and Kolb, 2005).
Debates surrounding the effectiveness of experiential learning are highlighted by Willmot (1994) and Reynolds (1998). They identify the fundamental issue that learning can often be confined to localised situational thinking and thereby constrain any innovative thinking. Others such as Revans (1985) and Dopson (2001) identify possible issues where inherent power within individuals and groups within the working environment can constrain participation and limit synergetic interaction. From an individual learning perspective experiential learning has been linked with cognitive and social learning theories (Kayes, 2002). In relation to experiential learning team events there are also possible links with more behaviourist formal development methodologies. In making these comparisons it is intended to identify the overall theoretical strengths and limitations of experiential learning team events and ELT in support of individual and team development. This theoretical understanding will then be used to form the basis of an empirical study on a chosen organisation, to evaluate the lessons learnt and assess how the impact of contextual factors might contribute to current theoretical discussion.

1.1.2 Personal Interest

Since my first experience of an action centred leadership programme back in 1974, I have taken a keen interest in the value of such training programmes to support managers in their development. Throughout my own professional career within the management development field, I have been actively involved, initially as a training provider in the roles of instructor, team leader and programme manager and more recently as a sponsor of experiential learning team events. Throughout this time I have witnessed a large growth in this form of development and have worked with many
organisations both in the UK and the Middle East, incorporating the methodology as an integral part of their strategic training plans. Having carried out initial academic research into planning of such events (Gardner, 2008), I was interested to further my studies in this rich area of social science.

1.1.3 Grounds for Research

Whilst over the last thirty years, experiential learning team events have emerged as a topical method for training adult teams, there has been very little academic review (Leonard and Marquardt, 2010). This is particularly the case when comparing the related experiential theories of Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984) with other areas including individual based theories including: knowledge transfer (Eraut, 2004; Tulving, 1995), critical reflection (Quinn, 2013; Ford et al. 2010; Reynolds, 2011; Antonacopoulou, 2010), motivation theory (Mumford and Honey, 1982; Downie et al. 2006), together with team theory (Castka et al. 2004; Adair, 1986).

When considering experiential learning from an individual perspective, there is a weight of evidence through studies and articles which highlight the benefits: building individual confidence in working with others, generating open discussions on issues, critically reflecting on the lessons learnt, collaborating on new ideas and apply these in their working environments (Trehan and Pedler, 2009; Ramsey, 2005). However there also those that highlight the concern that individuals may first need to overcome, their insecurities in working with others and dealing with the possible exposure of individual frailties that may be hidden beneath the surface. All of which may serve to de-motivate
the individual and lead to an undermining of the learning experience (Kayes, 2002; Reynolds, 2009; De Loo, 2002). What is less clear from the literature is how such insecurities might be overcome.

In relation to team development, numerous articles and books have been published championing the benefits of team development including the prominent work of Woodcock (1989) and Adair (1986). However, very few academic empirical studies have been able to assess the impact of experiential learning team events and the underlying team and individual based theories contained in meeting development and performance needs (Kuipers and Witte, 2005).

From a practical perspective of education and training, it has been estimated by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development that 42% of all UK organisations committed to management / leadership development during 2011 to ensure managers and future leaders ‘think in a more strategic and future-focused way, and enable the achievement of the organisation’s strategic goals’ (CIPD, 2010:02). Clearly this type of planning results in a considerable investment with expected returns. It is considered that gaining a greater clarity of how experiential theories and associated methodologies can best be aligned to meeting individual learning needs will help provide more insight when planning such events.

In carrying out an empirical study, the intention is to advance the academic understanding of experiential learning as a progressive development methodology, assess the contextual elements that may hinder its progression and provide clear direction on what areas should be included as part of future research into ELT practices.
In trying to achieve this aim, the study element has focused on a group of forty-eight managers from a single organisation, taking part in series of five experiential learning team workshops between 2007-2011. As such, the research offers the opportunity to study the effects of introducing external variables to a relatively consistent environment and identify the relative impacts. Thus, it has been designed to provide a set of data that can be considered to have external validity, relevant to a wider field (Bryman, 2008).

1.2 Research Problem - issues and contributions

1.2.1 Purpose

Given the above and in answer to the title question, the purpose of the thesis will be to determine the individual and contextual influences on the processes and outcomes of experiential learning team events and through a combination of academic review and empirical study to identify areas that might provide support, challenge and possible enhancement to current academic theory.

1.2.2 Scope and Contribution to Research

The study is intended to enhance this important social science area of research. It is also envisaged it will provide future researchers and practitioners with a strong platform for furthering understanding of the attributes of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), Action Learning (AL) methodologies and the influences that can affect the outcomes. Specifically the thesis will aim to contribute to research in the areas of:

1. Establishing the relationship between ELT, Action Learning (AL) practices and experiential learning team programmes.
2. Providing a comprehensive comparison of ELT and AL practices with individual based development theory.

3. Identifying the connection of experiential learning team events with organisational structures and cultures, sponsorship, facilitation and individual personality profiling to assess their possible impact on the quality of learning experienced.

4. Relating theoretical debate with an applied empirical case study using an experiential learning event based in one organisation.

5. From the study and literature review, to identifying the possible impact of contextual factors on experiential learning events and establishing areas of; common ground as well as possible gaps and areas that can add to current research.

1.3 Description, Definitions and Background associated with Experiential Learning Team Events

1.3.1 Definitions

In carrying out this enquiry into experiential learning events for managers, the first and perhaps most important aspect to establish is what such events are and what they are designed to achieve.

EL programmes can have a number of applications from social focus group settings to higher education study groups. As such a programme can be viewed as a standalone event or a series of events with the constituent methods of development being common to all. In relation to the practical setting for management development programmes, the
audience consists of managers or trainee managers that work for the same organisation and share the same corporate working environment. Programmes are normally tailor-made to address specific areas of improvement which all participating managers can relate to such as review of organisation wide behavioural issues, through to more technically focused improvement such as planning for reorganisation. The experiential learning event has three main areas of focus: activity, team and development. Beginning with activity in the context of learning, the nearest comparable terminology can be found in action science which Argyris et al. (cited in De Loo, 2002:246) perceive as ‘an inquiry into how human beings design and implement action in relation to one another’, where actions can encompass ‘research, planning, theorizing, learning and development’ (Cunningham, 1993:04). Action learning has been further defined as the ‘social process of managers and workers getting together to review and interpret the experiences in order to understand the processes that have led them to solve a problem.’ (De Loo, 2002: 246).

Engestrom (2001: 135) in his exploration of activity theory in a working situation identifies that social groups or ‘activity systems’ can be seen in terms of the resolution of tensions and contradictions within the social network. Whilst this is not directly aligned with AL, it is seen to stem from a need for change within the social group. Pedler (1997) sees it as an approach which takes the task as a vehicle for learning. So from these definitions of action and action learning the question is how these might be applied to the team and more specifically team development aspect of an experiential learning event?

Team development is seen by Castka et al. (2004) as having a complex make up where individual, team and organisational requirements may be seen to compete and be in
conflict with each other. In terms of outcomes they perceive the need for compromise to a synergy of interest where a team of individuals working together will produce better results than any collective of individual working in isolation of each other (Nurmi, 1996). Given these constituent examples a composite definition can be derived, *experiential learning team events* provide development of individuals, through engagement in practical activities, supporting them to work together to achieve a common purpose. As will be seen, this development is perceived by advocates to support personal development leading to an overall improvement in performance which can prove more beneficial than working in isolation. Clearly there can be many barriers to achieving this utopian goal, the aspects of which will be explored throughout this thesis.

1.3.2 History

The principles of Action Learning were pioneered by Professor Reg Revans (1907 – 2003) who developed the concept that the most effective learning (L) came from programmed knowledge (P) combined with the insight to question that knowledge (Q). This developed into the equation L=P+Q. The questioning was seen to be enhanced with interaction with others sharing their understanding, trying out new behaviours, reflecting critically on experience and applying the principles of that learning in tackling problems together and implementing shared solutions (Revans, 1983). This concept was further developed into practical programmes by Kurt Hahn, and Lawrence Holt who together opened the first Outward Bound centre in Aberdovey, Wales in 1941. The philosophy of the centre was that taking part in Outward Bound activities should ‘facilitate personal and social development through experiential learning in the outdoors’ (Outward Bound, 2011).
From this original ground breaking work, other provider organisations have emerged. Endeavour Training Ltd, founded by Dick Allcock was established in the early 1960s (Endeavour Training, 2012). Many others that have since followed using principles of activity based training experience with the same ethos and methodologies to support the individual and team development process.

Pedler (1997), in his book ‘Action learning in practice’ explores the early work of Revans and identifies a number of more modern day interpretations for action learning, but it is his focus on ‘collaborative enquiry’ that is of most relevance to experiential learning programmes. Pedler perceives this collective form of active learning as individuals working in small teams on work related issues, which can be related specifically to organisational improvement. This action is seen to support individual development whilst bringing improvement to the organisation as a whole. Clearly there are common aspects here with experiential learning in that the development is focused on individuals working in small teams; they work for one organisation with common holistic goals and shared issues. The major difference is in the focus of the development team activities. Experiential learning event activities would generally have no direct relation to work issues. However, in keeping with ELT principles, it is the application of the processes learnt that may be transferred back into the workplace, thereby contributing to overall organisational improvement. As such action learning theory can be seen as relevant to experiential learning theory (Dewey, 1938).

So for well over thirty years this type of development approach has been employed in the training of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. This use of experiential methodology has been well documented in literature published by specialist groups such
as Outward Bound and Endeavour Training Ltd, and more recently through academic journals such as: *the International Foundation for Action Learning (IFAL), Journal of Experiential learning and the Journal of Experiential Education (JEE)*, all published by the Association for Experiential Education and Action Learning: Research and Practice. As with many developing theories, the terminology has expanded with the interest shown. As an example Williams et al. (2003) make reference to Outdoor Experiential Training and (McEvoy and Buller, 1997) use terms such as Adventure Learning and Outdoor Management Development. On closer examination, many of the papers found in these journals can be related to experiential learning events and as such can be aligned with ELT principles.

It is apparent that interest from both business and academic environments has been considerable in recent decades. Through the publications generated it is evident that experiential learning programmes are growing in status as plausible alternative forms of pedagogy with particular interest coming from the more traditional areas of education found in Universities and Business Schools.

1.3.3 Purpose and Structure

As mentioned the format of experiential learning programmes, when applied to management development specifically, tends to vary depending on the required outcomes of the learning and the organisational environment it is intended for. This said there are fundamental characteristics of experiential learning that remain consistent and provide the hallmark for any such event.
Experiential programmes are normally supported by: a sponsor, who identifies the need for the event and provides the necessary funding, a programme provider, who designs and manages the event, in line with sponsor requirements and a team of facilitators, who work with the provider and act as catalysts for discussion and provide observer feedback. The programme provider would typically give clear direction on the structure of an event and help ensure the aims and objectives are in line with the sponsor’s needs. They would also provide specialist advice and resources as and when required to support the programme. The facilitators would be given a clear focus on the aims of each team challenge, providing initial guidance on possible learning outcomes and then giving delegates the latitude to explore their own ideas and work with each other to enhance their understanding. As such, a facilitative, empowering style of support (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) is the typical pedagogy adopted for experiential learning programmes, with more directive coaching input given only when considered useful in advancing discussion. The exercises themselves are commonly a combination of physical and mental challenges the teams are encouraged to take part in, with every aspect employed to maximise learning from the experience. The indirect nature of the development approach is seen as particularly important in helping teams to take ownership for their learning actions and be more able to apply the learning in their working environments.

1.3.4 Typical Content and Underlying Principles

Typically an event (see Appendix 1) will have clearly defined aims which are best achieved through shared team working. These aims would relate to an organisation’s wider issues concerning the need for improvement or change in behaviour. Noted
examples in literature are cited by Williams et al. (2003); improving conflict management (Wagner et al. 1991), building organisational commitment and increasing participant’s morale (McEvoy, 1997). Such events allow groups of individuals to come together, to explore shared issues and identify solutions. Facilitative support is provided to aid discussion but with care to avoid any direct influence on outcomes. The teams are then given the chance to reflect on their decisions and actions and relate the learning gained with past experience. The expectation is that this introspective reflection can then be translated by the individuals into practical improvements in their working environments. Through this methodology, the aim is to support individual growth and in doing so, bring improvements to the overall operation of the sponsoring organisation.

A programme would normally happen away from the work environment, in a location that provides sufficient space, is free of distractions, enabling team activities and learning to take place. Events can range from one day to two week events and be either standalone or form a series of sessions that align to build on previous learning experience. An event will characteristically begin with the programme provider introducing the event to all delegates, clarifying the aims of the event, the associated objectives and outlining the methods that will be employed to achieve the overall aims. This is followed by delegates being separated into small working teams of 6-8 members. In keeping with activity based methodology the teams will be given a warm up task lasting approximately fifteen minutes, with ten minutes to plan and five minutes to complete. The exercise is given to set the scene of team working with a specific problem to solve and reflect on lessons learnt from the experience. This is then followed with a series of team activities of typically forty five minutes in duration, following the same
pattern of: plan, do, reflect and review. Roles of leader and observer are established by the teams from the outset and reviews are made with the facilitator acting as a catalyst for team discussion and agreement on lessons learnt. Typically the event will culminate with a major exercise with all teams needing to work together to achieve the goals set. This introduces new challenges of communication between teams, team working and leadership. In doing this it is designed to lead to wider understanding of organisational issues and a range of methods for overcoming such issues. Finally, the event is reviewed against the aims and objectives and delegates are given the task of transferring the lessons learned into work based actions. These actions are then reviewed three to six months after the event, to identify achievements and any subsequent actions that are identified to overcome remaining issues.

As can be seen the approach is very much team based, related closely to team working and leadership theories both of which contribute to the underlying principles of experiential learning events. Prominent theorists in the field of team working and development include: John Adair, Bruce Tuckman, and Peter Senge. Beginning with John Adair (1986), he provides focus from a theorist viewpoint on the effects that management can have, when working with teams to improve performance. His model of Action Centred Leadership identifies three main areas for management focus when leading a team: task, team and individual. He argues that if each element is effectively managed by the leader, overall performance of team which includes individual development will be improved. This then sets scope in terms of the practical aspect of experiential learning events, where there are common tasks for the individuals to work together as a team to achieve a set goal. From a more psychological viewpoint Tuckman
(1965) focuses his attention towards the progressive stages of group dynamics within a team. In his now well-known formulation, he identifies six development phases of a team, four of which relate to experiential learning events. These stages follow a chronological order of team experiences, from the initial coming together of individuals to the successful completion of tasks with all team members supporting each other to achieve that task. He identified the relevant stages as: Forming - individual’s initial meeting with a range of disparate ideas, Storming - individuals via for position within the team with subsequent conflict, Norming – an agreement for the need to work together, and Performing - where common purpose creates a synergy of approach to work as a team to achieve. Experiential learning events closely align with Tuckman’s model in that it creates new teams to work on a task creating the environment for expected stages to take place over a short period of time. The third theorist, Senge (1990) is normally associated with the wider aspect of Learning Organisations, however his focus on team working relates closely with many elements of experiential learning event design and therefore worthy of reference. With the advent of Learning Organisation and Knowledge Management philosophies over the last thirty years his books ‘The fifth discipline’ Senge (1990) and ‘The Dance of Change’ Senge et al. (1999) have been particularly influential. He identifies the need for team working as a key element in the support of a lifelong learning philosophy. He perceives ‘team learning’ as ‘the process of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire’, thus building on individual skills and a shared vision of the common task (Senge, 1990: 236). Clearly this reference to the importance of team and team development aligns with the
principles of experiential learning events in promoting individual learning through team activity and thereby supporting improvement in organisational performance.

1.3.5 Places of Application

The earliest records of experiential learning programmes in industry can be found in the coal mining industry where it was used as a method in the late 1940’s to improve productivity (Revans, 1983). Following promotion efforts largely by Raven himself, this new form of development has since been promulgated throughout production and service industries both nationally and internationally. At the same time Outward Bound experience providers were seen to extend the application of experiential learning programmes to more social development areas which gradually grew to encompass groups such as: inner-city youth, recovering alcoholics, law offenders and single parent families (Outward Bound, 2011).

In relation to management development, experiential learning has more recently been adopted by Management Business Schools such as Ashridge Business School, Cranfield Institute and IMD where vocational studies are seen to be very compatible with the practical team problem solving programmes they offer.

In more recent years a number of pioneers including Tom Bourner (2011), have made attempts to introduce experiential learning into higher education. In the late 1980’s Bourner introduced this then relatively experimental form of learning into a higher education MSc programme with working sets supported by academic facilitators. It provided students with the opportunity to be self-regulating and drive their own learning
process. Bourner did however find opposition to the approach. Many of the academic staff perceived it as undermining academic standards and a threat to their professional positions. There was a strong bias towards the more traditional methods of programmed learning, with subject matter expert tutorials, supported by standard text books, journals and articles.

1.4 Links to Academic Enquiry
From a theoretical perspective experiential learning events can be most closely linked with ELT which has been defined as ‘the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience’ (Kolb, 1984: 41). In relation to experiential learning events such experience takes the form of a series of shared team based activities. From an academic perspective, the focus of the thesis question is perhaps best captured by the views of Holman et al. (1997) and Vince (1998) who challenge experiential learning (EL) as de-contextualising individual learning and failing to take account of the many facets that can influence such learning. In reviewing such contextual facets the thesis focuses on the theories most closely related to ELT including: AL (Revans, 1983), knowledge transfer (Eraut, 2004; Tulving, 1995), critical reflection (Quinn, 2013; Ford et al. 2010; Reynolds, 2011; Antonacopoulou, 2010), motivation theory (Mumford and Honey, 1982; Downie et al. 2006) and team theory (Castka et al. 2004; Adair, 1986).

Beginning with the Kolb’s (1984) model of experiential learning, the related attributes of experiential learning practice are aligned with the model to form the basis for further review. The work of ELT proponents including Kolb (1984) and Dehler et al. (2001) are
identified. These are compared with the more critical views of Holman et al. (1997), Reynolds (1998) and Vince (1998) to establish areas of strength in ELT, as well as recognising areas for further review. The related theories are then explored to provide different perspectives. This provides clarification to areas where ELT is less clear including: Mumford and Honey’s (1982) individual based learning styles: motivation (Mumford and Honey, 1982; Downie et al. 2006) critical reflection (Quinn, 2013; Ford et al. 2010; Reynolds, 2011; Antonacopoulou, 2010) and the specific contextual areas of: facilitation (Visser, 2007), team selection using personality profiling (Wilde, 2003; Partington and Harris, 1999), social web influence (Engestrom, 2001; Dopson 2001; Vidailllet and Vignon, 2010; Ramsey, 2005), and sponsoring leadership influence (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988).

1.5 Approach

The literature review is used to form the basis of an empirical study, reviewing the experience of a petrochemical company ADGAS based in the United Arab Emirates. The study follows the company’s involvement in an experiential learning programme run over a five year period. Themes arising from the literature review are used as the basis for the empirical study to review four specific contextual facets: sponsor role, personality profiling, facilitator role and subcultures, to determine their possible level of impact and provide support to future ELT research.

Analysis of the case study outcomes combined with the views of the sponsoring board members, a Delphi expert team and participants are triangulated to relate to current EL and AL theoretical debate and further add to discussion.
The analysis comprises of six phases using a post positivist approach with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods being employed for the study element (Ryan, 2006). The first four stages refer to the literature research with stage five focusing on the empirical study. Appendix 2 provides a study plan of activities against a forecast timescale.

Establishing theoretical links - Phase one begins with a review of experiential learning, the philosophies behind it and how these relate to theoretical models associated with the experiential learning work of John Dewey and David Kolb. The experiential learning methodology is broken down into constituent parts with each element identified in terms of approach used and the anticipated outcomes. These are aligned to elements of Kolb’s (1984) EL model to establish where the practice of an experiential learning event relates to theory and areas of possible contradiction.

Assessment of EL Strengths and Limitations - Phase two considers the theoretical debate surrounding the experiential methodology to identify perceived strengths and limitations. Comparing all arguments both for and against EL, it forms the basis for identifying possible gaps in the methodology for further examination in phase three.

Identifying possible improvements to EL model – Phase three considers the ELT related theories including: behaviourist, cognitive, social, personality, team, and motivation theorists. The relative value of each of these theories is compared against the identified
EL parameters to consider firstly their significance and secondly aspects that might contribute to a better understanding of EL from the perspective of an experiential learning programme experience.

Assessing possible impact of environment on an experiential learning programme -

*Phase four* identifies the possible impact the formal and informal structures might have on an experiential learning programme together with possible solutions for overcoming such barriers. This involves the review of formal organisational structures including: matrix, hierarchical, entrepreneurial, independent (Handy, 1985) and the working environment they create. The review then moves on to considering the effect of non-formal structures; social webs (Dopson, 2001), together with individual power and the influence they may have on experiential learning programmes.

*Empirical study - theory compared to practical application – Phase five;* having established a number of key theoretical factors associated with EL and AL theories, these are applied to the practical experience of one organisation spanning a period of five years. With forty-eight managers taking part, data is collected from a combination of sources including: questionnaires, semi structured interviews, focus group meetings and observations. Outcomes from the comparative review are triangulated to provide a cross reference of study outcomes against theoretical EL and AL positioning.

*Triangulation of results – analysis, conclusion and recommendation - Phase six,* the final phase focuses on triangulating all the results making a comparison of study data with
literature review to identify areas where the study might support, challenge or add to current academic debate. Outcomes for the analysis form the basis for lessons learned from carrying out the research together with recommendations for researchers in this field of social science.

1.6 Chapter Chronology

Chapter 2: Literature Review – provides a systematic analysis in two sections. The first section begins with an exploration of experiential learning events and their alignment with experiential learning theory and Action learning, the development methods and pedagogies to be found and how ELT and Action Learning relate to associated theories including, personal humanist and team development. Having identified the broad range of connections and areas of possible contention, the second section focuses on four areas for more in depth analysis: Establishing Goals, Related Pedagogy, Process and Measurement, and Environmental issues relating to influence of culture, individuals and social webs. From this analysis four elements emerged as areas that could possibly add to the current theoretical debate surrounding ELT and AL theory. The elements identified: effect of sponsors, organisational cultures, training provider skills, and individual personality profiles were considered suitable to form the basis of the planned empirical study detailed in chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Ethical Practice – Provides details of the methodologies adopted throughout the empirical study elements of the research, together with reasoning for each of the selected practices. The literary review was used to form the
basis for the extensive empirical study which followed the experience of the ADGAS Company’s programme of experiential learning events run over a five year period. The study was designed to incorporate a range of methodologies including: observation, semi structured interviews, focus group sessions and questionnaires. Outcomes from both the literature review and empirical study would be triangulated to identify possible areas where ELT and AL theory might be further supported and advanced. The chapter concludes with details of the ethical and legal codes of practice followed throughout the study in accordance with the Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2009).

Chapter 4: Case Study – Results and Analysis - given the design of methodology and indication of the ethical practices to be followed, this chapter provides outcomes from the study and aligns them with the literature review to provide a critical analysis set against the four elements identified in chapter 2: effect of sponsors, organisational cultures, training provider skills, and individual personality profiles. Broken down into two sections, the first section identifies the initial quantitative and qualitative data taken from delegate questionnaire feedback. The results are reviewed to identify emergent patterns and trends which form the basis for a more in-depth analysis in section two. This analysis focuses on the four key questions using qualitative data taken from: focus group sessions, individual interviews and facilitator/ senior management observations. Outcomes from the study are aligned with current academic research to identify where the results might either: support, challenge or add to current academic discussion. A summary of all the key areas of discussion is provided in a table format given in the concluding section of the chapter.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications of Research – provides a summary of all findings in relation to the identified elements, where evidence has been found to either support or strengthen academic discussion surrounding the fields of ELT and AL theory. Lessons learnt in carrying out the research are identified and the chapter concludes with a list of focused recommendations relating to the implications findings and areas for possible future research into ELT and AL theory.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

Given the focus of the thesis, to investigate the impact of individual and contextual factors upon experiential learning team events, this chapter considers the academic discussion relating to ELT and AL practice, focusing on significant contextual elements surrounding ELT which have not previously been considered. In reviewing the key ELT authors in this field of social science: Reynolds (2011), Kayes et al. (2005), De Loo (2002) Anderson (2003), Dehler et al. (2001), and the recent discussions from Ford et al. (2010) Antonacopoulou (2010) Bourner (2011), Yeo and Gold (2011) and Quinn (2013), the chapter identifies that whilst much of the discussion has centred around the individual learning process and the socio-political factors that can impact on ETL and AL programmes, it fails to consider the more fundamental elements associated with: the role of the sponsor, supporting pedagogy, individual personality and social environmental aspects common to all team-based experiential programmes. It concludes the potential impact of these elements could prove significant which forms the basis for the empirical study presented in chapter 4.

EL and associated theories have developed over the last century to provide a clearly defined alternative to more traditional formal methods of delivering management education and development programmes (Reynolds, 2011). Whilst it can now be seen to have gained favour within business schools and some higher education establishments (University of Hull, 2012), there remains a number of issues concerning how it might best
be applied, particularly in supporting managers to meet increased challenges of a constantly changing environment (Ford et al. 2010).

In order to explore the academic discussion surrounding ELT and identify specific areas within the field for further review, this chapter has been organised into five distinct sections. Section one begins with a brief examination of the development of EL theory and the emerging discussions that have shaped its development. This is reviewed in the context of more recent literature in Section two, which focuses on surrounding issues linked to the methodologies employed, process and measurement adopted and the growing debate on the need for more critical reflection within management development. Having highlighted the ethos and debates surrounding ELT, Section three draws on the wider contextual academic discussion associated with interpersonal skills and motivation required to take part in an experiential event and the impact these elements might have on the overall learning experience.

Given the wider review of theory and debate associated with ELT, Section four identifies the areas of focus for this thesis, experiential learning team events. In particular it considers the possible impact of the sponsors that fund such events; the supplier who supports the delivery and the delegates that attend. Review of Sections two, three and four forms the basis for selecting the four key contextual areas for the empirical study element of this thesis. Finally Section five provides a summary of all the related findings, together with details of the selected contextual factors: sponsor, facilitation, individual personality, and sub cultures identified as the most relevant for the purpose of the empirical study given in chapter 4.
2.1 Establishing Fundamental Principles of Experiential Learning Theory

2.1.1 Philosophical Rationale

The American philosopher Dewey (1938) was one of the first academics to identify the need for a different approach to education in response to the rapidly changing world. His early work helped to establish the principle of a more dynamic approach where the individual learnt through their experience rather than through the more formal autocratic, tutor led methodology. He argued that in gaining understanding through experience, individuals would be better placed to develop their education and thereby benefit society as a whole. He based this philosophical argument on two guiding principles: firstly continuity - that experience gained can impact on future experiences and secondly interaction - an individual’s present experience will be influenced by their past ‘stored’ experience combined with the situation they find themselves in. Dewey perceived ‘educational experience’ as understanding ‘cause and effect’ and how the relationship between the two, could inform future processes. To give an example, a trainee craftsman might allow a sharp chisel to slip resulting in a cut to his hand. The learning experience is not the pain from the cut but understanding the need for more care when using the chisel in future, thus avoiding injury. Dewey theorised that far more understanding could be gained from such an experience than any tutorial led explanation or demonstration alone might provide. In setting out his principles, he identified some contrasts with the traditional, tutor led education systems that were prevalent during the early twentieth century.
imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; ....acquisition of skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which direct vital appeal.

(Dewey, 1938:19)

In relating this educational theory to team development, Dewey strongly advocated a democratic approach where individuals are encouraged to share experience as equals and allowed the freedom to openly express their views on shared problems of common interest. Thus through an effective social interaction the individual would be seen to gain a collective understanding experience and would thereby be better placed to relate their personal experience to the environment they work in.

Kurt Lewin, a prominent theorist of the early 20th century was also seen as an influential figure in experiential learning. His field theory identified the concept of ‘life space’ where a person’s behaviour is seen as a resultant combination of both individual psychology and environment. As such the demands of a working environment are thought to affect an individual’s behaviour towards other activities such as leisure time and further education. His focus on group dynamics is particularly relevant to experiential learning team events, where he identifies ‘interdependence of fate’ - individuals working as teams because they perceive the group has influence on their individual destiny. He highlights that where there was a clearly defined group task the collective support for each other would greatly increase (Kayes et al. 2005). This would equate with Adair’s (1986) principle for a defined shared task which aligns individual effort to a common purpose.
Kolb extended the work on experiential learning to become a key influence in modern day Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). His model is seen as the most holistic on the market (Kayes, 2002). Largely derived from Lewin’s earlier work, it provides a four stage learning process with the initial experience being the driving force.

![Diagram 1: Adapted from Kolb (1984) with references to an example of a practical experiential learning team event exercise added.](image)

In order to understand the alignment of theory with practice the example given in Diagram 1 attempts to align Kolb’s theoretical model with a practical example of an experiential team event activity (ETEA). During the concrete experience (CE), the individual undertakes an action and relates to the interaction with others and the feelings this creates. In terms of a team event experience this could be a team of 6 individuals building the highest possible free standing tower using paper cups. Following the experience there is a reflection observation (RO) time which allows for the actions and related information coming from others together with the individual’s own feelings
to be considered. From a practical experiential learning team event perspective this would consist of the team individually reviewing the roles they each played and feeding back to the team in an open discussion on how effective they felt they were in working together to build the tower. This then leads to the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) stage where the individual relates the experience with past experiences and understanding to form ideas on what might be useful to apply in other situations. Referring to the experiential learning team exercise this would be represented by the team relating the tower experience with an issue of team working they share in their work situation (e.g. in the management of meetings), and the positive experience they have had in overcoming issues (e.g. electing a leader to support in identifying everyone’s ideas and agreeing the best way forward). This then leads on to the fourth stage in the process of Active Experimentation (AE). Here the individual uses all three stages to experiment with a new way or idea for putting it into practice and seeing if it truly does make an improvement on their previous way of thinking. Again relating this to experiential learning team activities, this could typically be associated with the lessons learnt from the ‘need for someone to take the lead role to support the team’ and applying this back in the workplace i.e. electing a person to chair meetings, taking everyone’s ideas and giving focus to the actions required.

From an alternative perspective, Kolb’s model could apply to the individual in relative isolation, but it was primarily intended as a shared team experience with development of individual and team understanding applying to all four stages (Kolb, 1984). Eraut (2004) identifies some issues with Kolb’s model remarking that the model excludes individual feelings. This point however, would seem to have been partly addressed in Kolb’s later
work with reference to individual learning styles and related to personality types (Kolb and Kolb, 2009). Eraut (2004) also contends that Kolb’s ‘concrete experience’ stage focuses only on the actual experience and fails to recognise the combination of new situations with reference to the individual’s past experience. On further review however, this could be seen as somewhat semantic given that Kolb’s remaining stages make clear reference to reflection on current experience and conceptualising with past experience. Interestingly Eraut introduces his own stage model of transferring knowledge to the workplace which includes: understanding the new situation, reflecting upon it, recognising a link with past situations, transposing the understanding and turning this understanding into action. On closer examination this would seem to mirror much of the literature associated with Kolb’s model albeit in a slightly different language.

Indeed a number of additional learning cycles have been developed (Joplin, 1981), (Priest, 1990), (Greenaway, 2002b), mostly to fulfil more practical user-friendly training applications (Neill, 2011). However in terms of academic review, Kolb’s model has generated the most discussion and subsequently has become one of the most highly referenced experiential models by far. This said, as noted by Trehan and Peddler (2009), the model does overlook a number of contextual, social and political issues aligned with the individual’s experience, areas that will be explored in more detail in Section 2.

2.1.2 Relating Theory with Modern Day Practice

In understanding the broader academic context of experiential learning theory, it is useful to consider related theoretical development. Whilst EL theory was emerging, a number of theorists were exploring the value of different approaches to education and
the associated learning that could be derived from them. Most notably perhaps is the often-cited distinction between ‘formal’ teacher-led education and the more experience-based ‘informal’ learning. As an example, Colley et al. (2002) provide an extensive review of these two concepts and the main areas of supposed distinction between them.

**Formal versus Informal Learning**

From their review Colley et al. (2002) identified eight alternative descriptions depicting the differences between formal and informal learning. Given the vast array of variation on a theme, they attempted to provide a generic description which was both objective and without prejudice. The table below provides a summary of terms identified that can be applied to formal and informal learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of Formal and Informal Learning Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher as authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned and structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative assessment/accreditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Externally determined objectives/outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests of powerful and dominant groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to all groups, according to published criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measured outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning predominantly individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to preserve status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy of transmission &amp; control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning mediated through agents of authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed and limited time-frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is the main explicit purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is applicable in a range of contexts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.1 – Original source (Colley, et al. 2002)**

Colley et al. (2002) are keen to point out the widely differing forms of definition, however their composite list does provide a useful starting point for assessing the types and patterns of pedagogy used for any given learning environment. The first thing to note is that most of the statements are diametrically opposed. Clearly they highlight an idealist view, with reference to the most extreme situations. Taking the first aspect of teacher as an example, this would tend to align with the formal practice of the behaviourist ‘teacher led’ form of pedagogy (Livingstone, 2001). Likewise the informal approach, defined as being non teacher led, would appear to be more cognitive; ‘learner controlled’, ‘Internally determined objectives’ (Bruner, 1965) or social ‘Learning predominantly communal’,
‘learning mediated through learner democracy’ (Piaget, 1978) in approach, with learning being driven by the individual themselves or within the social context they find themselves in. In a later paper the same authors under Malcolm et al. (2003) consider the interrelationship between formal and informal learning. In line with Billet (2002) they identify that every learning experience has elements of both formality and informality. They point out however, that making a comparison for any given learning situations can provide the support required to match the methods adopted with possible learning outcomes. As an example, the current method of study for attaining a General Certificate of Secondary Education for children at 16 years of age might be seen as predominantly formal, with most of the statements to the left hand boxes in table 2.1 clearly relating. Conversely, the learning process of a self-help group involved in a community improvement project might tick all the boxes on the right-hand side. Malcolm et al. (2003) assert that understanding such differences, how they relate and the interrelationship they have to the environmental setting, are important aspects to be considered in supporting programme design, delivery and review.

Interrelationships and effects can only be properly understood if learning is examined in relation to the wider contexts in which it takes place. This is particularly important when considering issues of power and oppression.

(Malcolm et al. 2003:317)

In attempting to effectively employ the theory of formal and informal learning within a Human Resource Development (HRD), Jacobs and Park (2009) have evaluated current
theoretical discussion and aligned it to practical application. They focus on a growing need for learning solutions to meet the needs of a rapidly changing workplace environment and a clearer understanding of how formal and informal learning methods can best support this requirement. In line with Malcolm et al. (2003) they highlight the need for sponsors and providers to have a greater understanding of the attributes of formal and informal learning and how this might help in designing strategies that best meet the HRD requirement. In answering this requirement they put forward a framework depicting the relationship between: the location of the development, the level of facilitation support, and the method of formal / informal learning provided. They point out that the framework is offered as a conceptual tool for HR teams to identify the main variables and associated requirements aligned with workplace learning (Jacobs and Park, 2009). However in terms of the contextual areas that might impact on the developmental experience, they fall short of providing any detail on: the different styles of facilitation required to support the learning methods, individual reaction towards the development method employed, or the sponsors role and influence in commissioning such development interventions.

In relation to an experiential team learning event (example Appendix 1) the overriding focus is towards informal modes of development. However this is combined with aspects of more formal introductions and input from subject matter experts. The formal is given as an initial focus as well as a catalyst for the development activities they form. In keeping with Malcolm et al (2003), Billett (2008) identifies that understanding the interrelationship between formal and informal methodologies and the context in which they take place can impact on the development outcomes. As such, how they are
perceived and the political dogma that surrounds them becomes an important aspect for review within the context of the study presented in chapter 4. In terms of overall impact, particular focus will be given to the experiential team learning event stakeholders: the sponsors, providers and delegates, their interrelationships, desired goals and understanding of the methods employed.

2.2 Examining Links with Current ELT Academic Debate

Introduction

In relating to the contextual elements that might impact on the experiential learning experience, this section explores the discussion surrounding the methodology employed to support the learning process. It is notable that whilst a great deal of discussion centres on the learning process itself, little attention is given to the surrounding environment the delegates might find themselves in, their personal preferences towards learning, or the supporting elements of sponsor influence and facilitation of such learning.

2.2.1 Experiential Learning - Methodology and Measurement

As discussed, the predominant theories associated with experiential learning events comprise predominantly of a combination of both cognitive and social development. These forms of development are largely driven by the individual learner and enhanced through experiences shared with peers in developing their understanding. Such experiences are based primarily on the shared action in preference to purely observing or listing (Abulwahed et al. 2008). This form of pedagogy is perceived by Dehler et al. (2001) to provide the individual learner with more freedom to explore the areas that are most relevant to them and motivational towards the learning process.
The types of activity involved within experiential learning team events can vary considerably. Activities may include but are not limited to: role play, simulations, structured actives, sensitivity training and adventure training (Reynolds, 2009). Reynolds goes on to make the point that the research and empirical base of experiential learning team events is still relatively under-developed and, as such the topic currently lacks a developed conceptual framework or a recognised system for measuring the effectiveness of such programmes and their performance benefits. A number of academics including Vince (1998), De Loo (2002) and Reynolds (2009) have challenged this lack of critical and theoretical data which often forms the basis for recognition within academic establishments. This apparent failure to provide certified evidence of performance highlights the issue of trying to justify a ‘humanist based methodology’ of development using largely ‘scientific behaviourist’ methods of endorsement. As noted in table 2.1 (Colley et al. 2002), the outcomes of less formal learning activities are commonly imprecise and often ‘unmeasurable’. Attempts have been made to identify formulaic responses to this fundamental question from the earliest L=P + Q where: learning (L) occurs through programmed knowledge (P) and insightful questioning (Q), to the latest where team learning = purpose, membership, role of leadership, context, process, and action (Kayes et al. 2005). As can be seen from these two examples, such attempts to enable the evaluation of informal learning tend to rely on inputs and outputs that are mainly subjective by nature. Hence any objective or ‘scientific’ evaluations of the outcomes becomes problematic. This considered, such approaches are arguably seen as useful in acknowledging individual perceptions particularly when evaluating their learning experience (Kayes et al. 2005). Of course when attempting to assess the impact
of such events, all factors that might impact on the methods and measurement employed would need to be taken into consideration. In relation to the thesis question what is not recognised in such discussion is the impact the contextual elements such as: the provider’s style of facilitation, the personalities of those involved, the environmental impact and the sponsoring organisation’s influence have on the outcomes.

From a Higher Educational perspective, the University of Hull (2011) (UoH) provide an example of the positives that may be gained from employing action learning as an effective process for supporting their higher education programme. Action learning as previously identified is closely related to experiential learning in that it is seen as a ‘social process of managers and workers getting together to review and interpret the experiences in order to understand the processes that have led them to solve a problem.’ (De Loo, 2002: 246). In relation to the field of Higher Education, this might translate from ‘managers and workers’ to ‘tutors and students’.

As part of what UoH call ‘platform for active learning’, they advocate that the process is effective in ‘developing students analytical skills’, allowing them to examine topics from different perspectives, appreciate others views and develop confidence in the argument they present. Taken from a survey of student first-hand experience of action learning incorporated into university learning modules, the institution identifies an enhancement of critical thinking skills, enabling students to better reflect on study materials. Group activities specifically are seen to present the opportunity for students to consider others ideas and critically evaluate the arguments in a select and supportive setting. As an education provider, Hull considers that experiential Active Learning can assist in
empowering students to become directly involved with the learning process. In taking this informal approach the students are encouraged to not simply react to the tutors but to: undertake their own research, reflect on the experience and apply the outcomes to their own area of study. They identify the advantage of student team working comes from stimulating discussion which can cover a much broader range of diverse material than by working alone. Tutorial discussion is seen to become more ‘free-flowing’, enabling students to explore the topics in far more detail than in a more formal environment. However, as unproblematic as such accounts may ostensibly appear, a number of authors have highlighted issues in applying action learning principles in practice. One point of contention is their assertion that group working guarantees students commitment to contributing equally to preparatory study. As identified by Downie et al. (2004), if individuals cannot agree on learning goals then individual motivation may decline. This can lead to a fragmentation in team unity and possible disproportionate levels of contribution from team members.

Downie et al.’s concern raises issues on how attempts to gain academic credibility for experiential learning, as a reputable approach to formal education can be met with challenge. Anderson (2003) identifies such issues from her case study into Masters Education, highlighting the logistical concerns of attempting to organise over one hundred students into working groups whilst at the same time trying to monitor their progress. She notes that qualification reward is a prerequisite for most students entering onto an education programme and the structure of team learning makes individual assessment difficult to isolate from the team understanding. This experience has been endorsed by more recent studies (Bourner, 2011; Gilmore and Anderson, 2011; Briggs
and Rainer, 2013), where the issue of combining experiential learning principles with the formal assessment requirements of either professional or academic qualification can create a conflict of purpose. Gilmore and Anderson (2011) in particular highlight the difficulties of introducing experiential learning elements within the context of a professional development programme requiring formal assessment. They note from their study of a CIPD professional study cohort, that the students experienced anxiety in balancing the demands of formal examination assessment with exploratory experiential learning sessions. The main contributors to this emotional frustration were seen to be in the inexperience of the programme developers in effectively designing the programme and a lack of tutor facilitation skills in dealing with student responses. In terms of the facilitation it was identified that many of the tutors, whilst considered expert in their various subject areas, were not aware of the behavioural skills required to support the experiential element of the programme.

In relation to the thesis question and experiential learning team events, whilst there is no conflict with formal qualification requirements, the discussion raises the issue of organisational stakeholders and possible conflict in desired outcomes. The representatives of organisations sponsoring experiential learning team events can have formal requirements such as aligning with goals linked to specific policies and procedures with measurements in place to verify their return investment (Senge et al. 1999). As with the higher education examples, there may be a conflict with the principles of experiential learning where the focus is on exploring ideas and not being constrained by authoritative assessment or measurement. Clearly these factors have been identified the work of Bourner (2011), Gilmore and Anderson (2011) and Briggs and Rainer (2013) but the scope
of their enquiry falls short of establishing a clear understanding of goals and capability of approach. This issue clearly links with possible impact on development outcomes and is a further area for review as part of the study presented in Chapter 4.

Within the underlying principle of cognitive and social learning, students are expected to work largely unaided by experts, exploring and defining their own standards. Taken to its extreme, Anderson (2003) identifies that for post graduate studies this can lead to a lowering of educational standards, below the qualification levels requirement expected of such HE programmes. She highlights that to avoid this situation, there is need for working groups of students to be made aware of the standards required from the outset and become self-challenging in meeting those standards. In setting out to achieve this, she identifies the need for a subject specialist to facilitate the groups and monitor group progress and thereby assure standards are upheld. Interestingly in relation to contextual elements that might impact on experiential learning events, Anderson makes very little reference to the style of facilitation required to meet such standards. Her case study does reveal however, that the principles of action learning can allow the students to explore through true critical reflection, where no stone is left unturned and nothing is taken for granted. The core subject covered ‘strategy of learning’ was particularly relevant given that students were thereby able to experience its effects first hand, in parallel with the review of relevant theorists. This Anderson found to be far more beneficial to the students than theoretical review alone. They were also seen to be far better equipped to deal with the transfer of knowledge to their working environments. Bourner’s (2011) experience of introducing experiential learning to the academic settings by comparison reveals a number of other relevant points. He concurs with Anderson
regarding the value of creating self-managed action learning teams and the improvement in learning achieved in comparison with formal approaches to post graduate programmes. Having met with success and failure in applying the approach however, he identifies some fundamental requirements worthy of note. For experiential learning to be successful he identifies that students need to: be capable in questioning and listening skills, show an interest in the value of knowledge and be proactive in supporting others in trying new ideas. Conversely, the approach was seen as least effective when students felt: threatened and exposed by the learning environment, had a lack of social skills in working within the group and demonstrated an immaturity towards managing themselves. This type of behaviour was seen to provoke high levels of challenge towards the providers and cause disruption for those wishing to take part and learn. In answer to such concerns Anderson (2003) and Visser (2007) advocate the introduction of an expert facilitator for group learning situations, to support individuals in overcoming anxiety, promoting effective team interaction and thereby help to neutralise hostility towards the provider. Bourner (2011) however, adds a note of caution in introducing an expert facilitator. He believes that their very presence can become too controlling and influential. As an alternative he favours assessing delegate readiness for such a programme, in effect carrying out a personality screening process to reject students that cannot meet the criterion. Yeo and Gold (2011) recognise this issue, seeing the facilitator in a teacher role as counterproductive in supporting manager spontaneity and creativity in communicating with each other. However, they also point out that in a more task focused environment where there is a fixed problem to be addressed a strong facilitator can become invaluable to the teams enquiry. In relation to the thesis question, what is
missing from both Bourner (2011) and Yeo and Gold (2011) is what constitutes strong facilitation and the skills required.

From the discussion it can be seen that there is evidence to suggest that there are both potential advantages and disadvantages to including expert facilitation as part of an experiential learning event. However in terms of what constitutes an expert facilitator, the skills required and their relationship with the delegates and the sponsoring organisation there would seem to be little clarity. Given the possible impact on development outcomes and the prominence of the facilitator role within the experiential learning process, the study presented in Chapter 4 will focus on: the skills required to support the process, the perceived authority of the role and the relationship with the sponsor.

The process of experiential learning is comprehensively reviewed by Reynolds (2009) in his paper Wild Frontiers – ‘Reflections on Experiential Learning’. He establishes that conventional formal education is focused largely on processing of the written and spoken word exclusively. By contrast, experiential learning is more commonly viewed as an alternative methodology, offering a variety of learning approaches. As such it is seen to challenge the authority of the conventional singular provider (lecturer) by actively encouraging social interactive and empowerment to think for ones-self and develop new ideas. This form of challenge has been more recently noted by Bourner (2011) as causing resentment from some academic staff who perceive it as challenging to their professional expertise and have a preference for the more traditional methods of programmed learning from text books, journals and articles. An attribute identified by
Baterson (cited in McGill and Beaty, 1992) and Dehler et al. (2001) as aligning with those more mature individuals that have been schooled in, and feel more comfortable with the more formal methods of learning.

The predominant leaning of experiential learning towards a more cognitive approach than the traditional structured behaviourist approach has led to its use more extensively in management development vocational training field rather than formal education establishments. Such restrictions however, are questioned by Dehler et al. (2001) who observe the need for more focus on experiential learning practice in formal settings. They argue that due to modern day commercial challenges and consistent need to review and change, there is a perceived need for more independent thinkers. Managers in particular are said to need a more complex understanding of skills to adapt to this need which they argue cannot be gained from a formal educational approach alone. Eraut (2004) identifies that the formal approach taken by many Higher Education authorities tend to focus on a review of previous knowledge and highlight what knowledge is most appropriate to the point in question. He points out that this fails to address the areas of relating knowledge with current situations, thereby supporting transformation of acquired knowledge into improved action.

Reynolds picks up the point that if designed well, experiential learning intervention can provide a high ‘feel good factor’ for all those participating. He notes however, that this can be viewed by staff associations and union representatives as a manipulative form of development, with organisations using the approach to take forward practices and usurp management and trade union agreed processes (Reynolds, 2009). This said, he
recognises the process of EL to be very effective in advancing ideas and ways of thinking particularly for practical situations. Overall, it can be seen at least in principle as a more democratic approach to formal education methods and more effective in solving problems across team functions. Vidaillet and Vignon (2010) concur that action learning can be used effectively to aid managers in getting together with their workers to review and interpret their experiences. Thereby they are perceived to be gaining a better understanding of the processes which can lead them to solve problems together.

From reviewing the discussion it is interesting to note how past experience of formal learning can influence delegates’ and providers’ perception of experiential learning. For the delegates this might also be influenced by the social setting with which they associate. In relation to the thesis question, what is not made clear is the level of impact this may have on the development outcomes. As such the experiential learning team event study presented in chapter 4 will review the possible effect of delegates’ social groupings and their reaction to the EL in comparison with past formal learning experiences.

In summarising the areas of experiential learning methodology and measurement, the existing literature suggests that experiential learning team events can provide the individual learner with more freedom to explore the areas that are most relevant to them. It potentially presents the opportunity for individuals to consider others’ ideas and critically evaluate the arguments in a select and supportive setting. This freedom to explore and experiment brings with it the need for effective team working. If teams fail to agree on learning goals then motivation toward the learning process may decline. The
methodology has been challenged in part for the lack of critical and theoretical data to support it. This critical data may prove important in forming the basis for recognition within academic establishments and gaining overall credibility. Also the lack of expert input and direction throughout the learning process can be seen to restrict the learning experience to what is known by the team and thereby constrain the amount of overall learning to be gained. In relation to the thesis question this raises the contextual issue of effective facilitative support throughout the learning process. For more senior managers, past learning experience may be more aligned to behaviourist events. As such their expectations may be limited to gaining technical knowledge from an expert rather than exploring their own understanding with others to better support their own development needs. In looking to expand the understanding of the impact such elements might have on experiential learning within management team based events, the study presented in Chapter 4 will review: the facilitation skills required to support an experiential event, the delegate’s reaction in comparison with age and experience of more formal programmes and the delegate’s social environment and the effects this might have.

2.2.2 Critical Reflection

More recently academic discussion has added to concerns that higher management education is failing to prepare students for the new demands of today’s working environment (Quinn, 2013; Ford et al. 2010; Reynolds, 2011; Antonacopoulou, 2010). With a constantly changing technology and social / political environment the value of more formally designed education programmes is starting to be questioned. The need for a more ‘critical enquiry’ and the associated pedagogies employed to achieve this have been raised as areas for discussion (Elliott, 2008).
In trying to address this issue, academic debate surrounding ELT has tended to focus largely on the ‘reflection’ element of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle. As previously discussed, Kolb’s model has been criticised for ‘the lack of depth and integration between self-action, interaction and transaction’ (Yeo and Gold, 2011:01). The tendency has been to focus more on the internalisation of reflection and much less on contextualising in terms of the social environment they find themselves in (Quinn, 2013:5). Without a critical reflection of the learning aligned to the individual’s localised social environment, it is argued that application of learning can become limited to merely maintaining what has gone before. In effect, the individual’s ability to assimilate the learning gained and challenge the status quo to bring new ideas can be restricted by the specific social and political environment they find themselves in (Elliott, 2008; Reynolds and Vince 2004). This is seen by Reynolds (2011) as very limiting, particularly to management development where the need for change and innovation is a key requirement.

Such concerns have led to debate centred specifically on management education and development related to the need for a more critical reflection (CR) to take place where CR is seen as:

- raising social, political and cultural issues, questioning purposes and intentions and, if necessary, challenging the assumptions and ‘taken-for-granteds’ on which organisational policies and practices are based

Reynolds (2011:8)
This alignment with environment and in particular the organisational policy tends to focus attention on the working environment, where change is said to be an endemic part of the management lifestyle (Yeo and Gold, 2011). It is argued by Antonacopoulou (2010) if management development and education cannot challenge the existing ways of doing things then it will have little effect in supporting the change required. This of course raises the question as to whether management development should be transforming organisations, or simply serving to reinforce the existing power relationships (Reynolds and Vince, 2004). Clearly critical reflection can be seen to support the former. This need for more liberation from the constraints of more conventional management theory and practices is raised by a number of prominent authors. Dehler (2009:45) talk of Critical Management Education as the main challenge for further education establishments to support future managers and leaders, enabling them to think critically, ‘raise consciousness of their own values and to create the potential for classrooms as sites for social change’. Terhan and Pedler (2009) in their review of management and leadership development consider the attributes of Critical Action Learning where the issues of: power control, politics and cultural processes are recognised as important elements to be addressed in any leadership development programme. In line with the philosophy of Revans (2011) and the work of Vince (2004) they argue that a critical action learning approach needs to be focused on a team of people with common objectives thus supporting a shared collective improvement. In this way they feel the issues of social and political influence can be addressed along with the more prominent technical aspects within a collective timeframe.
Reynolds (2011) warns that critical reflective practice can lead to challenges which may undermine social loyalties and bonding, developed through shared understanding and policies over time. Subsequently, an individual that challenges might be at risk of being marginalised, seen by the community as a disruptive influence. Reynolds does however defend critical reflection as an important tool to be used in modern day management development and higher education scenarios. Subsequently he points out that ELT is increasingly being introduced into further and higher education which has brought about a ‘fundamental change in thinking’ away from the more formal approach of how people learn and start to introduce new ideas such as outdoor management development as a vehicle for such learning (Reynolds, 2011).

It would seem from the discussion that critical reflection, if introduced effectively can have positive effects. From a more critical perspective as implied by Reynolds, this does raise the issue of how the learning gained from such an experience might transfer back to the working environment that it is meant to change. Ford et al. (2010:6) raise a number of challenges relating to this issue. In their self-evaluation piece as ‘teachers of Critical Management’ they review the meaning of critical management, the development methods employed and the outcomes from their past programmes. They question the practical value of MBA and vocational programmes that prescribe CM principles. When reviewing the outcomes specifically, they found that managers returning to their workplace have had little success in transposing their learning gained into action. Through carrying out a series of interviews with past students, they identified two contributory factors. Firstly the primary goal of the majority of students was to pass the course and to be recognised within the organisations for their achievement.
Implementation of the resultant action plans was not viewed as of prime importance. Secondly, their senior managers were cited as the key obstacle, effectively blocking any plans developed during the programme. In relation to the contextual elements associated with the thesis question it is evident from the discussion that the delegates’ managers (their sponsors) interests in outcomes were not considered during the design of the programme. Yet their position proved highly influential on the resultant outcomes. From this perspective, it can be seen that for *critical reflection* to be effective within an ELT developmental programme, the sponsor of such programmes would need to be seen to support the challenges it might evoke. In cases where this has not been made clear from the outset, conflicting interests can be seen to undermine the stakeholder outcomes.

When reflecting on all of the more recent studies relating to the introduction of ELT and critical reflection (Ford et al. 2012; Reynolds, 2011; Antonacopoulou, 2010; Yeo and Gold, 2011; Quinn, 2013), a number of factors arise. Students identify a concern regarding how their managers might react and yet little mention is given to those their involvement or influence with the programmes, or the influence their sponsorship may have on the overall development process. As with previous observations little reference is made to the differing personalities of the individuals involved and how this might affect the programme. Also little attention is given to the pedagogies adopted by the training providers and the effect this might have.

In summary, it is clear that the contextual factors of the sponsor’s role in supporting such events together with the facilitation required to support them may well impact on the
learning outcomes. Given that neither of these factors have been explored in any great depth it provides the opportunity to explore the possible level of impact which will be addressed in the study given in Chapter 4.

2.3 Exploring Key ETL Related Themes

The following section explores the theoretical discussion from both the individual and social perspectives. This has been included to further build on the understanding of the contextual elements that might affect ELT programmes and provide a more informed platform from which to design the empirical study.

2.3.1 Individual Perspective

A prerequisite for any experiential learning team event lies within the delegate’s willingness and capacity to take play an active role. Clearly this requires the individual to have an effective level of both interpersonal skills to work with others and a level of personal motivation towards taking part. The importance of individual perception for working in such a social learning environment has been recognised since the early work of psychologists such as McGregor (1960), Hertzberg (1959) and Maslow (1968). More recently, writers from a social science perspective including: Vince (2010) Dehler et al. (2001) Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) Lynch (2008) and Billett, (2008) have developed and refined this understanding in relation to experiential learning. In reviewing this aspect, focus is given to the individual’s interpersonal skill set required for working with a team and their motivation towards the learning process.
Interpersonal Skills

Beginning with the interpersonal skills required, Ramsey (2005) identifies experiential learning which allows individuals to build confidence and contribute to the team activities, discuss openly the learning outcomes, collaborate on new ideas and apply them to relevant work situations. Clearly such activities would require prerequisite skills which the individual may or may not have. It has been argued that without the capability to: work within a team, carry out a critical review and identify actions without the aid of directive expert support, the experience might prove challenging (De Loo, 2002).

Trehan and Pedler (2009) identify action learning as encouraging both collaborative enquiry and problem solving which can lead to individual development for all those involved. This they observe can also address tensions associated with power dynamics and emotions that might undermine individual motivation. There are however, a number of papers that contest such an idealist view (Kayes, 2002; Kolb and Kolb, 2009, Reynolds, 2009). De Loo (2002) notes a strong barrier to experiential team learning comes from an individual’s insecurities in working with others. The fear of entering into a highly challenging social setting, where recognised powers of influence are present can be a daunting experience. It can present the chance of individual frailties to be exposed and lead to anxiety and self-doubt. This in turn can set in place unconscious defence mechanisms proving a substantial inhibitor to learning (Kayes, 2002; Kolb and Kolb, 2009). Such situations as highlighted by Willmott (cited in Reynolds, 2009: 389) can limit contributions within the team and lead to ‘a poverty of ideas’ being generated.
In relation to experiential learning management team events and the skills required, individuals are often encouraged to test the impact of their powers of leadership and try out different ways of communicating such authority in a safe environment Vince (2010). The use of such power and personal influence of course can be seen as skills which the individual might use to support or in some cases undermine the learning process. In his review of interpersonal influence, Raven (2008) identifies six key forms of power adopted by individuals to be found in today’s working and social environments: *Informational Power*, the use of logical explanation and reasoned argument to persuade. *Coercive Power*, the use of threat or dominance to intimidate; *Legitimate Power*, a use of an authoritative position or ranking within an organisation to gain control; *Referent Power*, the use of individual charm and personal charisma to persuade others; *Reward Power*, typically achieved through monetary payment, or conversely the withholding of payment and; *Expert Power*, the use of knowledge and skills to gain the respect of others. The execution of such power based behaviours it is argued by Raven, can be seen as prevalent in management culture and therefore of particular interest to experiential learning team management events. This can have both positive and negative effects on the individual taking part. On the one hand it provides the opportunity for them to explore the capabilities as a leader and develop self-confidence in working with others in a position of control. Alternatively as noted by Gabriel and Griffiths (2002), the situation may be used by someone already in authority to undermine the learning event. Russ Vince provides an example worthy of review here.

Sue shares a problem with the group. The group tried to come up with possible options to improve. Sue rejected all of these answering ‘I have
tried that one, it didn’t work’. Result – the group shuts down, starts to take on Sue’s anxieties, feel they cannot accomplish anything for themselves. [Leads to] Downward spiral, which can end in failure. Sue was manipulating the group in her distress and/or the group manipulated Sue with their kind and thoughtful concern for the problem.

Shortened text from Vince (2008:99)

As can be seen from the example, such use of power, in this case a combination of legitimate and coercive power, can serve to create issues within the team. As such the learning outcomes from such events will greatly depend on the balance of power within the learning group (Willmott, 1994). This said, given that the individual has the personality and collective support of the team to overcome such inhibitions, the critical pedagogy associated with experiential learning can be an empowering experience in its own right (Dehler et al. 2001; Flood, 1998). The expectation of individuals driving their own learning experience and the unfolding social process of the team is seen to allow for a challenging of norms and solving problems without the constriction of past authorities. As a note of caution however Dehler et al. (2001) point out this can lead to a new inequality of powerbase, where a set of new individuals will be given responsibilities and others will need to follow.

What begins to emerge is that if individual concerns and formal powers are not taken into consideration then the social learning environment may detract from an individual’s learning experience rather than contribute towards it. However, Willmott (1994) suggests that with the right mix of individuals within a team, the politics and power
issues can be effectively managed and support the learning process (Willmott, 1994). This said Willmott fails to elaborate on what constitutes the right mix of individuals and whether or not this can be planned for. Preparatory guidelines and pre-selection of teams according to the personality profile may serve to address such issues and as previously highlighted will be an aspect included in the design of the study given in chapter 4.

Motivation

In relation to an individual’s motivation towards learning, Molden and Dweck (2006) discuss the idea of ‘lay theories’ where there are two types of learner. The first they label as fixed or static learners; who perceive learning as a threat due to bad past experience and have resultant concerns of a personal inadequacy towards learning. These individuals are typically seen to show low motivation towards a learning experience and will quickly withdraw. Conversely, the second type seen as incremental learners, are considered to be those that will adapt to the learning environment to suit the requirement. They typically will show high motivation towards the learning experience, happy to learn from mistakes and build a strategy towards personal achievement. Molden and Dweck identify however that these modes whilst evident are not fixed. They observe that an individual’s experience of success or failure can trigger a change in their disposition. From a slightly different perspective Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004:176) also consider the differing dispositions that individuals have towards learning and their surrounding environment. They point out the importance of understanding the individual’s cognitive and emotional state and how this might relate to the social
environment they find themselves in. If an individual feels supported by their working environment and have a positive persona of their own capabilities they will respond well to a self-driven process of learning. If on the other hand they feel unsupported by their environment and have low self-esteem in their ability to overcome barriers, they may respond negatively towards such a programme of learning. In essence one individual might view an experience as a ‘useful reinforcement to his existing ways of working’ whilst another may view it as a ‘dangerous external control mechanism’ to further undermine their position.

Given the nature of experiential learning team events, the individual’s disposition towards learning can create differing reactions dependant on how they relate to the social environment they find themselves in (Billett, 2008). From an introspective view point Billett (2010) identifies the areas of conscious awareness, unconscious desires and personally-derived attachments as drivers toward the disposition. From an environment perspective he notes a number of authors relate to the social setting as a key influence (Newton 1998; Ratner, 2000; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004; Somerville 2006). Lynch (2008) in her review of lifelong learning policies makes an interesting observation relation to contributing factors towards an individual’s motivation for learning. She concludes, an individual’s..

Desire enables a way of thinking about the values and drives within which identity is constructed, agency is produced and learning occurs. This is an affective process that relies as much on imagination, emotion and
environment as on reason. Each is significant to the momentum of desire, and, when obstructed, desire decreases and a sense of hopelessness follows.

Lynch (2008:688)

Relating these points to experiential learning team events, both the individual’s working environment they come from and the learning environment they find themselves in may impact on the learning experience. Likewise their personal disposition towards the learning event itself and alignment with their preferred style of learning could also have a marked influence.

In relation to learning styles Mumford and Honey (1982) have identified four distinct personality style preferences which can be aligned to the different stages of the experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984). The theory labels individual learning style preference as Activists; those with preference for Concrete Experience, Reflectors; who prefer to observe and ponder the many different elements of the experience, Theorists; that enjoy Abstract Conceptualization, the chance to analyse and synthesise the facts and logic, and the Pragmatist; who prefers Active Experimentation, keen to try out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. Personality theorists such as Honey and Mumford argue that personality can prove very effective in matching training method to the most appropriate individual learning style preference. As previously discussed, the design of experiential learning team events is set out to incorporate all four elements of the Kolb model. This in theory would provide the opportunity for
individuals with different learning style preferences to be met, an aspect which will be
reviewed in the study.

In Shen et al.’s (2007) study of the formation of engineering design teams using
personality profiling, they identified a positive correlation between team balance and
performance. They identify that using models such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
(MBTI), Keirsey Temperament Sorter II (KTS II), and Belbin’s team roles to select
individuals for teams based on matching individual personality traits could achieve a
more effective team performance in comparison to a more random method of selection.
They highlight the work of Wilde (2003) and his adaptation of both the MBTI and KTS II in
developing an effective method of team selection. When applied to teams taking part in
the annual National Lincoln Prize awards in the US it was notable that those teams that
were selected via personality matching achieve 73% of the awards whilst those that had
no selection strategy achieved only 27% of the awards. This example would on the face
of it provide an indication that if personalities are identified prior to the event and teams
selected on the basis of their individual compatibility, the results of team working can
improve dramatically. This however is in direct contrast to Partington and Harris (1999)
study of 43 teams of MBA students taking part in a project management simulation
exercise in which they identified no significant relationship between personality profile
balance and team performance. From a slightly different perspective, Anderson and
Sbackleton’s (1990) study into personalities and their effect on interviews adds a note of
cautions. They found when assessing the relationship between preferences for
candidates there was a strong bias of interviewers selecting candidates with similar
personality characteristics to themselves. Termed the ‘similar to me effect’, they
highlighted that personality should not be the only source of judgement for selection. There is also a more challenging view that the majority of individuals can adapt their personal approach to suit a given environment, seen as their ‘conscious state’ Jacobi (1973). Consequently, any prior judgement of personality might prove irrelevant given an individual’s need to adapt to different situations with differing demands.

Interestingly, despite wide use of personality profiling as a prerequisite for assessment centres, there is very little academic discussion relating to profiling and its use for experiential learning and development interventions. Given this and the contradiction relating to performance improvement, it can be seen as a specific area of concern which will be included as part of the study in Chapter 4.

2.3.2 Social Perspective

Team Working

To reiterate, a ‘team’ can be defined as ‘a limited number of people who have shared objectives at work and who co-operate, on a permanent or temporary basis, to achieve those objectives in a way that allows each individual to make a distinctive contribution’ (CIPD, 2011: 01). This of course raises a number of issues in relation to contextual factors associated with experiential learning team events including; cooperation, shared objectives, and individual distinctive contribution.

In establishing cooperation within a team there are a number of theories that need to be considered. The first of these related theories is given by Meredith Belbin (2004). He
developed his ideas carrying out research on management teams based at the Henley Management College. His theory is based on the premise that in isolation, no single individual has the capability to be as effective as a team. Combining individual effort has the potential to compensate for individual deficiencies whilst making use of each other’s strengths. His studies on syndicated teams revealed eight key roles as being required for a team to be effective and performing to high standards. The individual roles identified include: *Chairman* (later described as *Coordinator*) - able to formulate the input from all contributors and orchestrate their efforts to work as an effective team, often seen as the natural team leader; *Company worker* (later described as *Implementer*) - displays a common sense approach, self-disciplined and hardworking; *Plant* - imaginative and highly creative with a wealth of knowledge in their area of expertise; *Shaper* - outgoing individual that drives for action and will force the pace to maintain progress against objectives; *Team Worker* - socially inclined, sensitive and empathetic to the rest of the teams individual needs, they will try to calm conflict situations and encourage team harmony; *Resource Investigator* - enthusiastic in networking new ideas and obtain resource to help the team achieve; *Monitor Evaluator* - identify issues others overlook, level headed with discretion for sound judgment; and *Completer Finisher* - precise and orderly in their approach they are conscientious perfectionists who will guard the team against reckless actions. Belbin recognised that individuals normally show a natural tendency towards one or two roles. He notes that unsupported selection of team members can lead to a possible imbalance and a lack of required skills. However, when given the understanding of these roles and what could be missing from a team, potential weaknesses can be identified and adjustments made. Kayes et al. (2005) and Bradley and
Hebert (1997) agree with the philosophy that teams perform better with a good mix of individual styles and that understanding the difference in style can assist team learning. They suggest that psychological diversity is important in achieving an effective work team that can learn together. They also point out that too many individuals in the team with similar personalities can lead to ‘group think’ which can lead to jumping to a shared conclusion without challenging thought process and a compromise of weak solutions. They conclude that teams need to firstly establish trust and a safety for individuals to make mistakes. All members need to feel involved in activities as well as any decision making process.

Roles within a team are clearly important, in particular that of the leader and the style of leadership they adopt in supporting the team working (Van Dam et al. 2008). Interestingly ELT makes very little reference to the intricacies of team working. It would seem to be assumed that individuals will come together naturally and work as an effective learning team. Reference to team theorists would tend to challenge such an assumption as naive. As Amanda Sinclair illustrates in her paper ‘The tyranny of team ideology’; ‘the quality of interpersonal relationships among group members often leaves much to be desired. People fall too readily into patterns of competitiveness, conflict and hostility.’ (Nadler et al. quoted in Sinclair, 1992:615).

Kayes et al. (2005) pick up on these issues identifying that teams do not naturally develop or learn and therefore need to have a structured approach provided by a formal authority to assist the learning process. They point out that members need to be committed to the team, able to engage in conversation, be critical in their thought
process and prepared to make decisions and commit to action. They concur with Adair that there is a need for a leader, although they consider the role should be shared amongst the team members. They consider that a team can achieve autonomy when individuals find an effective working balance which Tuckman (1965) refers to as the ‘performing’ stage and Mills (1967) refers to as a team’s ‘self-determination’ phase. As identified by Tuckman, the experiences of newly formed teams particularly during the early Forming and Norming stages of development can be fraught with communication and individual roles issues. Boydell and Blantern (2007) highlight a number of specific communication barriers that can be experienced during this time. For example the individual’s reluctance to express true opinions given previous encounters with other team members; a failure to recognise a common pattern of language and etiquette from the outset; a lack of respect in taking turns to talk and respond with active listening; recognition that there will be failure as well as success and how this can be effectively managed. In such cases communication can become ineffective, with no shared ownership of objectives, and a disparate view of roles and required contributions. Belbin (2004) would predict that such disharmony may be experienced without a preceding personality profile assessment. He also recommends that such assessment would aid the team selection process by: establishing individual role preferences, pre-empting any natural clashes in personality and helping to create the most effective team mix. Whether this action would address the historical relationship and etiquette barriers is not made clear, however in helping to establish objectives and roles it might prove effective and clearly an area for empirical investigation.
In relating team development theories to experiential learning theories, a number of gaps become evident. Team working theorists identify that to improve team performance and thereby aid the learning process, individual personality profiling and matching can prove effective (Shen et al. 2007; Wilde, 2003). If team members are made aware of this requirement, they may naturally adjust to support skills deficiencies within the team, thereby overcoming team working issues and boosting motivation. Team working also requires an effective working environment. In order to improve team working it is observed that a leader figure is required (Adair, 1986). This can occur through natural team selection or via appointment of an independent facilitator. What appears to be important to overall team performance is that a leader is selected in the early stages of team formation. The benefits of the role are seen to provide: focus on task, coordination of individual action and awareness towards individual concerns. This said Kayes et al. (2005), Bradley and Hebert (1997), and Belbin (2004) could argue that a balance of personality mix within the team might be a prerequisite factor for this to occur.

From the discussion it can be seen that the mix of different personalities to form a team may have an impact on how they work together. Whilst some reference has been made to this contextual aspect by ELT theorists (Kayes et al. 2005), the significance of personality mix within experiential teams has not been considered in any detail. To contribute to this area of discussion, the study given in chapter 4 has incorporated a team pre-selection process based on personality types to assess the overall impact.
Formal Structure

‘Action learning [experiential learning] sets are environments within which the emotions, politics and social power relations that are integral to organisation can be viewed, discussed and potentially transformed’. This is the view of Russ Vince (2008:96). The very nature of the statement provokes a sense of freedom to think and openly discuss issues and allow team members to explore the learning without political hindrance. In keeping with the theme of this thesis, the last two elements of this literature review consider the barriers that might affect such freedoms, and the impact these might evoke on the development experience.

The structural form of a working organisation can impact on the type of culture and the distribution of authority for all those working within it (Handy, 1989). As observed by Boydell and Blantern (2007), all knowledge is made through social processes and therefore can be influenced by political ‘legitimate’ powers. When designing an experiential learning team events clearly an understanding of lines of structural authority can be significant in selecting teams, identifying team objectives and planning appropriate tasks. In terms of formal structures the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development CIPD (2008) identify seven team titles which relate to organisational structures to be found throughout industry. These they based largely on the work of Michael West (2004) ‘The secrets of successful team management’ with additional materials taken from Woodcock (1989) and Belbin (2004). The structures identified included: ‘Production or Service’ teams involved in supporting processes with continuous cycles having a long life-span. For this type of organisation there is often a need for cross
functional working where specialists are involved in supporting the process but often do not have the same direct reporting lines. The chain of authority is hierarchical, with functional heads typically reporting to divisional managers who in turn report to the board members. Due to the specialist focus of functions and the demarcation of roles, cross functional communication can prove a major obstacle to this type of organisation. ‘Action or Negotiation’ teams are seen as having specialists e.g. medical operating teams, who come together regularly to work with clearly defined and common outcomes. The lines of authority are less controlling with team members normally respecting others for their specialist skills. The main issues are when there is a breakdown in the respect level due to individuals not contributing to the level required. ‘Crew’ teams such as ‘airline crew’ work on standard tasks, albeit with constantly changing team members. Authority is more formally rooted, with higher ranking given to their more senior and experienced crew members. Such teams respect the position power first and foremost. Issues can arise when under pressure and in close proximity with other team members, often due to a clash of personalities. ‘Project and Development’ together with ‘Advice and involvement’ teams relate to ‘one off’ design or initial development work which has a finite life span. They focus on short term, improvement to support processes within an organisation. Authority tends to be direct from a project manager with all specialists hired for their specific expertise. This is normally a high pressure environment where the task is paramount. Individuals can often resent the authority of the project manager and if not given attention become disruptive to the planned workflow. ‘Self-Managed’ teams are normally associated with more short term projects often with individuals based in separate locations and different countries. Communicating by telephone, e-mail and tele-
conferencing is common and workload transient with teams moving from one project to another using different expertise brought in to support as required. Sometimes referred to as a ‘virtual team’, this type of structure relies heavily on individual being self-motivated with the ability to work in isolation for long periods of time.

From these descriptions and methods the differences in operating cultures become clearer. Charles Handy identifies that this difference in ‘team type’ or in his terminology ‘organisational culture’, can have a significant impact on individual attitudes and behaviours. As an example people working in a product / service environment would be expected to adhere to rules and strict codes of practice. People working in project and development environment where innovation and drive to achieve are required, the individual would generally need to be more flexible and dynamic in their approach (Handy, 1985).

So it can be seen that the influence that managers and teams might have can vary considerably depending on the type of formal power culture that exists. When considering an experiential learning team event for managers working within these structures, clearly the formal lines of power and influence need to be understood and allowances made to ensure any barriers towards that learning process are effectively managed. De Loo (2002) explores ‘action learning’ as the favoured method for improving individual and organisational performance. In trying to achieve this end he perceives a key challenge in the ever changing culture and structure of organisations. He argues that whilst it can be a very effective tool, to have any chance of achieving performance improvement, individual and organisational values must firstly be identified and aligned.
Eraut (2004) concurs that development experience can be greatly influenced by social working environments where individuals need to apply the learning they experience. These views perhaps serve to emphasise the need for a clear understanding of formal organisational culture and values particularly during the design stages of experiential learning team events.

From a slightly different perspective Engestrom (2001) identifies the importance of social structures within a formal setting and their insecurities as a strong influence in providing learning opportunity. He highlights that a working environment or ‘activity system’ comprises of a multitude of social webs all with diverse skill sets related to their own areas of operation. Learning takes place over a period of time within such a collective, building understanding from its history of experience. New ideas commonly from outside the system can lead to conflict within the systems operating culture. This conflict can generate need for change and create active learning opportunity. The system can also generate its own need for change through individuals becoming dissatisfied with the status quo and forming large enough social webs to overthrow redundant procedures. The resultant need for cultural change provides the opportunity for experiential learning to take place.

Conversely Maull et al. (2001) highlight that social cultures within the formal setting are formed over time and provide individuals with stability and a belonging. Consequently any challenge to that culture will be viewed with caution and will inevitably only be achieved over a long period of time.
In summary it can be seen that for organisations the environmental issues of culture and formal structures, indeed the fundamental principles of operation can vary considerably. Even when they are understood, the ever-changing external environment can impact on the organisation’s future strategies. When teams come together for the opening activity on an experiential learning team event, the first activity is commonly required to establish the overall objective. This provides the opportunity for individuals to establish shared objectives and identify a potential distinctive contribution that each person can make. Research indicates that each person must relate to the common objective and feel their contribution is of worth to that team (Mills, 1967). This requires an agreement in the forming stage (Tuckman, 1965) effectively with all individuals signing up to a common aim. This first stage can be undermined by the very culture of the organisation which sponsors the event. Gabriel and Griffiths (2002:215) refer to ‘defensive organisations that promote cynical managers, acrimonious groups, which can often become so discouraged that they will undermine any attempt to be positive towards learning. They can grow defensive and disruptive, identifying any new ideas as potentially threatening and subversive. Clearly this can apply to any form of organisational based learning. However, it is perhaps particularly appropriate to an experiential learning team event, where teams may be easily influenced by work based attitudes, allowing negative behaviours to undermine the development process. As such the provider would need to be made aware of the working environment and agree strategies with the sponsor in order to minimise possible risks.

In relation to ELT and AL theory again there is very little discussion relating to formal organisational structures, their corresponding cultures and how these might impact on
the overall learning experience of delegates. To further develop this area of debate the study will identify delegates from two distinctly different operational structures: process management and project management. The study will monitor processes on the delegates to gauge possible differences in their learning experience with particular focus on approach to carrying out exercises and the effects of working with others.

**Social Webs**

The final area of power influence is related to social webs in which affiliations are made through social interaction and not limited to formal working structures. In her review of introducing changes in the National Health Service (NHS), Dopson (2001) notes the importance of identifying the social web relationships within the formal organisational structures to determine their relevant status of power and influence. Dopson (2001) observed that for the NHS these social webs had a significant impact on the initiative to change the hospital management structure. With the introduction of a generalist management team to administrate human resources and finances the medical consultants and physicians perceived the structure as a threat to their underlying authority. Despite the fact that many were offered senior positions, the change in structure was perceived to reduce their individual power to control their functional teams as well as removing their control of workload distribution. Their reaction was to use considerable influence through their social web network to delay and undermine the process. This served to derail the entire change process and resulted in a great deal of redesign to address the ensuing problems. Dopson (2001) highlights the importance of identifying any underlying social webs relationships that may have formed before
introducing companywide initiatives such as change. The power of such webs cannot be underestimated and they will defend against any attempt to change the status quo they have created. Brown (cited in Bishop et al. 2006) relates this phenomenon more closely with development. He notes that subcultures can be very challenging towards organisational learning strategies that might be seen to undermine their status. Mauell et al. (2001) concur with this view. In their study of introducing Total Quality Management to a service provider organisation, they found that with an underling culture focused on maintaining processes and managing costs, there was a defined resistance to ‘project based improvement’ which focused more on quantity and time issues. The issues associated with social webs and their influences tend to become more evident it seems when attempts are made to change culture within an organisation. Sorey (1992) and Legge (1995) identify that whilst fabric alterations to artefacts and symbols might take place, the true change in practice is far more difficult to achieve. According to Bowditch and Buono (1994) if this is to be achieved then the norms of individual beliefs need to be taken into account and effectively addressed. Munro-Faure et al. (1998) and Senge, et al. (1999) both identify that development of teams can be a very effective method in overcoming such barriers to organisation change and supporting continued improvement.

In relation to experiential learning team events, the power of social webs might be seen to have possible marked effect. As observed by Driver (2002) a lack of foresight in understanding such hidden influences can create a silent but highly charged resistance to a programme. Vidaillet and Vignon (2010) identify that politics and power is often seen by managers as a barrier to learning but they also note that it can be used as an excuse.
The individual can be seen to recognise the power of a web or individual and embrace it as a form of imagery they require and wish to be a part of. As such they are not passive in such encounters but endorse the dominant actions with their own submissive behaviours. This Vidaillet and Vignon note may relate to being accepted as part of the ‘pack’. Once accepted, they find their place to learn from others and gradually work their way within the web to a better position for providing support against moments of anxiety and individual disillusionment. The provision of coaching and other options such as inclusion onto experiential learning team events programmes can be seen as a very positive step towards reviewing their working environment and how they operate within it. If however the experiential learning team event is seen to be a challenge to their social web, they will naturally resist such change.

Ramsey (2005) highlights a need for a social conformity. Group experience contributes to relationship construction, supports on-going recreation and helps individuals become motivated towards sharing and receiving development through shared personal experience. Such group behaviours influence socially driven decisions and ensure a oneness within the society. Rejection is not seen as an option with the social interaction becoming the foundation for meaningful experience. This social influence she concludes sets the standards for what is good and bad in a social group, together with methods for challenging bad and praising good behaviours. This strength in social webs is not covered to any great extent in experiential learning literature and is therefore a possible area for further investigation. Given this, the study through observation will consider the interactions of delegates through the course of the event to determine the presence of
active social webs within the represented delegate groups and whether these might have any impact on the overall development experience.

2.4 Assessing ETL - Stakeholder Influence

One of the emerging themes from this review of experiential learning is the role of the different stakeholders: the sponsors, providers, and delegates and the influence they can have in establishing development goals. This section explores these different contextual influences and the possible impact they may have on the overall development outcomes. Given that the nature of an experiential learning team event is focused on team development a useful starting point is to consider the relationship between teams and goals. As previously identified a useful definition for a ‘team’ is given by the CIPD as:

limited numbers of people who have shared objectives at work and who cooperate, on a permanent or temporary basis, to achieve those objectives in a way that allows each individual to make a distinctive contribution

(CIPD, 2011: 01)

Here it can be seen that reference is made to the people involved in the team as well as the objectives which are set by them or others. Clearly when designing any experiential event, the objectives are important in establishing links to possible development goals and resultant outcomes. For experiential learning team events there are commonly three main stakeholders which can have influence over such goals: The sponsoring organisation; responsible for paying and overseeing management of the event, the
specialist provider; for designing and running the event and the delegates that are attending. With such diverse interests represented, the chance of a misunderstanding of desired outcomes could ultimately result in a total mismatch. From a theorist view there are a number of aspects that can contribute to this dilemma worthy of review.

2.4.1 Sponsoring Organisational Perspective

Kaplin and Norton (1996) identify the need for organisations to mobilise and exploit their intangible assets. They put forward the case that investment in people has become far more relevant to organisations than physical, tangible assets alone. From a critical perspective this might be construed as organisational propaganda, appealing to individual’s sense of purpose and thereby gaining control. However, their point does perhaps highlight the important issue that without people in place to effectively control their tangible assets, there would be no organisation.

Bishop et al. (2006) identify that to achieve such alignment of goals requires a supportive learning culture to be in place. This they perceive can be achieved, but in line with a cultural analysis of learning requires three key elements to be in place: values, beliefs and practices. Values are described as ‘agreed principles to live by’. In terms of learning culture, this is seen to influence how, and how often learning occurs, determined by the amount of innovation and creativity seen within the workplace. Belief is the level of commitment to support the values with a plan of action. Bishop et al. make reference to Senge (1990) and Pedler (1997) who advocate that such plans need to be developed in partnership with the most junior levels within an organisation, enabling a sense of individual ownership towards the plan. Practice refers to the actions and associated
rewards linked to learning that need to happen to support the plan (belief) and ultimately cement the values. In developing a hypothetical model of a learning-supportive culture, Bishop et al. note the importance attached in some of the literature to, establishing a persuasive value system which can emphasise high levels of employee participation. This in turn can promote workplace skill utilisation, thus encouraging improvements in organisational performance. However, with reference to Mauull et al. (2001), they also emphasise that there are often significant challenges to this in practice, particularly relating to the existence of sub-cultures that may not be aligned with broader organisational structures or strategies. From Bishop et al.’s paper it can be observed that in reality; establishing learning values, beliefs and corresponding practices in an organisation can be difficult to achieve. However, if the three elements are in place and supported by management, then chances of individual development aligning with overall organisational performance improvement may be greatly enhanced.

As the funding body for development programmes, organisation sponsors would logically have a controlling voice in setting the goals. Marsick and O’Neil (1999) identify that in relation to action learning programmes, goals can be viewed in terms of growth of the organisation, or growth of the individual. Taking their first point, programmes can be designed for organisational growth where an experiential learning team event is focused on a specific problem relating to that organisation. Such goals are seen typically to include: ‘Savings from reduced turnover, Marginal profit for increased productivity, Marginal profit for increased sales, Reduced labour costs for rework, Marginal profit from increased repeat sales, Savings from a reduction in the number of cancelled orders and
Reduced labour costs for time spent handling customer complaints’. All of which can be used to identify return on investment set against cost (Williams et al., 2003: 55).

Alternatively the sponsor may consider teams to be given a range of activities without a set goal, to explore and develop and thereby focus on the individual’s goals. As pointed out by De Loo (2002), there is inevitably some form of gaming compromise or equilibrium arrived at (Myerson, 1991), where the individual manager’s development will be expected to lead to improvement in their work activity and thereby migrate into organisational growth benefits. De Loo is quick to recognise however that this has proven virtually impossible to measure.

Munro-Faure et al. (cited in Castka et al., 2004), identify that development of teams has become an important factor in supporting organisational change and continued improvement. From this it could be interpreted that the goal for an experiential learning team event would be to encourage ownership towards the future direction of an organisation and support any ensuing change. Reynolds (1998) highlights from a different perspective that managers are in a constantly changing environment and therefore need to be developed in reading new situations and be flexible in choosing their response. He notes that application of any standard or fixed theory can be limiting and unproductive in a changing environment. Dehler et al. (2001) develops this theme that management development generally needs to be dynamic and as such, there needs to be more focus on social application, the ‘how and why’ of doing things rather than the technical aspects of ‘what’ has to be done. They perceive that experiential learning team events are a complex system of development with discussion and argument as key to the process. As
such this format maybe ill-suited to more simplistic skills and knowledge transfer, where more formal methods would be better employed to deliver unchallenged information to a regulated standard. This understanding of the complexities of setting organisational goals is borne out by Engestrom (2001). His study into parents and practitioners working together to support childcare in a Finish Hospital highlights some of the concerns. He identifies that experiential learning can create conflict and contradictions between individuals and other teams. He perceives this is a natural phenomenon where people come with different histories or experiences of life. This conflict he believed can lead to tensions. However, when correctly focused, it may lead to support collective ideas and in turn generate innovative ideas to support the organisation in moving forward.

It is perhaps understandable that sponsor goals are difficult to establish, particularly when faced with such a wide remit of choices to be made. Such confusion may naturally lead to misunderstanding between sponsor and provider. Given that most senior sponsors have limited time to review activities, the potential for a misalignment of goals can result. If sponsors want to utilise an experiential learning team event to maximise its returns on investment, they may need to overcome such issues and establish the goals for such events from the outset. Monitoring of progress against these goals can then be established with the provider ‘before, during and after’ the programme takes place (De Loo, 2002: 250). These key elements in establishing a common understanding and inputting control mechanisms throughout the design and delivery process seems to have been overlooked by the vast majority of academic papers. To give two examples from leading protagonists of experiential learning; Kayes et al. (2005) identify over thirty five references to goals and Kolb and Kolb (2005) make ten references. Interestingly not one
of the references identified aligns to sponsor requirements; all primarily relating to individual needs. Given the direct financial control and indirect cultural influence that sponsoring organisations have over such programmes, their perspective is clearly an area for further review and evaluation.

In summary it can be seen that the role of organisations in sponsoring an experiential learning team event can affect every aspect of its design, delivery and outcomes. As such the sponsor might be seen to have an important part to play in setting goals that are both appropriate to the organisations requirements and that can be realised through experiential learning team events. In trying to establish such requirements there are a variety of views as well as obstacles surrounding possible outcomes of a programme where individual development may be seen as being in contention with organisational improvement. Given these challenges it may prove to be an influential factor that the sponsor is clear on the organisation’s requirement and understands the suitability of experiential learning team events in achieving such goals. Whilst much has been written on organisational improvement, the amount of impact the sponsors role can have on experiential learning has not been explored to any great depth and can therefore be seen as an area for further investigation.

2.4.2 Specialist Provider Perspective

From a survey on the outsourcing of human resource functions in 2009 it was identified that 57% of organisations in the UK were partially or fully committing to outsourcing training units (CIPD, 2010). Given this trend towards an organisational decline of training expertise, it could be argued that specialist providers external to the organisation, are
becoming more relied upon to advise on what training intervention is most appropriate to support organisational goals. This in turn puts a strong reliance on the provider’s professional integrity to support the organisation’s interest whilst also maintaining the need to return a commercial profit. For many Business Schools which offer experiential development programmes, the goals for development are set against the need for recognised certification. This is seen to be a strong sell factor combined with the need for technical skills in the current day marketplace as well as revenue streams that can be generated Dehler et al. (2001). Such direction however, as previously witnessed, conflicts with the concept that management development should not focus on technical outcomes being more related to the learning process or ‘ways of doing things’ which can be applied in the workplace, rather than the ‘end results’ (Reynolds, 1998).

The problems of using experiential learning for training in a purely technical subject have been reviewed by Summers et al. (2004). Their case study into the experiential methods for skills training in ‘customer credit management’ captured some important issues. Following a programme of experiential learning sessions they identify; the failure of the trainees to be independent in carrying out their technical tasks, delay in making key decision and failure to identify related issues. This mismatch of demand and fit for purpose could be further exacerbated by sponsors that may have limited time and understanding of experiential learning team events, making demands that are untenable.

Reynolds (1998) highlights that the dominance of more formal approaches in the past has influenced management sponsor expectation in favour of teacher led certificated programmes. He argues this has contributed to experiential learning methods being
labelled more as an alternative option to the main stream formal approach. Interestingly French and Grey (1996) have challenged the concept that formal learning is the most appropriate approach for post graduate courses. In their assessment of formal MBA courses they found that there was little reliable evidence that such formal programmes create improvement to management performance. They concluded that for post graduate courses where the goals are to question the ‘how and whys’ of a subject, the more formal approach was not working. They also raise the issue that higher education programmes provided by Business Schools and Higher Education establishments would benefit from a more informal style of pedagogy to support the applied learning process.

A key contextual influence on experiential learning team events which emerges from this discussion is the possible conflict that the provider may have between a desire to provide expert advice and support on the one hand, balanced with the need to maintain their own commercial viability on the other. If the sponsor’s goals are inappropriate to the experiential learning methodologies employed, it is only the provider that can review and challenge this. Clearly there is a need for understanding by both parties as to what goals are most appropriate to align with experiential capabilities. Well informed dialogue may be required between the two parties to avoid inappropriate use of the experiential learning team events (Gardner, 2008). As such the study design will include an effective dialogue between sponsor and provider to ensure such issues do not affect the outcomes.
2.4.3 Individual Perspective

Of course the other main contributors relating to the experiential learning team events are the individuals taking part and the goals that they set for themselves. This it could be argued is largely dependent on how individuals perceive development and how the development opportunities are presented. Tulving (cited in Eraut, 2004: 252) identifies that an individual reaction to any given situation is largely perceived as intuitive by the individual derived from three areas of recall: episodic memory - gained from a personal experience of events in their life, semantic memory - specific verbal knowledge gained from formal setting or personal study and procedural memory - skills learnt such as lighting fire, that are either acquired from formal tuition or individual trial and error.

Ramsey (2005) identifies that the goal of experiential development is primarily focused on the individual’s ability to apply the process of the learning experienced to real life experience and not on knowledge gained from the technical subject being discussed. As such, experiential learning would be most aligned to Eraut’s episodic and procedural memory states.

Interestingly Eraut notes that whilst formal learning logged as semantic memory is perceived by the individual as a development, episodic memory gained from personal experience is not. Given this, an individual might find it difficult to align any personal goal achievement with experiential learning team events. In essence they perceive their actions to be intuitive, resulting in a spontaneous response that cannot be attributed to a learning experience. From a critical realist perspective, this would mean that even if an
individual achieved their personal goals through attendance of an experiential learning team event, they would be unlikely to relate such achievement with the programme.

Downie et al. (2006) identify two specific areas relating to individuals motivation in setting and achieving personal goals. Firstly, in line with Sheldon and Kasser (1998) they highlight that goals should be meaningful to the individual, relating to their interests and values and not the construct of external demands they cannot relate to. Secondly is the need for a specific plan of action constructed by individual with assistance as required. Failure to do this can result in distraction from the goal and ultimate failure (Gollwitzer, 1999). Indications taken from the Downie et al. (2006) study show that individuals who focus on what is important and of interest to them, are likely to be more effective in selecting and achieving personal goals. They do however highlight that collaboration with others in setting goals can lead to a conflict with personal values and failure in implementing any subsequent personal learning plan. Primarily those individuals that are more sensitive to others will find it difficult to stick to any personal goals that may conflict with team members. If however team member goals are seen to be in harmony with individual’s goals, then Downie et al. (2006) identifies that they are more likely to succeed. These observations would tend to indicate the importance of preplanning within an experiential learning event, to share personal goals and establish a plan of how these might best be achieved within the team.

From a slightly different perspective the single and double loop learning theory of Argyris (1977) provides an insight into the individual goals that might be accomplished. ‘Single loop learning’ is centred on maintaining the status quo, making adjustments and
correcting issues within the organisational policies or guidelines. As such any individual goals would be constrained by organisational policy and process. Alternatively double loop learning is seen to occur when the organisation’s policies and procedures need to be challenged and improved upon. For double loop learning to occur it is recommended that a strategy of implementation needs to be considered: Governance of variables - the scope of acceptable actions that can be taken without affecting other performance areas linked to the individual’s actions, Action strategies - the specific plan of action, designed by the individuals to achieve their goals and Consequences - the outcomes of such action which can be intended and unintended. Such consequences can be seen to relate to self, and or others (Anderson, 2003). Clearly these strategies would be relevant in the design of an experiential learning team event where organisational change was the intention. Perhaps even more relevant is the importance in recognising the scope of change that is expected by the organisation and making that scope clear when agreeing individual goals from the outset.

Interestingly Dehler et al. (2001) pick up on this point identifying that experiential learning can provide the individual with the freedom to challenge the status quo. In so doing of course it gives them the freedom to challenge the validity of any organisational goals which have been set. De Loo (2002) makes reference to action learning as being most effective, when managers are given the freedom to identify problems where no standard solution exists. He notes that as a result, new problem solving processes can be applied with, and enable growth in shared personal understanding throughout the organisation. Pedler (1997) concurs that action learning should be centred on individual development within an organisation, with focus on individual’s setting their own goals
and accepting responsibility for their actions. What is not clear from the current literature is that the actions that need to be taken to ensure individual goals fall in line with organisational goals. This is particularly relevant concerning management teams that can have a strong influence over organisational performance.

So it can be seen that there are a number of ways to view how individuals might relate to their own development and the corresponding goals they set themselves. This may be affected by an individual’s perceived intuitive understanding gained from past experience. From an experiential perspective they may have difficulty relating learning experience with learning gain. Their motivation towards learning can also be seen as a key contributory factor. Perhaps not so surprisingly, individuals are considered to be more inclined to achieve learning goals which are of interest to them. However, such goals may be greatly affected by other team members that do not share their interest. This factor may point towards the need for careful planning in the early stages of forming a team.

Another key factor to emerge, is matching individual expectations with the constraints of external factors. Experiential learning is perceived in literature to be most effective when managers are given the freedom to challenge the status quo and create innovative ways of working to address new and existing problems. Matching individual expectations against organisational limitations is clearly an area of concern. As such, through effective liaison approval with the sponsor, the study design will incorporate a set of organisational objectives which allow delegates the latitude to explore their own ideas on how these might be achieved.
2.4.4 Summary of Factors in Establishing Goals

In reviewing the factors that contribute to establishing experiential learning team event goals namely: the sponsoring organisation, specialist provider and delegates, a number of linked areas of influences which could be seen to affect outcomes have been established. The organisations sponsoring an experiential learning team event may influence every aspect of its design, delivery and outcomes. As such the sponsor becomes an important factor in setting goals that are both appropriate to the organisation’s requirements and can meet individual development needs through an experiential learning event (De Loo, 2002). This would require the sponsor to have general understanding of the pedagogies employed and the most appropriate applications for given situations. Such understanding may assist the sponsor in communicating with the provider to form tenable goals which can be related specifically to the strengths of experiential learning team events. In essence, such a partnership could support the balance needed between organisational and individual goals. This is perhaps particularly poignant given the possible conflict that the provider could have between offering expert advice and the need to maintain their own commercial viability.

From a cognitive and social learning perspective it would seem more appropriate to allow the individual delegates to develop their own goals (Sheldon and Kasser, 1998). This however can be seen to create its own issues. Individual motivation towards learning may be affected by a team learning environment. If the importance of individual goals are not shared and supported by the team, this may well lead to a lowering of motivation towards achieving individual learning goals (Downie et al. 2006). In relation to
the individual, another important factor governing goals is the freedom given to challenge the status quo and create innovative solutions to be applied in their given environments (Anderson, 2003). Matching individual expectations against organisational constraints is clearly an area of concern that needs to be agreed with the sponsors and providers. Finally given Tulving’s (1995) theory that individuals may view experiential learning as intuitive, they may not be conscious of the relationship between personal development and an experiential learning team event. Consequently any measurements of delegate perceptions towards learning gained from such an event might be misleading. This clearly would require the providers to explain the nature of experiential learning and the expected linked outcomes.

2.5 Identifying Contextual Elements for Empirical Study

In summarising this literature review (see table 2.2), there are a number of key observations which can be made, providing the foundations for the empirical study element given in chapters three and four of this thesis.

The review confirms the wealth of informed discussion relating to the design and modes of implementation for ELT and associated Action Learning. In particular the work of Kolb, Reynolds and Kayes has supported the view that ELT can be considered a viable addition to formal traditional teaching methods, particularly in relation to the area of management development. As with any form of development practice, ELT is seen to have limitations. The AL approach is viewed as more suited to improving processes, rather than pure technical knowledge acquisition. As such, it has encountered resistance from some quarters. A contingent of Higher Education colleges and vocational skills
providers have found it difficult to reconcile ELT with individual focused certificated programmes which require knowledge transfer, individual assessment and monitoring to be in place (Summers et al., 2004). However, whilst clearly there are still prejudices and recognised limitations to the applications of ELT it would seem to have gained credibility in parts of the academic world (Hull, 2011) as a viable alternative method for consideration. Much of the current academic discussion has focused on the need for management development and higher education to incorporate a more critical reflective learning approach (Quinn, 2013; Ford et al. 2013; Antonacopoulou, 2010; Dehler, 2009). This development clearly falls within the ELT philosophy but is seen to bring with it challenges. For example, the need for a common understanding between sponsors, providers and the individuals attending such programmes is evident. In relation to such peripheral areas that might impact on the viability of ELT and Action Learning, academic interest has varied.

In terms of culture there has been a good deal of debate relating to social webs and how they might affect AL programmes (Brown, 1998; Dopson, 2001; Maull et al. 2001; Ramsey, 2005; Vidaillet and Vignon, 2010). Interestingly the focus for the majority of these reviews has tended to be on the negative effects of sub cultures, rather than any positives it might bring. As such, this gap in research provides the opportunity for the first of my empirical study questions: what effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?
With regard to the effect of individual personalities and how they might relate to the ELT experience, again there has been some reference but mainly focusing on the personal learning styles in relation to Kolb’s model (Kolb, 1984). Very few ELT and AL papers have made mention of the possible effects of the mixed personalities within a team and the impact this might have on an individual’s experience. Given this gap, my second question for empirical study is: what influence can a learner’s individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an event and the associated outcomes?

A good deal of debate has centred on the dichotomy of whether an action learning team should be left unaided to manage themselves or whether an expert facilitator should be included to provide support. The independence gained from no support was seen to provide a greater freedom to explore and develop more creative ideas devoid of textbook expert interference (Bourner, 2011; Yeo and Gold, 2011). Conversely having a facilitator to support discussion might be seen to overcome team working issues and help maintain focus on the true development outcomes (Visser, 2007). What has not been addressed in any great detail are the relevant skills and style of facilitation required which might best support both creativity and team focus. Given this, my third question for empirical study is: what impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

The final area of interest is centred on the sponsor for AL programmes, the role they might play and the effects this might have. In relation to ELT, again scholars make very little reference to this as a contributing factor. When considering goals for a programme
it is clear that academic focus has centred on individual goals with little consideration given to the organisation supporting it (Kolb and Kolb, 2009; Kayes et al. 2005; Downie et al., 2006; Sheldon and Kasser, 1998; Pedler, 1997). Given that all such programmes require funding, it would seem logical that the sponsoring agent would have some interest in and influence over the desired outcomes. Given this, the final question for empirical study is: *what effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?*

In focusing on these four areas from the literature review, the empirical study will seek to extend understanding in these selected areas and add to the on-going theoretical ELT and AL debate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Review</th>
<th>Current Academic Research – ELT and related areas</th>
<th>Practical Experience of Team Event Application</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Established Themes</td>
<td>Gaps /Ambiguities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General ELT &amp; Practical Team Events linked to Theory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well researched area with process of learning clearly defined and recognised to follow fundamental principles</td>
<td>Some indication that HE colleges recognise the value of ELT for post graduate courses, however research would suggest this is still largely in the minority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of ELT well established</td>
<td>Seen as difficult to transpose to HE programmes due to difficulty in monitoring individual learning progress, maintaining standards and assessing for certification of attainment levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More emphasis given to the processes that can be transferred than pure specific technical knowledge gain.</td>
<td>In comparison with traditional formal education, requires extra resource which is costly and not always an option for HE establishments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELT / Team Event areas of possible impact:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual learning theories</strong></td>
<td>Well documented research into individual development theories</td>
<td>Limited evidence of ELT being linked with individual learning and how it might impact on results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual personality profiling identified as useful but with limited study to back up this theory</td>
<td>Alignment to personality and humanistic theories not made clear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Facilitator Involvement and Skills Requirement

- **Team Development Theories**
  - Number of references made clearly linking social learning with ELT.
  - Team profile mix impact on ELT results not explored in any depth.
  - Little evidence of linking team development theory with ELT to identify possible alignment.

- **Establishing Goals**
  - Wide range of study relating to individual goal setting and related issues.
  - A lack of focus given to sponsor role and possible influence in setting and supporting ELT goals.
  - A lack of focus on the development provider’s role and influence in setting and supporting ELT goals.

- **Structural and Social Webs**
  - There are a range of studies relating to the effects of social webs and their possible impact on ELT programmes.
  - Very little link made to the power of structural webs and the possible effects these might have on experiential learning team events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Involvement and Skills Requirement</th>
<th>Healthy debate on the value of the facilitator role in AL, providing support to team working compared with having no expert facilitator and allowing teams to explore and create for themselves.</th>
<th>Very little mention of the style of facilitation required; the role they might play and the skills needed.</th>
<th>Skilled facilitation seen to be an important part of experiential learning team events, supporting teams to develop their own ideas with minimal intervention.</th>
<th>Very little mention of the skills and style of facilitation required.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Development Theories</td>
<td>Number of references made clearly linking social learning with ELT.</td>
<td>Team profile mix impact on ELT results not explored in any depth.</td>
<td>Little evidence of linking team development theory with ELT to identify possible alignment.</td>
<td>Experiential learning teams seldom selected on the basis of effective personality mix in line with team theories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Goals</td>
<td>Wide range of study relating to individual goal setting and related issues.</td>
<td>A lack of focus given to sponsor role and possible influence in setting and supporting ELT goals.</td>
<td>A lack of focus on the development provider’s role and influence in setting and supporting ELT goals.</td>
<td>Sponsors involvement seen to be important in providing focus for the programme and supporting managers in realising the follow on personal action plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural and Social Webs</td>
<td>There are a range of studies relating to the effects of social webs and their possible impact on ELT programmes.</td>
<td>Very little link made to the power of structural webs and the possible effects these might have on experiential learning team events.</td>
<td>Experiential learning team events seen as an effective approach to developing cross functional team working within an organisation.</td>
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</tr>
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**Table 2.2**
Chapter 3: Methodology and Ethical Practice

3.1 Introduction

In support of the empirical study given in chapter four, the following chapter identifies the theoretical and practical considerations made when selecting the methods adopted together with ethical codes of practice followed.

Organised into sections, the chapter begins with a brief review of the theoretical questions derived from the literature review together with an overview of the aligned methodologies employed. Section 2 explores the theoretical rationale for adopting a triangulated approach including a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods in support of the analysis of the empirical study. Section 3 explores the five key forms of data collection adopted for the study including: questionnaire, semi structured interview, focus groups, personality profiling and use of the Kirkpatrick evaluation model together with the reasoning for their selection. Section 4 identifies attributes of the ADGAS organisation selected for the study and my relationship as a researcher within the organisation. Section 5 sets out the steps taken to introduce the four contextual elements within the study design in support of evaluating their possible impact on the overall EL development experience. Section 6 highlights the chronological order of collection together with details of practical steps taken in processing and analysing the data. Finally the ethical dimensions associated with the entire study process are reviewed in Section 7 to ensure that the social study is complicit with moral codes of practice.
The analytical approach adopted for the research has been designed specifically to explore the question ‘How might individual and contextual factors influence the experience and outcomes of organisation-focused ‘Experiential Learning Team Events’ and what are the implications for the theoretical foundations of such programmes?’ From the literature review given in chapter two, this has included an examination of the underlying principles of John Dewey’s early work and the later work of David Kolb experiential education and its relationship with the principles of; experiential learning theory, action learning, social learning theory, individual development theory and organisation culture theories.

The review identified that a great deal of discussion had been given to ELT process and how it might be effectively utilised in the fields of higher education and vocational learning (Kolb and Kolb, 2005; Kayes et al. 2005; Reynolds 2011; Dehler, 2009). In these areas the literature was found to be particularly strong in assessing the value of ELT and the benefits it can bring in comparison with the more traditional formal development approaches. However, what was also evident was the lack of critical review in terms of the contextual factors that might impact on ELT development process. Through review of a number of associated theoretical themes including - Facilitation: (Visser, 2007; Yeo and Gold, 2011; Bourner, 2011). Team working: Sinclair, 1992; Tuckman, 1965; Downie et al. 2006). Social Culture: (Dopson, 2001; Reynolds and Vince, 2004; Elliott, 2008) and Personality profiling: (Mumford and Honey, 1982; Wilde, 2003; Shen et al. 2007), four specific contextual factors were identified linked to the thesis question which would be used as a focus for my empirical study review. The questions identified were:
1. What effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

2. What effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an event?

3. What impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

4. What influence can a learner’s individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an experiential learning team event and the associated outcomes?

These questions formed the basis for the empirical study with the specific aim of ‘collecting sufficient quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources which could be cross referenced and used to assess the potential impact of the four contextual factors’.

The selected setting for the study was centred on a petrochemical company, ADGAS based in the UAE. The company had previous experience of experiential team learning annual events which had taken place over the previous five year period. The learning gained from ADGAS’s experience, combined with lessons learnt from the literature review provided the design scope for the 2011 event. The key sources of information included the views of the: sponsoring board members, Delphi expert group, provider group and delegate participants. In keeping with study aims, feedback relating their experience of the 2011 event have been collected and triangulated to identify possible strengths and theoretical shortfalls of the experiential development approach.
3.2 Philosophical Position - Study Alignment

In relating the study to the philosophical debate surrounding social science study I was naturally drawn to the philosophy of post-positivism which has been most associated with the early work of Karl Popper (1963). Reasoning for this alignment was based primarily on the need to illuminate respondents own perceptions of the experiential learning event and the complex organisational and social inter-relationships that shape it. As such the aim of the study assumes the importance of subjective factors from an interpretivist position but also recognises that certain social realities (e.g. culture) exist and have impact independently of the individual’s perception of them, relating to a more positivist position. Thus, the research adopts elements of both Interpretivism and positivism which reflects a post-positivist outlook.

Given this, it was apparent that the key focus of the study needed to be much more than a purely positivist scientific set of objective data as advocated by the early French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), it needed to incorporate more of the quantitative reasoning and feelings of those delegates and others in involved in the study. The Post-positivist position argues that knowledge comes from many realities, rather than one reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This aligns with the basis of the study which sets out to assess the individual delegates’ initial reactions to an ELT event and then following this through with a more detailed analysis of their follow up reflective response towards the experience. It was considered that this information would be further enhanced through observations collected from the training providers and views of the Delphi expert group both of which had prior experience of such events.
In capturing such evidence the post-positivist philosophical position of utilising qualitative combined with quantitative data was seen to be most appropriate methodology. In adopting this combination of methods, the study was to gain a reasoned review of the possible effects taken from those directly involved in the experience, to learn from situation rather than testing it (Ryan, 2006). Given the relatively small population of 48 delegates involved, the study data was to capture observation together with inclusive feedback analysis from the delegates or ‘agents’ (Blumer, 1969). This would serve to record the actions and reactions within the experiential environment, and allow for detailed review of the reasoning underpinning the behaviours observed. As identified by Ryan (2006), this post-positivist approach to research allows for attention to be given to the broader, external structures and their impact on the feelings, values and emotions all of which are considered highly relevant to the overall aims of the study. The adoption of a post-positivist approach as highlighted by Ryan, promotes the use and integration of different research methods, both quantitative and qualitative to investigate the different drivers of thought and action. This was seen to be an aspect, very much in keeping with the aims of the study. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) explore the discussion concerning qualitative and quantitative research and in line with a post-positivist outlook consider the value of a pragmatic or mixed approach. Their research weighed the values of qualitative research, identifying the views and feelings of those involved against the objectivity of quantitative data collection e.g., statistical analysis, focusing on achievement against set targets, often using graphical representation. They argue that by combining the positivist aspects of ‘questionnaires’ with interpretivist ‘interviews’, results can provide a more balanced analysis in comparing factual scientific results with the
emotional based reasoning. Ryan (2006) concurs with this view pointing out that a more in depth understanding of the reasoning behind initial quantitative responses can be reviewed in the context of the social environment that might affect it. Such evidence Ryan highlights, often relies on discussion, which from a post-positivist view point can be seen as a prime source of data. Bryman’s (2008) review of 232 articles researching quantitative, qualitative and triangulation of methods over a ten year period: 1994-2003. He concludes that, ‘there is considerable value in examining both rationales that are given for combining quantitative and qualitative research and the ways in which they are combined in practice’ (Bryman, 2006: 111). This again relates to the more recent study of Palinkas et al. (2011) who reviewed twenty two mixed method studies and concluded that the quantitative element of research can prove effective in measuring specific outcomes whilst the qualitative enquiry provided understanding of the process that creates such outcomes. From a critical perspective Bryman, (2008) notes that one of the more practical drawbacks for adopting a combined method approach lies in the amount of time, effort and associated cost in collecting and assimilating the results. However, whilst this was seen as a valid consideration, given the relatively small numbers involved for my study, it was not seen to be a significant obstacle.

Relating this philosophical discussion to the study itself; the study design incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods using a structure approach, enabling the quantitative data to create the basis for a more informed and detailed qualitative investigation. As an example of this, having attended the EL team event, delegates were asked to identify their initial personal feedback on a questionnaire. The data received from the delegates was assimilated to create a quantitative set data on their initial
reaction to the event. Results from the quantitative data were then used to form the basis for discussion in a series of qualitative focus group sessions where the reasoning behind the initial feedback was reviewed. In this way the quantitative feedback questionnaire provided an initial concentration of delegate views relating to the areas that were seen by them as most important, and thereby providing the basis for areas for further review in the qualitative discussions that followed.

In summary the combined approach was seen to fit well with the study requirement for reviewing not only quantitative scaled responses to questions raised, but also the underlying qualitative reasoning behind them. The following sections provide a more detailed review of the specific methods which were employed in the study.

3.3 Selected Study Methods

The following study methods were selected based on the philosophical and theoretical positioning given above, and their alignment with the practical working environment of the ADGAS organisation. Collectively they were seen to provide an effective level of both quantitative and qualitative data taken from a variety of sources for the purpose of cross reference analysis. A summary of the research process together with details of when each method was employed can be found in Table 3.2.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

A large element of the study was to focus on identifying delegate reaction to the experiential learning team event experience. In order to meet the requirements for a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative evidence taken from a number of different
sources, it was considered most appropriate to begin with a questionnaire format (Appendix 3 blank form example). Questions were designed specifically to relate to two prime areas of concern. Firstly, to enable comparison with data collected from previous events and secondly to review the impact that the four contextual questions derived from the literature review might have. Within these parameters the questionnaire was designed to identify delegates’ immediate reaction and learning gained from the event. Given this requirement, all questions were designed to be open, with questions 1-11 providing delegates with a Likert (1932) type scale to provide their rating (Boone and Boone, 2012). A related qualitative comment area was included for delegates to provide reason for their scoring. As highlighted by Bryman (2008) the limitations to using self-completion questionnaires are considerable. The researcher cannot; prompt, probe, check understanding or explore beyond the question framework. For these reasons it was used purely as a preliminary tool, sent out two weeks after the 2011 event to identify trends that could be further explored using more in depth qualitative methods.

3.3.2 Semi Structured Interviews – Conducted with CEO and Training Provider

As part of the data collection and analysis plan given in section 6, a series of interviews were conducted with the CEO, senior management, the training provider. These were considered to be necessary in establishing an effective rapport with the senior management and provider, gaining their support for the research and providing clarity of their roles throughout the event. Using one to one semi-structured interviews was viewed as the most effective way of achieving these aims, providing them with a direct line of
contact with the researcher and allowing them the opportunity to explore their understanding and any related concerns with their roles. All interviews were organised in line with the semi structured approach or 'interactive clinical interview' technique as used by Schein (1983). This involves the researcher and the interviewee in a joint exploration of relevant detail and the reasoning behind them. Schein identifies that it provides an effective vehicle for interpreting ‘the essential assumptions and their patterns of interrelationships’ (Schein, 1983: 112). The key strength in adopting this form of interview technique is that the researcher can correct any misinterpretations with the interviewee at the time when both are fully focused on the subject matter. Essentially, this translates to include a series of well positioned validatory style questions such as ‘so can I just check understanding here ...is that your understanding?’ Secondly, the method is seen to be effective in challenging the interviewees strongly held assumptions. Schein (1983) points out that often the origins of information and feeling about given situations can be lost in the subconscious. Through supportive probing the researcher can help raise this understanding back to the level of consciousness. In this way basic assumptions that interviewees hold about past happenings can be effectively reviewed. This was considered to be particularly relevant to the study interviews with the CEO, given his past experience of the events and the influence this might have on his role during the 2011 event.

In terms of weaknesses, Schein points out that this style of interviewing is more effective when the interviewer is an ‘outsider’ divorced from any professional affiliation with the interviewee. For interviews carried out with the training provider where no relationship existed, there was no cause for issue. However in the case of interviews with the CEO, this
could have proven cause for concern. I had worked with the CEO on previous events and in my capacity as his advisor, our relationship was well established. However, this relationship did allow for more detailed probing in that understanding of the organisation and historical practices were shared. As pointed out by May (1997:111) such shared understanding can ‘allow for people to answer more on their own terms’. Also as highlighted by Bishop et al. (2006) the researcher’s mindfulness towards common cultural language and customs can help to build a mutual understanding and confidence. In order to manage the weakness raised by Schein (1983) however, it was agreed with the CEO that we should maintain an open and objective dialogue throughout the planning period, sharing concerns and adhering to confidentiality in reporting on sensitive issues. In this way I was able to utilise my ‘insider’ knowledge of language and cultural context, exploring the CEO’s requirements and concerns, whilst maintaining a credible objectivity in recording evidence. Monthly highlight reports were fed back to the CEO, identifying progress against agreed design activities. This provided process of assurance clarifying shared understanding and maintaining an objective record of what had been agreed.

3.3.3 Focus Groups

Given the aims of the study to obtain qualitative feedback from situational experience the focus group format was considered the most appropriate method for reviewing both the views of the expert Delphi group, and the delegates that attended the event. The method provided a safe environment in which they could share their experiences and allow them to explore the reasoning for their views. Outcomes from the focus groups were used to
identify patterns of feedback that could be related back to the four contextual elements under review.

From a social science research perspective Strauss and Corbin (1994) identify Focus Groups as semi-structured forums where information is used to build a theory which evolves during the actual research. The number of people involved in a forum can fluctuate but the optimum number is normally between six and twelve, all with an interest in the subject matter. A trained facilitator is normally required to guide the group discussion, and record outputs. The ability of the appointed facilitator is seen to be crucial in ensuring an open and supportive atmosphere amongst the participants (Bryman, 2008).

When considering the merits of focus groups Wibeck et al. (2007: 253) identify ‘the formulation of questions may thus be looked out for by the facilitator [of the focus group] as an important feature, one that encourages the participants to elaborate and clarify their viewpoints in the group.’ For this reason a semi-structured approach was adopted for the study focus group sessions. This was seen to be the most effective way of aligning information to the four theoretical questions but at the same time allowing all those involved to share their personal beliefs, considered opinions and insights.

The focus group as a qualitative method for gathering data can be seen to: ‘represent a powerful way of engaging with professionals and policy makers’ (Field, 2000: 328); present an ‘empowering process for participants and an excellent challenge for researchers wanting to gain a different perspective’ (Gibb, 1997: 05); provide ‘interaction between participants’ [which] highlights the respondents' attitudes, priorities, language and framework of understanding (Kitzinger, 1994: 116). In relation to the Delphi group technique, this was initially developed by Dalkey and Helmer (1963) at the Rand
Corporation in the 1950s as a method for employing a group of experts to share ideas and identify optimum solutions and predicted outcomes in their areas of expertise (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). For both forms of group, it is recognised that without the commitment from participants and an effective facilitator to support discussion it can become little more than a disparate meeting with little effect (Bryman, 2008).

Techniques employed by the researcher in facilitating a focus group meeting can vary, however there is a general guidance given by Bryman (2008) which provides a practical reference for good practice techniques to be employed. The person selected should demonstrate good technique in not being too intrusive or structured in their approach, only interjecting to keep the conversation focused on the subject matter. Whilst they need to be aware of the technical language and political environment, they should not be seen to have ownership or any biasing interests that might influence the group discussion. All other participants should have enough understanding about the given topic to be able to contribute to the discussion and be fully informed of what is required from them. A clear record of participants contributions needs to be kept, without distraction (Sim, 1998), providing quotes where appropriate for later analytical referencing. As with all aspects of the research the ethics framework (ERSC, 2009) needs to be adhered to with particular reference to the facilitator being non-judgmental ensuring, freedom of expression and protecting the rights of the individual and the organisation they represent.

In order to maximise the benefits of using focus groups it was considered important for the researcher to be fully conversant with these skills and practices identified. In keeping with this requirement I have had many years of experience in facilitating management and expert groups.
3.3.4 Personality Profiling

The fourth contextual question relates to the possible influence of a learner’s personality and the impact it might have on their experience of an experiential learning team event. Consequently it was considered important to identify a validated psychometric testing system, which could be used to identify the individual personality traits and assist in assigning individuals to event working teams. Psychometric testing systems have been employed over recent years as an aid to selection for employment. As such they have experienced mixed reviews as to the validity of outcomes, which are formed on the basis of the candidate completing their own questionnaire. According to Morgeson et al. (2007) who carried out an extensive survey of journal references on psychometric testing, the resultant problem of ‘faking’ is difficult to manage. They conclude that faking of information should be expected when candidates can identify the type of responses required to match the job requirements. However, further study by Ones et al. (2007) challenges Morgeson et al.’s concern of the soundness of such tests and validate them as an effective tool for self-assessment. In relation to his study, all Morgeson et al.’s findings were based on the validity of psychometric testing related to assessment for employment. Given that the anomaly of faking is related to selection, it is perhaps not surprising that faking may be prevalent.

In relation to the thesis study, it was made clear to delegates the information was to be used purely in the selection of teams for the experiential learning team event. With nothing to be gained by the individual delegate, any incentive towards faking information on the questionnaires was thereby minimised. As a cross check however, all profiles were
reviewed using the training manager knowledge of all the delegates’ feedback to verify
the results.

The personality profiling model chosen for the study was Insights Discovery (2012).
Selected specifically to meet the study requirement, it takes its origins from the early work
of the physiologist Carl Jung (1875-1961). Developed by Andi Lothian in collaboration
with the University of Westminster, it has since been ratified by the British Psychological
Society as a high quality psychometric tool BPS (2009).

The assessment questionnaire format is internet based with a combination of 100 multi
choice questions which individuals are required to complete and submit to a mainframe
unit located in Scotland. The associate software automatically generates individual
reports against a set criterion. The standardized question format has been developed to
identify the individual’s psychometric profile set against four key ‘function’ or coloured
‘energy’ types. These energy types signify two diametrically opposed behaviours:
introvert verses extrovert and thinking verses feeling. These energies are aligned with
what are termed ‘attitudes’ to further identify both a subconscious state, which is seen as
the natural personality without external influence and the conscious state, which
represents the personality adapted to meet the demands of the external environment. In
combining the individual’s response with the model attributes, the results can be used to
assist the individual in identifying their own personality type and preferences in an easy to
understand colour balance format which is made up of Red indicating: competitive,
determined, strong-willed and focused on achievement. Blue: cautious, precise, detailed
and questioning. Green: caring, sharing, patient and relaxed. Yellow: sociable, dynamic,
enthusiastic, flexible and persuasive. Such understanding is seen to provide individuals
with an awareness of how they might react with other personality profile types and gain understanding on how they could best deal with them. It is normal practice for the individual to be given feedback via a qualified practitioner to help them in understanding the details of the report and assist them in cross referencing their profiles with others.

The profile instrument was used in preparation for selecting individuals for each of the six workshop teams, with questionnaires being sent out to each delegate prior to the event. At the same time, profiles for the six facilitators assigned to each team were taken. The purpose of this was twofold. Firstly to create a selection of teams with a balance of personality types thus providing an effective norm baseline for analysis against teams that had an imbalance. Secondly, to relate the facilitator personality types with individual team members that they would be supporting and providing feedback to. The analysis would look for any correlation of performance variance in relation to both individual profiles and any alignment with facilitator profiles.

In terms of strengths the profiling tool was seen to be an established method for identifying personality traits and how these might relate to others. The tool was comparatively user friendly with all delegates finding it both straightforward to complete and relate to in terms of the feedback provided.

The main weakness came from the focus required to complete the questionnaire. It was envisaged that with 100 questions to complete online, the concentration levels could fall particularly from those that were either not clear or suspicious of the purpose. This in turn might affect the quality of the profiles and thereby decrease the overall validity of any results. Given this it was considered important to write to each delegate and facilitator explaining the value to them in giving time to complete it and the confidential
way in which their personal information would be treated. As mentioned the ADGAS training manager was asked to cross check the match individual personalities against the results before and during the event. Simple cross-checks were made with the facilitators on observed personality traits. In addition the training provider manager was asked to verify the facilitator traits to be in line with their profile reports. Outcomes from all these checks indicated that a high percentage (95%) of the delegate profiles did reflect their base colour profiles.

3.3.5 Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model

Data gained from all the aforementioned phases was collated and indicated in table 3.2, aligning the four study questions with the prescribed study actions and measurement methods.

In terms of the specific evaluation tools used it can be seen from the table that much weight has been given to Donald Kirkpatrick’s (1975) (KP) learning evaluation model where: level 1 relates to the initial reaction of delegates attending the event, level 2 provides an indication of learning they might have gained from the event, level 3 relates to the learning they have applied back in the workplace and level 4 is the impact the learning has made on the individual’s organisation. Whilst it is a very widely used model it is perhaps important to recognise that there has been some criticism regarding the narrow perspective it arguably provides. Bates (2004) in particular questions the ethical standing of KP focusing on the beneficence or ‘actions that benefit others’ that evaluation might engender. In particular he challenges the validity of KP results that make no
reference to the individual or environment they relate to. Fundamentally he points out the lack of consideration for the surrounding political, environmental, social and technical aspects that can affect outcomes, thereby making such evaluation of learning gain highly misleading. His critical review of the KP model also suggests a failure to consider pre training data with preference given to post training results. Whilst this can be seen as true of level 1 evaluation which purely measures reaction to the training presented, on closer examination it can be seen the KP model levels 2 and 3 do make direct comparisons with pre and post course assessment. This is clearly defined in the KP model with a step by step guide on how and what needs to be included when aligning pre and post results with training objectives. This said, Bates concern clearly has validity with reference to Level 4 which as he points out, is often used to justify training expenditure with conviction to meeting return on investment business goals. Clearly with so many external factors the results of level 4 cannot be solely attributed to training alone. Given these points the study has taken account of external factors that may affect results and excluded the questionability element of KP level 4, business achievement.

3.4 Selection of Study Sample – key considerations

3.4.1 ADGAS Organisation – Environment

The organisation selected for the study ADGAS, was chosen on the basis that: its experiential learning team programme represented an accessible example of experiential activity-based learning, the working environment was relatively stable and all managers
shared common business goals with interrelated team objectives. All of which proved to be of prime interest in supporting the overall aims of the study.

ADGAS is a gas refining company, forming a part of the ADNOC group of companies based in the UAE. The main ADGAS operation, which consists of approximately 3000 employees, focuses on gas processing and distribution and is located on DAS Island, approximately 100 miles off shore from the capital Abu Dhabi. The main HQ building, based in Abu Dhabi, houses approximately 600 employees including the senior management team together with service staff and project teams that support the island operation. Transport to and from the island is by chartered aircraft with a shuttle service. ADNOC is seen as one of the largest contributors to the Emirates balance of payments and as such has social as well as business focused goals. It is tasked with producing quality products, both safely and profitably helping to support a rich and vibrant long term development programme for the country. In line with government policies, the company has been required to employ increasing numbers of Emiratis. Consequently the type of employment offered has shifted from the former short term contractor base to a more long term career base.

The political environment for the region is relatively stable in comparison with much of the Middle East. The supporting infrastructure of government is stable under the rule of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Due largely to a lack of investment in training throughout the oil industry in the late 20th century there is a global shortage of experienced operator’s specialist engineers and managers to support the current demands. This has created the need to retain the specialist as well as attracting new
people to the industry to be trained. In relation to the experiential learning team programme for ADGAS the training method has largely been seen by the senior management as a value added event, helping to maintain management loyalty and creating a supportive environment for all employees.

3.4.2 Management Demographic

The sample group of 48 managers taken from a total population of 250 managers represents a cross section of middle and senior managers as well as disciplines employed by the organisation. Selection was made under the direction of the CEO based on individual commitment to the organisation and the impact they might bring in supporting positive change in organisational behaviours. Due to the focus on employing local people over the last ten years, the largest proportion of managers 50% are UAE nationals. However given the shortage of gas refining operatives, the remaining population of ADGAS employees comes from a wide range of countries including the neighbouring countries of the Middle East, South America, and Asia. Whilst Arabic is the most prominent first language for the managers, English is the accepted common business language currently in use. Due to predominance of the Muslim faith in the UAE the operational island has been designated an all-male island with ladies allowed to visit but not stay overnight. Consequently there is high proportion of male managers in comparison with their female counterparts. Currently the percentage is 99-1 ratio. The ages of the delegates range from 35 to 58 with the majority in their mid to late forties. All the managers are qualified to degree level or above.
3.4.3 Researcher Position

My role as Corporate Competency Development Advisor to ADGAS involves me in making recommendations to the board on matters relating management development and performance issues. Over the last five years I have supported the experiential learning team programme, developing it from a one off event to improve communication and management soft skills practices. Whilst external providers have been employed, this has always been carried out under my direction as the programme manager. In terms of my role as a researcher, my position within the company can be seen to have both positive and negative connotations. There are a number of papers that identify personal awareness of the culture and language used as a positive aspect when taken from an ethnomethodologist, qualitative viewpoint. Researchers in the ethnomethodological tradition argue that an;

understanding of the culture of a social group cannot really be achieved from the standpoint of an outsider (or survey researcher), as the words used and attitudes expressed by individuals are believed to draw their meaning from their (cultural) context; that meaning cannot be accurately captured if it is abstracted from its context

(Bishop et al., 2006:11)

Given such perspective, the value of understanding both the culture and terminology in context is evident. Clearly however, there is also the danger of influencing opinion and taking a bias viewpoint (Bryman, 2008). Given this situation I have been particularly focused on designing questions and related analysis to be objective and impartial. With
this in mind all questions have been carefully designed to focus on the academic questions and not on practical issues such as return on investment or link to organisations key performance indicators. Questions have also been reviewed to ensure no attempt is made to influence answers with leading questions and any quotes identified have been given in a verbatim format.

3.5 Study - 2011 Programme Design

Background

The 2011 programme evaluation was designed with two specific objectives in mind. Firstly to relate specifically to the four theoretically based questions:

1. What effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

2. What effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

3. What impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

4. What influence can a learner’s individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an experiential learning team event and the associated outcomes?

Secondly to align the previously designed 2007-10 evaluation processes with the 2011 process to verify a symmetry of approach and allow for an effective critical comparison in introducing four controlled contextual elements relating directly to the theoretical questions.
Trying to achieve both alignment with theoretical research and symmetry with a practical based process did however present some problems. The previous process was created to review practical outcomes from experiential learning team events and results relating to the organisations goals. These although aligning with some aspects of the 2011 event training provision element, were not specifically designed to assess the impact of sponsor involvement, impact of cultures or personality profile. However, the fact that these were not the direct focus of past evaluations did provide a baseline set of information devoid any possible bias.

So with these points in mind the following elements were introduced into the 2011 event. Assessment was carried out on the impact of introducing:

- Clearly defined CEO driven objectives
- Assessment of possible sub-cultural differences and their effect on outcomes
- Professional facilitators to support the event
- Personality profiling for team selection

Inclusion of these elements was specifically designed to provide both focus on the theoretical questions and to help ensure a step change to previous events. This created the situation for a clearly defined comparison with a limited amount of known variables. The following account provides a detail of the activities that led to introduction of the four design changes for 2011.
**Introduced Variables**

**CEO sponsor role**

After several exploratory meetings to gain agreement on the role the CEO might take in supporting the event, he was happy to act as the key sponsor. He was consulted about his views on the organisational requirements and specifically asked what goals he felt would best be served in using the experiential learning team event approach. Following a business quality performance review with his senior management team he identified the need to focus on improving the working culture of the organisation. After further review with the event providers it was agreed this would be too wide an area for focused action and would need to be refined to key areas of ‘behavioural change’ that could support improvement to the working culture. To establish these behavioural areas it was agreed with the CEO that I should liaise with the senior vice-president (SVP) teams. This also provided the opportunity to identify possible differences in SVP Divisional sub-cultures and specifically their perception towards behaviours within the organisation (question 2). From these meetings four key areas for behavioural improvement were identified: empowerment, addressing poor performance, maintaining focus at meetings, and ensuring two way business communications. The meetings were also used to identify the most effective methods of measuring event outcomes aligned to the Kirkpatrick evaluation model (used for all ADGAS training evaluation). In carrying out these meetings I was able to establish a baseline for the improvement, taken from the senior management teams.

I was able to correlate all the feedback from these meetings to present to the CEO who then gave his authorisation for the targeted goals for the 2011 event. In line with previous
evaluation feedback, the CEO also agreed to the introduction of personality profiling for team selection and trained external facilitators.

With reference to table 3.1, results of the intervention were taken from questions 10, 13 and 14 of the post evaluation questionnaire, together with the focus group sessions questions 1, 2, 4 and 8 (Ref. table 3.1). These were further referenced against the 2007-10 evaluation to assess the impact of the introduction.

**Trained Facilitators**

Given a clear directive from the CEO, authority was given to make contact with an external provider to identify 6 professional facilitators to support 6 teams of 8 management delegates. These were later briefed on the specific mode of facilitation that was required to include a catalyst approach to spark discussion and encourage team discussion with the minimum of ‘expert’ intervention.

Results of the intervention were taken from the post evaluation questionnaire questions 2, 3, 10, 13 and 14, together with the focus group sessions questions 4, 5, 6 and 8 (Ref. table 3.1). These were further referenced against the 2007-10 evaluation to assess the impact of the introduction.

**Personality Profiling**

Personality profiling took place 2 months before the event with a Jung related colours Insights profile (Lothian, 2012) being sent to each management candidate taking part. These were completed and returned and from their answers to a questionnaire their personality profiles were identified. Teams were then selected on the basis of an even
distribution of personalities for all six teams. This was to provide an objective comparison with previous years where this process had not been adopted.

Results of the intervention were taken from questions 6, 11, 12, 13, and 14 of the post evaluation questionnaire, together with the focus group sessions questions 4 and 8 (Ref. table 3.1). These were further referenced against the 2007-10 evaluation to assess the impact of the introduction.

**Review of Organisational Subcultures**

In reviewing the possible impact of sub cultures on experiential learning events the senior management were asked to firstly identify the prevalent cultures within ADGAS. From the initial senior management meetings and in line with Handy’s (1985) cultural analysis and CIPD’s (2011) team types, two cultures: project and process immerged as appropriate for the study. They were considered to be both sufficiently different in nature, and evenly represented by the delegates taking part. The event teams would be arranged with an event split of project and process delegates. This would allow for effective observation from the facilitators, on how the individuals from the respective working environments would react to the event and how they might interrelate. Whilst personality profiles could not be used to directly identify the subculture traits, the personality types were reviewed against the two sub cultures to identify any possible trends. This initial evidence was then cross referenced with delegate feedback during and after the event. It was noted that micro functional cultures might also impact on the learning experience and with this in mind, functional teams were dispersed across the event team to minimise possible affects.
Subsequently, data relating to the intervention were taken from the pre senior management interviews and personality profile trends and compared with the post evaluation questionnaire questions 4, 11,12,13 and 14 together with the focus group sessions questions 1,4 and 8 (Ref. table 3.1).

**Linking Theoretical Questions with Study Design**

A master spread sheet was created to capture all the data from the initial questionnaire for easy reference and comparisons between the 2007-10 and 2011 outcomes. The outcomes of this initial analysis formed the basis of the second stage qualitative focus group sessions and meetings with delegates, providers, senior management and Delphi group members. The following table 3.1, provides an overview of the entire study process. It details each of the four study collection processes, the people involved and the practical approach of collecting the data input.
Matching Study Evaluation Questions with Theoretical Questions

Selected questions have a direct or indirect correlation with the thesis paper sub questions.

**Q1.** What effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

**Q2.** What effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

**Q3.** What impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

**Q4.** What influence can a learner’s individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an experiential learning team event and the associated outcomes?

### Matching Study evaluation Questions with Theoretical Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Purpose and Method</th>
<th>timing</th>
<th>2007-10 Match</th>
<th>Study Questions</th>
<th>Link to KP levels</th>
<th>Link to theory questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Questionnaire | Purpose: To identify delegates immediate reaction and learning gained from the event.  
Method: Questions completed on line and returned to the Learning and Development department.  
Delegate feedback was sorted into:  
- Divisional Culture Groups – to identify any similarities (for Q2 reference)  
- Personality profile types – to identify and trends in | Sent to all delegates – 2 weeks following the workshop.  
Repeat  
Repeat  
Repeat  
Repeat  
Repeat  
Repeat  
Repeat | Repeat | - How did you rate? ........  
Q1. The Hotel Facilities  
Q2/3. The Facilitators  
Q4. The team approach to development in comparison to attending individual training courses  
Q6. The value you personally gained from the workshop  
Q7. How much impact do you think attending the workshop will have on your working environment?  
Q8/9 Which statement do you feel represents the way you currently work/ need to work in future?  
Q10. What will influence you the most to carry out your action plan?  
Q11. In terms of personalities, did you feel overall that your workshop team was........... (Mark one only)  
Open Questions | L1 | Q3  
L1 | Q2  
L3 | Q4  
L3/4 | Q2  
L2 | Q4  
L3 | Q1,2,3  
L1 | Q2,4
### 2. Delegate Focus Group

**Purpose:** To identify delegates applied learning in relation to the environmental effects that might have impact.

**Method:** Open Questions to be put to groups of 8-12 Delegates 2 months following the 2011 event

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the benefits of this type of workshops?</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the drawbacks to this type of workshops?</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What did you learn?</td>
<td>L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What contributed the most to making this happen?</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How effective were the facilitators in supporting you?</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What did you think of the facilitator’s style of support?</td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What has improved in your area?</td>
<td>L3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What made this possible?</td>
<td>L1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. What further support do you need to support your action plan?</td>
<td>L1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What should we focus on next?</td>
<td>L1/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Senior management Focus Group

**Purpose:** to identify sponsors goals. This also provided the opportunity to identify possible differences in Divisional sub cultures.

**Method:** a series of 4 meetings took place with the Divisional senior management teams before the event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Review individual’s lists of Behaviours – identify common areas</td>
<td>Q1,2 &amp; Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify what these behaviours look like in reality and the</td>
<td>Q1,2 &amp; Q3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Which behaviours you observe, that are positive and need to be changed.</td>
<td>Q1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Which behaviours you observe, that are negative and need to be changed.</td>
<td>Q1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Meeting Agenda which was semi structured although largely left to open discussion:**
1. Review individual’s lists of Behaviours – identify common areas
2. Identify what these behaviours look like in reality and the
3. Which behaviours you observe, that are positive and need to be changed.
4. Which behaviours you observe, that are negative and need to be changed.

**Pre meeting actions required**
- To consider behaviours you observe in the day to day working environment.
- Identify the behaviours you think are positive and need to strengthen throughout the organisation.
- Which behaviours you observe, that are negative and need to be changed.
4. Delphi Group Expert meetings  

**Purpose:** to review external influences surrounding experiential learning team events - drawing on expert experience.

**Method:** 2 x sessions - semi-structured meetings with 5 professional providers and sponsors of experiential learning team events.

5 months before the event and two months after.

**Theoretical debate identified** “but what does experience tell us?”

‘Traditional Chalk and Talk’ v Experiential - ‘Experiential Learning Team Events’

1. Methods - what works best in what situations?
2. Influence of individual preferences to learning / use of personality profiling

**Influence of Organisational Structures** on ‘Experiential Learning Team Events’

3. Formal structures – power / influence
4. Informal structures / individuals – power / influence

**Senior Manager Buy-in** - Experience of impact on programmes

5. Before, during and after events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Delphi Group Expert meetings</th>
<th>5 months before the event and two months after.</th>
<th>4. Delphi Group Expert meetings</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose: to review external influences surrounding experiential learning team events - drawing on expert experience.</td>
<td>Theoretical debate identified “but what does experience tell us?” ‘Traditional Chalk and Talk’ v Experiential - ‘Experiential Learning Team Events’</td>
<td>Q1,2,3&amp;4</td>
<td>Q1/Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method: 2 x sessions - semi-structured meetings with 5 professional providers and sponsors of experiential learning team events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Study - Data collection and Analysis Framework

Careful consideration was given to study data requirement in terms of its alignment with the thesis question and overall programme design. An important part of this was in the design of an effective framework of data collection which could support the continuity of building upon relevant information over a period of time, whilst maintaining focus on the theoretical questions. A table summarising the chronological order of the data collection is given below in Table 3.2. The description that follows provides an overview of processes employed together with the reasoning behind the methods adopted and the order in which they were implemented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Study Question Reference</th>
<th>Measurement Process</th>
<th>Date Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Comparison with previous years events | 1,2,3,4. | The action was to confirm areas of constancies with the 2011 event and verify a baseline of data suitable for comparison with the 2011 event. Areas identified included:  
- Organisation Divisional structure largely unchanged.  
- 45-50 Managers attending the events each year. 65% of these unchanged.  
- Senior Management team largely unchanged  
- Event accommodation standards  
- Kirkpatrick evaluation system adopted to assess learning gain and implementation in the workplace.  
From this baseline, comparative measurements could be made with the 2011 event. | April - May 2011 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Delphi Expert Focus Group - study design review and predictions</th>
<th>1,2,3,4.</th>
<th>Pre event meeting with the focus group to establish their expert predictions based on the initial study design.</th>
<th>May 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Delphi expert group to be convened to identify their predictions against the contextual factors introduced.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3. Senior Management Semi Structured Interviews – Agreement of SMART Objectives | 1 | The action enabled the establishment of clearly defined goals for organisation improvement in answer to the questions;  
- What behavioural changes are required from an organisational perspective?  
- What observations would indicate that the changes have been achieved?  

This in turn established the goals for the 2011 event on which the Kirkpatrick system of measurement could be based. It also supported introduction of the first of the 2011 variables agreeing the senior management sponsor as a key figure in the design of the 2011 event. | October 2011 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior management sponsor to be consulted prior to the event to establish clear organisational requirements relating to their behavioural / cultural change requirement. This would include the researcher in liaison with senior teams to identify change requirement, setting goals for achievement and establishing an effective measurement process to identify results.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 4. Organisational Cultures – identification and team selection | 2 | The action established distinct characteristics for each ADGAS Division taken from meetings with the Divisional senior management.  

From these meetings, individuals representing the differing cultures were allocated to different teams to provide an even mix in of representation for each event team.  

Feedback from qualitative comments from the delegates and the facilitators would be used to assess any emerging patterns of individual and cultural group reaction to the event aligned to the specific sub cultures represented. | October 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Members of the senior management board to be consulted before the event to review structural, cultural differences between Divisions and identify key influences associated within them. i.e., Project Division key operational focus and preferred practices in comparison to Administration and Support Services key operational focus and preferred practices.  

From these meetings comparisons would be drawn to identify which Division (if any) related better to the experiential learning team experience and the impact that different operating cultures might have on the applied learning process. |

| 5. Facilitators – selection and briefing | 3 | The action enabled a comparing the introduction of a team of professional facilitators set against that of previous year’s events where no such resource had been included.  

The delegate initial questionnaire feedback together with the focus group team discussions three months after the event were the main source for reviewing both the style of support and the impact this had on the individuals overall development experience. | October 2011 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provider organisation to introduce one professional facilitator for each team of 6-8 managers. Facilitators to adopt a catalyst approach to spark discussion and encourage the teams to gain maximum benefit from team discussion and activies with a minimum of ‘expert’ intervention.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Personality Profiling – Distribution collection and team selection</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| To carry out personality profiling (Lothian, 2012) for each of the delegates taking part in the 2011 event. Results were used to select team places and establish a mixture of both balanced and imbalanced team’s profiles in order to monitor differences in team approach and individual experience. | The action enabled the collection of data related to individual reaction to the exercises and their team colleagues in relation to their personality profile. Data was taken from individual feedback questionnaire and focus group sessions together with feedback from the facilitator’s observations. Facilitators were asked specifically for their review and feedback on:  
- Individual member actions against Lothian (2012) predicted actions.  
- Team actions against Lothian (2012) predicted actions.  

All information was collated and reviewed for the possible impact of personality profile on the individual ELT experience. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>7. 2011 Questionnaire - Design and implementation</strong></th>
<th>1,2,3,4</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The questionnaires was designed to:  
- Be in keeping with selected elements of the 2007-10 event questionnaires, to establish consistency of evaluation approach and provide comparative data.  
- Provide feedback on the contextual variable element that had been introduced to the 2011 event.  
- Identify both quantitative and qualitative preliminary data from the delegates within two weeks of them attending the event which could be used as the basis for more in depth qualitative review as part of the delegate focus group sessions. | The action enabled identification of the delegates initial reaction to the event aligned with questions 2007-10 but with addition questions linked to the four theses linked contractual questions.  

Results were collected, tabled, referenced and collated against allocated teams / personality profile types / work based cultures.  

Initial findings were used to identify specific areas for further review in the delegated focus group sessions. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>8. Provider Semi Structured Interview - Review with the Facilitation Provider</strong></th>
<th>1,2,3,4</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Following the event the provider was interviewed to give his views on the event in relation to other similar events he had experience of. He also provided detailed feedback from each of the 6 facilitators relating their observations on each delegate during the event.  
The action provided a cross reference of other experiential events in the region from a provider’s perspective. It was supportive in clarify the delegates response to the exercise from the facilitators’ viewpoint. | Written feedback from each facilitator was reviewed detailing their observations relating to each delegate during the event, detailing their reaction to each exercise and their interaction with others in the team.  

A semi structured interview was then carried out with the provider to review his views on the event and how it related to other similar events he had been involved in. His comments were recorded and later cross referenced against the delegate focus group responses. |
9. Delegate Focus Group Sessions - Design and implementation

Three focus group sessions were designed specifically to provide a more in-depth qualitative understanding related to the initial response given in the questionnaire from delegates.

- The action enabled the identification of delegates more reflective review of the impact of the contextual elements three months after experiencing the event.
- It also enabled delegates to reflect on the level of applied learning they had achieved.
- The semi-structured focus group sessions explored the delegates’ response to the introduction of the four contextual elements. These were then compared and cross referenced with feedback from the facilitator’s observations, CEO observations, Delphi focus group, and the researcher’s observations.
- The evidence was captured from the sessions using a standard approach with a series of open questions (reference table 3.3) facilitated discussion and responses of the group captured on flip chart. Outcomes from all three sessions were compared and combined to identify patterns aligned to the four contextual questions.

March 2012

| 10. Senior Management Semi-structured Interviews - Organisational Objective review | 1, 2, 3, 4. |
|---|
| Selected senior managers to take a helicopter view and report back on their observations of behaviour change against the goals set in the working environment following the experiential learning team programme. |
| Senior Divisional Managers to assess behavioural changes over a 3-month period following the event, through observations of both their Division and in context with the organisational cross-functional activities. |
| Semi-structured interviews took place with notes taken to cross-reference with the delegate focus group views on learning applied in the workplace. |
| March/April 2012 |

| 11. Delphi Expert Focus Group Members – Semi Structured interviews | 1, 2, 3, 4. |
|---|
| The Delphi expert group review sessions to review the outcomes of the study. |
| Post event meetings with the focus group to review the predictions against outcomes and identify possible reasoning for any inconsistencies. |
| May 2012 |

Table 3.2 - Note: Outcomes for all the actions listed were compared and triangulated to identify patterns trends in the overall response.
3.6.1 Pre 2011 event Activity

2007-10 Baseline Data

In setting out the framework for collecting and analysing the data a number of aspects were taken into consideration. Having established the four factored questions from the literature review it was seen as important to identify data which could be used as a baseline for comparison with results from the planned 2011 event. This involved a review of data taken from the previous ADGAS 2007-10 events to establish consistencies in design and identify data which could be aligned with the thesis question. Areas of consistency included: standard of event accommodation and senior management team organisation structure and Kirkpatrick evaluation system. The areas for specific comparison included introduction of: CEO sponsor role, trained facilitators, personality profiling for team selection and subculture identification for team selection. This initial activity enabled an assessment of the impact caused from introducing a set of four controlled variables to the 2011 event to compare outcomes.

The ADGAS organisation had experience of experiential learning team annual events over the previous four years 2007-10 with reviews recorded in accordance with the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation to level’s 1, 2, and 3. The evaluation process which I was able to introduce from the outset has enabled the collection of data to create feasible comparison with the 2011 event.

Whilst there have been a number of controlled changes to enable more focus on the theoretical questions for 2011, other factors were seen to be consistent with previous events. The Organisation Divisional structure has remained the same with a hierarchical
process based structure of functions representing over 80% of the organisation and the remaining 20% given to matrix project based work dealing with improvements and additions to the plant operation. Of the 48 managers attending the events each year 65% of these have remained unchanged. Other than the CEO who was replaced by the present CEO in 2008, the senior management team have all retained their positions. Finally the Kirkpatrick evaluation system has been employed throughout the four year period to assess the value of the events in assessing learning gain and implementation in the workplace.

Having reviewed data from the 2007-10 events, questions and methods were reviewed and the selection made based on relevance to the thesis question. These were used in the 2011 review design to ensure consistency of approach for comparison. Results from these selected questions were tabled on a spreadsheet providing the format for all subsequent 2011 event data entry.

**Delphi focus groups – SM & Divisional Heads**

Having established the baseline data in the form of KP levels 1,2 and 3 2007-10 feedback, the next activity was to set up a pre event meeting with the expert Delphi group. This would provide a different perspective on possible outcomes and in particular what to look for when introducing changes to the 2011 programme. The six experts selected represented a mixture of experiential team leaning providers and sponsors together with over 120 years’ experience between them. The questions were designed as a starting point for discussion in line with the semi structured approach (given in table 3.1). This provided focus on the key contextual elements and allowed for exploration of past
experience in relation to the 2011 event design. Key points were captured in note format and the evidence was used as a guide for the event observation.

Following this I arranged an initial meeting with the ADGAS CEO and subsequent meetings with his senior management team to establish focused aims and objectives for the 2011 event. This included discussion around the methods to be employed and attaining agreement on the role they each would play in supporting in the design and delivery of the event together with the follow up actions they would endorse. The board members representing: Commercial, Operations Administration and support Services, Technical Services were all in attendance. Details of the meetings which were captured in note form were used to record the agreement of the design and also the role each would play in supporting the event.

**Briefing of the Facilitation Provider Team**

Facilitators were employed based on their past experience and ability to provide a coaching / facilitative form of support required for the 2011 event. A meeting was held to identify their specific role in supporting the teams thought the event and providing a structured observation feedback sheet for each delegate which they were asked to complete at the end of each exercise detailing the delegate’s reaction to the exercise and to others within their team.

**Delegate team allocation process**

With aims and objectives for the event agreed with the senior management team, design of the 2011 event began. Having established the delegate list, the next step was to send
out the personality profiling questionnaire to be completed by the delegates. These were
completed and returned which provided the information required to selected teams for
the event based on personality profile and working function.

In relation to personality profiling four of the teams represented a balance of personality
types. Conversely the remaining two teams had an imbalance of personality types with a
predominance of one specific type for each. Through observation of how the different
teams responded to the event and comparing their individual feedback, it was considered
that the impact of personality on the learning experience could be compared and assessed.

In terms of selecting the teams based on subcultures, the senior management interviews
had identified two predominant working subcultures: process based and project based. In
order to assess the possible impact of these subculture, teams were arranged into an
even split made up of four predominantly project team members and four process team
members. Again, through observation and individual feedback, the impact of their
working subculture on their learning experience was compared and assessed for possible
variance.

3.6.2 During the 2011 Event

*Observations and data recording*

The facilitators were asked to observe their teams throughout the event and report back
on two key aspects. Firstly from an individual perspective on how they reacted to the
exercise and the possible development each person achieved. Secondly how the team
they were supporting had worked together to achieve the goals they had set themselves.
Together with the CEO, I had placed myself in position where we were able to observe how teams and individuals were reacting to the exercises with particular reference to the personality mix of teams and subculture differences. I was also able to observe what impact the CEO and senior team’s involvement had on the teams as they progressed through the programme. Notes were recorded throughout the event. All observations were noted during exercises and written up during the event break periods and reviewed at the end of each day.

On closure of the event facilitators were asked for their initial feedback in a single group review session. Their comment along with their feedback sheets for each delegate were collected and reviewed for possible patterns of correlation with the theoretical contextual elements introduced. A review meeting was held with the CEO at this stage to capture his observations of the event and these were subsequently combined with my own observations to provide a triangulation of data for further verification.

Following this the senior board members who had taken part and the provider were interviewed to give his perspective on the event. The provider was asked for his views on how the event had compared with similar events run for other organisations. Again all comments were recorded as part of the qualitative data for cross reference and alignment with the contextual questions.

3.6.3 Post 2011 Event

Questionnaire

Two weeks after the 2011 event took place the questionnaires were sent out to delegates. The short delay between event experience and first review was designed to
allow a little time for reflection on the experience of the event but not too much time that specific elements might be forgotten. The questions as identified in table 3.1 gave the opportunity to review both quantitative and qualitative data, comparing KP level 1 and KP level 2 results with the previous 2007-10 events. This in essence was designed to provide assurance that aside from the four introduced variables, all other aspects that might impact on the outcome were seen to be consistent with previous years. The quantitative data from the scaled response questions (Appendix 3) was entered onto an Excel spread sheet aligning each feedback with the specific delegate, their personality profile type and their work-base subculture. All related qualitative responses were reviewed for possible areas of correlation. The questionnaire was specifically designed to provide detail of the delegates’ initial response to the event in relation to their personality type, their subculture background, the teams they were assigned to and the facilitators they were supported by. This would provide the basis for alignment with the four contextual elements identified from the literature review.

The reasoning behind the responses given in the questionnaires was further explored through the series of three scheduled qualitative focus group sessions three months after the event.

**Focus Groups**

Three delegate focus group sessions were held with the ADGAS manager delegates three months after the 2011 event. Using the set of questions given in table 3.1 as a starting point I facilitated each sessions asking the delegates to review previously identified issues raised from the questionnaire (Wibeck et al. 2007). This created a supportive environment allowing for further exploration of the causes of the resultant effects. During the focus
group sessions, notes were taken and recorded on flip chart to ensure an accurate representation of what was being given by all those represented. Comments from all three groups taken from the flip charts were captured and aligned with the initial questionnaire qualitative data and event observation notes. These were then reviewed for possible alignment against the contextual questions identified.

During the same period the senior management team members were interviewed to provide their views on the event, with focus on the resultant actions and how much the event had impacted on the working environment following the event. Again record of the interviews were made in note format and transcribed directly following the meetings onto word processor.

**Qualitative Data Analysing Process**

In keeping with the post-positivist philosophy, the quantitative data collected from the questionnaires was analysed according to pre-defined scales and variables, while the qualitative data adopted a more flexible and organic coding approach. To provide an effective framework to determine possible impact of the interventions, all qualitative data was reviewed using a qualitative data coding system (Weston et al. 2001) relating to the four key theoretical contextual areas of: personality profile selection, sub culture, training provider skills and senior management involvement. This was initially established using the questionnaire format, with the questions specifically designed to align with the theoretical question (see table 3.1). Subsequent delegate focus group questions were developed in direct response to the questionnaire feedback allowing for more detailed qualitative analysis of reasoning for the delegates initial comments. As such the process
was able to demonstrate a ‘reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon’ (Weston et al. 2001:397).

All responses relating to the provider interview, senior management interviews and delegate focus group session were subsequently coded into three specific categories: comments indicating a positive impact relating to one of the four areas; comments showing a negative impact relating to the four areas; comments identifying factors not associated with the areas but which might prove significant. This sub-coding process allowed for a more significant probing of the data and provided greater clarity in reviewing the outcomes against the study aims. Having categorised all the comments, extracts of the key salient points for each category were selected to provide an accurate representation of views.

All notes taken during the interviews and focus group sessions were immediately transcribed to labelled Microsoft Word documents and stored on a computer hard drive, backed up on a cloud system. For the focus group sessions, a note was made of each individual contribution against the delegate name which allowed for alignment against their specific: personality profile type, process / project working environment and event team number. Whilst it was agreed that no quote would be made connecting an individual to a specific comment, the individual responses were used to identify any possible correlation against fellow team members, personality profile type and working sub-culture.

Finally the Delphi team members were revisited to identify their reaction to the outcomes of the 2011 event and subsequent feedback of the delegates and observers. Their feedback again was recorded and aligned with the contextual questions.
Data from all sources was reviewed and triangulated to identify common themes that might be attributed to the contextual elements introduced to the 2011 event. Outcomes from the study formed the basis for the results given in chapter four. In essence the triangulation of data was incorporated as an integral part of the data collection and analysis process as outlined in table 3.2. Initially a review was made of previous events data, to establish an effective baseline on which the 2011 event could be objectively compared. This was achieved using historic data taken from the 2007-10 questionnaires and cross referencing with data taken from the 2011 questionnaires. Based on the four contextual questions to emerge from the literature review given in chapter 2, the questionnaire included a framework of quantitative and qualitative questions to identify the delegates’ initial reaction relating to the introduced contextual elements and their possible impact. Outcomes from the questionnaire were used to form the basis of the qualitative focus group sessions in terms of the questions to be asked and analysis design. The subsequent qualitative data received from the delegate focus group sessions, facilitator and senior management team meetings were gathered and aligned with feedback from the Delphi experts. Using the Weston et al. (2001) coding system as previously mentioned, all the qualitative data gathered, coded and reviewed in alignment with the four contextual questions.
3.7 Ethical Considerations

In considering ethical dilemmas which may arise from the research the Research Ethics Framework (REF) guidance has been referred to as a legitimate guide and code of practice. The REF (ESRC, 2005) sponsored by the Economic & Social Research Council, provides a structured set of guidelines to ensure any social research carried out under its control conforms to a set of moral codes of practice. The codes relate to areas including: social environment, occupational and family life, surrounding community, personal values, privacy, sexuality, behaviours and beliefs.

It incorporates six key principles aligned with research to ensure that:

- Design, review and undertaking are carried out to ensure that both integrity and quality is maintained.

- All parties involved are fully informed of the purpose, methods and possible uses of the resultant outcomes. This would include their roles and responsibilities together with any possible associated risks.

- Confidentiality of information received and anonymity of respondents is to be respected at all times.

- All participants are willing volunteers free from coercion

- Harm to all participants must be avoided

- Independence of researchers must be evident and any conflicts of interest be made clear.
Most of the areas covered by the framework can be related to the research. The study element of the research involved the survey and investigative interviewing of a range of both user and provider organisations. Throughout the research period there was a need to gather detailed information which could be seen as personal to the individual participant, as well as commercially sensitive to their respective organisations. From participant representatives, focus was given to information concerning support of their managers, the organisations involvement in development programmes and the success or failure of the programmes based on individual and organisational team perceptions. From providers the emphasis was on the details of their interaction with clients, their products, client’s readiness for their products, client reaction to their products and long term support provided. It was recognised that care was needed in all aspects of the research study including: gaining entry to the organisations, collecting the data and publishing results obtained from the interactions.

In order to obtain the level of participation required, together with objective and honest reporting from both groups there was the need to understand the sensitivities of their operations and demonstrate an empathy with their situation throughout the study period. This required prior research through review of annual business reports to identify areas that may be of particular concern i.e., social standing in the community, financial situation, customer relationships and human resource issues. Given that there were no mitigating circumstances for approaching the organisation to partake, my next concern was in establishing a working relationship with the company. In all my dealings with the organisation, sensitivity was shown to the working environments, taking care to cause the minimum of disruption to the operations. The first objective when contacting the
organisation was to identify an authorised representative or ‘gate keeper’ (Silverman, 2000:198). Given this one point of contact, permission was gained to carry out the research against an agreed framework of planned activities. The activities included obtaining agreement on the format of questions and the processes to be used. This included an agreement on the restriction to publication of any materials deemed sensitive by the company. Reference was made to the ADGAS company codes of practice which related to ethics including their company values statements and commercial sensitivity clauses. Given this, a ‘research ethical policy contract’ was drafted and agreed by the gate keeper as a record for the duration of the study with reference made for any subsequent publication. This comprised of the following draft clauses:

**Integrity:** Both parties to demonstrate honesty in providing information and not debark from agreements made without prior agreement.

**Trust:** Through demonstration of integrity both parties will not query reasoning of actions in undertaking the research outside the prearranged management meetings.

**Identification of Roles and Responsibilities:** The role of the researcher will be to carry out the study as a non-judgemental investigator, recording evidence that is a true reflection of that presented. All those asked to participate in the research will do so of their own free will and not be coerced into doing so. Unless specifically authorised by the participant all evidence provided will be held in confidence and only correlated results that cannot be matched to individuals will be published.
**Researcher Influence:** The researcher will be aware of his expertise in the field of management development and will not allow this to compromise interpretation of the evidence presented.

**Use of Recording Devices:** It is not envisaged that use of recording devices such as visual or audio machines will be required for the research. However, in the event that this should prove necessary, prior agreement will be sort from both organisations participants before use.

**Rights of individuals:** The personal rights of individual taking part will be respected at all times. The confidentiality of statements made which could cause deformation of character or undermine in any way an individual’s standing in the organisation will remain secured. Records once processed and academically reviewed will be destroyed.

**Rights of Organisation:** Sensitivity to the companies’ reputation and standing in the community will be observed throughout the study. Any statements from participants that may cause harm to the company overall operation in terms of finance, sales, or personnel will be vetted by the ‘gate keeper’ before publication.

All of the above was agreed between the gate keeper representative of the company and myself as the researcher, prior to study commencement.

Having gained agreement with the ‘gate keeper’, arrangements were made for regular update meetings planned to monitor progress of the process and resolve any issues that may arise.
By adopting this approach it was felt that both researcher and participating institutions were kept informed of progress made against the agreed plan of study. Activities included agreement of: meeting dates, access requirements to records, analysis, results and agreement to publish. Given the time period of the research, it was recognised that there might be changes in roles and responsibilities that could affect agreements made.

3.8 Conclusion

In summary this chapter has identified the methodology of literature review and empirical study adopted in the research and reasoning for the selected practices used. The literary review has formed the basis for the extensive empirical study which has followed the ADGAS company’s experience of an experiential learning team programme run over a five year period. Outcomes of these actions, together with the views of the sponsoring board members, Delphi expert group/provider group and participants have been triangulated to identify possible strengths and theoretical shortfalls of the action learning approach set against the study outcomes. Throughout the study, careful thought and planning has been given to the ethical and legal codes of practice with guidance taken from the Research Ethics Framework (ESRC, 2009). Having established the theoretical and practical framework of the research, Chapter 4 has been set out to identify the outcomes of the study element combined with analysis from the literature review found in chapter 2.
Chapter 4: Case Study - Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In reviewing the study results, focus is given three of the key objectives identified in section 1.2.2 of the introduction:

- Identifying the connection of experiential learning team events with organisational structures and cultures, sponsorship, facilitation and individual personality profiling to assess their possible impact on the quality of learning experienced.

- Relating theoretical debate with the empirical case study using the experience of one organisation.

- From the study and literature review, to identifying the possible impact of contextual factors on experiential learning team events and establishing areas of; common ground as well as possible gaps and areas that can add to current research.

In line with these objectives the literature review given in chapter two identified four key contributory questions for the study to focus on: What effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event? What effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event? What impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event? What influence can a learner’s individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an experiential learning team event?
event and the associated outcomes? In relation to these factors, four key changes were made to the 2011 event in order to provide an effective comparison from previous years. These include the introduction of; clearly defined CEO objectives and support, assessment of possible functional cultural web differences, employing professional facilitator providers and personality profiling for team selection. Based on the methodology and ethical positioning detailed in chapter three, the study scope, structure and purpose have been established.

The following sections focus on the study results and their alignment with current academic research given in the literature review. The first section identifies the initial quantitative and qualitative data taken from delegate questionnaire feedback. The results are reviewed to identify emergent patterns and trends which form the basis for a more in-depth analysis in section two. This analysis focuses on the four key questions using qualitative data taken from; focus group sessions, individual interviews and facilitator/senior management observations. Outcomes from the study are compared with current academic research, to identify where the results might either; support, challenge or add to current academic discussion. A summary of all the key areas of discussion is provided in a table format given in the concluding section of the chapter.

4.2 Preliminary Study Results - Emerging Patterns and Trends

The 2011 questionnaire (Appendix 3) was designed to identify both quantitative and qualitative data relating the key areas of research. Questionnaires as outlined in the methodology chapter were used to establish both consistency of approach and to identify specific feedback against the four areas of research.
4.2.1 Study Response Rates

Beginning with the requirements of establishing a consistency of approach, *table 4.1* provides the comparison of the rates of response taken from 2007-10 and 2011 events.

*Table 4.1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Delegates 2007-10</th>
<th>Delegates 2011</th>
<th>Facilitators 2007-10</th>
<th>Facilitators 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delegate / Facilitator Response to Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to the Questionnaire</td>
<td>90% (average)</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delegate / Facilitator Response to Focus Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to Focus Group Sessions</td>
<td>63% (average)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Management Focus Groups</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance of pre event meetings:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial (project)</td>
<td>4 attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Support Services (process)</td>
<td>5 attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical (projects)</td>
<td>4 attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations (process)</td>
<td>3 attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CEO Meetings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Proposal Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Senior Management meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised Proposal Meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Event Review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One to one interviews with researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delphi Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Members Attending 1 x pre event meeting</td>
<td>Number 5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post event one to one follow up meetings</td>
<td>4 of the 5 -80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response from all contributing areas in terms of numbers taking part and the quality of input for 2011 was comparable with previous year’s statistics of attendance. In relation to 2011 event, 94% of delegates attending completed their post questionnaires with every individual providing qualitative comment in support of their quantitative scaled responses.

The number of delegates attending the focus group review sessions was lower, mainly due to work commitments. However, the 57% attendance was seen as an acceptable representation, given that all delegates that couldn’t attend received the summary of the points made and were asked for their comments to be sent via email. Feedback from all three workshops, together with the additional non-attendee comments were collated.

In terms of response rate from the other groups, the contribution from the facilitators was consistent with 100% participation for all events. The pre event meeting took place with the Delphi Expert Group with all five members attending and four of the five attended one to one meetings, three months after the 2011 event. The ADGAS senior management focus team meeting also took place before the event to identify organisational requirements and gain their support in following up agreed delegate actions. Four meetings were held with a total of sixteen senior managers in attendance.

The CEO was not included in these meetings. However, he did attend a total of four, one to one meetings with me at which time we agreed: the aims of the event, the list of management delegates, the role the CEO would take in supporting the event, and the review process to gauge the impact of the 2011 event.

In summary the response rate to all of the planned study surveys was in keeping with the design.
4.2.2 Delegate Questionnaire – Quantitative Feedback

Alignment and Comparison 2007-11

From the seven areas where evaluation questions were repeated for each year, direct comparisons could be made (table 3.1 refers). To support this process the scale of 1-10 was fixed for each year with scale values on the y axis representing 1 & 2 = poor, 3 & 4 = unsatisfactory, 5-6 = good 7-8 = very good 9-10 = excellent. (Reference Appendix 3 – questionnaire format).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2007-11 Standard Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2007-10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparison</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the comparative table 4.2 above it can be seen that, *Personal impact*, a KP 2 measurement relating to ‘learning gained’ identified the greatest difference from previous events showing 9% increase. The delegate’s scoring on *Team approach* to development, a KP 1 measurement, showed an 8% improvement on previous years in line with the overall quality of the content of the programme which saw a 6% increase from previous years. *Hotel Facilities*, another KP 1 measurement relating to ‘initial reaction’ to the event registered an 8% increase. Whilst the facilities were not seen as directly relevant to the core questions, it was noted to have possible impact on individual perception toward their development experience. There was also a 5% improvement on how they believed the event would improve the *working environment*, a possible indication of their commitment.
to achieving KP 3 ‘application in the workplace’. The only item that showed no movement was in the delegates perception towards their facilitators with no change from the 7.7 average recorded in previous years.

Whilst it can be seen that the percentage increases in isolation are relatively small, when combined they identify a more significant improvement in delegate perception of the overall development experience. When relating the corresponding qualitative details taken from the questionnaire, reasons for this improvement start to emerge.

4.2.3 2011 Delegate Questionnaire – Qualitative Feedback

In order to identify any possible changes in delegate responses against the interventions made to the 2011 programme, a number of specific questions were included in the 2011 questionnaire. These centred on the areas of: personality profile to select team members, introduction of professional facilitators and greater involvement of the sponsoring CEO in setting clear goals and taking part.

Senior Management Sponsor Impact

The related CEO sponsor influence questions were designed to be both direct and indirect in approach thereby helping to filter out any ‘legitimate power’ influences (Raven, 2008). Reference to what would be most influential in delegates completing resultant action plans identified the CEO (direct question) as only third in preference to Key Performance Indicators (linked to their operational objectives for the year) and Line Manager, rated as first and second respectively. The team buddying process (peer support) and Learning & Development team (expert support) were rated fourth and fifth respectively. A significant
point raised by the Senior Management team was that both KPI and line manager can clearly be linked to the CEO’s influence, whilst the team buddy and Learning Development Department were considered to be much less so. This correlation of evidence was seen to provide the first indication of a possible link between sponsor influence and the delegate’s commitment to the development process and resultant actions. Whilst there are advocates of EL such as Kayes (2002) who recognises a link between individual learning and social / organisational improvement, reference to the possible influence of its senior management on the practice was seen from the literature review to be minimal and therefore an area for more detailed qualitative enquiry.

**Characteristics and Skills of the Training Provider**

As identified, the shift from ADGAS internal facilitators to professional facilitators for the 2011 event showed no change in perceived standards in terms of the quantitative scale response (table 4.2). The supplementary qualitative questions however identified a more detailed account of the delegates experience and their reaction to that experience. From their marking of the 5 choice scale given in question 3 which included: Empowering – Empowering/ Facilitating-Facilitating/Coaching – Coaching/Directing and Directing, the majority of weighting indicated the facilitators to be Empowering and Empowering/ Facilitating in style, as table 4.3 shows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitator Style - linked to expectations</th>
<th>Overall Team marking for perceived style of their facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Score (least observed)</td>
<td>Highest Score (most observed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1 Directing</td>
<td>Empowering / Facilitating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2 Directing</td>
<td>Empowering / Facilitating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3 Directing</td>
<td>Empowering / Facilitating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4 Directing</td>
<td>Empowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 5 Directing</td>
<td>Empowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 6 Directing</td>
<td>Empowering / Facilitating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly the markings indicated that the facilitators had followed the style of facilitation required for the event. In terms of the delegate related comments on how this was received, table 4.4 indicates the there was a predominance of positive responses for the facilitators. There were however, a number of challenges related to the specific style not being in line with delegate expectations for a more directive and coaching method of support. This highlighted the issues raised by Gilmore and Anderson (2011) for facilitators to be well versed in facilitative skills with the ability to adapt to individual needs when required. This again was the first indication that some delegates preferred to be supported with a more expert directive style of facilitation aligning with Ramsey’s (2005) concern that individuals need pre-requisite skills and knowledge to work within teams and De Loo’s (2002) idea that team’s may not be able to carry out critical review without the aid of expert support. Kolb and Kolb (2009) also points out that learning may be limited by individual self-perception of their capability to learn. This said, 80% of the delegates gave positive comments towards the empowering style of facilitation which might indicate that many of the individuals were happy to work in teams with minimal support. Clearly from
initial delegate feedback, this could be seen as an area for further review within the qualitative review sessions.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delegates positive responses to the facilitators method of support</th>
<th>Delegates challenging responses to the facilitators method of support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator was supportive, cooperative and knows his duties very well</td>
<td>Her knowledge was not that much about some of the specific leadership-related subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We felt at home with him</td>
<td>Facilitator was fairly passive and repetitive and didn’t challenge or give advice when we needed direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was very cooperative and provided good guidance.</td>
<td>Facilitator skills needed improvement to give more leadership with clearer communication on what was expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was good in passing out and explaining each subject.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He was a very good facilitator, giving me feedback all time, I really felt very comfortable with his support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He gave me the support as coaching all time, a few times he was directive, and mostly he empowered the team to reach the goal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was great effort, where the team were able to support each other with a clear empowerment from the facilitator.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It worked well since there was a team work from all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate style – I felt comfortable to speak and be heard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He allowed us time to review our own ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style was good – there to support but only when required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learners’ individual personality Characteristics and Profile

In terms of personality mix the delegates were selected into teams which created a balance for four of the teams and a defined imbalance for the remaining two. This provided, through a combination of facilitator observation and delegate feedback, comparisons of team member
actions and their interaction throughout the event to effectively monitor any differences in their team approach and outcomes (see table 4.5).

**Table 4.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Team Member Total</th>
<th>Working Culture</th>
<th>Operations Divisions/ Total represented</th>
<th>Commercial Divisions/ Total represented</th>
<th>Services Divisions/ Total represented</th>
<th>Major Project Divisions/ Total represented</th>
<th>Business Strategy Divisions/ Total represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Process Project</td>
<td>Ops Maint Procure Marketing Fin HR IT PR Saf et Proj Eng</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 4 4 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>6 4 3 3 3 6 5 4 3 4 5 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 4 4 1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 4 4 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 4 4 1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 3 5 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 6</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 5 3 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delegates Completing the profiles</th>
<th>Personality Colours Profile (%)</th>
<th>100 % Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality type % Mix</td>
<td>Yellow 17 Green 27 Blue 25 Red 28 Introvert (B/G) 52 Extrovert (R/Y) 48 Head (B/R) 53 Heart (G/Y) 47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Team 1 11 30 29 30 59 41 59 41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2</td>
<td>17 26 24 33 50 50 57 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 3</td>
<td>28 28 18 26 46 54 44 56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 4</td>
<td>27 35 19 19 54 46 38 62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 5</td>
<td>4 21 39 36 60 40 75 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 6</td>
<td>22 25 25 28 50 50 53 47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitators</td>
<td>56 9 3 32 12 88 35 65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Colour indicates a district personality type taken from own feedback

- **Red** = competitive, determined, strong-willed, focused on achievement. Extrovert / Rational thinker
- **Blue** = cautious, precise, detailed, questioning. Introvert / Rational thinker
- **Green** = caring, sharing, patient, relaxed. Introvert / Emotional thinker
- **Yellow** = sociable, dynamic, enthusiastic, flexible, persuasive. Extrovert / Emotional thinker
To achieve the required comparative variation in team mix, all 48 delegates completed their ‘Discovery Insights’ profiles prior to attending the event. In relation to distribution of personality characteristics across all delegates, there was a prominent shortfall of yellow energies with only 17% preference shown (table 4.5) in comparison with 25-28% for the other three colours. This would tend to reflect a more pragmatic and systematic group in comparison to the norm. When considering the profile percentage share, the balance of extrovert verses introvert and logical pragmatic verses emotionally driven thinkers 4 of the 6 teams (1,2, 3 and 6) were within a 10% differential across all 4 coloured energies. This was considered within an acceptable tolerance to represent a balance of personalities for these teams. Team 5 on balance had a higher proportion of logical thinkers that might prove to be less forthcoming in openly challenging others or presenting their views. Team 4 by contrast would be predicted to be less concerned with reflecting on logical detail in favour of going with emotionally based instinct. Given the mix of personalities it was interesting to compare the outcomes with Shen et al. (2007) study which identified that a balance of personalities together with appropriate levels of team facilitation could prove effective in supporting individual development.

From the questionnaire response, the delegates identified the Personality team mix to be very a positive contribution to their experience with a score of 8.8 from the scale of 10 (table 4.2). Given there was no noticeable variation when comparing feedback from balanced and imbalanced teams, it provided an initial indication that a balance of personality profile might not be as influential as that experienced by Shen et al. (2007).
The facilitators were selected based on their previous experience in facilitation and capability to adopt the required facilitative/empowering style of approach. They were not asked to complete the colours profile until after the event. The results identified two key aspects of note. All showed high levels (88%) of natural extrovert energies mixed with a tendency to more emotionally driven (65%) than concerning themselves with logic and detail (12%). More specifically, for all the facilitators, the most prominent energy was ‘yellow’ which by comparison featured as the lowest of the four colours amongst the delegate group in total.

**Organisational Structure, Cultures and Practices**

In relation to the question of what effect structures, cultures and practices might have on an individual's experience, in reviewing with the senior management team the possible cultural differences to be found with ADGAS it was apparent that there was a clear difference in working team cultures with approximately half the delegates based in process environments and the other half involved in project teams. This provided the opportunity as part of the study, to review the possible differences in individual’s approach towards the event and learning outcomes relative to two specific working cultures. This would in effect test Handy’s (1985) view that people working in a product / service process based environment tend to adhere to rules and strict codes of practice causing them to be more reluctant to challenging authority and introducing change. Such response would be in contrast to those working in project and development environments where innovation and drive towards achievement are more in line with their required
outcomes. Such individuals would be more open to challenging norms and adapting to changing environments (Handy, 1985).

Given this, the study was designed to create an even balance of team members from process environments and project based environments. In terms of the sub cultural mix, the requirement was to provide each team with representatives from as wide a range of functions as possible (Table 4.5 refers). This was arranged specifically to remove any additional sub-cultural social web elements that might exist within the functions and provide focus on the specific differences between the process and project cultures.

It was noted that bringing together of team members from the different working environments and functional subcultures might be seen to create conflict. As identified by Brown (1998), the organisational culture may not always be compatible with the subcultures that support them. This he identified as a particularly challenging issue when trying to implement organisational strategies. However when relating this to the study outcomes, initial feedback from the questionnaires indicated that the teams had worked well together, adapting to their shared environment and gaining from the experience in terms of personal learning development. Comments relating to good team communication and a positive camaraderie were identified as clear evidence of some degree of cultural compatibility between the teams. These were identified from the qualitative comments under question 4 of the form (appendix 3). Examples of delegate comments (DC) included: ‘team working was excellent’; ‘we all got on from day one’; ‘at times there were great feelings of achievement made stronger through the support and recognition of team members’. Again reasons for this pattern of response could not be
established from the questionnaire results alone and this would require further investigation from the delegate focus group meetings which are explored below.

**Impact of the Event related to the Individual**

In terms of overall impact of the event delegates were questioned on what they found most and least useful to them personally. From the questionnaire there were 48 comments registered of which 70% identified the event as a positive experience and applicable to their working environment. In examining these responses over 90% of them related to the ‘process of learning’ and not to any specific task undertaken during the event. Such reactions would tend to align with Vidaill et and Vignon (2010) that experiential learning can be seen as effective in bringing individuals together to develop a greater awareness of collective learning and problem-solving processes.

The high level of perceived individual learning for all delegates would support Kolb’s view that his model supports all four of the learning styles as identified by Mumford and Honey (1982). As such this was seen as an early indication that no specific one learning style is significantly more suited to an experiential learning team event than any other.

It was noted that from all the delegates’ feedback, no reference was made to either the CEO’s involvement or the skills of the facilitators. This could be seen as a possible indication that the delegates considered their presence to be insignificant to the overall learning experience. By contrast, team interaction and the resultant behaviours engendered, could be seen in almost every statement taken from the ‘useful’ comments listed. This identified a 20% increase on positive team comments from previous years. This was seen as an indication that the individuals had experienced better team relationships,
although it was not clear at this stage what had caused it. Such an increase in positivity towards team working would tend to challenge Nadler et al. (1979) and De Loo (2002) concerns that individuals have a natural reluctance to share their ideas and learning with others. Indeed from this initial feedback which focuses specifically on delegate perception towards team working, it would appear that far from camouflaging conflict (Nurmi, 1996), the value of working in teams might be seen to encourage open dialogue and help to resolve issues. The support for team working was seen as an indication that the delegates had worked well together and enjoyed their learning experience. Contributing factors to such a response were clearly the area for further investigation.

Summary of Delegate Questionnaire feedback

From this initial review of the delegate questionnaire feedback a number of elements start to emerge. Firstly the consistency of event design elements with previous years i.e., accommodation, experiential learning team approach, selection of delegates and attendance numbers, proved to be in alignment with the 2011 events. This was seen to provide a reasonable indication that the impact of introducing the elements for 2011 could be compared against a relatively consistent baseline of past data.

In relation to the introduced elements, the CEO influence appeared to have no direct link to the delegates learning experience or their commitment towards following through with action plans. This result was compounded by the fact that when asked what they found most useful about the event, no mention was made concerning the CEO’s commitment or involvement. However, the senior management team made the observation that the delegate’s first and second choices of action plan source of influence, came from their
Line Management and KPI’s. These they observed, could be indirectly linked to the senior management position and an area for further review within the focus group sessions. Again, with the introduction of trained facilitators the quantitative feedback showed no change in delegate response to their effectiveness. However, there was a predominance of positive qualitative delegate comment responses relating to the facilitator’s support. A typical example of this was..

DC: ‘our facilitator allowed us to explore our own ideas and only came in when we need advice on capturing the lessons learnt’.

From the few comments that were seen to challenge the facilitator role, these were more concerned with the style of support than with the facilitator presence,

DC: ‘he [the facilitator] didn’t give us any direction on how to do the exercises’.

Introduction of personality profiling to create a balance of personalities was achieved with four of the six teams. The performance of all the teams was to be compared to identify any variance in approach towards tasks and general interaction. Initial feedback from the questionnaires indicated an improved sense of team working across all the teams compared to previous events. Any link to personality mix however could not be verified at this stage and would need further examination in the focus group sessions. In terms of influence of organisational structure, cultures and practices, the initial qualitative feedback was more attestable. Typically the delegate’s comments indicated an understanding of the differences across different Departments and Divisions but clear recognition of the benefits,

DC: ‘our team was from all parts of the organisation but it seemed to work well, we learnt a lot from each others different approaches’.
This was seen as an early indication that the experiential learning team event could be seen as an effective method for recognising differences across sub cultural groups, improving communication and working on shared areas of concern. Such positive relationships were seen to develop within the workshops, although again some of the feedback indicated that these would only continue after the event if the working environment required it. There were indications however, that working team relationships did support improved lines for opening future communication links should the need arise.

DC ‘although I don’t work with most of my team [event team], I feel we have built a better understanding of each other and I could easily work with them again should the need arise’

Overall there was strong support for the team working aspect of the event, which from the majority of comments could be seen as a positive improvement in comparison to previous years. From the initial questionnaire responses it was unclear why this should be the case. The causes of this improvement and possible alignment with the four contextual elements introduced into the 2011 event would be explored in the focus groups feedback sessions.

In relating the outcomes from the initial feedback from the questionnaires responses from delegates a number of aspects start to emerge:

- The CEO’s involvement appeared to support delegates commitment to apply the learning gained from the event back in their working environment.
- The facilitators had followed the design requirement for a facilitative/empowering style of support and there was a high level of feedback which recognised this to be
effective in supporting the teams’ development experience. There was however an indication from a minority of delegates identifying a preference for a more formal, directive style of approach.

- Team working was seen as more effective than in previous year events, however it was unclear if the introduction team selection using personality profiles to provide a balance was a contributing factor.

- In relation to the possible impact of diversity of cultures and social webs this was seen to be beneficial in terms of sharing different ideas and methods in challenging practices within their respective working environments.

4.3 Focus Group and Observation – Feedback and Analysis

Given the initial themes and patterns of information emerging from the delegate questionnaire feedback, three delegate focus group meetings were arranged. These were designed to further explore the factored questions relating to; senior management sponsor involvement, training provider (facilitators) skills, individual personality and organisational sub cultures. The following sections provide a summary review of all feedback received from the delegate meetings together with relevant feedback from the senior management meetings, Delphi expert group meetings and the provider interviews. All details have been aligned to the four research questions. The most common areas of delegate agreement were correlated against representative examples of comments made during meetings with the provider and senior management. These were integrated with remaining source observations and academic discussion. References have been made to related theories and literature throughout the analysis, to identify correlation, conjecture
and possible gaps in current debate. A summary of all the key findings relating to the study can be found in *table 4.7* for reference.

### 4.3.1 Senior Management Influence

In relation to the research question of possible impact that a sponsor might have on an experiential learning event; from the questionnaire results given in section one it could be seen that delegate’s initial commitment to following through with personal development action plans was primarily influenced by senior management. This was taken from the high percentage that identified KPIs and line management (senior manager) support as the key motivators in transforming experiential team learning into action. It was observed from the senior management team focus group meetings, prior to the event that they agreed on the importance of actively demonstrating their commitment along with the CEO in supporting any recommendations and action plans to be generated from the 2011 event. This they considered would be achieved through their attendance of the workshop and their subsequent follow up support to the action plans following the workshop. It was noted that in order to further support the delegates, they agreed for all resultant personal development actions to be made part of the delegates KPI actions for 2012. Outcomes would be monitored using three team review sessions to take place three - six months following the workshop. Senior managers would act as champions to monitor progress and report on results against the plan of action. Clearly the initial planning phase and follow up support from the CEO proved to have an impact on support of the learning actions. This was confirmed by the delegate’s in their initial questionnaire responses. From the CEO and his senior team’s perspective, being involved in the initial planning and
taking an active part in following up on the delegates action plans was instrumental in clarifying roles and supporting the outcomes. Their attendance on the event provided them with an opportunity to relate to their managers away from the workplace and share the development experience with them directly. This they found to be beneficial in gaining a better understanding of the issues they were facing and how they might enhance their support for the teams in tackling such issues.

From the delegate focus group sessions the general consensus, approximately 80% were positive towards the CEO (senior management) involvement, with the remaining 20% identifying some concerns. Starting with the more positive aspects, the delegates considered the CEO’s commitment to the event, his positioning of it and his expectations of the outcomes to be generally, very effective.

Example of delegate comment (DC).

‘His opening address helped to put the event into context. He related back to the organisational requirements and gave us encouragement that our improvement ideas and actions would be supported’.

The delegates also perceived that by being present throughout the entire event he demonstrated a genuine commitment to their development process, the programme and the learning messages that emerged from the teams. This was seen to be of particular importance given that management behaviour’s and working culture were the key theme of the event and he was seen as a significant factor in helping to shape that environment.

DC. ‘it was good to see him there for all three days…..clearly he needed to be there to gain a better understanding from us on how he can best support us in improving the working environment’
This support from the key authoritative figure was observed by the facilitators to settle the delegates and give them reassurance that they were in a supportive environment. As identified by Engestrom (2001) if the purposes of such events are correctly focused, in this case by the CEO’s presence, it can lead to a support for collective, innovative ideas that in turn will support the wider organisation development.

It was seen as an opportunity for the CEO to be more social, away from the working environment and able to share in some of the practical activity experiences. It provided an opportunity for those managers that had less of a day to day working relationship to develop a better understanding of him as a person.

DC. ‘The practical exercises opened up lines of conversation with others we hadn’t work with before and helped us to talk more freely particularly with the senior management team’

It was observed by the senior managers themselves that the event gave them the opportunity to move away from his more formal position of controlling authority to adopt a more supporting facilitative style of leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988).

Flood (1998) identifies that there can be great advantage in supporting and empowering individuals through a common approach in understanding and alignment of cognitive processes. Using such an approach can help to generate a common purpose with shared vision. However, Driver (2002:41) identifies a note of caution pointing out that ‘there are political processes within an organisation that may undermine [such a] humanistic vision’. Interestingly a small number of the more junior management delegates identified that the CEO’s presence, particularly during the review sessions did limit team contributions to discussion. There was a shared view that his involvement at such times subdued any
discussion that might openly challenge organisational strategies. They felt that for those managers that were interested in maintaining their current positions and future career plans, it was better to keep quiet rather than say something that might be seen as challenging to the senior management hierarchy.

DC.. ‘CEOs presence was quite important, but at the same time it did make everyone think twice before raising his point/issue at the risk of being seen as negative.’

This particular point highlight’s Bishop et al. (2006) argument, that in attempting to create a supportive learning culture, the values of the organisation need to be made clear to all. Such values or agreed principles to live by are fundamental to the learning process and a subsequent amount of innovation and challenge can happen within a social working environment. As identified by Senge et al. (1999), individuals can feel threatened by the presence of a senior authority figure and will need to be supported in a group situation to openly discuss issues which might be seen as challenging authority.

However, in the study this concern about the CEO’s presence was not shared by all. The majority of the more senior management delegates felt much less concern with any repercussions of sharing views and challenging practices. They countered the argument by stating that he would not have supported the event if he didn’t expect old management approaches to be challenged.

DC.. ‘He is a ‘hands on’ CEO and understands many of the problems.. what he expects from us is the honesty in saying what needs to happen to improve the working environment.. the event created the right environment for us to do that..’ (shared view amongst the more experienced managers)
Van Dam et al. (2008) identify that the style of leadership and relationship with other members of an organisation can greatly impact on results. Termed ‘leader member exchange’ they note that members (delegates) will have more trust towards the leader (CEO) that is willing to involve them in decision making, listening their ideas and establishing an open environment for exchange of views. Conversely when the relationship is more remote with a perceived autocratic leadership style then mistrust between leader and followers can result. Clearly from the study there was a mix of both those that felt the CEO could be trusted and was open to their ideas on improvement and those less confident in the relationship that felt ideas might be seen as a challenge to authority and career limiting. In relation to the research question and the impact that a sponsor role might have, clearly the evidence would indicate a significant impact which may be seen as either positive or negative, dependant on the sponsor’s style of leadership.

There were a smaller number of the more experienced delegates that did not see that his presence was that important to the development experience. Their view was that he could have been present at the start and finish to position the programme and recognise the efforts of all that took part at the end.

DC.. ‘As the CEO he should empower us to review our own performance issues, identify solutions and make recommendations without him getting involved with the detail.’

Whilst this was observed as a minority view, those that expressed it were noted to be prominent stakeholders in the organisation. This desire for minimal intervention relates with Hersey and Blanchard’s (1988) theory that individuals who feel confident in their abilities to take full responsibility for their actions should be empowered by their leaders
to do so. Such empowerment is seen to create a full sense of ownership towards decisions made, and supports the individual’s motivational requirements for applying energy that can be seen to generate the end results and rewards (Handy, 1985).

From the providers perspective the most prominent difference from other events they had supported was that CEO’s involvement. From their experience it was very rare that CEO’s would get involved in the planning or in attending experiential learning team events. Where this did happen, the style of leadership was seen to make a big difference. The CEO of ADGAS was seen by the provider to have a facilitative ‘helicopter style’ of leadership similar to other petrochemical leaders they had come into contact with. This translated in practice to him not leading from the front but rather asking the delegates to form their own ideas and allow him to use their feedback to formulate a strategic plan. In line with Kolb and Kolb’s (2005) thinking, the approach appeared to allow delegates the freedom to explore and challenge all management behaviours including that of the CEO’s. They were given the opportunity to set their own goals without any obvious restraints from CEO and thereby were given freedom to be more open in developing their own ideas along with the methods required to achieving them. Such leadership from the CEO would equate to Hersey and Blanchard’s (1988) participative, delegating style of leadership where the leader provides facilitation and empowerment to the followers that he see is willing take ownership in the given situation and can be trusted to make decisions and take full ownership for their actions. This style was observed by the provider’s facilitators to be appropriate and in line with the overall maturity of the delegates that were represented.
The provider reflected back on their experience in working with a more directive CEO where his style of leadership dominated the outcomes of the event from start to finish. Such an approach was seen to limit discussion in groups and control outputs to what he wanted to see. Whilst this was seen to produce focused results, the outcomes were constrained by the dictates of the CEO. Such a directive, ‘telling’ style as noted in Hersey and Blanchard (1988) tends to relate to followers that need clear instruction and close supervision to support their actions.

Clearly the style of leadership the CEO adopted in supporting experiential learning team events was seen to impact on the delegate’s development experience. When effectively matched to their requirements as in the ADGAS example, the delegates were seen to respond in a positive way to the event. If the style is not aligned to the requirement, as experienced by the provider, such interaction and development can become limited.

From a wider perspective, the provider considered the involvement of the CEO to be effective in aligning the workshop outcomes with business strategy. He felt that the process to link the delegate’s personal action plans from the workshop with their yearly objectives could only be achieved with the CEO’s backing. He had not seen this in any previous workshop and was interested in the final outcomes. He did however raise some concern that the results would largely depend on the CEO and senior management’s continued commitment and style of leadership. He considered if the CEO were too directive in style, then from experience, it would tend to curb any challenges on predetermined strategies and thereby lead to a watering down of learning outcomes. Conversely no direction at all might leave the delegates without a strong message of commitment leading to a lack of common focus on the skills and behaviours required to
achieve the corporate goals. On this point, three months after the workshop the delegates were asked if they were still committed to achieving their personal action plans. 90% identified that they were committed which would indicate that the support agreed by the senior team in the design stages was being upheld. Such results would tend to align with Vince (1998) argument that senior managers need to take an active part in such events, in order to gain support and commitment for the actions that are created. The results also challenge Ramsey’s (2005) concerns that Kolb’s theoretical model can be based on individual performance which can be seen to act out in such situations to please the peer team audience but in reality rarely transforms into reality.

The Delphi group considered the senior management support to be an important contributory factor in achieving a successful outcome for any experiential learning team programme. In practical terms they all agreed however, that changes in management or structure of an organisation was often an issue when trying to maintain long term development goals for organisations together with the individuals that support them. This view would tend to support Dehler et al.’s (2001) claims regarding the need for management development to be dynamic, focused on improving the approaches towards achieving technical goals rather than the technical goals themselves.

In dealing with change the Delphi group identified the need for continuity of support throughout such unpredicted changes, considering it to be a valuable attribute in trying to maintain focus on outcomes of the programme and promoting its value to organisations. The group were asked to consider the importance of senior management buy-in at three key stages; Before the event – it was seen as important by all to establish roles and responsibilities with clear reference to ownership of possible outcomes before the event
during the event – all saw it as useful to have a representative to position the event in relation to strategic requirements and the value of such events to the individual. It was recognised however, that it is not always a practical option, particularly for a large scale programmes with many events taking place. In such cases the message was largely given by the development provider. After the event - the majority of the providers in the group identified that they had little or no contact with their clients following delivery of the programme. They highlighted that delegates were encouraged to identify what was to be done and take ownership of implementing the actions linked to business KPI’s back at the workplace. This point would align with De Loo’s (2002: 250) that to maximise returns on investment from an experiential learning team style of programme, they would need to establish the goals and monitor progress with the provider ‘before during and after’ the programme takes place. As highlighted from the literature review these elements in establishing a common understanding and inputting control mechanisms throughout the design and delivery process seems to have been overlooked by the vast majority of academic papers.

The Delphi group did however point out, that the outcome of delegate actions could be greatly influenced by the personality of the senior managers involved. A sponsor whose style of approach might not relate to an activity based collaborative environment, might find it difficult to relate to a facilitative role in supporting their managers. In such cases the provider would need to assess the situation and make the sponsor fully aware of the scope of the experiential learning team event outcomes and the leadership approach required to meet them. In relation to the study results, there was a general consensus amongst the Delphi group that the 90% completion of action plans was considerably
higher than they had experienced. This they attributed to the support of the CEO in the initial design and in aligning the actions with individual KPI’s and on the continuity of support following the event. This observation would relate to the academic view that delegates will have more trust towards the leader (CEO) that gets involved and establishing an open environment for exchange of views and actively supports follow up activity (Van Dam et al., 2008).

**Summary**

It is perhaps a valid observation that all experiential learning team events have individuals or senior groups that effectively sponsor them. As such any impact would be seen across all types of event from localised community development projects to MSc study teams. As identified, very little reference has been made relating the influence of sponsoring bodies within experiential, action learning literature. Leading authors including Christopher Kayes, Michael Reynolds and Mike Pedler have tended to focus their attention on individual goals and social interaction rather than the sponsors of such programmes. In highlighting the hitherto neglected importance of sponsor influence upon the success of experiential learning interventions, this study makes a key contribution to existing knowledge.

The research has highlighted a number of elements that would make the argument for its inclusion. The participation of a key authoritative figure can provide support and focus. The facilitative empowering style of leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) required to meet the social development requirements of such learning experience (Reynolds, 2009), need to be clearly established with the sponsor during the initial design stages. Likewise
the senior representatives that may be involved need to be made aware of the style required to establish a common approach (Flood, 1998). Clearly there can be political issues within an organisation that can undermine such humanistic ideals Driver (2002), however if the values of the organisation are made clear to all from the outset (Bishop et al., 2006), together with clear goals and monitoring processes in place, then effective development returns on the investment made have a better chance of success (De Loo, 2002).

This said, there is still the threat that individuals can feel threatened by the presence of a senior authority figure and may need support in a group situation to openly discuss issues which might be seen as challenging authority (Senge et al. 1999). If leadership fail to realise the importance of their role, the wrong style of leadership might greatly impact on the end results (Van Dam et al., 2008). The more remote and autocratic the style the more estranged to the ethos of the event they become.

Clearly from the study there was a mix of views from delegates on the sponsor’s involvement during the event. A small minority, 10% didn’t see the need for the CEO’s presence stating they felt empowered to make their own decisions without the need for his involvement. The majority view, 80% felt the CEO’s presence was supportive; he was open to their ideas and encouraged them to take their learning forward. The remaining 10% had reservations that their ideas might be viewed as challenging to his authority and career limiting. From feedback concerning the CEO’s involvement during the planning and follow up phases which surrounded the event, the study identified a strong positive influence in his involvement. It provided the opportunity to set clear achievable goals at
the outset of the design process and establish a shared understanding of the support required to meet those goals.

Taking all the evidence into account, it can be seen that the sponsoring body can have a significant impact on experiential learning team programmes and is a contextual element that should be factored in as part of the wider experiential learning theoretical discussion.

This is a significant contribution to the existing theory and practice of experiential learning interventions. The involvement of sponsors can be seen to be beneficial, particularly when they are made aware of the attributes of EL and can be encouraged to adopt a supportive style of leadership in keeping with the principles of experiential learning and alignment with their charges development requirements. As such it has proven to be a contextual element that should form a more central part of the wider experiential learning future debate.

Such impacts were found throughout the life cycle of the programme. During the initial phase of design, the sponsor’s involvement in terms of providing clear aims from the event and understanding the roles and responsibilities was seen to be very positive in supporting the event. Within the event itself, the sponsor’s presence was seen to have both positive and negative impacts, dependant on the style of leadership adopted. If they were seen to be directive and authoritarian by nature the effect was to stifle conversation and creative contributions. Alternatively, if they are seen to be facilitative and empowering, a more open and free flow of challenges and ideas could be generated by the delegates. During the final phase of follow up on personal learning the sponsor and senior management’s engagement in supporting delegate’s actions was again seen to be positive in supporting their overall learning process.
4.3.2 Facilitation Skills (training provider)

In relation to the research question of possible impact that training provider might have on an experiential learning event; from the questionnaire results given in section 1 the style of facilitation was clearly noted as an area of conjecture amongst the delegates. Whilst 80% were in favour of the empowerment/facilitative approach given by the facilitators the remaining 20% showed preference for more expert direction.

From the professional facilitator’s perspective, they considered the atmosphere generated within the teams to be very supportive and focused on making the improvements happen. After an initial guardedness which was considered common in such events, the vast majority appeared comfortable to share their feelings and concerns of the barriers that need to be overcome to realise improvements back in the workplace.

A common remark coming from the delegates was that without the workshop the level of discussion moving from sharing fact to sharing feeling would not have been possible. Vince (2008) identifies that organisations can be seen as emotional places where external display of feelings can be used in attempt to manage or control social situations in order to cope with internal conflicts and contradictions. This he highlights can be driven by both the conscious or unconscious feelings within an individual where the unconscious can be seen to contribute to a social irrationality. From the facilitators observations there was evidence that feelings were openly displayed. However, far from being seen as controlling or irrational, the sharing of feelings within the groups was seen to contribute the openness of interaction and used to understand the effect on managers when dealing with difficult decisions on performance and to address behavioural issues. Of course in
Vince’s scenario, he relates his hypothesis to organisational working environments. However, in making the comparison with an experiential learning team event it is interesting to note how the potential negative effects of individual feelings can be transformed into positive support. From the provider’s observations this could be attributed first and foremost to the supportive environment created by the facilitators, secondly the CEO involvement and thirdly from the balance of personalities within the teams. The stipulated facilitator style was seen to be in keeping with the provider’s preferred method, although he did note that reaction from the ADGAS delegates for direction and reassurance from the facilitators was consistent with many other management groups.

In relation to the impact of training provider skills, whilst the questionnaire feedback from delegates did not identify any significant changes from previous year’s response, there was a notable improvement shown in the focus groups sessions. For those delegates that had experienced previous years events the impact of introducing professional facilitators was felt to be more effective in supporting their learning. They reflected that during the event each team member was given chance to share their thoughts openly and conversation was kept on track with the facilitator occasional summarising thought and expanding the debate with aspects that may have been missed by the team.

DC.. ‘Once we had agreed the contract of how we would work together, the facilitator only came in (to the conversation) when it wasn’t getting anywhere, or when someone was talking for too long.’
For the majority, there was greater value in having professional facilitators external to the organisation. This created teams with an impartial observer who could challenge without preconception or concern for anything other than supporting the development process.

DC.. ‘On previous events the facilitator seemed more reluctant to challenge the teams and help them to really get to the heart of problems, our guy (facilitator), on this occasion, had no such issues. He cleverly challenged those that were avoiding the problems with a simple question like ‘so is that what everyone feels is happening?’

The feedback would tend to challenge Bourner (2011) experience, that the introduction of expert facilitators could be seen by the team members as too controlling and influential. It was observed from the questionnaire feedback that the facilitators stuck clearly to their brief to use a facilitative and empowering style of support with the teams (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988). The delegates’ comments would tend to confirm this as an effective approach supportive but without a sense of being controlled. From an observer viewpoint however, the approach could be seen as influential in allowing the teams freedom to explore their own line of thought without interference. This observation supports Yeo and Gold’s (2011) view that the team member’s spontaneity and creativity in communicating with each other can be influenced by facilitator when seen as a teacher or expert, particularly when involved in a more developmental than task specific context.

DC.. ‘It was useful that the facilitator didn’t have a day to day understanding of our business. Meeting us for the first time gave him the freedom to challenge our thinking and focus on the approach we were taking in solving issues, rather than the technical issues themselves.’
This focus on process improvement rather than technical goals, supports the argument made by Dehler et al. (2001) that experiential learning for management in particular, should relate to the ‘how and why’ aspect and much less on the ‘what’. The Delegates feedback would tend to indicate that their sense of independence, combined with a facilitative style of support can prove significant in achieving such goals. Delegates also made a strong reference to the facilitators’ ability to maintain focus on the development issues.

DC.. If it hadn’t been for the skills of the facilitators, it’s likely we would have fallen back into our normal conversations on work targets and issues.

This would support Visser (2007) views that the process and quality of the communication within a team can be positively influenced the skills of the facilitator. Trehan and Pedler (2009) also consider that trained facilitators can be a contributory factor in maintaining focus and providing the quality required for an action learning programme. Whilst Yeo and Gold (2011) identify the use of a facilitator as a potential barrier towards spontaneity of manager’s dialogue, they do recognise the benefits in supporting problem based project learning. This concern for obstructing spontaneity is also raised by Bourner (2011) as an issue for self-managed action groups, introducing a degree of behaviourist control which many managers relate to and may have a preference for (Holman, 1997). This point was identified in the study with approximately 20% of delegates that showed a preference for facilitators to give much more expert guidance, particularly during the planning and execution stages of the exercises. Primarily they wanted a more behaviourist style of instruction with recognition for conformity to that instruction.
DC.. ‘We could have done with more guidance from the facilitators on what we were doing wrong and what we needed to do better during the exercise. Whenever we asked for ideas or reassurance they just said ‘ask your team?’’

Such reaction would tend to align with Willmott’s (1994) view that teams without expert support can be in danger of experiencing a poverty of ideas, limited by the understanding and creativity of the individuals in the team. Holman (1997) compounds this with the idea that individual learning as a process is inseparable from social and historical position of the learner. As such an experiential learning team event might be seen as unlikely to relate to the more traditionalist view of expert led training.

Of those 20% aligning with this view, it was noted that the vast majority were from the more senior managers. The remaining 80%, mostly middle and younger managers, seemed less vocal on this point. When pressed for their views they were more aligned with the value of exploring ideas, developing their own ideas and trying them out.

DC.. ‘the thing is, the facilitators didn’t know anything about our work situation, so they couldn’t really give any quick solutions to our specific issues, all they would say is ‘the decision is yours to make.’ This was a typical reply when we asked for guidance, which was fine.’

It was interesting to note that the response came from the more experienced managers in the teams. As outlined by Baterson (cited in McGill and Beaty, 1996) such a reaction would tend to relate to those more used to a formal behaviourist learning with clear direction given from a figure of authority to provide guidance and expert assurance. This would also align with Dehler et al. (2001) who express the concern that past experience of managers to formal learning approach, using text books and expert led teaching methods,
has created a custom for traditional learning methods. This said, when delegates were asked ‘if given the opportunity would you work with the same facilitators on future events?’, 90% said they would. The remaining 10% remarked that they were generally happy with their facilitator but would take the opportunity to work with someone new.

The Delphi group were all in agreement that professional facilitation was preferable to teams facilitating themselves. The quality of discussion, understanding of learning style requirement (Mumford and Honey, 1982) and the subsequent development experience achieved by delegates was considered to be much greater when supported by a professional person. This view is in contrast to Anderson (2003) who considered the introduction of an expert facilitator could detract from the team experience of self-challenge and possibly create the danger of introducing behaviourist control. The Delphi group’s view was that for management groups, even though they might be considered highly capable of chairing meetings and supporting teams in the work situation, when put into an experiential learning team event environment with peers, they were generally seen to be far less effective. Vince (2008) identifies that managers can have anxieties towards action learning as well as excitement. Their anxieties are thought to emanate from past experience, organisational constraints and individual self-doubt, working within a team that they are not confident with can bring such emotions to the surface and affect their normal patterns of behaviour.

The Delphi group raised one further point which was relevant to the facilitator role. The selection of facilitators and the style adopted could be seen as reflection of the senior management’s judgment of how they should be supported. The style of facilitation
therefore would need to reflect the behaviours that the organisation was keen to develop. As such the style of facilitation could be seen as just as important as the content. In relation to the study, the facilitation style was approved by the CEO during the design stages to allow individuals to take ownership from the outset and work together to develop their own ideas. Given the positive response from the majority of delegates, the facilitative / empowering approach adopted by the facilitators was seen to meet their requirements.

**Summary**

From the literature review it was identified that a subject specialist can be beneficial in supporting the learning process and overcome delegate anxiety towards the group learning environment (Anderson, 2003; Visser, 2007). However there was also the view that self-managed teams with minimum of direct intervention can better support the creativity and spontaneity provided that the delegates had the social interactive skills and general support for others in further the learning process (Bourner, 2011; Yeo and Gold (2011). What was not made clear from the literature was what constitutes the most appropriate style of facilitation in supporting experiential learning events and what impact this might have on the overall learning process.

In reviewing the study findings relating to the role of training provider, it is clear there can be a significant impact on the experiential / action learning process. Vince (2010) identifies organisations as emotional places where individual feelings can be used to manage or control social situations and thereby cope with internal conflicts and
contradictions. Such feelings were apparent in the study event. However, these were used in a more open manner to explore feelings and build better understanding in dealing with shared issues. This majority view was seen to be the result of effective facilitation, seen as effective in; supporting team communication and extend the development experience (Trehan and Pedler, 2009; Willmott, 1994; Visser, 2007). The style of facilitation was seen to be a strong contributory factor in achieving such outcomes. In the case of this study facilitative empowering styles (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) were used which appeared to address the concerns of Yeo and Gold (2011) and Bourner (2011) that behaviourist directive styles of facilitation might impact on the need for cognitive / social development sort in experiential learning events. The study also highlighted a smaller group of delegates that wanted a greater level of expert behavioural support from the facilitators. This echoed Baterson (cited in McGill and Beaty, 1992), Holman et al. (1997) and later Dehler et al. (2001) concerns that individual social and historical experience might be less palatable to the more traditionalist view of for expert led training. However, in taking away the expert guidance it was evident that there was more attention given to the ‘how and why’ process which could be applied to many technical issues, rather than the technical ‘what’ which might relate more to specific areas of operation (Dehler et al. 2001).

From the study it could be seen there was a strong indication that facilitation and specifically the style of facilitative / empowering support, not previously considered in studies, could have a significant impact on experiential learning process. As with the sponsor role, this has proven to be a significant contribution to the existing theory and practice of experiential learning interventions. While the involvement of experts appears
in general to be beneficial, it is evident that they need to be far more focused on the style of facilitation they adopt in supporting the principles of experiential learning whilst also being aware of the preferred learning styles of individuals. As such it can be seen as a substantial contextual element that needs to be factored in as a more central part of the wider experiential learning debate in the future.

4.3.3 Personalities

In relation to the research question of possible impact that the use of personality profiling selection might have on an experiential learning event; from the questionnaire results given in section 1, delegates considered the mix of personalities across the teams to be a positive contribution to the event scoring 8.8 from a scale of 10 (table 4.2). Clearly the high markings given by all the personality types tended to indicate that the experiential learning team event supported the full range of preferred learning styles (Mumford and Honey, 1982). This was endorsed in the focus group sessions with a general consensus for having a range of methods to support individual learning requirements.

D.C. ‘The approaches used were well balanced with time to plan, do and review. It seemed to work well even for those of us that like to be a little less active.’

It was also noted from the questionnaire that there was a much higher proportion of positive comments focused on the team working experience. In determining how these might relate to the individual personality profile matching, the groups were asked to consider reasons for the improved team synergy. Initially they were not informed of how the teams had been selected.
Delegates that had attended previous events felt there was generally a more open and productive discussions in the 2011 event than in previous years.

DC. ‘It just seemed there were less clashes of characters within the team than previous events’

According to Bradley and Hebert (1997) a balance of personality types in a team, can support that team in; maintaining focus on the goal, identifying options, analysing detail and maintaining a harmony in working together. In contradiction to this view however, Partington and Harris (1999) quantitative study using data from 43 teams of MBA students identified no significant relationship between personality profile balance and team performance.

From a qualitative perspective delegates were asked if the feeling of more openness and productive decision making may have been due to the professional facilitators or greater senior management involvement. In two of the three focus group sessions they didn’t consider involvement of either as prime reasons. The majority were in agreement that there was a much greater level of socialisation in the evenings when facilitators and senior management were not around.

DC. ‘There was a great sense of camaraderie in our team this year, people weren’t fighting to be heard like on previous occasions’

One of the focus groups didn’t feel a great deal of difference from previous years but noted that they seemed to enjoy the 2011 experience more, possibly due to the teams they were in. Some relationships had developed following previous events but these normally only continued if there was a business related reason for doing so.
When delegates were told their teams had been selected on the basis of personality balance, there was much more of a consensus that all the teams had performed better because of the balance. It was evident from their reaction that the information had influenced their decision making processes, linking the personality selection process with improved team harmony.

DC. ‘Ah... well now you mention it, we definitely seemed to gel more quickly and we have a wider range of strengths in the team,’

Such comments would align with Bradley and Hebert’s (1997) and Wilde (2003) who identify that the use of personality profiling as a selection process can assist teams in working more effectively together and help to improve overall team performance. This also relates to Kayes et al. (2005) views that a good mix of individual styles can improve team perform and assist in their learning process.

However, from the information received from the delegates, it was difficult to determine the actual cause of their positive feedback relating to improved team harmony. The facilitators noted a higher quality of team working in comparison to many other similar events they had supported but found it difficult to pin point the actual causes for the result. The facilitators also noted that individuals were generally more willing to listen to each other and work together even in the early stages of forming (Tuckman, 1965) which was particularly different from other events of a similar nature.

Given that two of the teams, 4 and 5, were noted to have an imbalance of personalities within their teams, the facilitators were asked if they noted any difference in approach across the six teams. They were in agreement that there were no major differences. It was noted that all teams experienced the same facilitative empowering style of support
from their facilitators; they all had the same level of freedom to set their own learning goals and explore preferences in working with their team members. Facilitators observed that the delegates tended to adapt their personal preferences to meet the needs of the team when required. This was seen to be the case for all the teams, with teams 4 and 5 showing no significant differences.

In terms of the style of facilitation, Sheldon and Kasser (1998) identify that individuals tend to be more motivated when setting their own goals. In keeping with this theory the experiential learning team event was designed to provide individuals with the freedom to act independently and challenge issues that had no standard solution Dehler et al. (2001), De Loo (2002) and Pedler (1997). However, the provider clearly identified that in relation to the study, individuals were willing to adapt preferred style of approach to meet the team requirement. Such actions align with Ramsey (2005), in that a group tends to influence socially driven decisions. To ensure an affiliation to the social group individuals will tend to adapt their behaviours to suit the social group, particularly where an individual sees greater strength from gaining support from others and avoiding rejection. This view would tend to support Jung’s theory of the conscious state representing the change in natural personality (subconscious state) that when required will adapt to meet the demands of the external environment the individual finds themselves in (Jacobi, 1973). As such whilst an individual can complete a personality profile questionnaire and identify their natural unconscious and conscious states, in reality, they have the ability to adapt to the situation they find themselves in. It may not be their preference but still they have the capability to adapt.
Such concerns were shared by the Delphi expert group who had mixed views on the validity of personality profiling tools to categorising individuals and placing them into ‘balanced’ teams. They were agreed on the value of using personal profiles to discuss behavioural attributes as part of a session. However, the overriding consensus was a belief that; Kolb’s experiential learning model allows for all learning style preferences; and that individuals, particularly managers, can often be seen to adapt their preferred personal approach to suit their environment. In opposition to Bradley and Hebert’s (1997) and Wilde (2003), the Delphi group concluded that personality profiling was time consuming, costly and not sufficiently proven as a tool for selecting teams to make it a viable option for most modern day organisations.

From the review, whilst it could be seen that personality mix within teams might have some influence it was inconclusive. However, a more significant factor in terms of personalities did emerge when aligning the facilitator profiles with that of their team of delegates. After the workshop each facilitator was asked to select three delegates from their team they perceived to be the most effective performers and suitable for accelerated progression in the organisation. This was carried out as a ‘blind’ test, with no indication given of the delegate’s personality profiles at that time. Results of comparison identified that there was a 70% greater likelihood that the person with similar personality profile to that of the facilitator would be selected by them as a high performer. As identified from the literature review this possibility preference was noted by Anderson and Sbackleton (1990) in their ‘similar to me effect’. The judgement of interviewers in their study identified a clear positive bias towards those candidates displaying similar personality, characteristics types. Whilst this aspect was not specifically related to the
study, it does provide evidence that facilitator judgment can be biased and as such should not be the only source of data when making performance judgements on individuals.

Summary

From a review of all the evidence presented it can be seen that the effect of using personality profiling for selection of teams is not conclusive. Whilst Bradley and Hebert (1997) and Wild (2003) perceive it as an effective tool for supporting working harmony and maximize performance, the study found no clear evidence of this. Rather it tended to support the work of Partington and Harris (1999) study of MBA students which identified no significant relationship between personality profile balance and team performance. The teams clearly worked well together and there was some indication from comments that it proved more effective than in previous years where the personality selection process was not included. However two of the teams with a predicted imbalance of personality types, failed to show any significant differences in performance approach or outcomes. As such, the balance of personality profiles proved to be an insignificant influence on the experiential learning experience of the study group. In line with Ramsey’s (2005) research the study would confirm that individuals will tend to adapt their behaviours to suit social group, or situation to gaining support from others and avoiding rejection. What became more significant in terms of personality profiling was the relationship found between the facilitators judgement on the delegates they predicted to be highflyers and their similarities in personality profile. As outlined in Anderson and Sbackleton’s (1990) study into interviewers and prospective graduate candidates, the judgement of interviewers in their study identified a clear positive bias towards those candidates displaying similar personality, characteristics types.
In terms of contribution to future ELT and AL research, clearly the findings have indicated that for management teams who share a common set of values and goals, personality profiling for team selection has no significant impact on the individual’s overall learning experience. However if the event were to form part of a wider assessment process, it could prove beneficial to review the personalities of delegates against their facilitators for any possible alignment which may have a significant impact on the objectivity of the overall evaluation process.

### 4.3.4 Organisational Sub Cultures

The final area of review centres on the structural and cultural environment that individuals and teams find themselves in and the impact this may have on the overall development experience. From the questionnaire results given in 4.1, it could be seen that delegates considered team working and positive camaraderie to be a positive contribution to the event. What was not so clear was whether the even mix of project and process based cultures within the teams was a significant contributor to the response.

Vince (1998) observes that individuals can experience anxiety in team learning environments where their weakness might be exposed to working colleagues. This can arise particularly from the requisite social interaction of experiential learning team programmes, where established legitimate powers of individuals can still prevail in the training context (Raven, 2008). This situation may be particularly poignant given a development scenario such as experiential learning team events, where informal grouping can be seen to challenge the established hierarchy in the workplace (Senge et al. 1999). In addition to cultural issues the structure of the organisation itself can vary dependant on
the type of formal structure the organisation operates under (Handy, 1985). The question arises then as to whether such social issues can impact on the effectiveness of experiential learning team programmes, acting as a barrier for those that may feel threatened by the influence of others aligned to hierarchical or social sub cultural situations. As highlighted by Senge et al. (1999) such concerns in relation to experiential learning events which may challenge organisational authority, need to be carefully considered. All of these aspects were explored as part of the focus group sessions to assess the impact and identify the possible ways in which they were perceived by the delegates.

In relation to the influence of sub cultures, the delegates clearly understood that there were differences in how the various functions worked within ADGAS. They saw this mainly as a requirement of the work rather than any social group influence.

DC.. ‘the project teams need to work to tight deadlines and deal with isolated problems. Whereas the process teams see their role as dealing with repeat issues that can be better planned, we all know that.’

Past events had formed effective communication between working functions but as with the individual relationships, these only lasted as long as there was a shared working practice to be addressed. However it was recognised by all the delegates that whilst attending the workshop, none of them perceived their normal way of working as affecting the teams working relationship. In observing the teams during the event and in the focus groups it was accepted by them that there would be some difference in approach because of the different cultures but a genuine interest in learning from each other the different ways of tackling and resolving issues. Handy (1985), considered that such a collaborative
approach can provide individuals with a feeling of togetherness, releasing them from bureaucratic controls which can undermine organisational success. This theme of togetherness is also noted in (CLMS, M2C U1: 6) with the use of ‘triple loop’ learning as a collective (focus group) method of thinking and reflecting to pre-empt change and associated learning requirement.

DC. ‘Surely the whole point about these events is to listen and learn from each other, I think everyone quickly got the idea and was happy to share ideas’

Such a shared reaction from the delegates goes some way towards allaying the concerns raised by Willmott (1994) that social and political conflict across managers can seriously influence problem solving activities such as experiential learning team events. Also Reynolds (2009) who notes some concern that such events might be seen as a manipulative tool of management, creating feel good factors that can serve to mask conflicts of interest. However, additional comments from the groups tend to support the more positive view that experiential learning team events can effectively overcome any such barriers.

DC. ‘As with previous workshops, it’s helped us to understand the differences and breakdown the communication barriers that were there before the event.’

Of course this type of reaction might be seen as dependant on the group of individuals involved and the political situation they associate with. De Loo (2002) identifies that for individuals to show such support and go on to achieve performance improvement requires an alignment of individual and organisational values and link between personal development plans against organisational goals. Engestrom (2001) also points out that in working situations, such interaction can help to stimulate social group resolution of
tensions and contradictions when a recognised need for change is required. Interestingly as observed by the senior management team, ADGAS to a large extent have achieved this focus through the CEO’s support for development being seen as a specific contributor to organisational KPI’s.

DC.. ‘The relaxed atmosphere on the workshop helped me to tackle one or two issues with one of my team mates. We now have a much better understanding of what we need to do to build relations between the sections and create a positive on which to move things forward’.

This type of response which is representative of all the groups feedback aligns with Dehler et al. (2001) views that given that individuals feel the collective support of the team to overcome such inherent social inhibitions, the critical pedagogical approach associated with experiential learning team events can prove to be an empowering experience. Clearly the experience of the delegates could be linked with driving their own learning experience, and the unfolding social process of the team allows for challenging of norms and solving problems without the constriction of past authorities Dehler et al. (2001).

Interestingly, as indicated by the delegate comment relating to the difference between project and process working teams, the facilitators observed that the delegates clearly understood the diversity across the represented subcultures within the organisation. However it was also evident and in keeping with the delegate feedback, that the event was seen to provide a vehicle for overcoming such differences, providing a shared of experience that they believed could help solve common issues. It also seemed that the delegates entered the learning situation with a common and shared understanding regarding its purpose and value. Given that the overall theme of the event was on
changing companywide behaviours, the emphasis was clearly linked to ‘double loop’ learning Argyris (1977) where the organisation’s policies and procedures need to be challenged and improved upon. As such more emphasis was given to cross functional cooperation.

In terms of experiential learning team event design, the majority of the Delphi group felt it important for the provider to understand the nature of the organisation’s structure and roles that people played. However, this was not considered as important as understanding the informal social webs and influences they may have on a development programme. Such concerns are noted by Maull et al. (2001) where individuals and sub cultures may not always align with organisational structures or strategies. In line with the views of Vince (2008), the Delphi group considered that understanding roles and the key areas of influences were important in addressing these potential barriers and possible issues. In this way it was felt the programme could be more effectively designed to address the real issues and better meet the requirement. This was considered particularly relevant given that experiential learning team events are primarily focused in dealing with behavioural issues, where behaviour was thought to be synonymous with ‘social webs’ and individual sources of influence. In relation to the ADGAS study, the Delphi group considered the positive outcomes towards changing behaviours to be the result of a clear understanding of the subcultures and the trust that had been built up through careful planning. In their experience, such trust needs to be earned through mutual understanding from both sponsor and provider, with open discussion on sub-cultural tensions which may exist and how these can best be managed both during an event and in the follow up activities that will ensue. As pointed out by Maull (2001) social cultures are formed over time, providing
individuals with a sense of belonging security. Any challenge which might affect that culture will be viewed with caution and only be achieved over a period of time.

Summary

In assessing the contributory factors coming from the review of possible organisational sub-cultural impact, it emerges that it can have both positive and negative influence towards the experiential learning experience. In terms of the negatives, individuals can be seen to experience anxieties in a team learning environment where their weakness might be exposed to work colleagues. Vince, (1998), Raven (2008), Senge et al. (1999), Willmott (1994) and Reynolds (1998) all speak of the legitimate powers of key individuals migrating from the work scenarios to the training context, causing individuals to be wary of challenging the established hierarchy which in turn can restricting problem solving activities. This however was not the result experienced by delegates in the study. In contrast, whilst they were fully aware of the differences in project and process ways of working, they perceived this to be beneficial, providing the opportunity to explore alternative approaches for tackling common issues. This positive spin on mixing subcultures is recognised by Handy (1985), CLMS (M2C U1: 6), and Dehler et al. (2001) who observe that using a more collaborative approach across functional groups can provide individuals with a feeling of togetherness, releasing them from bureaucratic controls which can undermine organisational success. The benefits of such collaboration are recognised to lead to stimulation of action towards solving cross functional tensions and an alignment of individual and organisational value without the restriction of formal authorities (De Loo, 2002; Engestrom, 2001; Dehler et al., 2001). From the delegate
comments and commitment to the resultant action plans, the study did achieve many of these positive outcomes. From the feedback this was made possible by a combination of shared focus on a single area corporate wide concern needing a collaborative response (Argyris, 1977) together with effective leadership and facilitation at the start-up of the event.

In relation to the research question of the possible impact that organisational structures and sub cultures might have on an experiential learning event; what emerges from the research is that these events can create an effective environment for individuals to openly discuss differences in cultural outlooks and develop understanding from these differences which can translate into improving their respective working environments. Such an outcome can be enhanced when, as in the case of ADGAS, delegates enter into the learning situation with a shared understanding of the organisation’s values and purpose. In turn, this perhaps suggests that, if the over-arching organisational culture is strong, then it can provide a common ‘glue’ that enables delegates to discuss and overcome any sub-cultural differences in a constructive rather than destructive way.

In terms of contribution to future ELT debate, a great deal of attention has been given to the negative aspects of bringing cultures and subcultures together (Vince, 1998; Raven, 2008; Senge et al., 1999; Willmott, 1994; Reynolds, 1998), however very little has been written on the benefits that can be achieved. The study has highlighted that given the correct circumstances of common values and high level goals, different subcultures can benefit from the cross fertilisation of ideas that lead to shared outcomes.
4.4 Summary of Study Findings

Table 4.7 sets out the key findings derived from all sources of information including; Delegate Feedback, Observation, Provider together with Delphi Expert group Workshop and Focus group meetings. This combined with associated literature analysis supports the conclusions and recommendations identified in the final chapter of the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory derived factored Questions</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Delegate Questionnaire Feedback</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?</strong></td>
<td>Initial feedback indicated links with CEO support and their commitment to applying learning gained from the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual's experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?</td>
<td>Initial feedback indicated that the facilitators had followed the design requirement for a facilitative/empowering style of support. There was also a high level of feedback which recognised this to be effective in supporting the teams' development experience. There was also an early indication from a minority of delegates identifying a preference for a more formal, directive style of approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What influence can a learner's individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an experiential learning team event and the associated outcomes?</td>
<td>There was a clear indication that team working was more effective than in previous year events. However, it was not clear if the mix of personalities in the teams was a contributing factor. Comments confirmed that teams were more interactive during exercise and more social with each other in the evenings. However, it was still not conclusive that the personality mixing was a significant contributory factor. The quality of team working across all the six teams was seen to be more effective in comparison with similar events run for other organisations. No clear evidence was established that personality mix was a contributing factor. However, personality match's between facilitators and the delegates they selected as high fliers identified a significant correlation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial indication that diversity of cultures and practices was seen to be useful in sharing ideas and challenging practices using abstract activities as a vehicle for testing understanding and learning from each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegates fully aware of differences across departments and the need to work together to overcome differences where these affected the organisational performance. Keen to use the workshop to recognise differences and explore better ways of addressing shared problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not notice any specific differences or conflicts caused by subcultures within the groups. More focused on the activities and the learning experience. However a big difference was recognised when working with commercial based companies which tended to be much more task and goal focused – more drive to succeed whatever the task given. Less caring of how it might affect others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered important to identify sub cultural influences, particularly during the early design stages to manage differences and avoid disruptive conflict that might undermine the development experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study aligns with the theory that subcultures can prove influential in relation to EL &amp; AL experience. Rather than being negative however, it is seen that it can prove to be positive in sharing different approaches and dealing with common issues. This can be made possible through development of a common focus, effective leadership and skilled facilitation.</td>
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5. Conclusion and Implications of Research

5.1 Introduction

The research given in this thesis has focused on the question ‘How might individual and contextual factors influence the experience and outcomes of organisation-focused experiential learning team events, and what are the implications for the theoretical foundations of such programmes?’ From the review of ELT and AL literature given in chapter two it is clear that the majority of academic discussion in recent years has focused on the individual cognitive experience rather than the contextual elements that surround it. From the review of literature it became evident that such contextual elements, whilst viewed as mere tools in support of the learning process, could prove to have a significant impact on the individual’s overall learning experience. On closer examination, four specific contextual elements emerged from the review as key areas for further study namely, the possible impact of: management sponsors (Vince, 2008), organisational structures, cultures and practices (Dopson, 2001; Reynolds and Vince, 2004; Elliott, 2008), skills of the training provider (Visser, 2007; Bourner, 2011; Yeo and Gold, 2011) and learner’s individual personality characteristics profile (Mumford and Honey, 1982; Wilde, 2003; Shen et al., 2007; Partington and Harris, 1999).

Given the review of literature surrounding experiential learning, the foundation for further study research into the four contextual factors of interest was established. The resultant empirical study was constructed using an extensive range of both qualitative and quantitative methods, based on one organisation’s experience. The study has identified a number of outcomes which have: supported, challenged and added to the wider ELT and
AL academic debate. These together with the practical implications of how different organisations involved in EL programmes might benefit from the findings, are presented below against the four contextual questions for ease of reference.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 What effect can senior management sponsors have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

In reviewing current papers on experiential learning and related action learning literature (Kayes et al., 2005; Reynolds, 2009; Trehan and Pedler, 2009) it is apparent that very few references have been made on the possible impact of senior management /sponsor on individual’s development process. A good example of this was highlighted when reviewing Kayes et al. (2005) and Kolb and Kolb (2005) where forty-five references had been made to ETL goals and yet not one of these was aligned to sponsor requirements. When comparing the work of associated theories including; learning organisation (Senge, 1999) and leadership styles (Van Dam et al., 2008; Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) it is clear that the sponsor role can prove to be a significant area of influence on the delegates’ development process. The findings of the study broadly support this view, and would indicate the need to include such a perspective into theories of experiential learning and related training and development practice.

From the study the CEO’s active participation throughout the design, implementation and follow-up stages of the 2011 event proved to have a very positive effect. It was observed to provide focus for the event and commitment to support development actions that were
For those that have considered the senior management role impact on ELT (Vince, 2008; Leonard and Marquardt, 2010), attention has tended to focus on the initial design stages and the support that can be achieved in gaining commitment to resultant actions (Vince, 2008). Such an underlying support from a legitimate figure can be seen to help in managing any political processes which might undermine such humanistic ideals (Driver, 2002). From the study it could be seen that the CEO’s involvement during and after the event contributed to the continuity of commitment for improvement both in terms of individual development and the wider collective organisational goals. However, the study highlighted that the style of the sponsor’s leadership was also seen to be an important contributory factor to its success. Whilst there was some concern that his presence might limit the amount of creativity and challenge of status quo thinking within the group, the facilitative/empowering leadership style that was adopted was significant in addressing any underlying feeling of hierarchical coercion. Such an approach could be seen to foster a common understanding and support an alignment of cognitive processes, thereby helping to generate a common purpose with shared vision (Flood, 1998). Senge et al. (1999) highlights that individuals can feel threatened by the presence of a senior authority figure and often need to feel supported in a group situation to openly discuss issues which might be seen as challenging authority. Van Dam et al. (2008) confirm that the style of leadership and relationship with other members of an organisation can greatly impact on results. They note that individuals can develop greater trust towards leaders that are willing to involve them in decision making, listening to their ideas and establishing an open environment for exchange of views. Conversely, they found when the relationship is more remote, with a perceived autocratic leadership style, mistrust between leader and
followers can result. Such a reaction was observed in the study, with some of the delegates feeling cautious to challenging practices which they perceived might limit their career prospects. As such, senior managers clearly need to be aware of the impact their presence can have and adapt the leadership style (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) to match the delegate requirement. In this way it was observed to allay such individual concerns and thereby further support the experiential development process, encourage individual creative and challenging status quo thinking (Young et al. 2008). This would also align with the need for critical reflection enabling delegates to challenge established ways of thinking and develop new conceptual ideas relating to the organisations or social environments they find themselves in (Ford et al., 2010; Reynolds, 2011; Antonacopoulou, 2010; Yeo and Gold, 2011; Quinn, 2013).

It can be seen from the research, in relation to contextual factors and more specifically the implications for EL and associated AL theory, senior management involvement in a sponsorship role can have significant impact. In relation to the study this proved to be a positive experience, supporting the development process for the individual delegates in alignment with organisational goals. This was achieved through the CEO’s affective style of leadership, facilitative / empowering (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) which proved to be effective in supporting an open and creative learning environment.

It can be seen from the research in relation to contextual factors and more specifically the implications for EL and associated AL theory, that senior management involvement in a sponsorship role can have significant impact. From a wider perspective the outcomes of the study could apply to all events where a sponsoring body is involved. This would include
areas such as *Higher Education* where university EL programmes are funded through industry sponsorship or indirectly through government / local authorities, *Business School vocational programmes* sponsored through industry and *Community Programmes* in support of areas such as lifelong learning, where local authorities are seen to introduce initiatives into the community. For all of these environments, the involvement of the sponsor throughout the life cycle of the programme, if effectively utilised in terms their involvement in the: design, delivery and follow up support of individual actions, can have a very positive effect on the overall learning experience.

In terms of contribution to the advancement of ELT and AL discussion, it is apparent that the role of the sponsor has largely been ignored in previous literature. However, as highlighted in this study the role of the sponsor has proven to impact on all aspects of the programme design, delivery and outcomes. As such and given the wide range of associated programmes that it can be affected by a sponsor, it is clearly an area that should no longer be viewed as a minor contributory factor and must become a key element for consideration in any future ELT and AL discussions.

5.2.2 *What effect can organisational structures, cultures and practices have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?*

The findings of the study identified that organisational structures and the social webs within them can have a significant impact on the delegate’s development process. With a few notable exceptions, the majority of literature relating to the effects of subculture tends to focus on the negative impacts it can generate. French and Raven (1960), Dopson
(2001), Boydell and Blantern (2007), De Loo (2002), Kayes, (2002), Willmott, (1994) and Gabriel and Griffiths (2002) all make reference to social webs formed within an organisation’s structure and their potential for undermining the introduction of developmental change. Such influence is seen to emanate from a combination of: strong individuals with influence they are reluctant to relinquish (Willmott, 1994; Driver, 2002) and significant social web groups that may perceive any change as a potential threat to their power base (Dopson, 2001). Engestrom (2001) notes such insecurities within social structures can effectively block any change unless there is common consensus on the need to do so. From the study it was noted that the CEO and his management team were able to effectively communicate their concern about growing behavioural issues and the need to introduce companywide improvements. What was observed from the study group was a combination of shared values held by all the delegates attending the event (Bishop et al., 2006) and the full commitment of senior management to provide the support required to overcome such issues (Vince, 2008). This combined with mixing of management functions across the teams, the support of facilitators to create a development environment, allowing close collaboration to solve cross functional issues and freeing individuals from bureaucratic controls (Handy, 1985; CLMS, M2C U1: 6; Dehler et al., 2001) proved to be effective. The benefits of such collaboration in a shared development environment was also seen to assist in solving cross functional tensions and strengthening the alignment of individual and organisational values (De Loo, 2002; Engestrom, 2001; Dehler et al., 2001). Evidence from the study clearly suggests that individuals were aware of social webs and differences in project and process based working practices and the effect this can have when working together to achieve common goals. However, rather than being seen as
negative, the delegates were focused on the benefits that could be gained, using the experiential learning event to challenge and identify best practices in dealing with issues of behaviour. This was seen to be supported through having an alignment of both shared values and aligned goals.

Clearly this does require experiential events which have delegates that can share a common vision in relation to their development. As indicated by Bishop et al. (2006), this would include the need for shared values and common goals. Where these attributes are not in place, the cultural influences as identified by Brown (1998), Dopson, (2001), Mauull et al. (2001), Ramsey (2005), and Vidaillet and Vignon (2010) might become a barrier to the learning experience. This said, in relation to contextual factors and more specifically the implications for ELT and associated AL theory, it can be seen that given the appropriate environmental conditions of shared values and common purpose, differences in organisational structures, sub-cultures and practices can have a positive rather than a negative impact on ELT and AL programmes. In terms of implication for experiential learning theory and the contributions made to come from this study, the results would indicate that given the establishment of shared values and common purpose, ELT and AL programmes can be seen to benefit from having a mixture of subcultures and disparate ways of working. This positive outcome is in contrast to the majority of discussion on culture and subculture interaction which has largely focused on the negative aspects that can ensue (French and Raven, 1960; Dopson, 2001; Boydell and Blantern, 2007; De Loo, 2002; Kayes, 2002; Willmott, 1994; Gabriel and Griffiths, 2002). As such the study contributes to debates surrounding ELT and AL practices providing a foundation for further
research, particularly in relation the relative importance or shared values and common purpose in achieving a positive impact.

As with the sponsorship role, from a wider perspective, the outcomes of the study could apply to all experiential events that have delegates with shared common purpose and values. Areas such as: Business School vocational programmes, where programmes are organised for one organisation or social projects, where local communities may come from differing professionals but hold shared goals with a common vision. For such settings the mix of differing cultures and social webs can be used to in a positive way, to develop best practice and create new ideas on how to overcome issues and achieve shared outcomes.

5.2.3 What impact can the characteristics and skills of the training provider have on an individual’s experience and the associated outcomes of an experiential learning team event?

The study found that the characteristics and skills of the training provider can have significant impact on the delegate’s development process.

Whilst there has been some debate on the level of support required ranging from self-governed with no support from an expert facilitator (Bourner, 2011; Yeo and Gold, 2011), to that of full facilitative support (Anderson, 2003; Visser, 2007), what is less clear are the specific skills required to support such events. As identified by (Dehler et al., 2001; Trehan and Pedler, 2009) the focus of ELT and AL experience is primarily on the process of learning and not any technical understanding. As such it would seem appropriate to conclude that any reference made to expert facilitation should focus on the skills of facilitating the team
development process and not the provision of any authoritative advice on specific technical areas.

For those that have shown some concern on the value of facilitation for AL and ELT teams there would seem to be some issue on the definition of expert. Bourner (2011) and, Yeo and Gold (2011) have questioned the validity of having expert facilitators involved, stating concern that groups can become reliant on them to give direction and undermine the natural creativity of the team they are there to support. Such views would indicate that the facilitator would naturally be seen as the expert in the technical field of discussion. Also there would be a tendency for them to adopt a behaviourist formal directive teaching style of facilitation. Such a style of facilitation would clearly be contradictory to the principles of ELT and AL’s focus towards cognitive and social learning.

Findings of the study indicate that given the experiential learning requirement for a more cognitive social development, facilitative empowering styles (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) can prove to be far more effective. The style would appear to address the concerns of Yeo and Gold (2011) and Bourner (2011) that a more behaviourist directive style of facilitation can become controlling and stifle individual expression. However, it was also noted that a smaller contingent of more senior delegates in the study expressed the need for clear direction from the facilitators, to give expert advice on what actions they might take and clarification on decisions made. Such reaction was seen to support Baterson (cited McGill and Beaty, 1992), Holman’s (1997) and Dehler et al. (2001) belief that cognitive / social development practices might prove less acceptable to those that have lived for many years with the more traditionalist view of for expert led behaviourist training.
In terms of the study’s contribution, what is made clear is that the style of facilitation can greatly impact on the learning experience and as such it can be seen as a key contributory factor in the construct of effective ELT and AL programmes. In focusing on this important factor the study has served to enhance the existing literature by highlighting the need for an appropriate style of facilitative support which can meet both the needs of the individual and provide an effective alignment in supporting ELT and AL learning principles. If the fundamental principle of EL in allowing delegates to explore their own thoughts and ideas are to be achieved, the need for facilitative / empowering guidance from the training provider becomes a clear requirement. Such enabling support can be seen to allow for more critical reflection rather than a potential curtailing of team discussion in deference to a technical expert that is considered to have all the answers. It can be seen that the characteristics and skills of the training provider in supporting the individual, can have a considerable influence on the experience and outcomes of such programmes. Fundamentally if the facilitation is facilitative / empowering (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988) by nature then as indicated by the study, the majority of delegates will feel empowered to explore their own ideas, critically reflect on them in the context of their environment and create their own improvements. If critical reflection is to be supported as an important aspect of experiential learning theory, then the method of facilitation will prove key to its success and should not be ignored in future research.

Clearly the skills of the facilitator from a wider perspective could apply to other fields where EL practices are applied. As with the sponsor role this would include areas of: Higher Education Business School, vocational and community based programmes’ where facilitators are involved with teams of individuals to support their learning experience. For
all of these environments, the facilitative / empowering methods applied in the case study could prove to have a positive effective on learning outcomes.

5.2.4 What influence can a learner’s individual personality characteristics profile have on their personal experience of an experiential learning team event and the associated outcomes?

The study found that there was no significant impact in relation the introduction of individual personality characteristics and profiling when selecting individuals for teams.

The use of personality profiling has been considered an effective tool for supporting harmony in working together, utilising the variety of strengths to maximize performance (Bradley and Hebert, 1997; Wild, 2003). The study found however, no clear evidence of this. Kolb’s (1984) ELT model would appear to naturally align with the personality profile learning styles identified by Mumford and Honey (1982). This alignment would support the idea that ELT can accommodate all individual personalities and their preferred methods for learning. In relation to team development, there has been support for the view that a balanced mix of individual personality types can prove beneficial to improving team performance (Kayes et al., 2005; Wild, 2003). Team theorists such as Belbin (2004) and Bradley and Hebert (1997) have supported this view that balancing personality types with a team can have a positive effect on team performance and resultant learning outcomes. Results from the empirical study found however, no significant difference in performance of teams that had a balance of personality types against those that were clearly imbalanced. Observations indicated that individuals within teams adapted their predicated style of working with others to accommodate any perceived gap in team performance.

This would tend to support the views of Ramsey (2005) that whilst individuals will clearly
have preferred way of working, dictated by their personality profile, they have the capacity to adapt and compensate for any deficiencies in team performance that they align with.

There was however, one aspect unrelated to ELT and AL but aligned with personality profiling that proved interesting. In line with Anderson and Sbackleton’s (1990) study into interview procedures there was a high correlation with their ‘similar to me’ effect with the facilitators selecting high performing individuals that were most aligned to the facilitator’s personality profile. This result from the study would tend to support Anderson and Sbackleton’s view that using one individual views as a single source of assessment can prove unwittingly bias towards the selector’s personality preference.

In terms of contribution to future ELT research, the study has shown that for experienced management teams that have shared organisational values and goals, the use of personality profiling for creating a balance of personalities within a learning team has no significant impact on the individual’s overall learning experience. However if the event were to form part of a wider assessment process, it could prove beneficial to review the personalities of delegates against their facilitators for any possible alignment which could have a significant impact on the objectivity of the overall evaluation process.

5.2.5 Summary of Contribution

This thesis provides significant contribution to the academic discussion surrounding experiential learning theory and action learning practice. It also contributes specifically to the field of management education where there is a growing need for managers to develop in the areas of critical thinking, breaking the barriers of conventional management practices which can be seen to limit the requirement for more creative solutions in a
constantly changing environment. More specifically the research has highlighted the significant impact that three key contextual elements can have in relation to ETL and AL style events, namely: the role of the sponsor, sub-cultural influence, and the style of facilitation incorporated to support such events. It has been identified that these areas which that have largely been ignored by ELT and AL theorists can be seen as significant and should command far more attention. The study has shown that the sponsor role can have a major influence on ETL and AL practices in particular through their involvement, attending events and supporting follow up actions. In terms of subcultures it was seen that in contrast to much of the literature which focuses on the negative aspects of cultural conflict, the mix of diverse cultures in the study proved to have a strong positive effect, creating an environment for sharing best practices and building understanding towards achievement of common goals. Finally in relation to the facilitator role in supporting experiential learning events, it was noted that the style facilitation adopted in supporting the event proved to be highly significant. The ‘facilitative / empowering’ style was seen to be particularly effective in supporting the principles of ELT and AL and allowing for individual critical reflection to take place.

Given these findings, the implications clearly indicate that for future ELT and AL research: the sponsor role can prove a strong contributory factor to the learning experience and should not be ignored; given that common purpose and values are in place, the diversity of subcultures can have a constructive and positive effect on learning; the facilitator role can prove a positive influence provided the style of support is in keeping with the principles of ELT and AL for individual empowerment.
5.3 Recommendations

From the conclusions it is recommended that future ELT and AL research should take into account, three contextual elements which were identified as having significant impact on the individual’s experience and development outcomes:

- The sponsors of ETL and AL based programmes. Specifically: the role they play, the style of leadership they contribute and the level of support they provide to the design, delivery and follow up for such events.

- The facilitator role. In particular the style of support provided relative to the ELT and AL requirement for a more cognitive based, social learning environment with broader scope for more critical reflection.

- The diversity of subcultures which can prove a productive element within the ELT and AL experience, providing that shared values and purpose have been established.

In relation to the theoretical debate surrounding ELT and AL, the study would indicate that under controlled conditions all three contextual areas: sponsor, facilitation and culture can have an impact on the outcomes of experiential learning events. It is however, recognised that very little theoretical focus and empirical study has been given to these three areas within the context of ELT and AL research. It is therefore recommended that further field studies should be undertaken to build on the findings given in this research.
From a more practical perspective, the thesis has identified that support for experiential learning theory and its associated theories has grown rapidly over the last thirty years. Clearly it has been seen to have great strengths in terms of empowering the individual to explore ideas and create new ways of approaching old problems which are appropriate to the environment they find themselves in. However if it is to maintain its growth against the competition of more established formal learning practices, organisation sponsors and providers need to take into account the three contextual factors identified namely ‘the role of the sponsor, the facilitative style of support for such events and the effective use of sub-cultural mix to enhance the development experience. These are important areas which the study has shown have largely been overlooked by theorists and practitioners. If they continue to be ignored it may serve to further undermine ELT and AL credibility as a viable alternative to more formal teaching practices.
Appendix 1 – Management Development Workshop - Outline for 2011 MDP 2/3 day workshop

**Date:** 13/14/15 December 2011

**Location:** Banyan Tree Hotel

**Theme of the Workshop:** ‘The way we do things around here’: SVP have identified 4 key behaviours that will be used as the key focus for improvement on the workshop. These include supporting:

- Empowerment
- Challenge of poor Performance
- Effective two way communication
- Sticking to the point (during business meetings)

**Objectives:** Each delegate will;

- Review the four key behaviours
- Commit to a personal action plan to support organisational improvement in all four areas

**Travel Arrangements:**

Bus from Abu Dhabi HQ to and from Hotel

**Teams:** To be selected according to their personality profile match – to create the most effective teams

**Measurement of Success:**

- Questionnaire – immediate reaction to event and lessons learnt
- Selected senior managers to monitor improvements for their area
- All Managers attending to include related behavioural objectives in their 2012 appraisal
- Team progress against agreed objectives to be reviewed by team leaders / facilitators three months after the event
Outline Structure of Workshop:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>08.00 Meet at AD bus transport to Banyan Tree RK</td>
<td>13.00 - CEO Address – Positioning from last year- Purpose high level focus</td>
<td>Teams to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Dec</td>
<td>• Collect ID’s</td>
<td>13.15 - CCDA – Over view of programme – introduce</td>
<td>16.00 – Team challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Day 1)</td>
<td>• Issue Packs</td>
<td>• Methods /Activities /review sessions /facilitators /Voting system</td>
<td>Ex 5 ‘Journey to the Oasis’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Label Personal Luggage</td>
<td>large ‘Fishbone diagram’</td>
<td>– make it to evening meal without getting caught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Allocated to team colours</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.00 –arrive at outside venue for evening meal. Review behaviours on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal Logs</td>
<td></td>
<td>the journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>11.30 - Arrival</strong> at the hotel - Check in</td>
<td><strong>13.30 – Adrian</strong> -introduces first four exercises</td>
<td><strong>16.00 –</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.00 -Light lunch – Prayer</td>
<td>• <strong>Ex1. Team</strong> way of working contract</td>
<td><strong>Team challenge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Ex2. Getting to use the Voting system</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ex 5 ‘Journey to the Oasis’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Actors on stage’ plays</td>
<td>– make it to evening meal without getting caught.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ex3. ‘Supporting Empowerment’</strong></td>
<td>18.00 –arrive at outside venue for evening meal. Review behaviours on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ex4. ‘two way Communication’</strong></td>
<td>the journey.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

13 Dec 2013 (Day 1)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6.30 - 7.30 | **Breakfast**  
7.30 – **Brief Review of day one** – Reference to Fishbone for collective learning points | **12.30** - Prayer followed by Lunch  
**14.00** – **Exercise continue**  
Paving the way  
Blazing the trail | **17.00** – Group assemble for review of day  
identify their ‘champion of positive behaviour’ with a token placed on board |
| 8.30 - 8.45 | **Actors on stage’**  
• **Ex 6 Sticking to the point**  
• **Ex 7 Challenging poor performance** | **After each exercise their must be 40 min review –**  
**16.00 Ex 9 Chariots of fire**  
Teams race their chariots over the bridges to the finish line | **18.30** - Dinner in the Hotel **evening challenge** - to write a role play to be enacted by them morning day 3 on: |
| 11.00 - 12.30 | **Ex 8 Bridging the Gap**  
Representatives from each team to be sent to Adrian | **18.00 Group’s identify a chosen individual from other teams that could champion could be seen to champion improvements in behaviour for the organisation. Each to give a brief light hearted speech over dinner on their choice and reasons why.** |
| Wed 14 Dec (Day 2) | **Adrian gives out team Exercises**  
focused on behaviours to be completed |                                                                 |
| | **Teams representatives to identify**  
between them the Competition elements:  
rules – points - simple prizes award system – how it will be judged |                                                                 |
| | Groups travel to Exercises  
Build Bridge and Chariot |                                                                 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 7.00 - Breakfast</td>
<td>- 12.30 - Prayer followed by Lunch in Hotel</td>
<td>- 14.00 - Return to AD HQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 8.00 - Review of lessons learnt in teams led by facilitators Via feedback for observers – Captured on board</td>
<td>- 12.30 - Prayer followed by Lunch in Hotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 9.30 - Ex 11 Teams Enact their own Role Plays based on positive behaviours</td>
<td>- 14.00 - Return to AD HQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Team reviews all of the learning points and add to fishbone</td>
<td>- 9.30 - Ex 11 Teams Enact their own Role Plays based on positive behaviours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- 10.30 - Ex 12 Enablers Identifying enablers that will support improvement</td>
<td>- 11.00 Action Review –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review the fishbone</td>
<td>- Individuals to put personal actions on boards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 11.00 Action Review –</td>
<td>- Identify Buddies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review others add endorsement where needed.</td>
<td>- Review of how the behaviours can be managed back in the workplace – how it can be measured.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Review of how the behaviours can be managed back in the workplace – how it can be measured.</td>
<td>- Management ownership discussed – review of the fishbone – next steps what does it mean in reality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 month team reviews of progress made</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Next Steps</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishbone to be sent to all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal action plans to be logged</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation electronic reactionaries</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.45 - CEO – review of two days – Next steps</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 – Thesis Plan for the research programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Task Name</th>
<th>Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1. Draft Thesis project plan - Initial Supervision Process</td>
<td>Sun 1 May 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2. Unpack the problem - revised thesis question</td>
<td>Sun 15 May 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3. Literature Study</td>
<td>Sun 29 Jun 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.1 Phase 1 Establishing theoretical link ADT to EL</td>
<td>Sun 20 Jul 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.2 Phase 2 Assessment of EL Strengths/Weaknesses</td>
<td>Tue 14 Aug 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.3 Phase 3 Identifying improvements to EL model</td>
<td>Wed 20 Aug 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.4 Phase 4 Assessing impact of environment on ADT</td>
<td>Sun 7 Sep 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.5 Draft Literature review</td>
<td>Sun 23 Sep 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4. Empirical Study - Phase 5 Relating Theory to Practice</td>
<td>Sun 6 Oct 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.1 Design Research Instrument</td>
<td>Sun 6 Oct 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.2 Review Plan and Organise Research</td>
<td>Tue 16 Oct 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.3 Conduct Research</td>
<td>Tue 23 Oct 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.4 Collect the Data</td>
<td>Mon 13 Nov 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.5 Analyse the Data against theory</td>
<td>Tue 20 Nov 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5. Draft Paper for submission</td>
<td>Mon 24 Nov 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Draft Introduction</td>
<td>Mon 21 Dec 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Section 1 Literature review and analysis</td>
<td>Wed 7 Jan 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Section 2 Research design selected methods &amp; process</td>
<td>Mon 14 Jan 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Section 3 Empirical Research Study</td>
<td>Sun 20 Jan 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Section 4 Results, analysis &amp; discussion of meaning</td>
<td>Tue 31 Jan 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Section 5 Conclusion, Recommendation &amp; Abstract</td>
<td>Sun 6 Feb 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bibliography and Appendix</td>
<td>Mon 12 Feb 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>19. Rewrite &amp; proof read</td>
<td>Mon 24 Feb 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>14. Adherence to the governing format</td>
<td>Mon 24 Mar 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>12. Submit the final thesis for assessment</td>
<td>Thu 11 Apr 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Delegate Feedback

1. How did you rate the Hotel Facilities
   (please mark on the scale 1 = poor .......... 10 = excellent)

   [Rating Scale: Poor □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ 9 □ Excellent]

   Comments

2. How did you rate your facilitator

   [Rating Scale: 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ 9 □ 10 □ Excellent]

   Comments

3. What approach did your facilitator take in supporting your team
   Please score  L to M..... Select one L (LEAST) and one M (MOST) and values for others in between [ L, 2, 3, 4, M ]

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</table>

   Comments
   e.g. how effective was it

4. How do you rate the ADGAS ‘team approach’ to development in comparison to attending’ individual training courses’

   [Rating Scale: 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ 9 □ 10 □ Excellent]

   Comments

5. How do you rate the overall workshop content
6. How do you rate the value to you personally from attending the workshop

Comments

7. How much impact do you think attending the workshop will have on your working environment?

Comments

8. Which statement do you feel represents the way you worked before the workshop?

Please score L to M..... Select one L (LEAST) and one M (MOST) and values for others in between [ L, 2, 3, 4, M ]

Comments

9. Having completed the workshop which statement do you feel represents the way you will need to work in the future?

Please score L to M..... Select one L (LEAST) and one M (MOST) and values for others in between [ L, 2, 3, 4, M ]

Comments
10. What will influence you the most to carry out your action plan?
Please score L to M..... Select one L (LEAST) and one M (MOST) and values for others in between [ L, 2, 3, 4, M ]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of my personal KPI</th>
<th>CEO and top team support</th>
<th>Learning and Development Team</th>
<th>Workshop Team (Buddy process)</th>
<th>Line Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select...</td>
<td>Select...</td>
<td>Select...</td>
<td>Select...</td>
<td>Select...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comments

11. In terms of personalities, did you feel overall that your workshop team was...........

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very well balanced throughout the workshop with little conflict</th>
<th>A good balance for the majority of the workshop</th>
<th>50% of the time balanced the rest in conflict</th>
<th>More conflict than balance</th>
<th>In conflict the majority of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</tbody>
</table>

Comments

12. Having attended the workshop what overall improvements in workplace behaviours would you want to see?

13. Which area did you find of most use to you on the workshop and why?

14. Which area did you find of least use to you on the workshop and why?

15. What areas would you like to be included for possible future events?

16. What in your opinion needs to happen, to make Management Development more effective in ADGAS?
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