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In-company Management Education and
Management Development:

An arena of contestation? Stakeholder
perspectives in accredited in-company
programmes

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Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomenon of credentialed in-company management development programmes leading to management education postgraduate awards. The empirical site of the research is four case study organizations each of which had partnership arrangements with one of two UK universities. In each case management education programmes leading to management qualifications were undertaken as the means by which managers could develop their abilities to better contribute to organizational goals. In this there is an assumption that management education can seamlessly act as management development to the mutual benefit of the individual managers, the organization and the academy.

The purpose of the thesis is to explore the extent to which such an assumption is warranted. The thesis adopts a stakeholder perspective in identifying key stakeholders in the management development/management education arena as the basis for the empirical research they are; the HR professionals, the university academic managers and the manager-learner participants.

The research stance of the thesis is critical and contributes to the domains of critical management studies (CMS) and critical management education (CME). In advancing a critical approach, a multi-discourse analysis was undertaken. Thus the thesis produces findings aligning respectively with the concerns of functionalist, constructivist, critical and dialogic, discourses of management development whilst retaining an overall interpretive, critical stance.

In so doing the thesis explores and analyses the ways that the management development / management education programmes in these case study organizations can be understood as sites that have conflicting purposes and values and also the extent to which these are reinforced, reconciled and proliferated.

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List of Abbreviations

AMBA	Association of MBAs (Master of Business Administration)
APEL	Accreditation of prior experiential learning
CEML	Council for excellence in management and leadership
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
COP	Community of practice
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CPD	Continuing professional development
DMS	Diploma in Management Studies
EDR	Employee development review
EFMD	European foundation for management development
FE	Further Education
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
I i P	Investor in People
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MCI	Management Charter Initiative
MD/ME	Management development/management education
NHS	National Health Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OD	Organizational development
OSD	Operations Services Directorate (East Council)
PGCM	Post -graduate Certificate in Management
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PLC	Public Limited Company
RAF	Royal Air Force
SHRD	Strategic Human Resource Development
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
SMART	SMART objectives – Specific – Measureable – Achievable – Realistic - Timely
SMT	Senior Management Team
WBL	Work Based Learning

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1. Introduction to the thesis

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to this thesis by providing a rationale for the research and its research questions. Next it provides a structural guide to the thesis showing how each individual chapter contributes to the research aims. It does this in two ways, firstly through a diagrammatic depiction which presents a guide to the structure and logic of the thesis and secondly through a narrative description of each chapter which explains the links to the research aims and questions. I turn first to explain the rationale, research aims and research questions

1.2 Rationale, research aims and research questions

Management development and management education emerge from different historical trajectories and occupy different institutional domains, relate to different discourses and prioritise different outcomes. In the last three decades those domains have become increasingly enmeshed as arguments about the necessity for management education to become more ‘relevant’ have prevailed (Grey, 2004; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Mintzberg, 2004). This debate is accentuated by the discourse that posits management development, education and ‘learning’ more generally, as pivotal to individual, organizational and even national performance (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008; Contu *et al.* 2003; OECD, 2007).

The question of ‘relevance’ however, is an area of contestation especially when the workplace is implicated in the practice of learning, but an emergent and hegemonic discourse comes to the fore whereby learning *for work* becomes as, or more important than learning *about* work (Rhodes and Garrick, 2001; Gustavs and Clegg, 2005). In this prospect humanistic ideals are subsumed by performative goals though these latter are emergent rather than concretely fixed. The implication for management education is one in which knowledge *about* management is framed as knowledge *for* management, as tools

and techniques in the service of organizational performance (French and Grey 1996). Thus corporate goals, however constructed, are construed as universal and mutually beneficial for all stakeholders. This is an assumption that the thesis seeks to question.

Increasingly the workplace is seen as a legitimate site for learning and workplace practice and knowledge is seen as the object of learning. Such learning, is in part, bolstered by subjectivist epistemologies of knowledge which invoke a re-conceptualization of what knowledge is and how and where learning happens. Institutionally, accredited in-company management education programmes, that is, programmes which lead to formal credentialed awards (e.g. Diploma in Management Studies [DMS] and Master of Business Administration [MBA]) are one such manifestation of this.

The prevailing unitarist assumption posits that the worlds of management development and management education can fruitfully combine to achieve mutually beneficial ends (Ryan, 2009; Paton *et al.* 2005). In this formulation management education, together with its attendant institutions and actors (the academy), can be seen to have relevance for the corporate world, and equally the corporate world benefits from the development of its managers' knowledge and competence through the acquisition of credentialed management qualifications (Stansfield and Stewart, 2007: 126). This assumption warrants investigation.

To what extent is there an unproblematic commensurability between the domains of management education and management development? This question has frequently been asked by critical management educators of more traditional educational environs, for example, a good deal of 'critical management studies' (CMS) and critical management education (CME) literature poses this question together with that of what interests are served or suppressed in developing managers or management (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Alvesson and Willmott, 2003; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Grey and Willmott, 2005). But this question has not been generally explored with regard to accredited in-company management education programmes.

Burgoyne (1997) has argued that the domain of management learning is one within which different stakeholders have "conflicting purposes and values can meet to be reinforced, reconciled and proliferated", that it is essentially a "pluralistic meeting point" (Burgoyne

and Jackson 1997:61). This thesis attempts to provide a more pluralistic and *critical* understanding of in-company accredited management development and education programmes. It does this through an exploration of perceptions and experiences of stakeholders central to the in-company management development and management education (MD/ME) arena in four case study organizations. The stakeholders comprise: HR professionals, university academic managers and the participant manager-learners. The research approach can be characterized as interpretive in its solicitation of the meanings these social actors attach to the MD/ME programmes in which they were engaged, as commissioners, providers or participants.

To what extent is there a consensus or dissensus of meanings amongst the stakeholders in these learning arenas? To what extent are the arenas ones in which the social relations of power can be detected? What are the implications for identity? As the concerns and interests of the academy become embroiled with those of work organizations what are the implications for those who undertake the social practice of learning in these domains? To date, there is insufficient empirical research on the MD/ME arena in which credentialed education occurs within the auspices of work place organizations. Notwithstanding a few notable exceptions, (Gustavs and Clegg, 2005; Legge, 2007; Thursfield, 2008) much of the literature on such environs adopts a normative, and usually, prescriptive approach as to the desirability and mutually beneficial prospects of such arrangements between the corporate world and the academy (Martin and Pate, 2001; Dealtry, 2003). This thesis seeks to make an original contribution to knowledge in this area through an exploration and analysis of the different stakeholders in the delivery of accredited in-company management development and education programmes.

Thus the purpose of this research is to provide an empirical example of a hitherto under researched aspect of social life and to provide ‘critical insight’ into the MD/ME arena investigated here. The focus is on the exploration of the extent to which the stakeholders’ perspectives, experiences and interests converge and diverge, revealing a much more complex, and power infused picture. A picture in which there are consistencies *and* inconsistencies of understandings, values, motivations, interpretations and interests. The findings reveal that these are related to both to the institutional contexts of the

stakeholders' e.g. specific organizational contingencies of both the academy and the host organizations.

The research discovers the tensions and contradictions that emerge as the domain of management education is grafted on to the corporate context. It explores the extent to which corporate agendas are embraced by the academy and reciprocally, the extent to which educational agendas are upheld in the corporate context.

In so doing the research here addresses the research aim which is to:

‘Explore the ways that the management development and management education arena be understood as one in which there are conflicting purposes and values and to what extent are these reinforced and proliferated’

Addressing this involves an exploration of what interests are served or suppressed in the MD/ME arena and what are the possibilities or impossibilities for the resolution of these. To this end the questions are formulated as:-

- In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development in these contexts?
- To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders to the MD/ME programmes?
- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are their effects?
- What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

I turn now to elucidate the logic of the thesis by providing firstly, a diagrammatic representation as a means by which to indicate its structure, followed by narrative guide to each chapter and to show how they relate to the research aims and questions.

The Logic of the Thesis: diagrammatic representation

1. Introduction

2. Exploring the discursive context

3. Developing a conceptual framework

4. Research methodology

5. Organization case Study profiles

6. Looking through a functionalist lens	7. Paying attention to sense-making: the HR Professionals
8. Looking more ‘critically’: the academic managers	9. Struggles in subjectivity: the participants

10. Drawing conclusions and concluding

1.3 Guide to Chapters

Thus, after this introductory first chapter, what follows in Chapter 2 entitled Exploring the discursive context, provides a background to the debates in the literature on management education and management development providing the reader with an historical overview of the continuities and discontinuities within the field. It embraces a discussion of pertinent discourses of knowledge and learning showing how a ‘practice turn’ is a factor in precipitating the workplace as a learning environment. Key theoretical approaches are highlighted and evaluated here.

The conceptual framework of the thesis is explained in Chapter 3 and demonstrates that although the majority of mainstream literature in management development emerges from a normative perspective, the management development and education arena warrants a more critical interpretation. The chapter explores and explains the ontological and epistemological commitments underpinning the thesis. It explains that a critical approach to the data can be achieved through the adoption of an ‘interpretative repertoire’ by exploring it through the different discourse of management development, that is, functionalist, constructivist, critical and dialogic. The rationale for this stance is explained. Thus it demonstrates my own position on knowledge and understanding in relation to these issues and how these have shaped the approach to the research.

Chapter 4 moves from a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of the research, that is, methodology, to a wider discussion of the methods used in the research process. This emphasises the approach to data generation, the rigor of the process and how the research questions are addressed with the respondents. It explains the rationale of a stakeholder approach and for the choice of case study organizations. The chapter outlines the process of data analysis and addresses the question of reflexivity.

In Chapter 5 the case study organizations are presented and provide the reader with a detailed account of each case study in turn in relation to five distinct themes. This provides an overview of the case study organizational types and how the programmes worked in each case. It also gives a detailed account of the complex meanings and motives at play in

these arenas and allows for some comparisons between them. Here the similarities and differences between them and significantly, between the stakeholder groups within them, are surfaced showing the presence of tensions and power relations as conflictual purposes and meanings are exposed.

Despite these tensions the stakeholders, adhere in different degrees and in different ways, to a performative rationale for the MD/ME arena and in Chapter 6, which specifically views the empirical material through a functionalist lens providing a more detailed account of the ways and the extent to which the MD/ME arena can be understood as, and act as, an aspect of management development. It addresses the concerns of a functionalist discourse by examining its relationship to organizational goals and strategy as well as the extent to which it concurs with individual goals. This chapter surfaces areas of consensus and areas of dissensus between the stakeholders and a complexity of meanings in the arenas.

Chapter 7 introduces a rationale for adopting a more interpretative account by paying attention to the concerns of a constructivist discourse of management development. The empirical focus for this chapter is the HR professionals. It explores the meanings they attach to the MD/ME arena and finds that although they foreground a performative discourse in making sense of it there are also complex other meanings which concur and conflict with it. Thus creating tensions and contradictions for themselves and for the other stakeholders, in this chapter the consensual and dissensual aspects of the MD/ME arena are surfaced and theorised showing how it is one in which there are conflicts not only of meaning, but also conflicts of interest as these latter become suppressed to more performative agendas.

Chapter 8 takes the experiences of the academic managers as its empirical focus. In this chapter the constraints of a predominant discourse of performativity in the MD/ME arena are explored and theorised in relation to pedagogical processes and practice. In this the focus is the politics of the curriculum, assessment processes and the implications of the organizational presence and gaze. This gives rise to the possibility, but not inevitability, of the MD/ME arena as an aspect of social control through its acculturation tendencies. In this chapter, attention is paid to the concerns of a critical discourse of management development with an emphasis on the power relations in the arena in the context of the

workplace and all its attendant inequalities. Dimensions of sovereign power are manifested and analysed as management education becomes embroiled in workplace practices of human resource management and its ordering of organizational resources and rewards. This analysis also points to the identity implications of ‘becoming’ a better manager.

This is the focus of Chapter 9 which takes as its empirical focus the experiences of the participants in the MD/ME arena. Thus it pays attention to the concerns of a dialogic discourse of management development by analysing the implications of the arena for the struggles over identity and subjectivity. The chapter analyses this through an explanation of the ways that the techniques of HRM can be understood as discursive practice in the MD/ME arena. Thus the aspects of panoptic power are emphasised here. The empirical focus for the chapter is the experiences and perceptions of the participants. It is with regard to them that and the implications of panoptic power is analysed by paying attention to its constraining and productive effects. The chapter explores and theorises the extent to which this is not a ‘totalizing’ effect but argues that subjectivity and identity is a complex site of both domination and resistance and in this respect the power effects of the MD/ME arenas can only be understood in the specifics of localised contexts.

The last chapter concludes the thesis. Chapter 10 is structured by taking each of the research questions in turn to show how the empirical material together with the analysis provided in each of the preceding chapters addresses the research questions and aims. It concludes with a detailed consideration of the thesis contribution to knowledge and to the implications for further research.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has provided a rationale for the research demonstrating its commitment to exploring the MD/ME arena as a pluralistic one in which key stakeholders can be understood as having different, potentially conflictual interests and concerns. The thesis contributes empirically to the existing research on in-company accredited management development and education programmes, which is currently sparse, through the rigorous analysis of four case studies.

Current research in the field arises from within predominately normative and unitary frameworks and emphasises the homogeneity of purposes meanings and interests among stakeholders. It is argued here that a more critical understanding of such programmes is warranted. The empirical contribution of the thesis is to provide a critical and interpretative account of MD/ME arenas in four case study organizations. The theoretical contribution of the thesis is to be achieved by paying attention to the different concerns of four discourses of management development namely, functionalist, constructivist, critical and dialogic. Thus it produces a multi-discourse account of the empirical material whilst retaining its overarching ‘critical’ stance. This is reflected in the framing of the research questions which point to issues of ‘dissensus’ as well as ‘consensus’ and importantly to the issue of power and its’ effects in the MD/ME arena.

This chapter has argued that it has become common place and commonsense to regard the doing of ‘management education’ as ‘management development’ as unproblematic. On the contrary it appears as a natural, desirable, mutually beneficial phenomenon for all stakeholders. It is pertinent therefore in this thesis, to identify the multifarious discourses that have contributed to this conception. This is the purpose of Chapter 2, Exploring the discursive context, which now follows.

2. Exploring the discursive context

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the rationale for the thesis in the light of discourses of management development and management education which in turn have been influenced by and constituted in national, institutional and workplace factors. Discourses of management education and development can be observed to be circulating on and around other discourses of learning and knowledge. Current conceptions of management education and management development can be understood as shaped and constituted by those discourses which ‘naturalize’ the apparent commensurability between management education and management development and in particular the mutually beneficial outcomes of doing management education *as* management development.

This chapter identifies those discourses that can be understood as contributing to the ‘naturalization’ of doing management education as management development. I begin with the contested nature of management and trace the ontological and epistemological discourses on knowledge and learning. The chapter advances an argument that the growing disenchantment with formalized management education together with upsurge of interest in constructivist learning epistemologies serve to coalesce on the legitimacy of workplace learning, learning in work, and learning for work. Concerning the academy, discourses that circulate on the need to be more ‘relevant’ in teaching and research, press towards forms of ‘academy / work organization’ partnerships as if there were no troubling tensions and contradictions between them. Finally, the chapter shows how the prevailing discourses coalesce to present MD/ME programmes as not only unproblematic but a natural development between educational and organizational spheres.

The expression ‘naturalize’ is used consciously here, drawn from Critical Theory’s (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 84) proposition that when social formations are abstracted from ‘historical conflictual sites of origin and treated as concrete, relatively fixed’ entities they appear as un-problematically self evident and un-challengeable. Accordingly, one role of *ideology critique* is to say something of the social forces which press toward that

consensus (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 85). The theoretical relevance for critical research of disrupting naturalized understandings is elaborated in Chapter 3 of the thesis. For now it is enough to say that some sense of past, as well as present struggles over discourse, exploring the contingent processes by which things come to be understood as they are, is helpful in disrupting the social formation's relatively 'fixed' appearance (see for example, Foucault's 'historian of the present', 1977; and Barratt, 2008). Whilst it is not the purpose here to provide a genealogy of management discourse, it is nonetheless pertinent to point to the way in which there has emerged a consensus (albeit precarious) about the taken-for-granted, commonsense and naturalized views of management and its development, inside or outside of the academy.

Management as a contested category: professional artistry gives way to management theory

Management education and management development are themselves contestable, emergent and unstable categories. That is to say they have no fixed meaning and what they come to mean in any wider social and / or localized context is historically contingent and socially constructed (Lees, 1992; Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 43; Cullen and Turnbull, 2005). This, at least in part, is attributable to the problematic nature of what management is, what it is for and its own status as a contestable category (Grey, 1999; Willmott, 1997; Golding and Currie, 2000).

This can be illuminated by a consideration of the social forces in which management emerged as a practice and the institutions (governments, professional bodies, and the academy) which claim a stake in determining what it is and what it should be. Despite its contestation in certain academic circles 'management' is nevertheless generally understood as the 'scientific' improvement of the practice and functions of organization(s) and organizing. As such it contains the assumption that questions of efficiency, effectiveness are central in both theory and practice (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, 1: Grey and Willmott, 2005). In this characterization managers are construed as the vehicles of a technical rationality, enacting instrumental means-ends decisions and behaviours thus privileging a 'technicist' view of management and managers (Rigg, 2007: 10; Dispenza, 2000: 21). Constructed in this way, it is implicit that the development of individual

managers or the collective of ‘management’ largely depends on enhancing skills knowledge and attitudes in its various cognitive and behavioural configurations for the purpose of improved organizational performance. However, it is precisely because of its positioning as both *practice* and *theory* that has given rise to discourses about *what* skills, *what* knowledge and *what* attitudes can be thought to be enhancing of the managerial technician project.

Discourses which circulate around ‘management as a profession’ emphasize its ‘*practice*’ dimensions, practical know-how, ‘real world’ knowledge and accumulated life/business experience (Mintzberg, 2004; Revans, 1987). Alternatively discourses which incline towards ‘management as science’ emphasise scientific and theoretical dexterity, the acquisition of abstract knowledge which can subsequently be applied to performative effect (Donaldson, 2005; Moss Kanter, 2005). These discourses can be traced to the emergence of management as discursive practice in reformulations of economic social relations necessitating the control of worker behaviour (the conditions of developing industrialized capitalism) and found expression in the work of Taylor and Fayol in their assertions of managerial prerogative in those processes (Taylor, 1911; Fayol, 1949).

Moreover, the conflictual problematic of *management theory vs management practice* played out in the struggle between the academy, and professional and social agencies, as to how management and management knowledge can be conceptualized. Early 20th century conceptions posited management as a social *practice* which prohibited its constitution as an academic discipline (Engwall 2007). In this formulation management knowledge, in concert with that of other professions, for example engineering or medicine, should be governed from within the profession, if indeed accepting that *knowledge* was a prerequisite to practice in a profession where prevailing norms embraced:

“trial and error, on the job learning and the passing of accumulated skills and abilities from one generation to another” (Raelin, 2007: 498)

In characterizing it thus, management-as-practice was construed as *a-theoretical*, having no established research base and relying on homilies rather than scientific enquiry.

Despite this, the growing importance of commerce and business nevertheless predicated management as an academic discipline (that is, ‘business education’) located within the academy and based on a rational analytical curriculum with less emphasis on practice or vocational instrumentality (Armstrong and Fukami, 2009: 5). The establishment of management as a ‘science’ was thus bolstered by, and anchored to, abstract theory and codified knowledge in what continues to be the basis of business and management curriculum, that is, the functional disciplines of finance, economics and marketing etc. The discursive and historical institutionalisation of management education occurred along different time lines across North America and Europe, but it occurred nonetheless. In doing so it adhered to and promulgated a characterisation of management, management knowledge and management education as causally related to organizational and national economic performance.

The establishment of the academic disciplines of management and business education and the prevalence of a management-as-science took strong root in the academy and especially as business education began to flourish. Boyatzis (1997) observed of the 1990s that globally some \$37 billion dollars were estimated to have been spent in the development of managerial capacity a factor related to a perception of its role in securing organizational economic survival and future competitiveness (Easterby-Smith, 1994: 3). The discursive establishment of management education (as science) together with its assumed link with individual, organizational and national performance precipitated the growth of business school education. Postgraduate management qualifications, specifically Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and its composite awards, Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) and Postgraduate Certificate in Management Studies (PGCM) grew exponentially in the late 20th Century, along with higher education sectors, and MBAs in particular were a much sought after means of demonstrating managerial qualities (Williams, 2010: 28; Prince and Beaver, 2004)¹.

¹ These developments in North America and the UK were preceded by the commissioning of, and publishing by influential bodies notably the Ford and Carnegie Foundations in the former (Gordon and Howell, 1959; Pierson, 1959) and in the UK, The report into Higher Education (Robbins, 1963) and the Franks report (1963)

2.2 Management-as-science: a dominant discourse under siege

One effect of the established management-as-science discourse was that it acted to legitimize the profession of, or category of, management as one which was underpinned by established knowledge (positivist knowledge or what Garrick calls ‘scientific realism’ 2000: 203). A second effect was, that through the identification of a core curriculum, both the academy and the profession could be defended from ‘commercialization, commodification of professional knowledge and rampant vocationalism’ (Donaldson, 2002; Trank and Rynes, 2003).

In posing it thus, the discourse of management science, based on accepted theory and taught in formalized credentialing institutions, becomes oppositional to those discourses which foreground practice and experience where learning happens (transferred or constructed) by doing the job. Thus management knowledge becomes uncoupled from its practice base as management-as-science becomes a privileged discourse, marginalising even oppositional to, other practice-based knowledge forms.

Two challenges to the dominance of this discourse have more recently disconcerted the worlds of management educators. The first of these concerns the relevance of theories constructed as management science and the second concerns the role of experience in knowledge construction. Both questions are underpinned by ontological and epistemological issues and are pertinent to what is privileged as management knowledge and who says what it is and what it is for.

In exploring the first of these questions, the discourse of *management knowledge as science*, assumes an ontological stance of realism in which positive science suggests an ‘out there’ reality capable of apprehension with the ‘right’ analytical tools and theories. Therefore accepting this stance, the challenge is to find the ‘right’ tools and teach the ‘right’ theories. The management-as-science discourse accedes that the academy and its incumbents are appropriately the guardians of knowledge as *experts*. Consequently *learners* are constructed as the, more or less, passive recipients of representational knowledge. It conforms to a construction of knowledge ‘acquisition’ in which the expert,

the learner and the knowledge are construed to be ontologically coherent and separate (Fenwick, 2008a).

However the last decade has seen an onslaught of critique from within this discourse. In this construction, critiques of management education circulate on the following arguments:-

Recent critiques of management education

Insufficiently robust theories are being taught therefore there needs to be a stronger positivist basis for knowledge (Donaldson, 2002, 2005). The wrong type of theory is being taught because it reifies organizations and is unable to account for complex behavioural and political contingencies (Mintzberg, 2004). Teaching is in the wrong hands as the academy shows signs of inadequately qualified staff without the necessary terminal degrees (AACSB, 2002). Even if adequately qualified, faculty don't have 'real' business experience and are therefore not credible (Clinebell and Clinebell, 2008: 99). Including external practitioners won't rectify this because they don't understand the educational process and might undermine or dilute it (Fowler, 2005: 4). Efforts to compensate for lack of business experience through case study pedagogical methods are fruitless, especially if taught to the wrong students (Mintzberg, 2004). This is accentuated when the business school business model is construed as that of 'cash cow' (Gustavs and Clegg, 2005), driving pedagogical forms which privilege economies of scale. Western models of knowledge and theorizing are inadequate in the globalized economy (Mintzberg, 2004). 'Silo type' disciplinary mentalities are an anathema to understanding complex problems from interdisciplinary standpoints (Chia, 2005).

Finally, theoretical models which contain ideological distortions teach managers unethical practice as the academy is active in:

“Legitimizing some actions and behaviours of managers and delegitimizing others by generally shaping the intellectual and normative order” in which “Bad management theories are destroying good management practice” (Ghosal, 2005: 75)

In this, Ghosal specifically refers to the unethical practices of Enron, Tyco and to which we could now add many others and, rather unusually for a contributor to the 'management-

as-science’ discourse, has concluded that management education has become a hegemonic tool in the promulgation of economic liberal doctrines (2005: 77). A view supported by Pfeffer in observing:

“if anything Ghosal understates the potential downside to the inculcation and acceptance of economic language, assumptions and theory” (Pfeffer, 2005: 97)

The condemnation of current practice is further reinforced (if any were necessary) by the narrow focus of business and management research which excludes notions of ‘the public interest’ (Walsh, et al. 2003) and lacks interest in the professionalization of management, that is in so far as a profession has concerns with values, “the why and what of management action not just the how” (Pfeffer, 2005: 99)

Taken together, the critique of formalized management education under the auspices of the academy can be characterized as having taken something of a battering in the face of an accumulating discourse challenging its exclusive authority in the shaping of management knowledge and the education of managers.

Moreover this critique has been underscored by another parallel critique of the extent to which the academy is sufficiently equipped not only in terms of pedagogical orientations but also in terms of its role as ‘knowledge producer’. In other words the extent to which the academy is best placed to host business and management research amidst claims that it is too esoteric, abstract or just too inaccessible (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 182).

It can be argued that the discursive struggles over the relevance and applicability of business and management research, has manifested itself through the schematization of academic knowledge into ‘modes one and two’. Gustavs and Clegg (2005: 11) have observed that with the increasing acceptance of the “economic value of knowledge as a source of competitive advantage” there has emerged a more ‘utility’ view of it. The categorization of knowledge into ‘modes one and two’ attest to this more performative attitude to knowledge. Mode one knowledge is associated with conventional disciplinary ‘management as science’ frameworks whilst mode two is concerned with the context of application, deriving from ‘trans-disciplinary’ approaches and can be more easily associated with workplace knowledge (Gibbons et al. 1994; *British Journal of*

Management, 2001). In this characterization mode one knowledge occurs from within the context of the academy whilst mode two is more likely to emerge from the workplace.

The vocabulary of modes one and two are problematic in many ways, perhaps introducing ‘false’ divisions but it is a discourse that is taking root as changes in research funding streams attest. What is significant to the discussion here is that the category of mode two knowledge legitimizes “knowledge of the workplace” and eradicates the pejorative connotations that might be associated with it. Moreover, mode two knowledge resonates with other theoretical positions that posit ‘experience’ and ‘practice’ as inherent learning and knowledge, for example, Polanyi’s distinction between ‘tacit’ and ‘explicit’ knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) and aligns with “a new interest in ‘experiential’ ‘situated’ and ‘informal’ knowledge” (Gustavs and Clegg, 2005: 12)

The pedagogical critique of the academy together with the challenges posed by the discursive shifts in knowledge has led to calls that more holistic and relevant management education (and indeed research) would be better placed were it more integrated with practice and ‘governed’ with input from practitioners and professional bodies (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005: 103).

2.3 Knowledge as constructed through reflection and practice: a ‘practice turn’ fore-grounds ‘reflection’

The re-introduction of practice here, leads to the second of the questions identified above, concerning the role of *experience* in knowledge construction and this, it can be argued, poses a more powerful epistemological challenge to the academy’s role as the exclusive ‘guardian’ of knowledge. Raelin (2007) has observed that the privileging of an empiricist (positivist) academic epistemology has fuelled the charge that the academy is unconnected to real-world problems and equally significantly, has driven a conceptual wedge between theory and practice (2007: 498). Similarly, Knights purports that in the search for ‘scholarly respectability’ practice, as a form of knowledge, is subordinated in favour of theory-as-scientific endeavour (Knights, 2008: 538).

Whilst accepting that this resonates with the critiques of *pedagogy* advanced from within the academy, it can be detected that there has been something of a paradigm shift in

considerations of what constitutes knowledge and how that relates to the social processes of learning. This shift centres on the primacy attributed to the role of experience and reflection in learning and the propensity of these to be part of the process of knowledge construction. It represents an ontological and epistemological shift towards subjectivist and constructivist conceptions of learning as advanced by Fox (1997:27) in his consideration of situated learning.

There are two dimensions of this that are worth paying further attention to here. First is the increasing prominence attributed to the role of reflection in learning not simply as an instrument to learning, or a cognitive tool with which to apprehend the outside external world, though this is a factor. Rather reflection has increasingly become constructed as constitutive of the learning process. For example, in Kolb's (1976) learning cycle, (experience – reflection – abstract conceptualization – active experimentation), both reflection and practice are construed as equally important in the learning process as theory. Indeed taken together with active experimentation it could be deduced that practice / reflection elements are more important than opportunities for abstract conceptualization or rather this aspect of learning might not need to embrace 'scientific theory' but insights from elsewhere (others' experiences). This aligns with what Raelin proposes as an 'epistemology of practice' (2007: 500) in which experience (practice) is repositioned as a necessary pre-requisite to learning and knowing.

This resonates strongly with other conceptions of learning that foreground reflection on practice and reflecting in practice that have become central to discourses in the management development and organization development (OD) arena. Revan's (1998) action learning, Schon's (1983) reflective practitioner, Argyris and Schon's (1978) double loop learning all emphasise the connectedness between experience-reflection-action as central to learning and are prevalent in the Organizational Learning literature (Easterby Smith *et al* 1999) and in the vocabularies of OD and HRD practitioners. Perhaps it is not coincidental that the concerns of this literature have promulgated the better understanding of learning processes so that they might contribute more effectively and immediately to organizational performance and effectiveness. In this discourse the effects of learning have an apparent performative dimension in ways that the *management-as-science* has not. Rather in the latter, its usefulness (to management practice,

organizations and society will always be ‘deferred’). Moreover, its usefulness to the individual may align a ‘knowledge as acquisition’ construction with its ‘banking’ possibilities to be exchanged as ‘human capital’ in the labour market (Freire, 1972: French and Grey, 1996).

Accepting that it is easier to make the link between ‘relevance’ and practice-based forms of knowledge there is the second dimension of this discourse to pay attention to and that is its ontological and epistemological departure from an empiricist academic epistemology. In practice-based forms, knowledge and learning are not construed as ontologically and epistemologically distinct. The doing is the knowing and the knowing is the learning and the doing. Thus, knowledge and meaning and learning are inextricably bound up with practice (for a good example from non-academic literature see Pirsig, 1974). This is because neither language nor knowledge is understood to be representational but *constitutive* of meaning. Thus it can be characterised as ‘constructionist and situated’ in which the main principles are suggested as:

- Learning occurs when there is reflection on practice
- Through reflection, experience is reorganised to produce new meanings
- Reflection involve an internal dialogue in the head about the lessons of experience and external dialogue with others
- Focussed enquiry of this kind leads individuals to change their mental models. This may mean different behaviours and new learning

(Elkjaer, 1999:75)

Thus knowledge and learning can be conceptualized independently of formal theory, credentialed courses and academic institutions, occurring instead (or as well) in communities of practice (COPs, Lave and Wenger, 1991) action learning sets (Revans, 1987: Pedlar, 2005) or in T Groups (Lewin, 1951) and other social contexts.

This more experiential discourse of knowledge and learning as situated and constructed has both emancipatory and dominating aspects. Emancipatory, on the one hand, because of its potential to reveal hidden relations of power and to provide new vocabularies and ways of reframing experience leading to more just social forms. Alternatively *dominating*

because in constructivist approaches to learning and knowledge there is an inherent tendency towards *a*-political constructions of knowledge and ‘consensus’ worldviews (Contu and Willmott, 2003; Contu *et al.* 2003). In these ways certain constructivist formulations tend to look more at the processes of learning in the construction of meaning and less at the unequal power relations in which those processes take place. This is significant because the workplace is generally the assumed or primary site of learning in most considerations of constructivist management education and development. This is explored below but first it is pertinent to point to the dual prospects of emancipation and domination.

Humanist concerns in constructivist discourses of learning and knowledge: a ‘practice’ turn gets the moral high ground

Taking its emancipatory aspect here, reflection on practice poses the possibility that, in its uncoupling from a dominant academic epistemology and domesticated knowledge, it can escape from the prevailing, historically contingent, hegemonic power relations. Reflection on practice and experience can thus facilitate a ‘reframing’ of what’s going on in the world and one’s own position in it. It can be ‘unmasking’ in its propensity to reveal understandings sustained by the privileged position of powerful groups and ‘disruptive’ of normalized discourses. Thus it can be a basis for social action, challenge and change as opportunities (alternative discourses) are made available for self-emancipation, democratic knowledge and ultimately a more just society, as subjugating economic and social relations are revealed as such (Freire, 1972; Brookfield, 2005; Habermas, 1984).

This is underscored by a powerful humanistic tradition located in the discursive trajectories that can be traced to Critical Theory and beyond that to Marx. Thus, learning and knowledge are harnessed to self and social discovery in the accomplishment of freedom from communicative distortions (ideologies) and false consciousness (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 88). At the heart of this tradition is the ideal that knowledge and learning are associated with an emancipatory project.

Although the vocabulary used here emphasises its more ‘macro’ humanist dimensions, its emancipatory promise can also be detected in the microcosms of the classroom (or training room) and the micro emancipations through learning. This is evident through the

discourse of Critical Management Education (CME sibling of CMS), where the concern for more democratic learning and teaching, and its trials, is well rehearsed and where the difficulties and ironies of working with constructivist/situated knowledge approaches in an ‘academic empiricist epistemic’ environment is also well documented (Reynolds, 1999; Reynolds and Trehan, 2000; Rigg and Trehan, 2008; Elliott, 2008; Fenwick, 2005).

At the same time the principles underpinning this humanistic discourse can be detected beyond the classroom in the micro emancipations occurring in the reclaiming and reframing of experience such as in the second wave of feminism articulated through consciousness raising arenas and exploring ‘the personal as political’ in both feminist and anti-racist movements. Indeed some adherents of this discourse pose that the reflection and questioning of experience is the epitome of learning, the *antithesis* of ‘expert knowledge’ as expressed by Carl Rogers:

“It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significant influence on behaviour. That sounds so ridiculous that I cannot help but question it at the same time as I write it....

I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered, self appropriated learning....

As a consequence I have lost interest in being a teacher...

When I try to teach, as I sometimes do, I am appalled by the results, which seem little more than inconsequential, because sometimes the teaching appears to succeed. When this happens I find the results are damaging. It seems to cause the individual to distrust his own experience and to stifle significant learning....”

(Roger’s 1967: 276)

In these quite powerful position statements learning and its resulting ‘knowledge’ are posited as the very opposite of positivist constructions, centering as it does on the individual appropriation of learning through experience. The reframing of learning along these lines has led to a powerful discourse of ‘learner centeredness’, ‘self appropriated learning’, ‘independent learners’ and so on, frequently within the rubric of experiential

learning. Dalton has observed that such has become the interest in experiential learning that he notes its ‘irresistible rise’ (2010: 181). In the worlds of adult education there is much to point to demonstrating that current uses of the experiential learning vocabularies *and* its humanistic emancipatory prospects cohere with practitioners’ deployment of experiential learning approaches (Brookfield, 2005; Fenwick, 2001; Fenwick; 2008).²

Similarly, its uses in the management learning world, as attempted by scholars and educationalists of a critical persuasion (CME), evidence an ethical-political and *reflexive* approach to experiential learning. Demonstrating as they do, all the attendant difficulties arising from the institutional constraints of the academy and the implications of empowering (emancipating) managers to observe their own and others’ oppression and their own complicity in it (Trehan, 2008; Fenwick, 2005; Perriton 2007; Elliott, 2008).

The persuasiveness of ‘individualism’ in constructivist discourses of knowledge and learning

Both the institutions of mainstream higher education and the work place organizations are implicated in the decoupling of constructivist knowledge/learning from its humanistic traditions. In the academy, learning technologies (social as well as technical) which emphasise ‘independent and empowered learners’ can serve to disguise resource limitations and economies of scale and to ‘individualize’ learning in ways that theorists elsewhere have critiqued as the pressure to become ‘enterprising selves’ (Ball, 2000: 18).

The discourse of experiential learning is powerful in its suggestions of ‘autonomy’, ‘individual responsibility’, ‘independent learning’ and in this way it strongly resonates with deeply engrained Western values and commitments in its appeal to possessive individualism (Macpherson 1962). This is a construction in which ‘individual’ freedom,

² Indeed, there has been a strong and coherent tradition in the Adult Education world engaging with critical theory and radical pedagogical practice concerned with empowering disadvantaged and less powerful groups, perhaps now threatened by changes in Government funding. The recent Closure of East Coast University’s Centre for Life Long Learning – previously Centre for Adult Education – previously Centre for Adult Education and Trade Union Studies attests to the victims of recent policies as well as to the discursive closure in its exclusion of particular social actors from the formal higher education arena.

responsibilities and rights are underscored by specific notions of ‘individual freedom’ aligned with the political strictures of Western constructions of ‘liberal democracy’ (Macpherson, 1979). ‘Liberal’ can be construed as to do with individual freedom “it can mean the equal and effective freedom of all to use and develop their capacities” (Macpherson 1979: 1), thus cohering with the humanist orientations outlined above. Alternatively it can be understood as to do with economic freedom as in “the freedom of the stronger to do down the weaker by following market rules” (1979: 1).

The point here is that notions of individualism and freedom are anchored to historical political and economic social relations and are not neutral. How could one be against freedom or democracy? But as Macpherson indicates, the very terms work to disguise underlying power relations. Just as easily, how can one be against the notion of ‘independent learner’ and ‘learner centeredness’? The significance here lies not in what the terms ‘mean’ but the meaning invested in them in the institutional settings where they occur and the social practices that flow from them. It is precisely upon this point that Brah and Hoy reflect in their observation of the way that ‘experiential learning’ and ‘learning from experience’ may be understood in some contexts as ‘social transformation’ and in others (they refer to the economic climate of Britain in the 1980s but it is equally, arguably more, applicable in the current era) as concerned with economic outcomes. Thus ‘experience’ itself can be understood as an ideological construct and experiential learning can be understood in its political now, as well as humanistic dimensions (1990: 70-71).

Moreover, the constructivist discourse with its vocabularies of ‘learner centeredness’ and the implied promises of experiential learning, (and reflecting on practice, learning and reflection) as reproductive of ‘significant’ meaning and autonomy provides a powerful and persuasive discourse that resonates deeply with philosophical roots of individual and inalienable freedoms. It is a discourse however, that is amenable to ends other than emancipation and respect for the individual. There are many ways in which the vocabularies are used in ways that do not necessarily (or even at all) serve those interests.

As a discourse, uncoupled from its emancipatory traditions, it has significant power effects both in work organizations and the social institutions concerned with learning and knowledge. There are many accounts of the possible (performative) pitfalls of reflecting

on experience independently of *critically* reflecting upon the social, ethical and political forces which are constitutive of that experience and the circumstances in which it occurs (Reynolds, 1999; Vince, 2002; Rigg and Trehan, 2004).

At the level of the organization this primarily relates to the arenas of HRM and HRD. At the wider institutional level (professional bodies and government agencies etc.), it concerns the primary areas of policies and practices that shape the learning / knowledge agenda. The discourse of experiential learning has entered arenas much less concerned with emancipation and much more concerned with ‘performance’ and Dalton suggests that this is the more explanatory factor in its irresistible rise. Whilst part of the interest in experiential and reflection / action modalities can be characterized in terms of the disenchantment with formalized management education, far more persuasive factors contribute to the “new hegemony of informal (experiential) learning” (Dalton, 2010: 181).

2.4 The performative dimensions in constructivist discourse of knowledge and learning: the rise of workplace learning

It can be argued that in its performative aspects that there has been an upsurge of interest in informal and situated learning especially concerned with how it can be instrumental in improving individual, workplace and even national performance. Elkjaer has observed that the vast majority of theorising in organizational learning is of a normative character and addresses a ‘market’ interest (1999: 76). This is very evident in the ‘Knowledge Management’ literature in which the purpose is to render visible and useful tacit knowledge which can be disembodied and be expressed through new systems of codified knowledge and new processes of sharing what is learned. Thus defined by Scarborough and Swan as:

“Any process, practice of creating, acquiring, capturing and using knowledge, wherever it resides in the organization, to enhance learning and organizational performance” (1999: 4)

Indeed, according to Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008:84) Nonaka's notion of knowledge management (1995) exemplifies the essence of performative constructivist discourse in the way that it assumes that individual learning is primarily to serve the purposes of the organization. In this formulation it is incumbent on the organization to control what and how learning occurs and what use it is put to. Knowledge here is perceived to be key in leveraging competitive advantage and organizational performance in the context of globally competitive markets and economies increasingly characterized as 'knowledge economies' requiring 'knowledge workers' who continuously update and refresh their knowledge and skills facilitating organizational renewal and innovation (Gustavs and Clegg, 2005).

The characterisation of 'knowledge economies' and 'knowledge workers' has been critiqued as disguising the 'de-skilling' tendencies of modern work (Keep and Mayhew, 1998). The knowledge economy / knowledge work discourse distorts perceptions of modern work by ignoring how much 'service work' is either 'manual' or has been subjected to Tayloristic controls (Thompson and Smith, 2010). It is however a persuasive discourse resonating with conceptions of organizational learning (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 1999), the learning organization (Senge, 1990) and life-long learning (Coffield, 1999), which in turn are seen to be crucial in contributing to organizational and national performance.

Such discourses are strongly 'consensus' orientated and most significantly they have been central to posing the workplace as a learning arena equally plausible to that of the academy. Reframing learning and knowledge as derived from reflection on practice, has prised open its performative potential in the respect that both its location and its focus can legitimately be the work place and workplace practice.

The methodologies of action learning and organization development and termed by Raelin as 'action modalities' (2009) emphasise learning's situated character and Fox (1997) has asserted Lave and Wenger's (1991) work draws attention to its informal, practice aspects. In this way situated learning is conceived as an analytical viewpoint which distinguishes between 'learning' and 'intentional instruction' (Fox, 1997: 29). As articulated by Fox, situated learning is underpinned by a critique of traditional models of education and

learning thus: “Schooling produces what might be called ‘communities of discourse’ rather than ‘communities of practice’” (1997: 30). Therefore situated learning discourse enables a differentiation of ‘talking about’ (management) from ‘talking from within’ the practice of management.

Posing the workplace as a site of learning, and reflection on work as ‘knowledge producing’ changes the contours of learning and knowledge discourse in eradicable ways. Fenwick has observed that a focus on workplace learning has surfaced many aspects of learning that have previously not been to the fore including:

- The extent to which ‘learning as acquisition’ has been subsumed by ‘learning as knowledge production models’
- The significance of ‘sense-making’ and reflective ‘meaning making’ in workplace learning
- The use of network learning for organizational knowledge transfer
- Learning as ‘boundary’ crossing to exploit knowledge and promote knowledge sharing
- Individual learning in promoting self directed learning capability
- What community environments promote learning
- Communities of practice
- Learning as knowledge creation through social participation in work

(adapted from Fenwick, 2008b)

Despite these developments she observes that there has been little consideration of the way in which the ‘context’ of workplace learning is infused with power relations. Rather, research and theory have instead been preoccupied with the social practices of learning as abstracted from workplace and wider issues of power. In referring to current research in the field Fenwick observes that:

“Given the importance of power relations in (workplace) learning the low attention paid to power is significant...In empirical studies where power is mentioned the reference is often kept general or focused on the micro-politics of the organization rather than systemic analyses of how power functions to position people and practices, promote interests, recognize some knowledge and ignore others”

(Fenwick, 2008b: 239).

The under recognition of power in workplace learning is partly explained by its appearance as naturally a good thing and others have noted the tendency for the discourse of learning to be uncritically associated with an inherently ‘good’ in itself irrespective of what is being learned and the purposes to which knowledge serves.

Learning – that’s a good thing right?

Contu *et al.* (2003) and Contu and Willmott (2003) have observed that discourses concerning situated learning and organizational learning have become embraced in ‘wider learning discourses’ (Contu *et al.* 2003: 931). This discourse poses ‘learning’ as ubiquitous in its coupling to almost anything (learning organization, learning communities, lifelong learning etc.) and in so doing it imbues whatever coupling it is associated with an inherent ‘progressiveness’. In this way the discourse directs attention away from issues of power and inequalities embedded in learning contexts and even in learning processes themselves. Similarly, Ortenblad (2002: 88) observes that whilst the subject of learning in the organizational context has become ‘incredibly popular in the last two decades’ seemingly ‘bewitching’ an extensive and impressive array of theorists (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Senge, 1990; Pedler et al. 1991; Brown and Duguid, 1991; Garvin, 1993), research has tended to err towards normative and prescriptive concerns and been much less inclined to adopt a critical stance.

Constructivist learning discourse then has been clearly linked to organizational performative contingencies as learning outside of formal education and inside the workplace gathers momentum as legitimate and important for organizations, individual and society. It has similarly been reinforced by national, even international agendas and

policy making which identify life-long learning as central to social and economic performance and development. Coffield (1999) has observed that a consensus has emerged which poses education as the key to economic competitiveness and moreover that it elevates ‘human capital’ as the most important causal factor in determining national success. Thus spotlighting individuals’ own responsibility to continually up-skill and remain flexibly employable in the globalized economy and overshadowing other (governmental, institutional and organizational) responsibilities to invest in infrastructure, technologies etc. and to address inequalities in labour markets. Continuous reports from the OECD reinforce the life-long learning panacea to all economic ills (OECD, 2007; Gustavs and Clegg, 2005). So influential is this consensus that Coffield refers to it as the new orthodoxy in which the discourse of education becomes subjugated by the discourse of economics where:

“education is no longer viewed as a means of individual and social emancipation, but as either ‘investment’ or ‘consumption’, as having ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’, and ‘stocks’ which ‘depreciate’ as well as ‘appreciate’ and is measured by ‘rates of return’. (Coffield, 1999: 485)

The uncoupling of learning discourse from an academic epistemology thus legitimates the site of learning as the workplace and in reframing learning and knowledge as primarily concerned with economic gains provides it with a now performative rationale ever more clearly. Moreover the workplace-learning legitimacy has also fostered a ‘competence’ discourse of learning and knowledge, whilst not in itself ‘constructivist’ (ironically ‘competence’ measurement suggests a positivistic underpinning), it nevertheless borrows heavily from the ‘practice turn’ in learning through its assumptions that learning for work is equally legitimate as learning about work.

2.5 Management development, competency discourse: strengthening the voice of HRD

Subsequent on the publication of certain notable reports identifying the ‘lamentable state’ of management training in the UK (Mangham and Silver, 1986: 12), the 1980s saw a more concerted governmental effort to institutionalise and professionalize aspects of management development which hitherto enjoyed a dubious status as a profession

(Thomson *et al.* 2001: 45). Both the Handy and Constable McCormick reports of 1987 indicated that there were no available means by which to monitor and influence trends, an issue that became much more of a priority as management development came to be associated with broader economic aims (Tamkin and Denver 2006: V) and its lack, the cause of economic failure (Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership (CEML), 2002: 4).

This priority formed the backdrop to more governmental interest in the learning and development agenda, for example, the 1988 Green Paper ‘The Learning Age’ and the 1999 White Paper ‘Learning to Succeed’ both of which advance a discourse of the economic efficacy of life-long learning and advocated channelling funds through Learning Skills Councils in support of practice based management National Vocational Qualifications framework (NVQs). Thus discourses of management development circulated on the importance of the national economic contribution of management and the enhancement of management capability through practice – based learning (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 55)

In promulgating a discourse of competency, governments, associated quangos and social institutions are implicated in the very technologies of learning *per se*. The ubiquity of the competence movement attests to this, emerging from the United States in the 1970s (Iles, 1993) and gaining prominence in the UK during the 1980s, under the auspices of the Management Charter Initiative (MCI, an employer led consortium, the operating arm of the Council for Management Education and Development) established in 1987 with governmental support (Williams, 2010: 30). Competence based educational discourse hinges on the premise that effective management practice is universal and can be identified (Fennell, 1991: 10). Consequently these generic skills and knowledge can be codified (MCI competency standards) and measured (levels of competency achievement) and mapped on to credentialed awards (Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma in Management Studies and Master of Business Administration). Significantly, these are valued not only through traditional awards emanating from the academy but more usually through a parallel structure of awards (NVQs) governed by the MCI and professional bodies (for example, the Chartered Institute of Management).

It is hard to overstate the effects of the competency discourse in management education and most especially in management development. Whilst the take-up of competency-based management education in the academy (especially ‘red brick’ universities) has not been a dominating influence it has been taken up in the tertiary and the post 1992, ‘new university’ sectors (Prince and Stewart, 2000; Fox, 1997: 24), with programme designs linking to competency standards. Most significantly however is the extent to which it has firmly taken root in organizations that, with the exception of small companies, have been universal in identifying competency frameworks as a lynch-pin of HRM and HRD practice and strategy. As Mabey and Finch-Lees observe, competence-based approaches to management development are now “undeniably almost synonymous with progressive or best-practice HRM” in both the United States and across Europe (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 166; see also Mabey and Ramirez, 2004).

Competencies as a means through which to identify, measure and inculcate specific managerial capabilities has been widely critiqued on a number of different levels as being ontologically and epistemologically suspect and underscored by functionalist, unitarist assumptions (Holmes, 1993 and 1995; Antonacopoulou and Fitzgerald, 1996). Moreover, they can be understood as an aspect of micro-practices of disciplinary power invoking ‘examination’ of the self and ‘confession’ through the processes of appraisal and other technologies of HRD (Townley, 1994). These criticisms though are academic (in both senses), as competencies have become embedded in the language of HRM and HRD. Bolstered by the crude reality that government funding follows NVQ qualifications and best practice kite-marks, particularly Investors in People (IiP) accreditation, which specifically requires that the relationship between individual competencies and business strategy is identified and evidenced (Hoque *et al.* 2002).

It has also been observed that in foregrounding ‘performance’ as the means by which managerial effectiveness is measured, the competency approach privileges ‘*performance*’ over ‘*knowledge and understanding*’, in particular through assessment processes which emphasise evidencing observable behaviours. In this formulation knowledge and understanding is relegated as less significant, if it is at all, than performance (Hyland, 1993)

Antonacopoulou and Fitzgerald (1996: 27) have observed that despite a lack of consensus on how competency might be understood, it nevertheless provides a common language through which management development might be articulated and organized. This is not to suggest that the language of competency and indeed of workplace learning amounts to discursive closure, indeed there is much to suggest that competency approaches and workplace learning in general are sites of struggle, resistance and redefinition (Grugulis, 2002; Antonacopoulou, 2000; Currie, 1999). Rather, the competency discourse has provided a powerful vocabulary through which organizations, especially through the HRM/HRD function, can articulate performative requirements in the employment and deployment of learning approaches.

Discursive shift in management development

Dalton (2010: 179) points to the changing nature of managerial work, in which the emphasis is increasingly concerned with soft behaviour skills requiring sophisticated organizational knowledge, political dexterity and people skills. In this construction the focus in management development becomes the enhancement of managers and managements' capacity to develop flexibly through 'self-development' processes and preferably in the context of real work issues (Pedler *et al.* 2006). It can be argued that this orientation has become so much more accentuated as the focus has shifted to understanding effective management as 'leadership' where 'transformational' models have superseded 'transactional' ones in contemporary research (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2005 and 2001). Thus casting doubt on whether or not 'leadership' can actually be taught in formalized ways (Salaman, 2004; Mole, 2004; Antonacopoulou, 2004).

From a more political perspective, managerial work intensification resulting from restructuring, downsizing and efficiency seeking, together with constrained training and development budgets means that 'off the job training / education' is marginalized in favour of in-house 'coaching and cascading' interventions. This is both resource 'efficient' from the organizational perspective and is commensurate with an 'individualized' view of learning that places the responsibility for it on the individual who must ensure their own flexibility, employability and commitment by engaging in such processes (Dalton 2010: 181). Whilst this orientation has been critiqued as being at the very least 'one-sided' in

favour of the employer it is nevertheless a powerful discourse underpinned by the others circulating on ‘life-long learning’ (Coffield, 1999). The practice turn in management development can be detected through a discursive shift ‘away from’ management - as - science and ‘towards’ management - as- practice along several dimensions as follows:-

Shifts in management development discourse

From teaching to resourcing: The trend is away from formalized educational interventions (lectures and explicit teaching) and towards more interactive self learning. Increasingly teachers are becoming consultants and facilitators helping managers to define their own problems and work through them.

From programmes to contracts: more locally designed learning; less standardised packages based on predefined programmes of education. Less teaching as an end in itself; more learning as a process of individual discovery.

From individual to group orientation: Whilst traditional training emphasis has been on developing individuals, increasingly management learning is through the group, with teachers acting as facilitators of a ‘learning community’.

From standard cases to real cases: Moving from the study of case histories written up by professionals to learners considering cases which are current and real so that work experience is brought into the arena.

From delegating to developing: Line managers are increasingly involved in MD. They are required to allocate tasks not just on the basis of functional efficiency but also as a vehicle for development. They are increasingly held to account for the development of others.

From inputs to outputs: Moving from an ethos of filling people with knowledge and giving them skills to shape a climate in which people develop their knowledge and skills through projects which are supervised and guided

From fixed term to continuous education: Continuing professional development (CPD) is replacing education and training as a one-off episodic input for the professional. Learning is becoming more flexibly organized so that it becomes embroidered throughout a professional life.

From management education to experiential and 'existential' learning for managers:
Formal development still has its place but the educational process is moving nearer to managers' lives to connect with their existential reality. This means that learning is increasingly becoming embedded in the fabric of managers' work and directed by them.

Figure 1 adapted from Margerison, C. (1994)

In articulating it thus, a rather idealized ('consensus') perspective comes to the fore but one which resonates strongly with contemporary trends in management development interventions. Notwithstanding that the reality may be very different from the rhetoric of this 'new world' of management development; it nevertheless provides a legitimizing narrative for learning in the workplace. In shifting the responsibility to the 'learner' a whole range of planned, unplanned; formal, informal array of possible interventions, events and incidents can be conceptualized as 'learning opportunities' to be apprehended by the learner and characterized as management development (Thomson 2001: 145). The avocation to continuous life-long professional development uncouples management education from the auspices of the academy and asserts instead that significant learning will be self appropriated / constructed in the context of real issues thus achieving 'self-development' in concert with 'organization development' with clear claims on personal and organizational relevance. In this way the discourse privileges the workplace as the site of 'personal development' as it is here that real learning can be acquired through reflection on real issues.

This discursive shift has implications as shown above for what counts as learning and knowledge as well as legitimating the workplace as the site of learning. Now aligned with performative dimensions and economic vocabularies, constructivist and 'workplace learning' has provided the HRM and HRD function and profession with a powerful language with which to associate. In this association it aligns itself explicitly with organizational imperatives, stated goals and strategies. Increasingly, the language of strategic human resource management (SHRM) and strategic human resource development (SHRD) enter organizational narratives as the vehicles through which a whole array of possibilities can be secured including, employee commitment, performance management, culture control and transmission (Grugulis *et al.* 2000, Kamoche 2000), organizational

change (Gold *et al.* 2010) and strategic leadership (Woodhall and Winstanley, 1998). It is possible to see that the language of SHRM / SHRD itself becomes a significant discourse conferring a strategic legitimacy on the practices under these umbrellas, as well as a more authoritative organizational positioning, at least rhetorically and symbolically, for the function's incumbents. A good deal of 'strategic' language appears in the 'best practice' and 'best fit' literature for both HRM and HRD as claims are made for the possibilities of management development's contribution to a virtuous circle in linking individual development to business goals and performance (Guest, 2001; Purcell *et al.*, 2003; McCracken and Wallace, 2000).

2.6 The 'naturalized' partnership of the academy and the organizational workplace in learning and knowledge

It is in the context of the above discourses in which management development assumes more significance than hitherto. Moreover it is a context in which traditional pedagogies and epistemologies are construed to be insufficient to fully address that significance. Gold *et al* (2010: 33) assert that there has been a 'sea change' in attitudes according management development a greater priority and pressing for more innovative (or performative) forms of learning, a discourse that has been enthusiastically received by some commentators:

“..a revolution is happening between large companies and business schools. Traditionally, firms have taken a pick-and-mix approach (to management education and development), sending executives to a variety of schools or developing a relationship with a few academics. But companies are proving less willing than they were to accept the traditional fodder offered by schools, much of which is more aimed at achieving dry academic qualifications than appropriate learning. Many companies are now starting to demand more influence over the learning process.” (Clutterbuck 2000: 40)

The ‘influence over the learning process’ takes many different forms. One such form is that of credentialed in-company management development and education programmes such as those investigated here. The argument throughout is that these forms of management development and education (MD/ME programmes) are ones in which there is a presumed mutuality of interests of all stakeholders which occurs against the legitimizing backdrop of the discourses that the chapter has outlined and developed.

Certainly the development of in-house accredited management development / management education programmes can be seen as one aspect of organizational workplace influence over learning and to-date there has been little evaluation of the implications of such provision particularly not from a critical perspective. It is however relevant to indicate here the general thrust of the extant literature concerning such organizational / educational partnerships.

Some authors, for example Ryan (2009: 1315), explore the emerging phenomenon of university-corporate educational partnerships from the perspective of the corporately espoused rationales among which are:

- Credentialed awards can complement in house provision and build credibility for management development activities
- University awards are prestigious, validate knowledge and stand as a mark of achievement (which is seen as an important return for the investment of time and resources)
- Association with a university expands the available range of knowledge and was seen as important in a ‘knowledge economy’ and universities facilitate access to a vast array of contemporary research
- University association will provide a degree of challenge through the input of ‘objective knowledge’ and assist in the organization’s learning processes creating a mutually beneficial relationship

Attention is also drawn to the need for flexibility in structuring different level awards to suit the different levels of management in the organization and for the need for complementary institutional arrangements necessary for the effective management of such provision. A point taken up by others and which find a high degree of institutional

incommensurability given the different priorities and concerns of the academy on the one hand (high velocity teaching models and research) and for the priorities of corporate organizations on the other, (highly professionalized, customized, provision slickly managed training interventions), (Legge *et al*, 2007). A number of authors have concerned themselves with the issue of managing accreditation and demonstrating how issues of matching and mapping curriculum to organizational needs and competencies can be achieved (Prince, 2003; Dealtry, 2002).

There is a strand in this literature which can be characterized as descriptive and normative in showcasing good examples and citing successful ‘best practice’ in sustaining such partnerships (Prince, 2003) or developing models through which to manage validations, accreditations and delivery models (Stansfield and Stewart 2007:120). Much of the literature advocates practices and processes which take more account of the organizational ‘demand’ side in constructing learning architectures which accommodate clients’ internal career structures and needs (Dealtry, 2003).

Alternatively, commentaries focus on the changing role of the corporate education market and the implications for Business Schools in responding to the new demands. For example, Prince and Stewart (2000) argue that there is increased demand from corporate organizations for business schools to credential work-based learning with university awards (PGCM, DMS, MBA) and /or work in some form of consortia arrangements to align credit to management development interventions and to engage in APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning) to acknowledge learners already ‘acquired’ organizational skills and knowledge. Similarly, Watling *et al* (2003), have observed the trend for employers to move away from open programmes and instead commission their own corporate education initiatives, they cite Brown (1999), CEML (2002) and EFMD (2002) in substantiation of this claim.

Yet another strand to the literature addresses the question of academy workplace partnerships through an exploration of the concept and practice of the ‘corporate university’. This is one which can be conceptualized in many different ways including where there is no actual (or virtual) presence of the academy and the term is used symbolically to denote the organizing of work-based learning, not necessarily leading to

awards or credit, but rather serving the achievement of corporate goals and objectives acting as knowledge management systems and notions of organizational learning (Prince and Stewart, 2002). Paton *et al* (2004: 101) cite Hamburger U (McDonald's) and Motorola U as early famous examples but identify a massive growth in the phenomenon, particularly in the United States, in the fifteen years leading up to the publication of their article. The orientation here, as with the subsequent book (Paton *et al.*, 2005), is predominantly case – study – descriptive, mostly extolling these developments but occasionally pointing to their fragility (Matthews, 2005: 53). The corporate university phenomenon has also attracted attention in so far as it might more authentically be connected to the academy where the educational partner credentials aspects of an organization's management development provision and awards credit or qualifications (Dealtry, 2001 and 2002 and 2003; Prince and Stewart 2002).

The discourse pertaining to corporate universities in much of the literature is normative / prescriptive with any 'critique' being levelled at problems of implementation and mismatch of institutional arrangements. One exception to this is Antonacopoulou's contribution to Wankel and DeFillipi's edited collection 'Rethinking Management Education for the 21st Century' in which her chapter specifically critiques corporate universities as an aspect of the 'domestication' of management education. In this she asserts that "the drive behind the investment in corporate universities is not education for its own sake but for the organization's sake" thus drawing attention to their inherently performative purpose (2002: 192).

Similarly the above contributions relating to accredited in-company management education programmes take a mostly functionalist stance with the implication that such programmes can integrate individual interests into wider organizational interests if the right processes and mechanisms can be found. Even in Stansfield and Stewart's (2007) contribution, where different stakeholders are explicitly acknowledged, they are framed in such a way that presumes the priority of the particularity of business arrangements (i.e. business model, comprising *providers, commissioners, consumers, and verifiers*) rather than taking account of any power relations amongst the stakeholders and within the context of learning. A rather more evaluative study from within 'situated learning' theory is provided by Martin *et al* (2003) who drew attention to contextual barriers to knowledge

transfer in the company – based education programme they studied, but concluded nevertheless that knowledge transfer occurred in spite of rather than because of the organization.

Exceptions to the deployment of this normative paradigm include the work of Legge *et al.* (2007) and Thursfield (2008), who explore in-company accredited programmes also from constructionist perspectives. Their respective analyses rest on the extent to which such programmes can be characterized as aspects of ‘situated learning’ or ‘individual vs collective’ learning and in different ways they advance a critique that the organizational barriers are such that the aspirations for organizational and individual learning are generally frustrated. Similarly, Gustavs and Clegg’s (2005) study of a credentialed work-based learning programme unravels and critiques the power implications at both the institutional level and at the level of the learner, though this programme was exclusively work-based and not a hybrid of ‘formal’ lectures and work-based projects as in the case studies in this current study.

Concluding remarks

There are many critical studies of exclusively work-based learning demonstrating the politics of the workplace and the employment relationship (Fuller et al., 2004; Garrick, 1998; Rainbird, 2003), as well as critiques of specifically project-based learning (Garrick and Clegg, 2001; Rhodes and Garrick, 2003), and the constraints on workplace pedagogies (Rigg and Trehan, 2008). All of these complement the critical explorations of management learning more generally (Burgoyne and Reynolds, 1997; French and Grey, 1996). The purpose of the study presented here is to contribute to a more critical exploration of accredited (credentialed) in-company provision starting with Burgoyne’s notion that the management development arena is one in which there are multiple stakeholders and in which there can be detected different interests at play in the arena to be reconciled or to be *proliferated*.

This chapter has explored the differing discourses influencing that arena particularly those that blur the boundaries of formal learning (management education) and the less formalised processes of management development. Fox (1997) has asserted that the blurring of these boundaries warrants the adoption of a more inclusive term of

‘management learning’. Whilst this is a helpful construction generally to explore formal and informal aspects of learning and constructivist dimensions of knowledge, it is germane to this thesis that the separate institutional contexts of, on the one hand the academy and on the other hand the ‘host’ organizations are maintained. Thus the nomenclature *MD/ME arena* is used throughout to underline that these are *management education* programmes emanating from the academy with all its attendant institutional and pedagogical assumptions, requirements and concerns. At the same time they are initiated, sponsored and largely engaged in as *management development* initiatives, manifesting some similar, but inevitably some different interests, expectations and requirements. It is the intersection, the boundaries, the permeabilities, the compatibilities and the incompatibilities that are of interest here and the stakeholders’ perspectives are the starting point for this investigation.

This chapter has demonstrated that the shifting discourses in learning and knowledge have become much more embroiled with discourses which are inherently performative in orientation. The epistemological shift in approaches to learning and knowledge captures the language of emancipatory learner centeredness and learning from reflection. But in workplace contexts where experience and reflection are circumscribed by organizational power relations and knowledge is redefined for more performative ends as learning and knowledge become ordered and organized through the discourse of HRM and HRD.

It is in the context of these prevailing discourses that partnerships between the academy and workplace organizations appear as naturalized commonsense to mutual benefit of its stakeholders. It is the purpose of this thesis to contribute an alternative to those assumptions. The following chapter turns to discuss the conceptual framework underpinning the research.

3. Developing a conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I intend to explore the nature of management development theorising. Specifically the purpose is to identify the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of much management development theory with reference to developments in organizational theory which point to alternative conceptualizations. In doing so, I intend to locate my own theoretical positioning as somewhere at the confluence of critical theory and postmodern theory.

In undertaking this PhD project/journey/trajectory I originally imagined that I would, in the course of my reading and thinking, encounter a specific theoretical framework which I could lift from the shelf and say ‘that’s it’ ‘that’s what I am doing’ ‘Eureka – that’s me’ I am a ‘critical realist’ ‘post modernist’ ‘discourse analyst’ ‘whatever’ !! I have wrestled with this attempt to locate myself within a specific theoretical framework. In searching for the ‘holy grail’ I have engaged with many different specific theoretical orientations such as labour process theory, communities of practice, adult education, organizational learning and attempted to align my thoughts into each of them without much success and with many frustrations. In an earlier period I would have called myself a ‘Marxist’ believing, as I still do, that capitalism is an economic system with many structural inequalities. I now no longer believe that resistance is an inevitable outcome of structural antagonism and I increasingly adhere to a more social constructivist worldview, albeit one that is constructed in conditions not of our own making.

What to do? A PhD thesis can’t be theory-less. In the end what I came back to time and again was ‘critique’, ‘critical exploration’, ‘reflexivity’, ‘critical deconstruction’ so rather than claiming a specific theoretical framework I am identifying a theoretical orientation that involves critique. However, the adoption of a ‘theoretical orientation’, implies a world view, an approach to what counts as real (ontology) as well as a perspective on what counts as knowledge of that reality (epistemology). Labour process theories imply a

realist ontology and a positivist epistemology. Theories of communities of practice imply a subjectivist and constructivist epistemology. So where do I stand? In deciding this question I thought long and hard about the data I collected/generated and the stories that emerged from what I have characterised as my three groups of stakeholders, feeling compelled to tell their stories and mine, to do them justice. All of them in different ways could be understood to be negotiating their practice and meanings in the context of social relations of power, both complicit and resistant to them, both reproduced by them and productive of them. What follows in this chapter provides a rationale for departing from conventional functionalist interpretations of management learning and exploring the data generated by the research through a ‘critical’ lens. It explores why such a lens is a valid one in which to render the MD/ME arenas as ‘problematic’ and worthy of exploration in terms of asymmetries of power, conflicting interests and negotiated identities and follows Alvesson and Deetz (2000) in the deployment of an interpretative repertoire as necessary in producing ‘critical insight’. Moreover it locates the approach of this thesis with a cross paradigmatic exploration of the empirical material.

First though I begin with a discussion of ‘typical’ theories of management development to illustrate their limitations and thus provide a rationale for going beyond traditional conceptions.

3.2 Management development theorizing: critiquing descriptive and normative models

Burgoyne (1997: 3) proposed that there are four different types of theory that can develop our understanding of management development; normative, descriptive, interpretative, and critical. This provides a useful starting point in delineating the complex map of theoretical underpinnings that comprises the management learning landscape. Normative theory is that which looks to address the question ‘what should be done?’ A good deal of management development literature adopts this approach particularly in the world of HRM and HRD as it points to ‘desirable’ actions and practice. It prescribes what might constitute appropriate policies, strategies and interventions that would comprise effective

management development approaches and how these would contribute to the effectiveness of the development of individuals and organizations. For example, the literature on ‘best practice’ offers models which encapsulate ideas and practices that are deemed to ‘work’ and offer guides, or ways forward in achieving this. An example might be found in the work of Brown (2003, 2004, 2006) which both extols the value of strategic management development as a key to enhancing organizational performance and offers ‘key requirements for successful management development’ to provide a road map to achieving this success (Brown 2006: 38). Normative theory offers guides to action for organizations and practitioners and conceptual models as to what might be aspired to. In this sense it is both prescriptive and solution orientated but is less concerned with explaining why things are as they are.

This can be contrasted with ‘descriptive’ theory, the focus of which is to understand and make sense of what is going on. It comprises not so much a guide to action but rather seeks to represent patterns of behaviour, to understand the trends and to derive models and conceptual frameworks which aid understanding of these. Management development theory is littered with typologies that attempt to characterize the state or stage of management development practice in organizations. For example, the Ashton model of management development steps (Ashton 1975) in which management development is defined in formalistic and institutional terms linking levels of management development activity to the degree of commitment from senior and middle managers. In this model patterns of management activities are ranked in relation as to how seriously the organization takes management development. The patterns or steps identify the relationship between the degree of commitment to and the extent of management development, see figure overleaf.

Ashton’s Management Development Steps

Pattern 1	Little or no commitment to MD from line managers. Developing people is not seen as important and line managers don’t see it as their responsibility. MD is ignored or given only token attention. This is reflected in low levels of MD activity.
Pattern 2	Line managers are ambivalent about the merits of development and show only shallow commitment to MD. There is a slightly higher level of MD activity because line managers are inclined to ‘go along’ with it but there is not much attention to the quality of it as its value to the organization is unclear.
Pattern 3	A more balanced and integrated situation exists in which line managers embrace the development concept, attempt to develop a climate of learning in which MD is integrated in routine activities and embedded in organizational processes. MD may be difficult to detect because of this embeddedness, but is more effective because of this.

Figure 2 - adapted from Dalton (2010: 53)

Such a model as this does not ‘prescribe’ what should be done but offers a way of characterising the degree of, and the importance of management development that enables practitioners to locate their own organization’s practice and to consider whether or not that location is commensurate with their aspirations and what might need to change or be improved. In a similar vein, Burgoyne’s (1988) typology of the six levels of ‘maturity’ in management development practice plots the degree of sophistication with which an organization’s approach to management development is integrated with other HR strategies, policies and practices.

Such models capture the relationship that exist between management development and other HR systems; the extent to which it flows from systematic training needs analysis, the extent to which it integrates with appraisal, succession planning and career development, and ultimately the extent to which it relates to the strategic direction of the organization and feeds into the managerial processes of learning and change management. Again, such models do not *explicitly* ‘prescribe’ what organizations and practitioners should do, rather they offer a conceptual framework for analysing where the organization sits in relation to

the model. However, it could be argued that in such models there are some unexplored assumptions. For example, that management development is in itself a ‘good thing’ and that if it has managerial commitment (Ashton 1975), or if it is sufficiently integrated (Burgoyne 1988) then management development can make an effective contribution to organizational performance.

Management development ‘typologies’ such as these, infer an implicitly prescriptive agenda because although they do not overtly prescribe actions they imply that better organizational performance is predicated on having a higher degree of commitment to, or a more integrated approach to management development. Elsewhere Burgoyne and Reynolds have noted a tendency for descriptive theory to ‘turn back into’ normative theory (1997:3) because it can be interpreted as a guide to what ‘should’ or ‘must’ happen. Dalton (2010: 52) has observed that such models provide a useful way of thinking about and classifying, management development but they are ideological in the sense that they have a tendency to implicitly prescribe what would be an ‘ideal’ state. By suggesting progressive movements through a hierarchy the models predict what ‘successful’ management development would look like.

There is then a close relationship between normative and prescriptive theory and Burgoyne and Reynolds (1997: 4) note that they share a conservative tendency in positing a ‘common sense’ view of social phenomenon in which the prescriptions have a ‘taken for granted’ quality of ‘conventions’ to be learned or adhered to by relevant parties. What they do not do is try to explain things, such as, why is management development valued in some contexts and not others? Why are some organizations able to embed management development activities in a broader HR context and others not? Theories which adopt a more explanatory position are identified by Burgoyne and Reynolds as interpretative. ‘Interpretative’ is used by them to illustrate that any social phenomenon might be understood, interpreted, through a ‘whole range of available theories that attempt to reveal a deeper level of reality’ (1997:4). For example sociological or psychoanalytic theories are able to surface deeper understandings of why things might happen or not, by examining the underlying reasons for why things are as they are. Burgoyne and Reynolds suggest that ‘interpretative’ theories have been useful in the domain of management development in revealing the effects of behaviours and the implications for learning. At an interpersonal

level this might be about understanding the interaction of personality types (Belbin, 1981, Myers-Briggs, 1962), understanding the impact of emotions on learning (Vince, 2002b) or making sense of wider social processes that shape attitudes and roles in the workplace. Whilst interpretative theories point to explanations of why things occur, Burgoyne and Reynolds argue that these too share a normative dimension in that the provision of an explanation suggests a course of action which may be undertaken to improve individual and organizational receptiveness to management development process and interventions.

In contrast to normative, prescriptive and interpretative theories Burgoyne and Reynolds propose that critical theories have a different intention. Their purpose is not ‘solution’ orientated but ‘question’ focussed.

“An intention behind critical theory is the strengthening of normative, descriptive and interpretive theory by searching out their weak points” (1997:4)

Thus surfacing the difficult questions in management learning by exploring questions of social control, emancipation, ideology and morality, issues which have a tendency to be buried in management development practice but which are important to address. Critical theories in management development focus on questions of power. What or whose interests does it serve? Is it concerned with reinforcing or challenging inequalities? Can it be construed as ‘humanistic’ or ‘oppressive’? In seeking to pose these questions critical theories tend to explore the underlying assumptions and meanings in management development processes and interventions, unpicking the contradictions and tensions that exist between stakeholders and examining the social and organizational contexts in which they occur.

In distinguishing these approaches to management development theory, Burgoyne and Reynolds provide a starting point with which to develop a deeper understanding but in itself, their distinction between four types of management development theory falls into the category of descriptive theory which provides a classification but does not develop an explanatory framework. In order to do so it is relevant to consider the differing ontological and epistemological positions of management development theory. Inevitably this proceeds with a discussion of what is taken to be social reality; and how it can be understood and made sense of at a theoretical level.

3.3 Sociological paradigms: ontology and epistemology

An important theoretical development in organizational theory is found in the model originally proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979). It is worth focussing on this for two reasons. Firstly, to show how management development theory can be viewed through different ontological and epistemological prisms and secondly, because subsequent theoretical debate on what constitutes the realm and subject of management research and theory frequently refer to this as a reference point from which to develop or from which to depart (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000: 22). The elucidation of this and its trajectories pertinent to management development, assist in the search, my search, for a conceptual framework for this thesis.

Burrell and Morgan proposed that social theory can be located in terms of its position in relation to two significant axes. First, is the alignment of theory within an axis that identifies its propensity to make sense of the world in terms of its ontological orientation. This axis proposes that social theory may be either ‘objectivist’ in orientation or ‘subjectivist’ in orientation. This axis distinguishes what it is that we take to be social reality. An objectivist position accepts that there is an objective reality that exists independently of human consciousness. This suggests a reality in which the outside world is a concrete entity that is capable of being understood and made sense of providing we have the appropriate methodological tools, the scientific method, which when appropriately applied is able to generate new knowledge about the world and the phenomenon under investigation. An objectivist orientation is contrasted with a subjectivist ontological orientation. Subjectivism suggests that social reality does not have an existence that is separate from human consciousness. Rather, individuals actively interpret the outside world in relation to existent socio-historical and cultural contexts, past experience and prevailing discourses. Thus enabling individuals to make sense of, and construct their own meanings accordingly, in given specific contexts. Furthermore, in Burrell and Morgan’s model the objectivist/subjectivist divide relates to the agency/structure dualism and has implications for the conceptualisation of human action in the world. This is distinguished as a ‘voluntarist / determinist’ dualism. Voluntarism

foregrounds active human agency in making sense of the world through cognitive abilities and processes in contrast whilst ‘determinism’ focuses on the contexts and structures within which individuals exist and the extent to which these socialise and determine human consciousness, thus rendering individuals as relatively passive recipients of prior structures, definitions and interpretations.

The subjective – objective dimension

The subjectivist approach		The objectivist approach
Nominalism	<i>ontology</i>	Realism
Anti-Positivism	<i>epistemology</i>	Positivism
Voluntarism	<i>human nature</i>	Determinism
Ideographic	<i>methodology</i>	Nomothetic

Figure 3 adapted from Burrell & Morgan (1987: 3)

Burrell and Morgan represent objectivistic and subjectivist ontological positions as a dualism existing at two ends of a spectrum in which there are implications for how reality is understood (ontology) but also there are implications for what is taken to be knowledge of the world (epistemology) and how the world is investigated and knowledge is acquired (methodology). Whilst this conceptualisation is relevant to methodological issues, it also has an important bearing on the nature of theory in management development. For example, are we to take organizations and organizational practices at face value as concrete entities with identifiable boundaries and observable practices? In relation to management development theory this would lead us perhaps to ask questions about how much management development goes on in an organization, measured in days or

expenditure and perhaps compare it with other organizations, sectors or countries and to attempt to measure and evaluate its impact. In so far as this goes an objectivist position can provide some interesting and useful data (for example Handy, 1987; Constable & McCormick, 1987; Mabey & Gooderham, 2005) but it would not convey much about how management development was experienced or about the motives and understandings of those that sponsored, delivered or participated in it or indeed what interests it served, a factor which is very pertinent to this thesis.

By contrast, a subjectivist position would lead to different sets of questions about management development as it might seek to uncover individuals' understandings of the processes in which they were involved, whether or not they experienced any development, whether or not they were interested in development for career enhancement or personal growth (see for example, Antonocopoulou, 1999; Currie, 1999). The differing ontological positions suggest rather different research methodologies with the objectivist positions favouring positivist, quantitative, approaches including large scale surveys, whilst a subjectivist position might lend itself to more interpretative, qualitative, methods and in depth interviews. This has implications not just for researcher preferences, choices and pragmatic limitations but rather it concerns what constitutes valid knowledge and theoretical constructs. From an objectivist position, establishing behavioural patterns and trends and establishing causal relationships between, for example, management development inputs (types and amounts) and organizational outcomes are a key concern. However from a subjectivist position the question of the meaning and subjective interpretations of management development reveal far more about what is going on, and why, from the perspective of individual actors and stakeholders.

Philosophical roots of objectivist/subjectivist dualism

The roots of this dualism in the social sciences can be located in the origins of sociology. The sociological objectivist position emerges from a Durkheimian understanding of what constitutes proper scientific enquiry and valid scientific knowledge (1897 original / 1951 translation). Following the tradition of the natural sciences Durkheim proposed that knowledge of social phenomenon had equal validity with that generated within the fields of physics, mathematics and chemistry provided that it adhered to the principles of

investigation and theory generation that had been already established. The application of the scientific method, which proceeds according to the hypothetico / deductive method, could therefore generate ‘social facts’ which were comparably robust with ‘facts’ generated in the natural sciences. From the establishment of facts causal correlations could be drawn and underlying explanations could be extrapolated. Even such unfathomable social acts such as suicide (Durkheim, 1951) could be rendered knowable by comparing trends between different countries and deducing key variables, in this case, differently prevailing religious traditions, to provide theoretical claims. That is to say, where Protestantism was the more dominant religion suicide was more likely to be a more frequent social phenomenon compared with areas where Catholicism prevailed. Durkheim’s explanation for this was in terms of the internal dynamics of the relative religious beliefs, for example, the role of the confessional in Catholicism and its potential to act as a psychological safety valve. Whilst this has little to do with management development per se, it does illustrate well the explanatory potential of the objectivist approach without any recourse whatsoever to individual agency.

By contrast the subjectivist, anti-positivist sociological tradition is rooted in the thought and work of Max Weber (1964) who asserted that the corner stone of sociological enquiry was the *meaning* of ‘social action’. According to this view ‘the meaning’ is the meaning attributed to the ‘action’ by the individual actor; the *actor’s subjective understanding* of the situation and his or her intention at a given historical moment; not the meaning subsequently attributed to it by a social researcher. It is, according to this world view the researcher’s job not to establish abstract social facts and propose causal correlations, but to ascertain the meaning social actors attached to their own actions and to consider the theoretical implications of this. It is the acknowledgement of the role of the ‘subjective’ dimension which has had such impact in social theory. It is not so easy to label this approach as the objectivist/positivist tradition precisely because it allows for the possibility of multiple subjective understandings and realities to be in play at any given time in relation to any given event or process. Thus, the generating of knowledge of the social world involves enquiry into the subjective understandings of the actors and an exploration into the meanings they attach to their own actions and how they arrive at those meanings.

To continue with the example of the study of suicide, this, according to the subjectivist position, would not be open to social enquiry in the way suggested by an objectivist approach. Quite simply, the understandings and meanings of the suicide would be inaccessible. Only by shifting the focus of enquiry would we be able to explore this from a subjectivist position, for example, to focus on the interpretations of close friends and relatives, or to deconstruct the contents of suicide notes, but even these alternatives would not generate ‘truths’ or ‘facts’ about the reasons or intentions behind the suicide itself according to the meanings attached to it by the social actor concerned. Rather it would generate the meaning *others* attached to it. This subjectivist ontological position has spawned many diverse theoretical positions relevant to an analysis of management development, social constructionism, symbolic inter-actionism and postmodernism have their roots in this tradition. The theoretical implications of these are explored later in this chapter but for now I turn to the second of Burrell and Morgan’s axes.

3.4 Social order versus social conflict

The second key axis of Burrell and Morgan’s model concerns assumptions about the nature of society (1987: 10). The distinction they propose is between the propensity of society toward the principle of social order on the one hand; or towards conflict on the other. Again these positions are characterised as a dualism at either end of a continuous spectrum, see Figure 4 overleaf.

Two theories of society: ‘order’ and ‘conflict’

The ‘social order’ ‘integrationist’ view	The ‘conflict’ ‘coercion’ view
Stability	Change
Integration	Conflict
Functional co-ordination	Disintegration
Consensus	Coercion

Figure 4 adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1987: 13)

Social Order View

In this conceptualisation Burrell and Morgan attempt to capture something of the different foci of social theory and its underlying assumptions. A good deal of social theory seeks to understand the mechanisms through which society seeks to maintain itself, through an examination of the way its institutions of ‘kinship’, ‘education’, ‘belief systems’, ‘political systems’ and so on integrate and interact with each other. Such explorations are underpinned with an implicit ‘social order’ world view that these different elements of the social world behave indeed, function, in relation to each other in a systemic way. It is presumed that each of the parts has a role to play in the maintenance of the whole and that the focus of enquiry can be societal institutions, the relationship between them or the way individuals come to act within them depending on whether the theoretical perspective is a macro or micro one. For example, structural functionalism takes a macro view of how each of the social systems functions to maintain the whole society. Citing Talcott Parsons (1949), Burrell and Morgan identify some key elements of this perspective. Society is seen to be a relatively persistent stable structure of well integrated elements, each of which has a function which contributes to its maintenance as a system and in which there is a

consensus of values amongst its members (1987: 12). Micro theoretical perspectives tend not to make such overarching claims about the entire system but perhaps focus on the minutia of how individuals come to accommodate their place in society. For example, Goffman's (1959) 'Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' is not explicitly pro 'social order' but the focus is on the mechanisms through which individuals learn and enact their (differing) roles in relation to the institutions of society.

Social Conflict View

The 'conflict' view of society has a different emphasis entirely, one that focuses on the fluid nature of the social world in which change is ubiquitous and not predictable as implied by the 'social order' view. Burrell and Morgan (1987: 12), citing Dahrendorf (1959), identify its key features as characterising society as subject to processes of change at all times, persistently manifesting dissensus and conflict in which all elements of society contribute to dismantling stability, constant reconstruction and change. Importantly, this perspective embraces a notion of 'power' through the acknowledgment that every society is based on the coercion of some of its members by others (Dahrendorf, 1959: 160). In terms of social enquiry, research underpinned by an orientation towards this end of the spectrum would be inclined to explore the sources of social change, the ways in which different elements of society pull it in different directions, the sources of tension and conflict and the ways in which some groups in society are able to have more say and sway in the direction of change. In this perspective there can be no easy assumption that the guiding principles of the social world are towards integration and consensus. Rather, the social world is conceptualised as a domain in which there are multiple interests, worldviews and perceptions and the role of social enquiry is to uncover what these are and to explain how some interests and worldviews are a more powerful force for social change than others. In management and organizational theory this is often posited as the distinction between 'integrationist' and 'conflict' perspectives or 'unitarist' and 'pluralist/radical' perspectives.

Implications of the social order / social conflict dichotomy

One important aspect of the 'social order' versus 'conflict' dichotomy is the extent to which social phenomenon can be interpreted as contributing to the social good by

providing regulation and ‘order’ or alternatively as an aspect of ‘coercion’ and ‘domination’. So for example, institutions that, according to a ‘social order’ world view, *function* to meet the ‘needs of society’, might be understood from a ‘conflict’ perspective as legitimising the actions and interests of more powerful groups and interests.

“What Parson’s and other grand theorists call ‘value orientations’ and ‘normative structures’ has mainly to do with master symbols of legitimation”

(C. Wright Mills, 1959: 46)

Burrell and Morgan (1987) have argued the ‘social order’ perspective with its orientation to show how the different elements in society function to maintain itself does not preclude an analysis of social change ‘per se’ but that any such focus would be mainly preoccupied with how social change happens to sustain, maintain and reproduce the status quo. Social processes that work against this assumption would therefore be regarded as dysfunctional, interruptive of the social order and undesirable. Moreover, an important aspect of this is that organizations are themselves seen as functional and contribute to the ‘social good’.

It is an easy slippage, from a functionalist analysis, to a value judgement that the social equilibrium is a given and that social change is desirable only in so far that it enhances the status quo and improves the functional relationships between the elements. It is for this reason that ‘functionalism’ as a theoretical framework is said to embrace a normative perspective in that it inclines toward a justification of the status quo and seeks out ways of supporting it and minimising disruptions to it. ‘Conflict’ is therefore inherently ‘pathological’, and antithetical to social order and regulation. In the ‘social order’ world view the most benign interpretation of conflict is that it is borne of miscommunication, misunderstanding and misguided-ness; a more ‘extreme’ interpretation from within this world view would attribute ‘conflict’ to malign intentions (trouble-causers, rioters, ‘hoodies’, trade unionists etc.) to undermine social equilibrium, the status quo and society.

It is precisely because of the strong normative tendency of the ‘social order’ perspective to adopt a non-critical justificatory defence of the status quo that Burrell and Morgan (1987:29) propose the nomenclature ‘the sociology of regulation’ with which to categorise social theory which adopts this position. Such theories concern themselves primarily with

social enquiry which emphasises the tendency for social cohesion and looks for explanations of how and why this happens and what can fix any disruptions to this (a classic example is Durkheim's work on social solidarity, social cohesion and anomie in *The Division of Labour in Society* 1898 / 1964 translation).

This stands in contrast to the 'sociology of radical change' which takes, for its starting point that it is necessary to find explanations for the forces that drive change and the social tensions that give rise to this.

“its basic concern is to find explanations for radical change, deep seated structural conflict, modes of domination and structural contradiction which (such theorists) see as characterising modern society”

(Burrell & Morgan 1987: 17)

A key aspect of the 'radical change' perspective is that social change is driven by the conflicts that exist in the social world; conflicts emerging from the unequal distribution of resources and 'life chances' among individuals and structural conflicts embedded in the nature of economy and society. Part of the role of social enquiry in this perspective is to uncover the sources of conflict and show what the mechanisms are through which more powerful groups (classes) and individuals are able to maintain their advantageous positions in relation to those less powerful .

Underlying this position is another strand of thought and that concerns the impact of such domination, the power of some groups (classes) over others that create conditions of inequality and oppression and gives rise to struggles against them. This world view, it is argued, is future focussed concerned with what's possible rather than maintaining what 'is'.

“It is essentially concerned with man's emancipation from the structures which limit and stunt his potential for development. The basic questions it asks focus upon the deprivation of man, both material and psychic. It is often visionary and Utopian, it looks towards potentiality as much as actuality, with alternatives rather than acceptance of the status quo. In these respects it is widely separate from the

sociology of regulation as the sociology of Marx is separate from the sociology of Durkheim”

(Burrell & Morgan 1987:17)

3.5 The significance and limits of ‘paradigms’

Burrell and Morgan use the two axes of subjectivist/objectivist and regulation/radical change as the basis for constructing a four dimensional model to depict four distinct paradigms within which to locate social theory (see Figure 5 overleaf). The presentation of the four paradigms in this way helps to delineate the orientation of social theories in relation to their ontological and epistemological assumptions and to help to conceptualise where they stand in relation to each other.

There have been debates and critiques about how the boundaries have been drawn and what might be best placed in which of the paradigms (Schultz and Stabell, 2004; Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 23) and there have been refinements of it with a more ‘post modern’ focus (Alvesson & Deetz 2000: 26) and alternative paradigmatic conceptualisations. But it can be argued that the proposal to map out theoretical orientations along the two axes provided an important impetus in social theory especially in relation to the study of management and organizations. See Figure 5 below, Burrell and Morgan’s ‘Sociological Paradigms’.

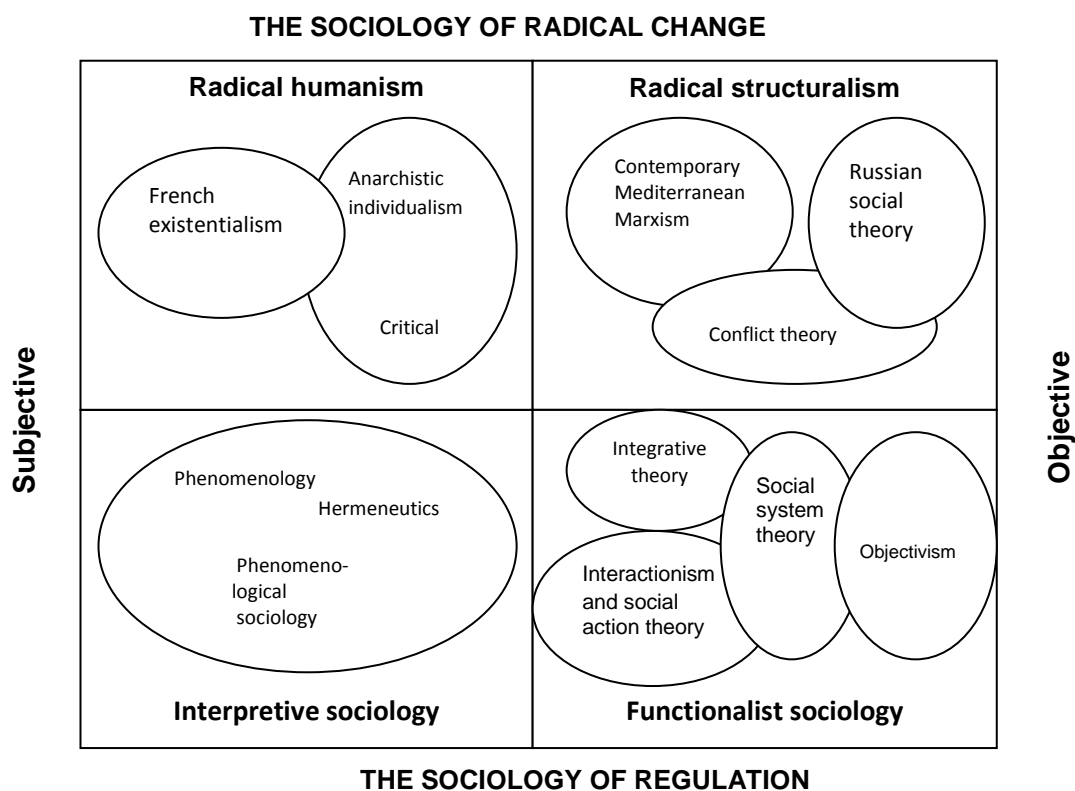


Figure 5 Burrell and Morgan (1987: 29)

Although the model implies a degree of ‘equal distribution’ between the four paradigms Burrell and Morgan are clear that the dominant paradigm for social enquiry has been the functionalist paradigm with its objectivist ontology and regulatory orientation. This has particularly dominated thinking about management and organizations. Legge for example, has said that:

“Positivism with its realist ontology, seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements... To a greater or lesser extent this is the logic which reigns in much of the research in HRM”

(Legge 1996: 308)

Burrell and Morgan assert that this paradigmatic model constitutes a meta theoretical framework which provides a frame of reference for social theorists, *a modus operandi* (1979) which locates a communality of perspective for researchers working within the boundaries of similar problematic. The communality referred to does not suggest similar

standpoints but it does suggest similar ontological and epistemological assumptions that are not usually rendered visible. Put another way, each paradigm suggests a different view of the social world based on different meta-theoretical assumptions as to the nature of science and of society. Burrell and Morgan identify that there is a degree of scope within each paradigm for movement but it would be less common for social theorists to travel between paradigms. In this they follow Kuhn's notion of paradigms having a self-referencing aspect to them (Kuhn 1970). Moreover, such a shift would amount to an 'epistemological break' which has implications for a shift of theoretical community as well as a shift in theoretical positioning. They cite Silverman (1970) as an example of the shift from the functionalist (positivist) to the interpretive paradigm in organization theory.

Significantly, they argue that the paradigms represent different ways of seeing the world, alternative views of social reality and so a synthesis is not possible. Theorists can move between them over time but cannot operate within more than one simultaneously as the assumptions of each contradict each other and therefore they propose that they are not commensurable. Paradigmatic incommensurability would ensue and cast doubt on the efficacy of the project. The paradigms are therefore mutually exclusive 'in the sense that one cannot operate in more than one paradigm at any given point in time' since accepting the assumptions of one would amount to defying the assumptions of another (Burrell & Morgan 1987: 25).

Paradigmatic incommensurability has been the source of a difficult and fraught debate concerning research and theory development in management studies, particularly between 'realist /radical' labour process analysis (Thompson, 1993; Thompson & Ackroyd, 1995; Reed, 2000) and postmodernist, post-structuralist theory (Knights, 1995; Willmott, 1995). The debate hinges on the problem that on the one hand, the abandonment of a realist ontology/epistemology might imply or could be understood as an abandonment of a radical agenda for change rendering all social theory as 'normative' in passively upholding the status quo with all its attendant inequalities. On the other hand, the acceptance of a subjectivist ontology / epistemology could be understood to imply that all social phenomena is subjectively apprehended, all discourses are relative and therefore none has any better claim on truth than any other, so claims of false consciousness to one's 'real' interests are therefore elitist and arbitrary (Parker 1999; 2000).

3.6 From paradigms to discourses

With regard to theories concerning management learning, it is this inflexibility that is called into question by Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 15) who accept the useful distinction between the two axes but reject the argument of ‘incommensurability’ of paradigms in relation to theories concerning management development. Instead they propose that the concept of discourse is useful to understand the contribution of potentially conflicting theoretical positions. They embrace the notion that, for example, functionalism as a theoretical position generates useful theory but that it does not provide a complete picture hence

“Naturally, there is a place for functionalist studies and positivistic methods... The difficulty arises when this is assumed to be the *only* way to analyse and understand organizational activities like management development”

(Mabey & Finch-Lees 2008: 13)

Discourse is used by them to denote a ‘meta-theory’ which has the potential to remain distant from the immediacy of any specific paradigm and the limitations that such immediacy would suggest. Discourse is the means by which usually but not necessarily through language, the social world, its actors and events, come to be represented. Different discourses can portray the social world in very different ways, they are particular ways of representing social reality, framing the way that people understand and act with respect to it. They are “Connected sets of statements which constitutes ways of talking and writing about a particular issue” (Watson 1994:113). One significant aspect of ‘discourse’ as opposed to ‘paradigm’ as a means of representing management development theories is that different discourses can be invoked with which to ‘scrutinize ‘ practices, narratives and meaning in a reflexive manner. In other words they use the notion of discourse in order to consciously think about the way management development is thought and written about, practised and experienced.

Drawing heavily on the work of Schultz and Stabell (2004), who in turn adapt the work of Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 24), Figure 6, below, Mabey and Finch-Lees recast Burrell and Morgan's original paradigms embracing the notion of discourse as the means by which the quartiles can be distinguished from one another (2008: 23) and relate it to discourses of management development. What follows below is Alvesson and Deetz revisions of Burrell and Morgan's model. Mabey and Finch-Lees adaption of this is shown later in the chapter at Figure 7, 'Four discourses of management development'.

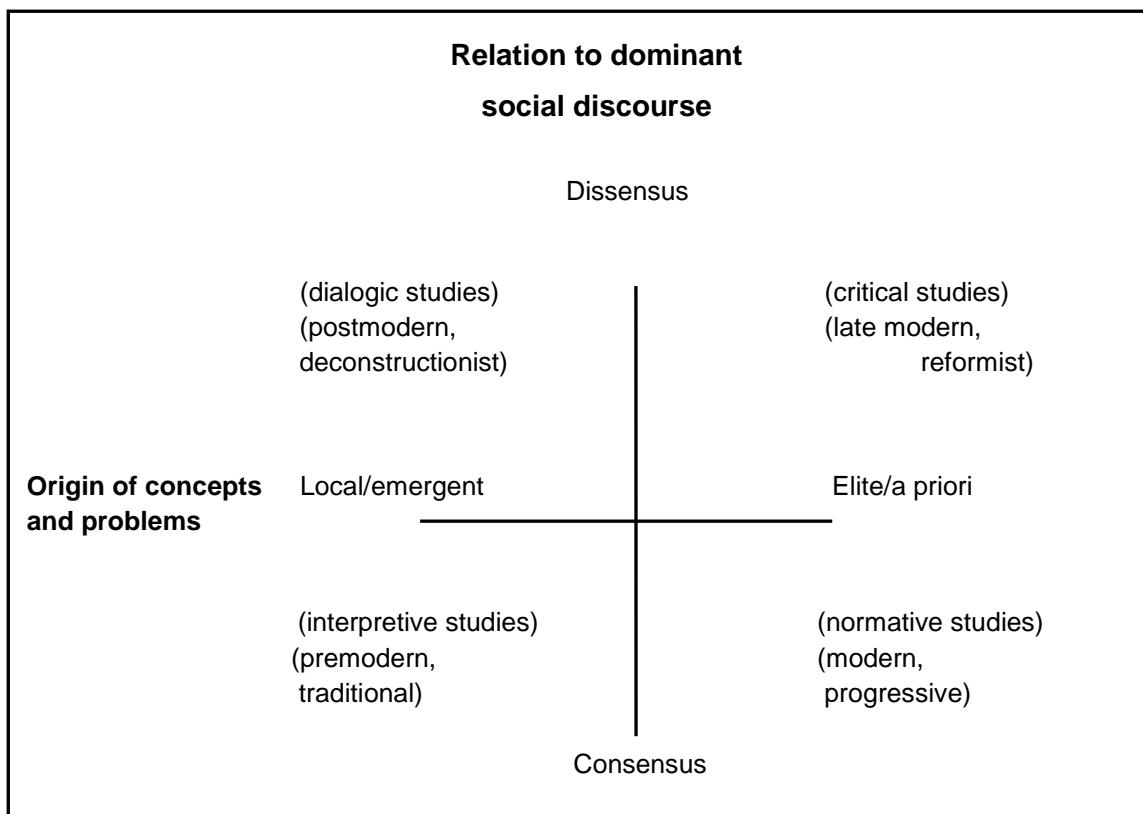


Figure 6 adapted from Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 24)

From paradigms to discourses: the implications for knowledge (construction)

Reframing the debate from that of ‘paradigms’ to that of ‘discourses’ has some important ontological and epistemological implications which can be understood through a consideration of modernist and postmodernist approaches to knowledge and being in the world. Modernist conceptions construe an enlightenment view of science and knowledge that posits that the social world is knowable through the objective application of scientific methods. This construct involves the notion of an objective reality of which knowledge can be derived by independent observation and the derivation of scientific truths and generalisations. The researcher is conceptualised as distinct from that which is researched and the findings contribute to, or refute, existing bodies of knowledge or facts.

In contrast, postmodern approaches challenge the notion that the external world is knowable in this authentic way. One significant factor here is the role that language plays

in mediating the human condition and the external world. A key issue is how the social world is experienced through language. In the modernist project, the role of language is to represent the world to act as a mirror to describe and portray it, to act as a neutral, objective tool in progressing our understanding of the world. Deetz (2003: 31) has observed that “the most common misleading conception of language is that it represents an absent to- be- recalled, object” in which it is implicit that there is an essentialist rather than arbitrary relationship between the word and the reality it signifies.

It is this representational capacity of language that is refuted by postmodernist theorists, rather language is understood as constitutive of the world, it constitutes our sense of the real (Barratt, 2003). Deetz (2003) has identified language as a ‘system of distinction’ in which the classification of things in words and practices recalls some aspect of phenomenon but not other aspects. In doing so it gives presence to some aspects of social reality but leaves many other aspects absent (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 96) so, for example, the concept of ‘manager’ is not possible without the notion of ‘non manager’ or ‘worker’, so every linguistic presence implies what is also ‘not’. Furthermore language is not neutral, it might seem commonsense to name managers and workers and to take such classifications as natural and neutral but ‘naturalness’ of such classifications disguise or hide the social relations of power that are implied and the institutional and historical conditions within which they emerged.

“Every linguistic system, because it is a system of distinction, puts into place certain kinds of social relations and values – that is certain things that are worthy of being distinguished from other things”

(Deetz 2003: 31)

In this regard discourse is constitutive of reality, of which there could be other discourses, other realities. Different discourses are always possible though they may be more or less powerful, dominant or marginalised (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

3.7 Reframing the regulation / conflict dualism to a consensus / dissensus duality

The now reframed model (Figure 6 above) makes one other significant departure from the Burrell and Morgan (1979) position. That is the emphasis on a consensus/dissensus differentiation as a departure from the regulation/conflict dualism. Similar to Burrell and Morgan, the consensus / dissensus dimension draws attention to the extent to which social and organization theory tends to orient towards reinforcing or disrupting social order but importantly it does not emphasize or presume a ‘coherent dominant group’ as the source of conflict. The problem is not conceptualised as one of class conflict, rather the ‘suppression of parts of the human being and the presence of destructive control processes, technocracy, consumerism, and concern with economic growth’ (Alvesson & Deetz 2000:25). Furthermore, power is characterised not so much as the exercise of sovereign power, possessed by certain groups in the service of their own interests but as constituted in social relations and manifest in the ‘routine micro-practices in the work site itself’. With such an emphasis the focus is on discursive rather than group (or class) relations and allows for an exploration of domination and its reproduction without the attendant connotations of ‘class interests’ and ‘class struggle’ (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 26).

In Alvesson and Deetz’s (2000: 24) conceptualisation, the *consensus* dimension (Figure 6 above) draws attention to research and theory which seeks to discover order and patterns; and the purpose of theory production is held to describe and mirror social entities as relatively fixed aspiring to reveal the ‘true’ or ‘real’ character of social phenomenon. The problematic, random and arbitrary nature of social entities are minimised in the search for norms of behaviours and processes. In the consensus dimension, conflicts, contradictions and ambiguities are treated as ‘system’ problems to be minimised.

By contrast the *dissensus* dimension draws attention to the problematic nature of social phenomenon. It foregrounds the tensions, struggles and power relations in the domination of people and in human conduct. A dissensus orientation in research and theory adopts the position of challenging taken - for - granted meanings, assumptions and social practices. It seeks less to address the issue of ‘how the world works’ but to rather to problematise how ‘the world has come to work like this’ and how does it continue to do

so. In this way it seeks less to classify the world than to examine those classifications and the underlying conflictual processes that they hide, revealing other ‘truths’ and ‘realities’ which challenge objectifications and posit emergent rather than ‘apriori’ fixed categories.

Importantly, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) argue that such an orientation is what characterises *critical* management and organization theory, drawing on two important traditions, critical theory and postmodern (and post-structuralist) theory. They depart from the idea that theory is somehow representational of the social world, a framework or construct to be applied, in favour of a notion that it is rather a lens (ie one amongst many) through which social entities might be better understood.

“In our view theory is a way of seeing and thinking about the world rather than an abstract representation of it. As such it is better seen as the ‘lens’ one uses in observation than a ‘mirror’ of nature”

(Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 37)

This does not imply an outright rejection of positivism but an assertion for a more subtle understanding of the relationship between theories and the world, the relations of power in which they are a part and the relation of theories to the communities of which they are a part, the social and historical context in which they emerge and the interests they serve (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 39). Moreover, the metaphor of the ‘lens’ permits the possibility of thinking about what should be paid attention to and the way in which theory precedes the observation of that which is observed. It also points to the implications of this in the research process, that observations are theory-laden. Theory directs attention, organizes experience and enables useful responses (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 44). All of this suggests a more reflexive approach to research and theory construction. The researcher is not an independent observer but rather a ‘producer’ of accounts or versions of social entities which emerge from specific historical and social arrangements and discourses, framed by the researcher’s values and the limits of their exposures.

3.8 Criticality: exploring the ‘dissensus’ dimension

Although there has long been a strand of this position in social science (see for example Becker’s 1959, ‘Whose side are we on?’), it is only relatively recently that this more reflexive approach to making sense of the relationship between research, theory, knowledge production and power relations has come to the fore in management studies. The emergence of critical management studies has been the vehicle for this and its trajectory (both theoretically and institutionally) has been well documented (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Alvesson & Willmott 2003; Grey & Willmott, 2005; Perriton, 2007). Critical management studies (CMS) has been influential in promulgating an ontological and epistemological lens to work and organizations that addresses the orientations outlined in the preceding discussion. It has advanced this by embracing theoretical orientations that adopt a critical approach deriving from critical theory (that is, derived both from Critical Theory and labour process analyses) and a dialogic approach deriving from postmodernism and post-structuralism. Whilst the historical roots are complex it is worth outlining some important strands as they inform my own orientation to the research question addressed in this thesis.

Critical theory (CT) has largely been identified with the Frankfurt School which drew on the work of Marx (1964) in identifying the asymmetries of power in social institutions and the exploitative, coercive propensity of capitalist economy and society. Accordingly attention focussed on the way in which social processes masked the inequalities of power and access to resources through ideology. ‘Ideology critique’ attempts to reveal the ‘real’ interests of social groups (social classes) and expose the antagonisms inherent in the economic relations of capitalism. This formulation subscribes to a realist ontology in which social groups can be categorised in accordance with their relationship to the means of production. Exploiters and exploited can be attributed as having ‘real’ interests but the latter in particular, temporarily, cannot see what these are because the dominant class have the ideological means through which to manifest their own interests as *universal*. Furthermore, the conditions of capital and the social relations therein contain structural antagonisms that have the future potential to precipitate the realisation and disruption of such domination and lead toward more emancipated social arrangements. Although

Critical Theory, particularly as expressed through the work of Habermas (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 83) embraced notions of domination and exploitation, it is more sceptical of the realist assumptions of ‘real interests’, ‘autonomous self-evident individuals’ and ‘structural antagonisms’. The notion of ideology as masking real interests can be challenged as elitist in the sense of who is to say what these might be? Would that not simply dislodge one ideology for another? In any case, is there not a degree of arrogance in the portrayal of some social groups as cultural dopes (Johnson and Duberley 2000:128)? This latter characterisation is a rather crude interpretation and other more sophisticated accounts can be identified, see for example Althusser, (1971).

Critical Theory, as distinct from Marxist theory, accepts that asymmetries of power relations are prevalent but that they do not necessarily or exclusively derive from economic relations however important these might be. It has also been argued that an over emphasis on ‘ideology critique’ can lead to theory which personifies ‘class interests’ in an oversimplified way with notions of a self evident, intentionally acting, dominant group mystifying and manipulating social relations to their own advantage (Abercrombie et al 1980). Nevertheless, what characterises Critical Theory’s concern with ideology and its critique revolves around four key aspects that have contributed much to a more critical study of management.

- The naturalization of the social order, the way that a specific /socially constructed social order is treated as necessary, natural, self evident and rational
- The universalization of managerial interests and the suppression of conflicting interests
- The domination by instrumental rationality, and the eclipse of alternative reasoning processes
- Hegemony, the way that consent becomes orchestrated

(Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:84)

These insights from Critical Theory have informed much of the project of critical management studies in problematising the nature of work and organization in specific historical / social locales together with the actions and meanings of social actors within them. Many writers in CMS have sought to probe beneath the appearance of the

‘naturalness’ of the social order by surfacing the partisan nature of managerial interests, exposing the hidden power relations of instrumental rationality and reveal the processes through which human subjects come to accept social arrangements which are contrary to their interests and well being.

From within this perspective lies a humanistic aspiration that there can be a more egalitarian state achievable if, through the exposure of repressive practices and ideas, false consciousness can give way to undistorted communication based on communicative, rather than merely technical / instrumental rationality, embracing ethical principles (Habermas 1984).

“This concept of communicative rationality carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective view and owing to the mutuality of rationality motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld”

(Habermas 1984: 10)

In posing it thus Habermas (1984) alludes to a means of achieving a ‘higher state’ of rationality achievable through undistorted communication (i.e. free of ideology) and an acceptance of individuals as having the potential to be free autonomous agents.

In doing, so critical theory, particularly as represented through orthodox labour process analyses, is largely underpinned by an objectivist ontological and epistemological position that is at odds with the second main strand of thought embraced within critical management studies, that is post modernism / post structuralism. By contrast, Critical Theory (as distinct from labour process analyses) as advanced by the Frankfurt School and Habermas (1984) in particular, reconceptualises this positive ontology to embrace the notion that reality is not ‘fixed’ and available to ‘objective’ scrutiny and appropriation. Rather, there is a dialectical relationship as expressed through thesis /anti-thesis / thesis recursiveness which accedes to the more socially constructed nature of the social world (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

3.9 Criticality and postmodernism: exploring the dialogic dimension

Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 95) have argued that although postmodernism comprises many variations it is possible to identify some common themes. Language and the centrality of discourse are key, and as noted earlier are regarded as productive/constructive of reality rather than a mere vehicle (mirror) for the conveyance of meaning. Moreover, language implies absence as well as presence so that there must always be a sense of ‘otherness’ concerning any text or discourse. This identifies language/discourse as a medium which is invested with power and carrying certain ‘power effects’ in distinguishing some aspects of phenomenon and not others. Power and knowledge are inseparably related so that knowledge is never neutral but reflective and productive of power relations. In these ways there is much to relate postmodern themes with those of critical theory. The plurivocality of discourse and its relatedness to power has much to connect it with critical theory’s concern with ideology and its ability to mask other meanings and interests.

Postmodernism however, embraces two important ontological and epistemological premises that are much less reconcilable with critical theory. Firstly it posits a view of the individual as discursively constructed so that, there can be no recourse to ‘essentialist’ notions of the autonomous meaning-creating individual. Subjectivity is an ongoing project in the midst of competing and emergent discourse. Secondly, postmodernism abandons an adherence to grand narratives (normative and critical) which lay claim to ‘higher’ truths and purer ‘knowledge’.

In critical theory ‘speak’ (that is, deriving from both labour process theories and Frankfurt School traditions), ideology masks hidden truths behind which lie peoples’ real interests and emancipation. In postmodern ‘speak’ there are only multiple discourses with (arguably) equal claims to truth and knowledge (though most writers accept the historically situated nature of this). In critical theory the project is to unmask the truth in pursuit of humanist ends whilst the postmodern enterprise seeks to understand the processes by which some truth claims take root more firmly than others and how power relations work to produce and reproduce this. In this conceptualisation ‘unmasking the truth’ would only replace old illusions with new ones, one regime of truth with another, some power relations with others, equally if differently, dominating. The ‘problem’ with

such a characterisation identifies a postmodern perspective as one which is recursively relative, unable to identify a moral and ethical superiority, with all discourses having competing legitimacy and rendering social, organizational management theory as ‘language games’ played out in specific, academic communities of practice. On the other hand variations of critical theory reliant as they are on an objectivist /realist ontology stand accused of adhering to elitist versions of ‘real interests’ posing its adherents as having superior insight in surveying the social world able to detect others’ false consciousness and cultural doping (Johnson & Duberley 2000).

Whilst these differences have been regarded by some as irreconcilable, Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 107- 109) argue that critical theories and postmodern perspectives can be shown to be ‘both alike and different’, advocating that critical research and theory work with these unresolved tensions productively by following different themes from both critical theory and postmodernism and to allow space for discrete voices. Moreover Parker (1999) has argued that ontological and epistemological differences should not paralyse attempts to explore issues of power and domination, inequality and injustice, that ethical and moral considerations take primacy over theoretical infighting.

Whatever the differences, critical and postmodern theory share a ‘suspicion’ of processes (structures) of power and language (ideology) and a mission to reinterpret (deconstruct) meanings that go beyond mainstream normative theory. In this way they can be understood as being ‘anti-positivist’ in orientation and looking at the world with a ‘critical’ lens. In the realm of management studies there is a vast array of productive work that has taken up this baton to reconceptualise and problematise management and work organizations using a critical lens and drawing on insights from both critical and postmodern theory (for example Alvesson & Willmott 2003; Grey & Willmott 2005; McKinley & Starkey 1998). Moreover the postmodern concern with examining the disciplinary effects of discourse in the micro practices of everyday working life has prompted some important insights into the power effects of organizational discourse concerning human resource management (for example, Townley, 1994; Deetz, 2003; Barratt, 2003; Barratt, 2008).

3.10 My position in the landscape

It is in this landscape that I locate my own ontological and epistemological position. My world view is informed by Critical Theory (and critical theory) in accepting the necessity that social enquiry should seek not only to describe the social world but that it should work to disrupt taken for granted meanings expose issues of power and control. Moreover I incline towards a postmodernist post-structuralist orientation in accepting that knowledge of world can only be appropriated subjectively and that social researchers' ability to apprehend it are limited through the discourses available to them. In concert with many proponents of critical management studies I find myself at the intersection where criticality embraces the notion that individuals have agency and meanings are subjectively constructed, yet in the context of social arrangements in which power has both sovereign and disciplinary effects. Furthermore I subscribe to the notion advanced by Alvesson and Deetz (2000:168) that the project of critical research is to view social phenomenon through different prisms, to surface not only 'apparent' and 'naturalistic' meanings but those that do not at first suggest themselves. In so doing I have in this thesis advanced what they term an '*interpretative repertoire*' to de-familiarize that which appears natural and develop critical insights to disrupt common-sense understandings of doing management education in management development contexts.

The thesis pays attention to the plurivocality of the management development arena by attending to how the actors in the MD/ME arena make sense of their roles and the purposes of the arena in different sometimes conflicting, sometimes consensual ways. In this way I address the 'emergent' and constructed nature of social phenomenon to foreground 'subjectivist' dimensions of the empirical data. This is to adhere to the socially constructed nature of the MD/ME arenas but also to temper the authority of the researcher as a mere conduit in the 'representation' of particular social realities. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that subjective understandings and meanings (of respondents) are not sufficient in progressing 'critical insights'. Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 112) observe that a failure to 'stand back' from the data and unravel less obvious meanings can result in a kind of naive empiricism and that it is, for example, highly unlikely that respondents themselves will report that they are victims of discursive closure or trapped in

asymmetrical power relations. To this end I have explored the empirical material through different discourses of management development, paying particular attention to the ways in which interpretations of it suggest its location in relation to the ‘consensus /dissensus’ axis and significantly, to issues relating to power and domination in both their constraining and productive possibilities.

Until relatively recently the main theoretical impetus for management development research and practice has been firmly located within the functionalist discourse dominated by positivist/realist assumptions in which the researcher is the neutral observer and gatherer of the ‘facts’ as gathered and reported in language presumed as neutral (Valentin 2006). Moreover, as observed, the orientation of researchers and practitioners within this discourse has been to regard ‘management’ and ‘development’ as unproblematic concepts and to concern themselves with seeking the ‘best ways’ to develop managers with the purpose of enhancing organizational performance. The linkage between individual development and organization even national benefit has not much been problematised, except in so far as how to do it. That is to say, what techniques are useful, how can management development be captured for the benefit of organizational development and how can any barriers to efficacious development be reduced?

Much of the language within this discourse is performative (Lyotard, 1984) in the sense that development and learning is characterised as desirable only in so far as it is ‘useful’ in serving organizational ends which themselves can be seen in the context of wider issues of domination. Management development has been extolled for its potential to better pursue organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage ‘to meet the changing character of market conditions’ (Storey et al 1997:207) and to fulfil the requirements of business strategy ‘organizational management is a vital ingredient in securing improved business performance’ (Woodhall and Winstanley 1998: 3). In this way management development is conceptualised as a ‘technicist’ project (Rigg, 2007: 10) in which the expertise of individual managers can be enhanced through the acquisition of business knowledge and strategic insight able to be harnessed for the corporate good. Typically the focus is on the enhancement of managers’ knowledge, skills and attitudes with a view to enhancing micro and macro performance (Winterton & Winterton, 1999; DTI, 2001).

Mabey and Finchlees (2007: 23) have argued that this discourse posits management development in such a way that takes as a position that the manager is construed as a self – evident entity needing only to be ‘developed’, a passive recipient of development interventions. As such it is most frequently, and in mainstream literature almost exclusively, discursively constructed from a positivist ontology and articulated through the grand narrative of functionalism. Consequently, categories of ‘management’ and ‘development’ are taken as ‘real’ and ‘natural’ rather than as social constructions to be problematized. Moreover, the prevailing discourses generally fail to acknowledge the MD/ME arena as one characterised by conflicting interests in which some are privileged whilst others are subjugated thus erring to a ‘consensus’ orientation.

Similarly, the relationship between individual development and organizational development has generally been constructed as problematic only insofar as the necessity to search for and implement the appropriate knowledge-transfer mechanisms to facilitate organizational learning from individual learning. In other words a functionalist / technicist discourse privileges a notion that there is commensurability between individual and organizational needs and interests that are presumed rather than demonstrable. Thus, the formulations which emerge from a predominantly functionalist discourse ‘naturalize’ the primacy of organizational imperatives and ‘universalizes’ managerial and performative agendas. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 23) show how the discourses of management development can align with Alvesson and Deetz characterization of dominant social discourses (2000: 24).

This thesis draws on the inspiration from these sources in developing critical insight through the use of an interpretative repertoire. An interpretative repertoire implies “considering the empirical material from a multitude of angles” (2000: 149). Thus the thesis draws on the lens metaphor through which to explore different aspects of the data. In so doing the lens is in effect the different discourses of management development which are characterised in Figure 7 below. Thus, each of chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 explores the empirical material paying attention to the concerns articulated in each of the discourses of management development that is functionalism, constructivism, critical and dialogical.

Four Discourses of Management Development

Dissensus

<p>Dialogic discourse <i>emphasises:</i></p> <p><i>Metaphors:</i> of discipline, reproduction, carnival</p> <p><i>Role of MD:</i> vehicle for the active construction of identity which are themselves inherently multiple, shifting and negotiated</p> <p><i>Theories:</i> postmodern, feminist post-structuralist, post-structuralist, deconstructionist, Foucauldian social theory</p> <p><i>Research:</i> MD as discourse, identity construction in MD, deconstructing the language of MD</p>	<p>Critical discourse <i>emphasises:</i></p> <p><i>Metaphors:</i> of political struggle and ideology control</p> <p><i>MD role:</i> to produce and resist order, predictability, control, domination, subordination</p> <p><i>Theories:</i> critical theory, labour process theory, some forms of feminism</p> <p><i>Research:</i> MD as a means to preserve or change the balance of power.</p>
<p>Constructivist (interpretive) discourse <i>emphasises:</i></p> <p><i>Metaphor:</i> drama, MD an arena of social actors</p> <p><i>Role of MD:</i> enabling collective learning and self development, conferring meaning and status</p> <p><i>Theories:</i> role behaviour, theories of practice, sense making</p> <p><i>Research:</i> modes of MD and outcomes, cultural significance, meaning-making</p>	<p>Functionalist (normative) discourse <i>emphasises:</i></p> <p><i>Metaphor:</i> MD as a tool kit of skills and competencies</p> <p><i>MD role:</i> building skills and knowledge to address performance gaps and optimize resources.</p> <p><i>Theories:</i> human capital, systems, HRM, resource-based views, institutional</p> <p><i>Research:</i> performance impact of MD, types of activities and evaluation of MD</p>

Consensus

Figure 7 adapted from Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 23)

This thesis attempts to disrupt the ‘common sense’ conceptualization of the commensurability of management education in management development contexts. Theoretically, in advancing an ‘interpretative repertoire’ it adopts a cross paradigmatic approach in the respect that attention is paid to subjective constructions of the arena but also to issues of power and domination which emerge from ‘objectivist’ notions of sovereign power as well as postmodern dialogic conceptions of disciplinary power. Mabey & Finch-Lees have identified that there is ‘an important research agenda for studies which cross the paradigmatic boundary’ (2008: 79) and this thesis contributes empirically and theoretically to that call.

Concluding remarks

This Chapter has outlined the nature of the theoretical landscape which underpins management development theory. Management development theory is most often underpinned implicitly and explicitly from a ‘consensus’ orientation which presses towards a unitary perspective of organization and management. Assumptions that it can and should contribute to the well - being of individuals, the organization and society locate it within this framework and the relationship between these is seen to have a rationalistic ‘fit’. Based on technicist views of management as a fixed entity and a concrete and self evident category, rather than as socially constructed, it is largely underpinned by a positivist and objectivist ontology.

I have argued that this is an altogether too limited approach to making sense of the MD/ME arena and that what is called for is an ‘anti-positivist’ approach adopting multi-paradigmatic discourses in order to disrupt the naturalistic taken-for-granted assumptions that management development and management education are un-problematically interchangeable with fixed meanings, calculable outcomes and mutually beneficial. What is required is closer attention to the complexity of conflicting meanings and sense making and the way that this is fluid and emergent with covert motives as well as espoused rhetoric. Furthermore, educational and organizational processes are inherently political involving micro and macro issues of power and control, constraint and domination. Naturalistic and commonsense understandings of these arenas are insufficient to surface the power effects of learning practices as they occur in organizational settings. Following

Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 166) I have argued that what is additionally required is the adoption of an ‘interpretative repertoire’ in which a *dissensus* orientation is taken toward the empirical data embracing both critical and dialogic discourses to explore the workings of power as both ‘sovereign’ and ‘relational’ phenomenon.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I advanced an argument and a rationale for the adoption of an interpretative repertoire as a conceptual framework underpinning the research stance (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 166). The purpose of this chapter is to show how the research approach, strategy and methods relate to the overarching aim of the thesis which is:

- An exploration of the ways in which conflicting purposes, values and interests can be detected in the MD/ME arena and to what extent are these reinforced, reconciled and proliferated.

Therefore this chapter demonstrates the research methodology implications of utilizing Alvesson and Deetz's (ibid.) concept of an interpretative repertoire through a discussion of how this relates to the specific research questions, which are:

- In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development in these contexts?
- To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders to the MD/ME programmes?
- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?
- What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

In this chapter the methodological implications of the research approach is explored in relation to both 'research methodology' (philosophy) and 'research methods' (techniques and procedures). The discussion therefore proceeds with an exploration of its philosophical dimensions through an elucidation of its ontological and epistemological commitments in the deployment of an interpretive research design. An interpretative repertoire presses towards the development of critical insight and this chapter shows how this is to be achieved through a multi-discourse approach. The chapter continues with a

rationale for the stakeholder approach and the choice of organizational case studies. It goes on to describe and evaluate the more practical aspects of generating and managing the empirical material. Finally the chapter considers my own role in the research and issues concerning reflexivity.

4.2 Researcher obligations in surfacing ontological commitments

It has been previously identified that there can be differing underlying ontological commitments in research, that is to say, what is taken to be the nature of reality. Kuhn (1962, 1970) has argued that all knowledge is socially and historically located and that it proceeds within and amongst members of specific knowledge-making communities. It is they who determine the boundaries of what constitutes knowledge and the procedures by which it is generated and ordered. Thus for example, a pre-enlightenment knowledge paradigm could be identified as ‘metaphysical’ in which knowledge was deemed to emanate from religious narratives and their interpreters and all other forms of knowledge judged by them as heretical. The emergence of early science through reason and hypothesis testing can be seen as one of struggle in which the incumbents (guardians) of one paradigm act to resist the emergence of another.

The point here is not so much about the transition between paradigms but that communities of practice can be seen to coalesce around the prevailing paradigm and purport particular world views. Each paradigm contains its own language, rules and techniques of knowledge construction and these determine what knowledge claims are acceptable at any given time. The significance of Kuhn’s work is that paradigms are socially and historically located to the extent that the validity of knowledge is evaluated by a scientific community according to the social conventions that determine the boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy (Johnson and Duberley, 2000: 72). Accordingly, and importantly, there is no paradigm-free way of looking at the world. If this is accepted then there are important epistemological and ontological implications. Firstly, that there is no theory-neutral observational language – therefore knowledge is produced in accordance

with the rules, language conventions of a specific paradigm. Secondly, paradigms are socially and historically contextual and reflect inherent power relations.

This suggests that the construction of a research methodology in the first instance must proceed from revealing the values and theoretical inclinations of the researcher and the way in which this is articulated through the paradigmatic or discursive choices in relation to ontology and epistemology. Ellis *et al.* (2008) have argued that there is no single universal paradigm that can be said to be exclusively ‘the right one’ which implies that there is a degree of individual choice. To some extent the idea that one selects a paradigm according to personal inclinations is highly attractive but one that I find a little unnerving because the tendency might be to work within a paradigm that has the most currency, best chance of getting published for example, without respect for ‘truth’. Of course, this raises its own difficulties because the notion of ‘truth’ itself is anchored to an ‘enlightenment’ paradigm of knowledge-as-progress, which has been well challenged by both critical and post-modern conceptions of knowledge. So perhaps this can be reframed as academic rigour and ‘ethical concerns’ to do with the researcher’s obligations to both surface the paradigmatic and discursive predilections in the research and to pay attention to what power interests are served and or, subverted. Weber alerted us to this problem in undertaking social enquiry and asserted that it was not ‘objectivity’ that preserved the integrity of research but the declaration of proclivities and underpinning values that permitted the transparent scrutiny by others as to its ‘rigour’ (Weber,1964).

Ontological and epistemological implications of adopting an ‘interpretative repertoire’.

I have found the idea of the interpretative repertoire to be a useful one in a number of respects. Firstly, ‘interpretative’ is suggestive of a particular stance on the nature of reality drawing attention to the subjectivist dimensions of the social world and the social researches orientation to it. So for example, it implies that the social world and social phenomenon are not ‘stable’ and ‘fixed’ and that categories such as ‘development’ ‘learning’ and ‘education’ do not have independent existence, but rather they are socially constructed. That is to say that they have meaning according to the historical and cultural particularities at time and place of their occurrence. At a basic level what we understand

by, for example ‘learning’, changes historically, in relation to the meanings and purposes attributed to it in a given context. What ‘learning’ ‘meant’ in the Victorian era is very different to meanings that might be attributed to it in 21st Century. Similarly, as we have seen earlier, the attribution of meaning is fluid across geographical and cultural boundaries so that we can for example identify that what is understood as valid social research in a UK context might by not be so readily accepted as such in a North American context (Perriton, 2007).

So ‘interpretative’ draws attention to the variability of meaning at a social or institutional level and leads us to question ‘how did it come to be that this meaning has come to prevail’? This is one of the questions that prompted my interest in the research presented in this thesis as I found it intriguing and troublesome that there should be a taken-for-granted discourse that management education and management development could and should, but for a few institutional ‘tinkerings’ amount to the same thing, serve the same purpose, serve different interests equivalently. The framing of ‘interpretative’ in this way leads to conceptions that meaning is socially constructed in the context of power and power relations with some meanings coming to have more import than others, in dialogic terminology, the potentiality of discursive closure.

‘Interpretative’ though, also suggests another dimension and that is to do with the way in which individuals make sense of the world, absorbing ‘data’ around them, words, texts, symbols through the senses, organizing it through perceptual filters, processing it through cognition and giving it ‘meaning’. In this way then sense-making and meaning attribution occurs at an individual level, framed by the individual’s experiences, values, beliefs and preconceptions. This suggests that no two individuals are alike (quite) as the world is socially constructed in the context of the uniqueness of individual experience albeit in the context of prevailing cultural norms and prevailing discourses.

These two aspects of ‘interpretative’ strongly suggest that the role of the researcher is to pay attention to the meanings actors attach to social phenomenon and their actions within it. This requires further development in terms of the implications for what constitutes valid data. Clearly it suggests that valid data is that which is to do with individuals’ subjective meanings, what they think, their expectations, hopes, fears etc. Accordingly,

attention is given to their experiences of the world. In the context of my own research, in its embryonic stages, I was intrigued, prior to actually conducting the research. Part of this was to do with the ways in which the different stakeholders in, what I have now come to call the MD/ME arena, made sense of the arena and the extent to which meanings attributed to it circulated around different discourses. So for example, HR professionals talked a lot about ‘organizational objectives’ and academic managers talked a lot about ‘managing clients’ expectations’ and participants about ‘learning and getting on’. Of course, there were areas of consensus as well, concerned with the discourse of ‘learning and development’ and ‘organizational and individual benefit’. It seemed to me that the ways in which their meanings converged or diverged was a matter for investigation. These concerns are clearly tied to the research question:-

- To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders to the MD/ME programmes?

Exploring meanings and the ways in which social actors experience the world is commensurate with ‘constructivist’ orientations to social research which is ontologically ‘duality’ orientated (in Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008:23). In their ‘models of management development discourse’ (ibid, and see Figure 7, Chapter 3) they use the concept of ‘duality’ to convey that individuals are not merely the vehicles of meaning but that they actively produce it, linguistically and symbolically. Thus ‘duality’ is contrasted with that of ‘dualism’ in which the latter sustains the ‘object/subject’ distinction and is rooted in a logical positivist tradition. Duality is elsewhere referred to as ‘anti-positivism’ (Alvesson and Deetz 2000), or as a ‘negative ontology’ (O’ Doherty & Willmott, 2009) because it is an absolute departure from ‘logical positivism’ or a realist ontology.

In the light of the above observations, I would therefore commit to the premise that the ontological stance in the thesis concurs with that of constructivism. I adhere to the notion that the categories of ‘management’ ‘learning’ ‘education’ or ‘development’ are not self-evident and fixed but rather their meanings are fluid open to construction by the actors who inhabit these realms. They construct their own meaning about what is going on in the management development and educational contexts in which they are engaged. Moreover these meanings are not straightforward but sometimes contradictory and conflicting. In

advancing this argument, I am rejecting the positivistic notion that the world is ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered and about which ‘facts’ can be generated and deployed in generalised laws. Rather I seek to generate ‘critical insight’ and revealing new ways of understanding otherwise familiar aspects of social this particular social phenomenon (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 141).

Constructivist ontology does not imply that there is a distinct differentiation between the research and that which is researched. Rather the research is informed by the values and priorities of the researcher even in the way that the research topic is chosen and in the framing of the research questions. I return to this point later in the chapter but next I consider the ‘repertoire’ dimension of working with an ‘interpretative repertoire’.

4.3 Developing ‘critical insight’

‘Repertoire’ is suggestive of the idea that research and, in particular, critical research of post-positivist persuasions develops insight of social phenomenon by probing beneath the surface of everyday meanings and constructions, thus opening up self-evident and normalized explanations to alternate modes of explanation. Such explorations require dexterity in the use of vocabularies paying attention to what is said in the research processes and also to what is not said. This has relevance for the following research questions in this thesis:-

- In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development?

and

- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?

In adopting an ‘interpretative repertoire’ Alvesson & Deetz (2000) suggest that the role of research might in part include the surfacing of dominant discourses, indeed Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) argue that functionalist interpretations *per se* need not be abandoned,

but that they are *insufficient* to revealing the more complex character of social life. It is this complexity to which the research is addressed, surfacing that which is usually hidden, even masked, by dominant discourses.

Critical insight therefore includes a commitment to a *dissensus* orientation, explored in the previous chapter, in which the revelation of conflicts and conflict suppression informs the research approach. This is not necessarily evident at the point of generating empirical data, indeed Alvesson & Deetz suggest that in terms of ‘methods or technique’ they look like approaches that emerge from more ‘consensus’ orientations (2000: 146). Rather it is in the application of analytical categories that distinguish more critical or dissensus proclivities.

The key to this is to draw on such discursive resources to pay attention to issues of power, to detect the power effects of particular discourses and discursive practices and this is particularly developed in this thesis in order to address the third of the research questions (stated above) as well as to address the final question which is to:-

- What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

Moreover, the notion of ‘repertoire’ is suggestive of different ways through which empirical material might be generated and interrogated. That is to say, that if the material is looked at in ‘this way’ certain things will become apparent, and if it is looked at ‘that way’, through a different lens, certain other things will come to the surface.

For example, if looked at through functionalist lens an appraisal system ‘looks like’ a rational instrument for identifying management development needs. Alternatively if looked at through a constructivist lens it could be understood as a vehicle for the production (and reproduction) of cultural norms. Alternatively again, if looked at through the lens of labour process analysis it becomes an instrument of control through the assertion of managerial prerogative. Lastly, if a ‘dialogic’ postmodernist lens is adopted it can be understood as a discursive practice in which its power effects are self-disciplining.

In this thesis I have adopted this approach so that in chapter 6, I explicitly adopt a functionalist lens and examine the material through the vocabularies associated with this discourse. For example the extent to which the MD/ME arena is can be understood as

achieving individual and corporate objectives. In Chapters 7 – 9, I consciously shift the focus and the vocabulary to move round the discursive distinctions made by Mabey & Finch-Lees (2008:23) and Alvesson & Deetz (2000: 24) in order to pay attention to different aspects of the empirical material and draw on different paradigmatic discursive resources to progress this. Thus, Chapter 7 errs towards an exploration of the sense-making and meaning construction of the *HR professionals*. Chapter 8 pays attention to issues of power and control in pedagogical and curriculum issues through an exploration of the *academic managers*' perceptions and Chapter 9 pays attention to issues of domination, subjugation and resistance drawing on a dialogic discourse to explore the *participants*' experiences.

Thus, in each of chapters 7, 8 & 9 the theoretical lens focuses on each of the three sets of stakeholders in turn, HR professionals, academic managers and participants respectively and each of these three chapters draws on slightly different vocabularies to emphasise the different concerns of constructivist, critical and dialogical discourses.

The guiding thread in this theoretical and epistemological endeavour throughout the thesis is an adherence to developing 'critical insight' drawing on a dissensus orientation which seeks to disrupt everyday common-sense and naturalized categories. In this regard the research stance is both *anti-positivist* and *critical*, drawing on the concepts from labour process analysis (in its reformulations that eschew economic determinism and realist ontology), Critical Theory and postmodernism. These preoccupations were discussed in the previous chapter in terms of a conceptual framework but they are presented here in order to transparently surface the epistemological concerns which inform the methodological stance and values underpinning the thesis. The logic of the research stance is to advance a multi-discourse analysis in the interrogation of the empirical material generated by the research questions but through the use of an 'interpretative repertoire' which facilitates uses of 'critical' theories that emanate from both neo-realist and subjectivist ontological positions. Thus the deployment of an 'interpretative repertoire' facilitates an exploration of issues to do with power that might be at the boundaries of these theoretical traditions.

The rationale for the inclusion of a ‘functionalist view’ (chapter 6) in an otherwise anti-positivist and critical stance is to highlight the taken-for-granted categories and understandings that accompany the MD/ME arena and to surface the limitations of such enquiry. In doing so this does *not* indicate ontological and epistemological multiplicity. I am clear that I proceed from a ‘subjectivist’ and ‘constructivist’ rather than ‘objectivist’ stance. Rather, it is included as a *discourse* of management development and one that especially the HR professionals and the participants most readily drew down to describe and articulate their perceptions and experiences. However, as can be seen from the chapters which follow it, a functionalist ‘story’ is one which disguises other more revealing aspects of the empirical material and one that acts as a mechanism of discursive closure in the MD/ME arena

4.4 Epistemological commitments in the research

Adopting a constructivist / subjectivist ontological stance has epistemological implications for research. In suggesting respondents’ subjective experience as the legitimate site of social enquiry ‘interpretative’ also implies the procedures commensurate with pursuing it. It is unlikely that the data required for conducting interpretative research will be generated through large scale surveys for lots of ontological and technical reasons. Probably the most significant of which is that, questionnaire construction requires an a priori commitment to ‘fixed’ ontological categories in the narrative construction of questions or scales (e.g. Likert [1961] scale, moving from agree to disagree etc.). In my experience, this cannot be sufficiently addressed or tempered with the addition of the odd ‘other’ or ‘any further comment’ response box.

The gathering of qualitative data for interpretative research eschews survey-questionnaire approaches not simply because it is better to get a sense of the respondents’ opinions in a face to face context. Rather, in interpretative research the researcher is required to minimise the extent to which he or she explicitly or inadvertently ‘frames’ the respondents’ world views. This is quite difficult, even in interviews, to avoid asking questions in such ways that lead respondents to predictable answers, but interpretative

research that explicitly sets out to establish how others see the world has to tread carefully in this regard. The tendency in ‘survey’ approaches, and in some forms of questionnaires and interview schedules, is to collapse back into a positivist enquiry. Social phenomenon is attributed meaning through the very categories (vocabularies) used in data generation which frame the respondents’ view of reality.

By contrast, in constructivist epistemologies the point is to explore the respondents’ understandings meanings and worldview. This aligns with Weber’s (1964) concept of ‘*verstehen*’ which is an explicit attempt to understand the meaning of action from the actor’s perspectives, entering the world of the actor and empathising with their concerns. Thus the epistemological commitments in this research were explicitly to solicit material (data) which captured respondents’ experiences, perceptions, meanings, motives, attitudes and feelings and such a stance concurs with the collection of qualitative data (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Silverman, 1993).

The validity of a ‘stakeholder approach’ in data generation

Qualitative data is epistemologically commensurate with constructivist approaches precisely because of its phenomenological commitments. These are firmly focussed on making sense of respondents’ experiential understanding of social phenomenon (Patton, 2002: 107). It is however appropriate here to point out that this thesis is not exclusively concerned *per se* with the rich and complex experiences of the respondents because it is also concerned with producing theoretical analyses emerging from their descriptions. From these analyses and following the precepts in deploying an ‘interpretative repertoire’ the project is to explore issues of power. In other words the research and this thesis is intended to ‘go beyond’ the respondents’ world view and, whilst paying attention to them, to *interpret* their experiences and observations in the light of broader theoretical commitments.

In the light of Burgoyne’s (1997: 61) proposition that the management learning arena is one in which there are a plurality of interests which are played out and reconciled or not, I was inspired to think of the MD/ME programmes in this study in just such terms. That is as an arena in which there exist a multiplicity of stakeholders each with their own concerns, interests and experiences. Elsewhere (1998: 187) he has elaborated extensively

on the use of a stakeholder analysis as a vehicle through which aspects of management learning might be explored. In locating it in the spectrum and history of research methods Burgoyne argues that it has much to contribute as a theoretical and analytical device moreover it is, he claims (ibid), useful as a general data gathering approach.

In this research it is the latter use to which I employed the notion of stakeholder. ‘Stakeholder’ as such does not inherently align with any specific ‘ontology’ or ‘epistemology’ but can be used as a heuristic device to make decisions about which aspects of social phenomenon can be focused upon for the purpose of data generation. Burgoyne asserts that at the strategic level of conducting research it can be aligned with qualitative data along three propositions. Firstly, because it allows for an exploration of the subjective realities of different stakeholders who experience the same phenomenon differently (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Secondly, situations are not necessarily manifestations of unitary purposes but are created through the interaction of multiple purposes and agendas. Lastly because, following anti-positivistic proclivities, much behaviour is the manifestation of ‘cultural software’ that actors have internalized rather than it be regarded as a “fixed reality across people and over time” (Burgoyne, 1998: 189).

Thus stakeholders make sense of social phenomenon subjectively and in their social and historical contexts which includes, in this research, their organizational contexts. Inspection of the term ‘stakeholder’ suggests that ‘stake’ refers to two possible frames of reference, firstly that of ‘territory’, for example the MD/ME arena and secondly to the idea of ‘marking out’ a position in that territory as in the anchoring of a set of interests. The holder of a stake thus has an ‘interest’ which might be in concert, or in conflict, with other interests and indeed is suggestive of the possibility that others’ or one’s own interests might be ‘usurped’ (Burgoyne, 1998: 90). In this way framing the respondents as stakeholders prompts a scrutiny toward the ‘interests’ played out in the arena and permits a political mode of analysis.

The choice of stakeholders is in itself a political and discursive act. In the identification of some, not others, as the focus of research, implicitly and explicitly implies two things. The first concerns what Alvesson & Deetz (2000) term the problem of ‘presence and absence’ in which some interests are apparent and not others, and in this research there are many

‘absences’ of stakeholders who have ‘interests’ but who are not included. Most notably, those organizational members who would like to be part of the arena but who are not, and those organizational members who become *subject to* organizational change as a result of the outcomes and activities of the arena and whose ‘interests’ may or may not be served by these effects. Secondly, is the effect of what Deetz (2003: 31) calls ‘language as a system of distinction’ which pays attention to some aspect of the subjects’ identity and suppresses other aspects. So for example, in this research attention is given to the HR professionals in their professional roles, thus it is a specific construction of identity emphasising their organizational role rather than other aspects of their humanity. Similarly, with the university academic managers and the participants, the language employed in naming them draws attention to specific identity aspects. In each of the chapters pertaining to each group of stakeholders (see Chapters 7, 8 & 9) I attempt to reflexively acknowledge the effects of discursively constructing them in the way that I have through the research.

4.5 A rationale for the organizational case studies

Burgoyne’s point that, ‘interests are played out in specific contexts’ (1997), draws attention to another dimension of the research that concerns its focus on four organizational case studies. In setting out on this research I was most convinced that the congruence within the stakeholder groups was of primary significance (that is, I believed that there would be more commensurability within each stakeholder group than between them) and indeed there is a degree of commensurability within them as can be seen from the empirical data. However, it became increasingly clear through the period of data generation and its subsequent analysis, that the specific organizational contingencies which framed the MD/ME arenas were significant to how the actors made sense of the role and purposes of the MD/ME arenas and their engagement within it. To this end it became increasingly important to specify what those contexts were and required the production of the ‘case study profiles’ (see Chapter 5) to elaborate this.

Methodological choices are not exclusively informed by the researcher's ontological and epistemological commitments. There are other determinants and influences concerning the particular methodologies adopted. Bryman (1998) has observed that there are 'technical' as well as philosophical considerations and justifications for adopting qualitative methods and the lines of enquiry in this research specifically require such an approach. The choices of qualitative method are not 'prescribed' by one's philosophical stance but rather they have to be instrumentally viable, or useful (Symon & Cassell, 1998). In this respect it was deemed appropriate to adopt a case study approach to solicit empirical material from different organizational contexts. Primarily, this decision was driven by a pragmatic opportunity because, in my own role as MBA Director in one of the Universities here (University of Humber) and subsequently as a deliverer of a Research Methods Module at East Council (on behalf of the University of East Coast), I had 'access' to the case study organizations and the respective stakeholders.

Much case study research is conducted through the careful selection of organizations on the basis of some characteristics that meet the criteria demanded or inferred by the research questions. Clearly the case study organizations selected for this research met that specific criterion, in that they all were involved with in-company credentialed programmes. However, the 'selection' is described here as 'pragmatic opportunism' with regard to my proximity and access to the organizations and respondents. This is not an inconsiderable issue in social research particularly that which depends on qualitative data. Techniques which generate data considered to be valid in qualitative approaches (semi-structured interviews, ethnographical methods, participant observation) all require painstaking and time-consuming effort, not only on the part of the researcher, but also of the researched and this is often the 'nub' of the problem. Crompton and Jones attribute the dearth of in-depth empirical studies of organizations to the problems of gaining access (1988: 69) and how this is particularly difficult when 'cold calling'.

In determining that the organizations with which I already had connections would be suitable territory in which to conduct the research, the thorny problem of 'access' was partially resolved. 'Partially' because there still remains the difficulty of insinuating one's self into the busy diaries of the respondents. Moreover, all of the HR and academic managers were known to me as clients or colleagues respectively and I had conducted

admission interviews or taught many of the participants as they entered or travelled through the programmes. In this regard I could characterize myself as a participant observer and I say more on this below but for the moment I wish to further justify the use of my connections to select³ the case studies.

Buchanan *et al.* (1988) concur with Crompton and Jones (1988) that ‘access’ is the paramount issue in attempting to undertake qualitative enquiry. They observe and experience, that despite much literature extolling potential researchers to undertake systematic approaches to the selection of fieldwork sites, by far the most effective strategy is an ‘opportunistic approach’ (1988: 53). Fieldwork, they claim, is fraught with tension between what is theoretically ideal and what is practically possible. They paint a backstage picture of adhocery and instantaneous decisions whilst the front stage end result is a well-crafted conventionally sequential presentation of the material. Moreover they do not characterize ‘opportunistic access’ as an any less desirable form of access than ‘systematic selection’, rather the opposite.

“There is no standard or conventional way to ask for access. We have been most successful where we have had a friend, relative or student working in the organization” (Buchanan *et al.* 1988: 56)

The case studies in this research were selected on the basis that in all four case study organizations I had access to the three sets of stakeholders as outlined. Furthermore, in contrast to some of the other companies I had worked with I had a more rounded understanding of these four organizations from my personal experience, having in three out of the four cases been party to their initial approval (with the exception of East Council). In three of them I had undertaken some delivery on the programmes (with the exception of Glass Co). In the final selection I had more or less equivalent access to each of the stakeholder groups through personal and professional connections. In this regard I can compare the resulting data sets as equivalent or similar to many other researchers in the field of management learning who rely on localized personal and professional contacts as an appropriate media to a site of fieldwork and to legitimate, valid sources of empirical

³ ‘selection’ is still an appropriate term to use as at the time of undertaking the empirical research I was associated with seven different companies undertaking similar programmes.

material. (Elliott, 2008; Reynolds & Trehan, 2000; Griffiths *et al* 2005; Currie & Knights, 2003).

In selecting the four case studies one other factor influenced my decision and that was to embrace two public sector (service) organizations and two private sector (manufacturing) organizations. This was more out of a concern for symmetry than any underlying analytical aspiration. It provided a means of generating insight in very different types of organization, though as it transpired, many other factors were more significant than the dimension of public or private ownership.

4.6 Research procedures

Having outlined the rationale for the case study organizations and for a stakeholder approach to the research methodology, I now turn to the more practical aspects of conducting the research. It is worth reiterating here the research aim and questions to recall that they are generated from within an inductive approach, that is to say that the research is exploratory without clear pre-determined ideas about what would be generated from operationalizing the research strategy.

Research Aim

- An exploration of the ways in which conflicting purposes, values and interests can be detected in the MD/ME arena and to what extent are these reinforced, reconciled and proliferated.

Research Questions

- In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development in these contexts?
- To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders to the MD/ME programmes?
- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?

- What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

It is implicit in adopting a stakeholder approach, even as a strategic (organizing) device, that the tendency will be to surface contrasting realities and the interactions of meanings between groups. It does therefore offer comparative possibilities between stakeholders and, in this research, within and between organizational settings (Burgoyne, 1998: 203).

In order to facilitate the generation of a rich set of data and subsequent to the selection of the case study organizations, I determined the sample of respondents from the stakeholder groups. The case study organizations numbered four with six HR respondents; the academic managers (five in total) came from two university contexts, the University of East Coast and the University of Humber. Altogether the participants numbered forty two. This latter data set was constructed from responses to a universal request sent to a completed cohort in each case study organization. ‘Completed’ in the sense that in each case they had achieved their final award and graduated (though not necessarily been ‘conferred’) within a period of approximately six to nine months prior to the ‘interview encounter’. In designing the research thus I managed the ‘fact’ of my programme directorship/lecturer role in such a way that the ‘research interview’ could not be construed as relating to their success or otherwise regarding academic achievement. Though it is likely that my ‘roles’ other than that of researcher might anyway have framed aspects of their responses for reasons which are discussed below, I do not believe this to have compromised the research. Thus, selection into the data set was voluntary on the part of the participants’. Sufficient numbers from each of the cohorts did volunteer enabling me to feel comfortable that a representative range of issues could emerge.

The interview process

The interview material was collected over a period of approximately two years, this lengthy period was in part to do with waiting for specific cohorts in the different organizations to complete and not least to do with juggling my own busy job and life (my son was thirteen and troublesome and my mother’s health was failing), working around the commitments of the respondents and fitting in PhD requirements generally. The conduct of the interviews of all respondents took place in their own workplaces. This was a

conscious choice on my part, to de-emphasise my ‘other-than-researcher’ roles as well as to accommodate their time constraints and encourage co-operation. Each interview undertaken took between one and two hours during which time I both recorded (on cassette tapes) and took notes of what was said. The interviews were guided by a very loose framework of five or six ‘prompts’ that provided a ‘structure’ but which could be flexible in its deployment in the interview encounter. In this, the interviews can be characterized as ‘phenomenological’ designed to attain material which provided an in-depth understanding of the respondents’ experiences and perceptions (Thompson et al., 1989) and explore their subjective realities (Mason, 2002). The prompts used typically were, see below

Me to HR professionals: OK, it would be good to hear a bit about your job and how you came to get involved with this particular management development programme

Me to academic managers: OK, tell me about your involvement with these (this) in- house programmes

Me to participants: OK it would be good to hear about your job and how you came to be on this programme

Such open ended conversational approach tended to solicit interesting and lengthy narratives and if it did not naturally flow into issues concerning the purpose of the programme I would follow with:

Me to all: Tell me about what you think the programme is intended to achieve both from your own perspective and from the perspective of the organization?

and

Me to all: to what extent did it achieve these different goals?

and

Me to all: What kinds of things helped achieve those goals and what kinds of things got in the way?

and

Me to participants: How did it feel, studying in your own organization?

Me to academic managers: What is it like working on in-house programmes? How is it similar to or different from your usual day job?

and

Me to all: what would improve it for everyone?

and

Me to all: Are there any areas that we haven't chatted about that you think is worth discussing about the programme (s)?

To characterize this as an 'interview schedule', would be to over formalise what was a more free-flowing and informal engagement. Though the interviews were taped I asked at the outset if the respondents felt comfortable with that and suggested that we switch it off if it 'got in the way' of the discussion. Mostly, it did not interrupt the encounter, though in some instances, the point at which the tape was switched off prompted the emergence of other more critical issues, at which point it was useful to make the odd note manually to capture what otherwise would have been lost. In the majority of cases it was evident that as an 'interpersonal encounter' the interview / discussion / conversation was welcomed as a space in which the respondents were pleased to have their view sought out and paid attention to.

The value of less formal means of soliciting qualitative data and in minimizing hierarchical power in interviewer/interview relationships has been highlighted particularly in the feminist social research literature (Oakley, 1981; Roberts eds., 1981; Finch, 1983; Stanley, eds; Gluck & Patai, eds; 1991) as both a political issue and as an approach to research that is very effective in the sense that it is inclined to facilitate more revelation of the subject's thoughts, meanings and experiences. I return to the issue of politics below but for the moment stay with the research process.

4.7 Data Analysis

Following the interviews I transcribed the tapes together with my notes so that I accumulated a voluminous amount of overwhelming material. At one level this was fantastic, but at another level it became the source of stress and paralysis, whilst I grappled with the ‘problem’ of how to manage it and construct a coherent analytical narrative. Most of the methodology textbooks gloss over this crisis stage in the research process assuming that the researcher has a predetermined plan of how the data might be systematically analysed. I detect the opportunity for a different type of text book aimed at this crisis point. In reality, I did not have such a systematic plan which, coupled with a lack of deft software-analysis skills, left me adrift with a mountain of empirical material and a set of highlighter pens. I would like to reveal a much more suave story here but no, the data was a monster!

In more positivistic research this presents less of a problem as the data is compared to clear cut hypotheses in order to ‘prove’ or ‘refute’ them but qualitative data gathered inductively specifically opens up the uniqueness of the subjective experiences, eschewing its easy alignment with predetermined categories. This is the point at which a judgement has to be made and the decision making at this point is crucial; looking for similarities and differences in the data “looking for commonalities and differences in behaviour, reasons, attitudes, perspectives” is a dominant aspect of qualitative research (Boeije, 2002: 393). Case study analysis, it is suggested (Miles & Huberman, 1994) lends itself to either ‘case oriented or variable oriented’ analysis but in my research I had the added complexity of looking across the case study organizations *and* within *and* between the stakeholder groups from which to identify themes and patterns. At this point I identified several themes which seemed to highlight similar and different perception of the programme under the headings of:

- Role and purpose of the programme
- Individual and organizational outcomes
- Cultural enablers and constraints

- Academic and institutional tensions

In determining and ‘coding’ for patterns the process at this point involved scrutinising the data for recurring themes (Silverman 1993). Subsequently, I rewrote the ‘findings’ according to ‘theme’ but this was insufficient to capture the richness and distinctiveness of each specific organization. Consequently I re-wrote the findings according to ‘stakeholder’ groupings.

It is possible to characterise this stage in the data analysis process as one of deep immersion in the data. Indeed one early attempt to ‘write up’ the findings relied almost exclusively of respondent quotes with little interpretation or theorizing to accompany them. Evaluating this stage of the proceedings now, with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to conclude that I was initially intimidated by the data and expected it to tell its own story. Silverman (1993: 47) has observed that qualitative data, used ‘unintelligently’ can ultimately degenerate for a form of empiricist research in which the data becomes a smoke screen for underlying but unacknowledged guiding theories. Thus it became necessary to make explicit the direction of travel in the research.

It was during these re-writing episodes that I returned to the research questions to unlock a suitable structure for the re(presentation) and analysis of the empirical material. It was at this point that I determined that the map of management development discourse prompted by Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 23) drawing on the characterization of management research by Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 24) as discussed above and in Chapter 3, could be utilized *both* as the means by which the data could be analysed *and* organized. Accordingly, the empirical material is (re)presented and theoretically analysed in the thesis according to the structure suggested by the discursive distinctions of ‘functionalist’, ‘constructivist’, ‘critical’ and ‘dialogic’ and focussing (with the exception of the functionalist chapter) on each of the different stakeholders.

Having made this decision it was clear that I could not analyse each of the stakeholder groups through each of the discourses of management development as this would have resulted in twelve separate sets of analyses. Thus the researcher’s hand (my hand) is evident in determining the contours of the research. In this research it is apparent through the decisions made as to which empirical data to include /exclude and equally importantly

in the decisions about what empirical material will be theorised through which discourse. It would have been equally plausible to scrutinize the data emerging from the academic managers or the HR professionals through a dialogic discourse, but having decided that the adoption of a multi-discourse approach to the data would contribute substantially to the field it became incumbent to work with the data generated by each of the stakeholder groups according to the key assumptions underlying each of the discourses.

What is important here is how just how significant the values and priorities of the researcher is in the creation of the story of the research, thus as Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 149) indicate it is more appropriate to talk about the *generation* of empirical data and the *accomplishment* of research than it is to claim to be representational of reality. This has an implication for the extent to which ‘truth claims’ can be made for the ensuing conclusions rendering them inherently tentative and emergent. This point is developed further in section 4.8 below.

It is worth reiterating here that in adopting this as a means by which the narrative could be structured it was not my intention to produce four competing paradigmatic analyses but rather, in each of the Chapters 7, 8 and 9 to pay attention to what they emphasize as ‘discourses’ of management development. The overriding theoretical considerations were to use an interpretative repertoire (look at the same social phenomenon in different ways) but with a concern to generate critical insight.

4.8 Validity of qualitative data and matters of reflexivity

As previously discussed in 4.7 above, the researcher's hand is evident in construction of a particular account from the empirical material generated. Thus it was my decision to deconstruct the empirical material in the following way:-

- HR professionals stories according to a ‘constructivist’ discourse
- Academic managers according to a ‘critical’ discourse
- Participants according to a ‘dialogic’ discourse

The rationale for these choices concern my own commitments in the research including an ontological commitment to a subjectivist ontology and a philosophical / theoretical commitment to developing critical insight.

It is also worth drawing attention to one other salient point in relation to the researcher's hand in the research. In presenting the material, as I have in chapters 6 to 9, I have conveyed something of the respondents' stories but, as indicated, in the telling of the stories the contours reflect my concerns and aspirations. Moreover I am in the research as a member of faculty, a colleague of the academic managers, and a programme leader to the HR professionals, I am very present in the site of the research and I hope to have demonstrated in this chapter how, in my role as a researcher, I have influenced the forthcoming account. I have not made myself so visible in the accounts that follow. In some regards this research and thesis might have taken shape as a piece of auto-ethnography (Holman Jones, 2006; Coffey, 1999) and this was considered as a possible approach. Ultimately I considered that I was present enough in the case study contexts, the empirical data generation and the construction of the research accounts and data analysis. These considerations led me to conclude that robustness and validity would be enhanced if I were, as far as possible to focus the lens on the accounts of the respondents, rather than my own stories, concluding that there was enough of 'me' in them anyway.

Having described the process by which the empirical material was generated and how the research process progressed, it is appropriate now to turn to the concerns of 'validity' and 'reflexivity'. Positivist criticisms of qualitative research in general, and constructivist research in particular, centre on the accusation that it is inevitably partial and subject to the bias of the researcher who does not 'stand back from' but rather becomes immersed in that which is the subject of research. Thus, in opposition to 'objectivist' truth claims of positivism dependent as they are on internal/external validity, reliability and objectivity; Lincoln and Guba, propose an alternative set of validity criteria for constructivist research and qualitative data based on 'credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability' (1985: 301). Thus, the purpose of the qualitative research is to produce trustworthy and credible accounts of that which is investigated.

In part this is achieved through the careful construction and implementation of a research approach and design as befitting the overall aims of the research but there are some important distinctions between positivist and constructivist ontological and epistemological positions that challenge how the question of validity and reliability might be framed. In positivist constructions validity and reliability are scrutinised through which an *objective distance* is maintained between the subject and object in the production of knowledge (researcher neutrality, distance etc). In constructivist research, the point is to ‘get inside’ the head of the researched and to surface how the world appears to the social actors in it for example Whyte’s (1943) *Street Corner Society* and Beynon’s (1975) *Working for Ford*.

In this variation of social constructivism, as in many anthropological and cultural studies, the ‘subjectivity’ of the object (of research) is fore-grounded as the site of the research (therefore adopting a subjectivist epistemology) but the subjectivity of the researcher is not (therefore adopting an objectivist ontology). This formulates as ‘there is a real world, it comprises other peoples’ subjectivities, and I can represent those subjectivities more or less faithfully in my research, provided I pay attention to some conventions regarding qualitative research’ (my summary).

4.9 Reflexivity

In the above formulation it is important to consider the dynamics that exist between the subject and object in the research. In the generation of qualitative data it is important to acknowledge that power relationships are inherent in the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Such power relationships are not predetermined but dependent on the contingencies of the situation. So for example, in my earlier discussion of ‘access’ it could be conceptualized that organizational members have power in relation to researchers in their potential to permit or deny access.

On the other hand Finch’s (1983) accounts of feminist research specifically draw attention to the inequalities of power between the interviewer and respondent in favour of the

former, on the basis that the respondent might regard the interviewer as more knowledgeable, better spoken, representative of a powerful academy and so on. Therefore it is incumbent on the researcher to be mindful of the specific power issues inherent in the research process and in its (re)presentation as a text.

I have given this some thought in a number of different ways, one of which was alluded to earlier in making mention of the ‘politics’ of the interview encounter and the researcher /respondent relationship. In the construction of myself as a *researcher* I acknowledge that this aspect of my identity is not one with which my respondents would most readily associate with me. Indeed, even though I approached all respondents in the vein of ‘Can you give me some time to help me do some research for my PhD’ it is likely that they responded to me in relation to their association with me as ‘Jean the MBA Director’; ‘Jean, that quite friendly lecturer’; ‘Jean, that woman from the university’; ‘Jean, my colleague, friend, wife’⁴. In the light of this I have to consider that the respondents in the research will have variously understood my researcher role through their perceptions of my other roles. It is therefore possible that the HR professionals might have been minded to encode their responses in the context of ‘client relationships’; participants may have taken the opportunity to ‘air’ any disgruntlements as well as satisfactions about various aspects of the programmes; friends and colleagues (and husband) might conceivably have framed their discussions variously in relation to their interests and their perceptions of my interests and so on. However, an important step in the production of ‘credible’ research is to acknowledge areas of complexity and ambiguity in the process of data generation, and thus to review and interrogate the empirical material suspiciously, mindful of the ‘contexts’ and ‘interests’ now hidden in the accounts. This sensitivity is germane to the production of a ‘reflexive’ research account.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that I am a participant in a very immediate way in the research sites. I am around them as a programme director, as a tutor, in the classroom, examination boards and so on. In that sense the research is partially ‘ethnographic’ but I have chosen to ‘back ground’ my own personal experiences as part of

⁴ Yes, one of the academic respondents is my partner and colleague.

the explicit empirical material in this research in the sense that I do not produce or rely on ethnographic notes to enrich the data which emerges from the respondents. In this regard I am a participant in the research but not claiming the research approach as ‘participant observation’. It is undeniable however that these experiences inform my perceptions and understanding in a myriad of ‘un-pick-able’ ways.

There is a second formulation of ‘constructivism’ which attributes more significance to the language of ‘production of’ research accounts. In this formulation the subject / object dualism is more completely rejected (or collapsed) such that it is acknowledged that the researcher is present in the research, not merely as the conduit to represent the subjective realities of others, but in the active construction of meaning. Thus it is acknowledged that the research site, is the site of co-constructed meaning, the emerging social reality is relative to the interactions between people in moments of time and space and meaning is inter-subjectively ‘produced’ between researcher and researched. In other words, extending the example above about respondents perceptions of me, there is also the necessity to acknowledge my perceptions of them, and that the social interaction between us, based on past experience, current proclivities and future possibilities, is creative of the ensuing dialogue and meanings.

Accordingly ‘reflexivity’ is not merely about reflecting on the extent to which appropriate research conventions have been adhered to, neither is it about the extent to which dynamics of power in the research process have been surfaced (as in critical reflection), though it involves both of these processes. Additionally, reflexivity challenges or even presents ‘a crisis of truth’ in social research, for suddenly, the researcher is inextricably ‘present’ in the research as constitutive of meaning (Cunliffe 2003: 983). In this way reflexivity is embroiled with a crisis of representation as it questions how we relate to the social world and how we account for our own and others experiences (Clifford, 1986). It unsettles conventional truths about how the world can be understood and represented and in so doing emphasises the situatedness of knowledge and knowledge production. Cunliffe (2003) proposes that there are a number of important implications flowing from this. Firstly, concerning the need to be tentative in the ‘truth claims’ emerging from research and secondly, the necessity for researchers to take responsibility for their own

theorizing and it is to explore these ethical implications of reflexivity I now turn before concluding this chapter.

The outcome of research and the research process is the production of a text, narrative, in this instance a PhD document and it is pertinent to consider ‘truth claims’ and ethical ‘responsibility’ in the light of these issues and in the context of this research. Reflexive approaches, drawing on post-structuralism and postmodernism, draw to attention the powerfulness of language not only in the construction and deconstruction of meaning but also in its (re)presentation as a text. I earlier mentioned Deetz’s notion of ‘language as a system of distinction’ (2003:31) and it is relevant here to consider that research accounts create meaning as much as through what is not said as what is said, through a “constant interplay of presence and absence” (Cunliffe, 2003: 987). In this way it must be acknowledged that in the production of this text, attention has been paid to some stories and not others, some theories not others and some conclusions drawn at the expense of others. That it is one account amongst many other possible accounts, (ibid: 986). This is inevitable, though in laying bare the ontological and epistemological assumptions in the research stance I hope to have demonstrated a degree of reflexivity opening up my own philosophical commitments ‘to critically question so that we expose their situated nature’ (ibid: 985).

One final point here concerning ‘responsibility’ is the extent to which reflexivity, involving as it does responsibility for ‘one’s own theorizing’ has implications for the construction of a text and the proclivities of the author. In this I return to Kuhn’s (1962, 1970) paradigms and the socially and historically situated-ness of research. In declaring myself as a researcher committed to a particular ‘dissensus’ or critical stance in the research it is germane to acknowledge that I am of a generation, influenced by the civil and political movements of the 1960’s, from a working class background and a ‘mature’ student Sociology and Anthropology in the late 1970’s when it was still possible/desirable to study Marxism without having to ‘wash your mouth out’. I was active in left wing student politics and the women’s movement. I (eventually) got a job teaching Sociology and like many others similar to me ‘morphed’ into an ‘Organizational Behaviour’ lecturer in a Business School in the early 1990’s. (Chris Grey (2001) has observed the collective, historically located and institutional implications of numerous other similar stories for the

development of a more critical approach to management and organization and the emergence of CMS).

These autobiographical factors are not exclusively the determinants of my ontological, epistemological, theoretical (and political) commitments but they are part of how I make sense of the world, are part of the meanings I bring to the research context and how I interpret and constitute meaning. How could it be otherwise? In the construction of this research account however, I have attempted to be reflexive not only through the engagement with different discourses but consciously drawing attention to the instability and tentative nature of ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth claims’ produced through this work.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have developed what I began in the last chapter by further exploring the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the research in order to elaborate on the research stance and to reiterate its theoretical commitments. In order to accomplish this the chapter explores the methodological implications of utilizing Alvesson and Deetz’s (2000) concept of ‘interpretative repertoire’ in the way that it infers a subjectivist, constructivist approach to the generation of empirical material and the requirement of qualitative data. Moreover, it is argued that the generation of ‘critical insight’ is facilitated through an exploration of empirical material through the prisms of different discourses thus paying attention to multiple issues and voices in the research.

A rationale is provided for the use of the concept of ‘stakeholder’ as a principle by which the main actors are identified and comprise the primary research site. It also entertains the suggestion that there are competing realities and interests and renders them amenable to exploration. Similarly, I provide a justification for the use of four organizational case studies in which to examine the MD/ME arena and explain the process of ‘selection’ of both the organizations and participants.

In discussing the more practical aspects of the research process attention has been paid to more political aspects of the conduct of the research in addition to the mechanics of its execution. Undertaking qualitative research involves sensitivity to the issues that surround

and inhabit the research process, particularly the ‘interview encounter’, with regard to roles, perceptions and power relationships. In describing the process of, and decision-making in, at the stage of data-analysis I reiterated that the rationale for adopting a multi-discourse framework for structuring and analysing the data was to look at the data from different view- points as opposed to claiming ontological and epistemological pluralism.

Finally the chapter considered issues in validity and reflexivity and accepting the two as inextricably entwined as the validity of research is subject to the perceptions of those that judge it. Research and knowledge generation does not happen independently of social and historical processes but is the product of research communities who are ‘situated’ and subject to the knowledge constructing conventions as historically contingent. This rejects the idea of ‘theory-neutral’ language and neutral theory. A consideration of the ways that these propositions impact on the positioning of this research and its status as a research account is surfaced through the engagement with the concept of reflexivity and its attendant complexities.

5. Organizational Case Study Profiles: emerging tensions and conflicts

5.1 Introduction

The research for this thesis is based on four case study organizations, East Council, North Council, Caravan Co and Glass Co. The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a profile of each of the organizations paying attention to some particular themes and elaborating the management development contexts within which the management education programmes coalesced. Although the intention here is to provide a descriptive account of each case study inevitably, the telling of the story involves an interpretation of events and perceptions which emerged through the empirical data, my reading of it and my own preoccupations and proclivities. In the context of my research aim and questions, issues emerge which vie for further attention and these are developed and *theorized* in subsequent chapters of the thesis. In developing the case studies I drew on the empirical material from the interview, programme documentation, informal conversations and personal experiences gleaned from my interactions with the stakeholders within and between the academy and the organizational contexts.

The themes identified with which to produce these accounts are:-

Organizational type and HR orientation;

Relationship and relevance to business objectives;

Curriculum and Delivery;

Senior and line management commitment;

Inter-organizational (organizational / academy) interface and issues.

These themes are identified in order to tell the story of each organization, showing how the MD/ME programmes ‘worked’ in each case. The purpose is to provide an account of salient organizational factors relative to management development and the experience and

perception of the stakeholders in this research. The case study profiles reveal something of the local context of each organization. Describing each of the case studies in alignment with the five themes enables some useful comparisons to be made between them and also draws attention to what is distinctly different about each of them. What follows is an evaluative interpretation of each case study; the chapter ends with a tabular depiction of the case study organizations together with a narrative summary of key issues. In the narrative respondents are identified with anonymous first names and their roles as either HR(D) professionals (designated HR professional), academic managers or participants, throughout the thesis all respondent quotes are italicised so as to distinguish them from quotations from the literature.

5.2 East Council

Organizational type and HR orientation

East Council is a medium size unitary Local Authority. It came into being in 1987 following a re-organization of Local Government. It became responsible for a geographical and administrative area that was formerly part of a much larger regional County Council that was abolished. It employs around 10,000 people and serves a largely rural region. At the time of data collection, the Council prided itself on being ‘well managed’ and several of its services were awarded ‘Beacon’ status. Politically, the Council had a history of conservative control but with a low level of ‘activism’ amongst its elected members thus accommodating strong ‘Officer’ leadership. Apart from the strategic political leadership the Council was strongly ‘Officer’ rather than ‘Elected Member’ led, on operational and day to day matters. The political leadership did however wish to distance itself politically and managerially from its predecessor believing it to be profligate with public money and remote from its employees and its population. It supported the Chief Executive Officer’s ‘transformational’ leadership style with a focus on vision, mission and strategy.

The leadership and management regime was ‘managerialist’ and ‘centralist’ and it attached high significance to building a sense of ‘corporateness’ through the authority. Despite

being frugal in its general expenditure and service provision the Council has always demonstrated a high commitment to the development of its employees and its Elected Members. Faced with declining Central Government financial support year on year the Chief Executive claimed that innovation and change achieved through management development were pivotal to the Council's success and strategy.

A centrally located Learning and Development Unit managed these activities employing around eight professional learning and development advisors. This group delivers a wide range of courses and some customized activities. The Learning and Development team comprised a complement of staff with education delivery experience gained in Further or Adult Education and had a much stronger programme delivery orientation than a problem solving and consultancy orientation.

The Learning and Development function is part of a wider Human Resources Division with the Head of Learning and Development reporting to the HR Director. Despite the organizational location of HR and Learning and Development, the two functions are not strongly integrated. The HR function is a traditional 'personnel management' model (Beardwell and Holden, 1997: 21). The Learning and Development Manager holds his own budget and has autonomy to spend with a programme of activities agreed annually with the Council's Corporate Management Team. Effectively the centrally held budget exists to fund the centrally managed courses. Other budgets to support employee development are held by Directorates to fund non-centrally managed provision such as external short courses, university or college based qualifications etc. Throughout the Authority there is a system of Employee Development Review (EDR) that is managed by line managers. It is through this process that participants will be nominated to attend accredited management development programmes or any other short courses. The Council has a behavioural competency framework that is communicated widely throughout the organization. Development Centres for managers are used to diagnose training needs of individuals in relation to the competency framework. These Centres serve to reinforce the existence of the framework and inform the direction and content of management education and development.

The Council has a track record of having accredited management education and development available to its employees. It was an accredited Centre for the NEBSM, supervisory management qualification, and later embraced the Institute of Leadership and Management programmes. Its first university accredited programme commenced in 1995. The Council's stance was always to secure approval of external bodies to be able to deliver these programmes itself through its Learning and Development Team. The Council also embraced the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system and again became accredited as a NVQ Centre so that its own staff could deliver the qualifications. The Council's stated belief was that it could deliver accredited qualifications efficiently and that it could ensure relevance. The focus of research in this Council was participants on a university accredited MBA programme delivered in partnership between the university and the Council.

The Learning and Development Team saw themselves and were seen by others including the Chief Executive as having an 'organization development' orientation, aligning individual development to organizationally preferred behaviours and outcomes. Their function and their perceptions of it could be characterised as benign unitarism (Dibben *et al.* 2011: 65), through the development of managerial capabilities, individually and collectively, to facilitate better organizational performance. The co-ordination, delivery, assessment and general administration of the portfolio of management development programmes together with the assessment centres formed the basis of their main area of work.

At the time of data collection, the MD/ME programme (the MBA internally entitled, The East Council MBA) was on its fourth cohort of students. The programme was embedded in the Council's management development strategy in so far as it had a portfolio of provision with University of East Coast accreditation (embracing University Awards) including an undergraduate certificate (CMS). The management development provision loosely mirrored the organizational hierarchy in that, team leaders and lower level supervisors would join the undergraduate CMS and progress to higher level programmes commensurate with their position and career trajectory. Participant managers would have typically come through the CMS route though not necessarily depending on their own professional qualifications and backgrounds. Many participants were well qualified in their

own fields (Social Work, Law, and Engineering) but relatively new to business and management subjects. The participants were often in their mid thirties or more, with a good deal of experience. A typical MBA cohort would comprise 15-20 places.

Access to the programme was processed in accordance with University entry requirements but selection to the programme, occurred through East Council's appraisal process and generally candidates would, prior to the MBA stage have undertaken the Council's internal management competencies assessment centre (Development Centre) and have acquired feedback on personal and management development 'needs'. Whilst this provided an outward level of consistency and transparency regarding access to the programme, in practice there was much more demand than places and potential applicants and Directorate Heads lobbied on behalf of themselves and their service to secure places. Participation in the programme was perceived to be a symbolic acknowledgment of a participant's career development as well as a vehicle to acquiring qualifications that would enhance career prospects.

Relationship and relevance to business objectives

The programme was considered to be highly relevant to business objectives through its close association with the Council's strategic plan 'Striding Ahead'. This was a widely understood and shared perception amongst the different groups of stakeholders. The strategic plan was central to its service efficiency objectives and its achievement of modernising services in line with government reform of public service delivery and 'New Public Sector Management' (Ferlie and McNulty, 2004; Ferlie *et al.* 1996). East Council's vision was to be a 'top ten authority' and its pursuance of 'best service awards' was a deliberate strategy to enhance its 'Beacon' status as a progressive local authority. In considering the relationship between corporate objectives and the MD/ME programme the HR professional is very clear on this point that it was specifically intended to further the organizations goals:

"The original role and reason for setting up the management development programme was to do with one of its strategic aims to be a 'well managed authority', Darren (CEO) wouldn't be interested without organizational gain. Its all about 'Striding Ahead' and being a 'top ten' authority, the programme first and

foremost has to be seen, and is seen as aligned to business objectives and relevant to what we do and how we have to move forward”

(Wanda – HR professional)

One specific way that this was to be achieved was to encourage ‘cross directorate’ working as this was seen as crucial in breaking down traditional functional boundaries and finding more efficient means of service delivery. It was regarded as a key element of ‘best practice’ and an important aspect of the programme to be achieved through the process of bringing together managers from different Directorates and through the work-based projects. This was a transparent orientation of the programme and understood by the university academic manager as significant:

“At the outset of the programme the Chief Executive was very public about what the programme was about. That was the environment of Local Government, which was going to have to ‘make savings of 2%, in real terms, year on year in the delivery of services and that those savings were going to come through innovation and motivation’ and the MBA was seen as a main contributor to that agenda. They were really very clear about having strategic goals for the programme: Enhanced credibility for the Council, enhanced networking, breaking down the barriers of professional networks. Overall the goal was to enhance services and cut costs through cross directorate working rather than the sectional needs of individual directorates”

(Thomas – academic manager University of East Coast)

The overt focus on the organization’s strategy and objectives was not contested by the participants. On the contrary there was a broad consensus welcoming the opportunity to extend knowledge of the organization’s corporate goals and strategic thinking and how they and their respective departments fitted into that plan. There was a strong sense that what they were learning on the programme had direct relevance for how they could better understand and implement their roles.

“Getting to grips with Striding Ahead is not just about meeting the targets it’s about really understanding about how these can lead to better service delivery”

(Anna - participant)

“What I like about understanding “Striding Ahead” is that I know what we (in our department) are aiming to achieve and I can see what we are aiming for as an organization. To be honest, before I came on the programme I didn’t have a clue what it was about really, in fact I thought ‘what a load of rubbish’ but the course has made me rethink that and I think it is a good thing, knowing what we are about and where we are going”

(Stephen - participant)

East Council’s aspiration to be perceived as a progressive authority was to a great extent achieved in relation to the participants on the MD/ME programme. The existence of the programme *per se* reinforced that attitude and they frequently alluded to feeling proud to work for a ‘forward’ thinking authority and contrasted it positively by comparison with a neighbouring Council that was perceived to be ‘traditional’ and ‘backward’.

“My perception is that the organization is very forward moving, very much so. I actually rate this authority really highly, its good working for an organization that has a vision, it knows where it is going and knows what it wants to do. Running this course is part of that. They are actually putting their money where their mouth is. It’s a big plus that they do this management training, not many organizations would do that”

(Frederick - participant)

At East Council the programme was conceived as contributing to goals and strategies that were ‘change orientated’ to embrace ways of working thought to be attuned to a modernisation agenda in local government in which ‘partnership working’ both within the Council and in collaboration with external providers, was articulated as a key strategic goal . In the MD/ME programme this was reinforced as ‘best practice’. For example, much of the assessment encouraged ‘cross directorate working’ and this was valued. Both

the process of, and the content of the programme facilitated better understanding of organizational aims and objectives, developing participants' insight into management thinking and decision making.

Curriculum and Delivery

The programme was *validated* provision that is to say credentialed by the University who approved its conformance with sector standard bench-marks and applied its 'quality' and monitoring procedures, including the moderation of assessment tasks and student outputs and the application of all internal examination board procedures. This was mediated through a university nominated programme leader who acted as a link between the university's requirements and the East Council Learning and Development Team.

The curriculum largely followed the standard subject disciplines (Marketing, HRM, Finance etc) in line with campus based provision with a rather more public sector orientation and the substitution of a small number of modules to customize it to organizational requirements for example 'Performance Management' replaced 'Systems Thinking'.

In terms of 'curriculum content' the programme was highly customised to East Council's context with all assessed work focussing on work relevant issues. For example, at one juncture in the programme, the Project Management Module focussed exclusively on the use of 'Prince 2' , the Authority's in-house project management tool⁵ and the Strategic Management module devoted considerable time to elaborating on and examining implementation issues concerned with the 'Striding Ahead' five year strategic plan. The programme was seen to be integrated with the organization's competency framework in that these were reinforced in an early module on the programme and the assessment included, at least in part, the participants' critical reflection of how they judged themselves in relation to the framework and what personal development action plans arose from that consideration. This closeness of the curriculum to organizational competencies, priorities, plans and processes was, for the majority, welcome as they developed deeper

⁵ The exclusive focus on Prince 2 was subsequently revised to give the module a more generic orientation

understandings of the organization's direction and where they and their departments fitted in to the big picture.

Delivery was undertaken by East Council staff or their nominated deliverers (external consultants) who would be compliant with the University's 'recognised teacher status' policy which would require as a minimum that any deliverer on the programme was qualified at least at the level they were delivering. The exception to this was the delivery of the MBA Stage Research Methods module and the supervision of MBA dissertations both of which were undertaken by members of full time faculty of the university. Until the final stage of the programme it would be fair to say that the University was a relatively invisible actor in the piece as the only 'front stage' intervention until then was a university based induction programme, with the East Council Learning and Development Team managing all aspects of staffing the programme, administering assessments, sorting out library cards etc albeit within the University requirements and regulations and with designated academic and administrative support back on campus. The programme was delivered in modular blocks each requiring four days of input Thursday to Sunday, thus requiring time commitments from both the Council and the participants. Each stage of study (60 credits) taking just over a calendar (not academic) year to complete and was based at the Council's training venue.

The East Council programme, of the four case study organizations in this research, most closely resembled Stansfield and Stewart's 'two way partnership model of management education' where the commissioner (sponsoring organization) has a role 'in the design and sometimes even the delivery of the programme' (2007: 128) where the organization is central to the programme in a number of respects including its customization to organizational requirements. In the East Council model the in-house delivery, the tailoring of subject content and assessment to its internal strategy, policy and practice inevitably emphasised internal corporate goals and values and this was seen by participants as legitimate and relevant.

"Everything is linked to 'Striding Ahead', internal delivery, assessments, and there is the recognition that the MBA meets the required generic competencies that come

from the Leadership Development Centres, it all links together and it all makes good sense”

(Karen - participant)

“Well there are some pros to getting an insider view of things and you can’t question the relevance for our day jobs, but whether or not they are the best people from a subject point of view, that’s another matter, but on balance its a plus.”

(Clive - participant)

The programme fostered an ethos of ‘application’ encouraging participants to both extend and apply their learning from the programme to their workplace contexts. This might take the form of encouraging students to see how conceptual models might be used to enhance performance in their local contexts (an example might be team development or strategic management concepts) or by sharing learning with their teams. The HR professional and a participant give examples:

“John for example, he would go back after the sessions, have his team meeting the next day and they would say ‘right! What are we putting into practice today?’ People are receptive and want to know what’s going on and how they can improve”

(Wanda – HR professional)

“They are glad to be ‘in the know’. Two years ago the team knew nothing about it, they just kept their heads down and now they have all benefitted because of the wider understanding we have of Striding Ahead. It’s not just about being committed to achieving targets but being committed to why those targets are important”

(David - participant)

The programme’s prevailing orientation towards business objectives and priorities lead some participants to question whether there would be more merit in developing a wider,

more externally focused curriculum with more ‘university’ input but this tended to be a minority view. Generally, participants welcomed the opportunity to be privy to management thinking and to focus on internal strategy and practice, often referring to the MD/ME programme as ‘training’ with the significant advantage of acquiring a qualification perceiving this as advancing their intellectual and social capital.

Senior and line management commitment

In terms of the level of senior management support the MD/ME programme, could be characterised as ‘best practice’ according to the functional normative management development literature (Burgoyne 1988; 1997). The programme received a very high level of senior management support. In hard times when other budgets were cut the CEO was known for publically reiterating that the funding for the Master’s programme would be left untouched because it would be these that would deliver the year on year savings that had to be made as part of ‘Striding Ahead’. Moreover funding for the programme occurred through the annual business cycle and was held centrally so that it did not impinge on local training needs. Participants’ departments did not have to bear the cost so it was consequently perceived as more stable and embedded in the organization than it might otherwise have been.

“One interesting thing has been the level of support from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team. He has repeatedly said that wherever else we are making cuts we are leaving the training budget for the East Council MBA alone. He has always said ‘This is a priority for us, this is how we are going to move forward’ it gives us all confidence that it is taken seriously”

(Dorothy – academic manager)

The programme was highly visible in the organization in a number of significant and symbolic ways. Each cohort’s success was demonstrably celebrated by internal, in addition to the University’s, awards ceremony at which the CEO and/or members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), and line managers would be present and make congratulatory speeches, hand over certificates and have photographs taken with graduates. The internal news bulletin carried stories of cohorts’ and individuals’ success

and achievements, or savings made through the application of work-based projects which occurred at each stage of the programme.

“Darren (CEO) and his corporate management team have been right behind this (programme) from the very beginning and have seen it as central to getting the commitment of a good working culture amongst middle management. I don’t doubt the level of commitment and belief of the senior managers. They have been so supportive right from the beginning in being involved in the assessment of the projects and in the delivery of the modules. This sends out a positive signal, the students all want to know which senior managers will be involved in the delivery, but they are nearly all involved now. It’s almost as if someone is involved then they want to be too. But Alistair (Deputy CEO) is always involved with the final project presentations and it’s always in his diary, it’s always a priority. The students do go back and report that there is this level of support and commitment from high up. I am surprised sometimes, they turn out regularly on the Saturday mornings, the leader of the Council has turned out regularly and a couple of the cabinet members. So you can’t fault them really.”

(Wanda – HR professional)

Participation in the *delivery* of the programme mostly occurred at the CMS/DMS stages of the programme and all of the stakeholders interpret this as indicative of the high degree of commitment to it, for example, the Head of Strategy undertook the delivery of the Strategic Management module and the Finance Director led the Finance module. Additionally, different members of SMT would frequently attend aspects of different modules during weekend delivery sessions to give inputs or just generally offer visible support.

“There is an ongoing interface with the Corporate Management Team, their presence in delivery and assessment sends a strong message to the participants, that the programme, and they, are taken seriously, and more generally conveys CMT’s enthusiasm for management development. I think it is symbolically important for the participants”

(Thomas – academic manager)

Line managers attended presentations of work-based project findings and all participants were allocated organizational mentors to anchor the programme and its assessment to the workplace. At the MBA stage, dissertation projects were taken seriously and participants were appointed a ‘workplace champion’ whose role it was to oversee the implementation of any relevant recommendations. At completion of the projects all participants were individually invited to present key findings from the dissertation at a designated Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting. This was considered to be a high profile event and one which acknowledged the significance of the programme as a management development intervention not ‘merely’ the acquisition of the credentialed award. Participants saw their work from the programme translated into new working practices and this greatly reinforced that their outputs were perceived as relevant.

Senior management visibility in relation to the programme and the narratives that related it to corporate objectives and strategy reinforced senior management commitment and set the agenda positively for line management support too. The involvement in delivery, presence at assessment presentations and significant events, were understood by the Learning and Development Team, academic managers and participants alike, as symbolically significant as well as important mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of learning from the programme into the organization.

The programme was perceived to be at least partially connected to processes of promotion and career development. Participants were nominated through the Employee Development Review process (which had a ‘developmental’ rather than ‘targets and reward’ focus). At the level of narrative much managerial discourse emphasised that the Council was focussed on promoting from within and MD/ME programme was argued to be instrumental in this. There was also a strong narrative concerning the potential for managers to get promoted *outside* of their specialist professional area on the basis of their participation in the programme and the acquisition of a generalist qualification (i.e. the MBA). This mirrored and reinforced the ‘working across directorates’ narrative but as we will see later this was not necessarily borne out by the participant’s experience. Nevertheless, at least at the level of rhetoric, the programme was linked to succession planning and career development.

Inter-organizational interface and issues

The day to day management of the programme was undertaken by East Council's Learning and Development Team who took responsibility for scheduling, staffing, assignment submissions and first and second marking. The university managed quality assurance through a designated programme leader who managed moderation of student outputs, external examiner liaison and ensured proper conduct in relation to examination board procedures. Together the academic manager and the programme leader managed the relationship with East Council in terms of the Learning and Development Team – curriculum development, external examiner feedback, and quality enhancement. This was mainly 'backroom work'. From the perspective of the participants, the presence of the university relative to that of the organization was really only evident at certain points, for example, a campus based induction; certain aspects of assessment (all work-based assessment presentations attended and assessed by the academic programme leader) and attendance at celebratory events. The exception to this was at the MBA stage as described above in relation to Research Methods module delivery and dissertation supervision.

The University presence on the programme worked through the academic manager's relationship with the Learning and Development Team holding regular meetings and discussions about issues and progress, though this was mainly 'backroom' work. The University presence was more apparent, from the point of view of the participants at internal awards ceremonies and events where opportunities were taken by University staff and members of Senior Management Team to reinforce the success of 'partnership working' on this long standing relationship and provision. Moreover both the senior management of East Council and the University personnel referred to the relationship as a 'strategic partnership'.

Despite the relatively low profile of the university in relation to the conduct of the programme the credentialing of the programme with named awards was seen as a highly

significant factor in legitimising the programme and making it attractive to potential participants. This was a point of agreement between all the stakeholders

“The University adds enormous credibility to what we do, it really does. Right from the beginning, we sell it as a discreet university qualification and I would say it’s a critical factor in its success. Without the MBA it wouldn’t have anything like the power of the authority or the interest behind it”.

(Wanda – HR professional)

The programmes linkage to MBA sector benchmarks and the programmes conformance to university procedures were perceived to be a double edged sword. On the one hand this conferred the ‘power’ to enforce standards (of student outputs) and on the other it brought a good deal of unwelcome bureaucracy. With regard to the former, the authority of the academy was acknowledged to be an important factor in ensuring rigour not only of standards of work but of compliance to programme requirements; programme attendance, completing assessments on time, engaging in many extra-work activities and projects that would otherwise be unacceptable on a non-credentialed management development programme. The downside regarding the bureaucracy revolved around the academic institutional blockages to anything that was non standard provision and outside the undergraduate life-cycle; registering students, getting library cards, allocating academic supervisors outside of ‘normal workloads’ all provided major challenges and frustrations on all sides.

Summary

What is distinctive in this case study is the degree of consensus that existed amongst participants, the HR professional and the academic managers that the programme was first and foremost a management development initiative. The linkage with organizational strategy and objectives; senior management commitment; its espoused relationship to career succession and development; are acknowledged by the different stakeholders. In terms of normative/prescriptive management development theory, the East Council case most closely resembles the progressive and integrative models proposed by Ashton (1975) and Burgoyne (1988). Despite the consensus that the programme’s role is primarily a management development vehicle there is also an acknowledgment that participants’

primary reasons for engaging in it are related to individual benefits more than organizational gains. The relationship between organizational and individual objectives warrants further scrutiny and this issue forms the basis of discussion in the next chapter in which the tensions arising from this relationship are explored.

A second distinctive dimension of this case study is the extent of the East Council omnipresence throughout the programme. This omnipresence is facilitated by those very factors that emphasise its management development aspect concerning its relevance to business objectives, involvement of senior management and integration with wider HR policy and practice. Paradoxically, the programme's very success as a management development intervention gives rise to some rather interesting issues. On this MD/ME programme participants, and their progress throughout the programme, are very visible in the organization to their peers and to more senior managers. This is an aspect that they perceive to be both empowering and simultaneously to make them more vulnerable to judgement; judgement of others and judgement of themselves in relation to organizational expectations, also a factor which prompts closer attention.

5.3 North Council

Organizational type and HR orientation

North Council is a small Unitary Local Authority with approximately 3,500 employees. It came into being in 1987 following a re-organization that abolished a 40,000 employee County Council that had administered the area. The Council administers a part rural and part urban region in an estuarial location. The larger urban centres have a population together of around 130,000 whilst the population in the Council area overall is only around 160,000. The urban areas include parts with above average social deprivation, high unemployment, low educational attainment and poorer levels of health. Economic activity was very weak in relation to the national average. The Council has a history of labour control and 'active' elected members. The management of the Council at the time of the research was fairly traditional and transactional (Dalton, 2010: 22) in that it did not have

a highly developed approach to the ‘New Public Sector Management’ agenda (Ferlie *et al*, 1996). Management was participative and respectful of the roles and professional obligations of its directorates but this had the tendency to reinforce traditional boundaries and ‘silo’ ways of working. Strategic direction was delivered through politically led committees. Central management acted in a facilitating way whilst Directors and professionals had their own relationships with Committee Chairs (Councillors). Consequently ‘change’ in relation to a modernising agenda had been slow and not very evident. Unlike East Council, North Council was more limited from a resource point of view due in part to its small size and struggled to deliver appropriate levels of service to a diverse population as it was unable to achieve the economies of scale that larger authorities benefit from.

A centrally located Learning and Development Team was in place with its Head reporting to Central Human Resources. The Learning and Development Team consisted of six people who were located in, and seen as very much part of a general HR team. The roles of the training and development specialists were seen as flexible in regard to the wider team undertakings. They were regularly deployed on projects that had a more general HR remit, so for example, one respondent was engaged in a performance management and benchmarking project as well as the MD/ME programme described here.

The HR function was not well integrated with the organization’s strategic objectives as described in East Council; rather it was reactive and ad hoc and this also characterised the HRD roles and function which could be described as ‘training administration’. They had a significant role in relation to collecting data on and identifying training needs across the organization, (for example, specific professional safeguarding compliance requirements for social workers or other professional prerequisites) as well as identifying and commissioning training from external providers concerned with other general up-skilling requirements.

The training team was remote from the strategic management of the authority and although competent in the roles it performed it did not enjoy high status. The training team saw its role as implementing training programmes which were evident in most local authorities. These were short skills courses and some NVQ accredited management development

programmes for Supervisors through to senior managers though these were not well subscribed to. The training team did not deliver the management development programmes. They produced specifications of needs and then procured delivery through selection processes. Typical deliverers were the local Further Education College, a University, NVQ providers from the FE College and private companies. The Council had accreditation arrangements with the Chartered Management Institute and the Institute for Leadership and Management.

The Head of Learning and Development had a budget for commissioning off-the shelf short courses programmes but not for the MD/ME programme which was funded through the departmental training budgets of programme participants. The decision to have an accredited programme was recommended by the training team but had ultimately to be agreed by the Corporate Management Team. Within the Authority there was a process of appraisal in place but little evidence of integration into other HR systems. North Council had developed its own set of ‘management competencies’ though these had been developed from within the HR department from ‘best practice’ models with little input from the Council’s management team and were consequently not very widely known about or ‘owned’. Furthermore they were not integrated within the appraisal system though they did form the basis of the ‘curriculum mapping’ exercise that was undertaken prior to the development of the MD/ME programme.

At the point of data collection the MD/ME programme was in its second year of existence with one active cohort at each stage of the CMS/DMS structure. It was not connected to other levels of provision and not integrated with the management hierarchy in any structured way as was evident at East Council. Anyone who had ‘team leader’, ‘supervisor’ or ‘manager’ as part of their job title was deemed eligible to apply. There was not a coherent ‘over-arching’ management development offering that related to the organization’s management hierarchy and career structure. Up to this point in time the available management development programmes on offer had comprised a portfolio of ‘off the shelf’ courses run over one or two days that addressed such issues as ‘induction’, ‘time management’, ‘project management’ ‘managing disciplinary procedures’ and so on. In other words there existed a range of provision designed to fill knowledge and capability gaps that were very much about individuals’ knowledge and skills but were not

underpinned by a philosophy of individual and organizational development nor were they specifically designed to promote linkage between these levels of performance.

The focus of research in North Council was participants on an accredited CMS/DMS programme in partnership with the University of Humber delivered exclusively by university faculty but delivered ‘in-house’ within North Council at its own training premises.

Relationship and relevance to business objectives

The North Council’s MD/ME programme had been initiated by the energies mostly of one individual who had a role in interpreting the some of the implications of, and possible responses to, some specific aspects of a recently failed Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). CPA’s were one of a series of audit reviews which emerged from the 1997 Labour Government’s agenda for local authority modernisation and the reform of public service provision. Part of this agenda was a radical refocusing of perceived traditional roles and inertia in local government, a shift to ‘service enabling’ rather than ‘service provision’ and a focus on joined-up partnership working (Laffin, 2008). The introduction of the CPA followed on from its predecessor ‘Best Value’ as the means by which local authorities were evaluated in terms of whether or not they were fit – for – purpose in this ‘brave new world’. Successful authorities could put themselves forward for competitions and awards for ‘Beacon’ status which drew status and acclaim for Senior Managers. East Council, above, was one such authority, but those coming out with a low CPA score had to take remedial action or face the indignity of being directly administered by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. North Council was in this perilous position. A key negative aspect of the results of North Council’s CPA, as far as this research is concerned, is that the collective capability of management had been found wanting with few avenues for development for individual managers and too few processes aimed at organizational capacity building. As a consequence two initiatives were set in train, one was the decision to apply for Investors in People (IiP) and the second was the decision to proceed with the ME/MD programme addressed in this study. North Council had experienced difficulties in persuading its middle managers to engage in development and it

was believed that offering a programme leading to credentialed awards would galvanise more interest in the management development agenda.

In some regards this account ‘reads into’ the situation rather more rational instrumentality than existed at the time. The inception of the programme was borne out of the initiative of the HR professional mentioned earlier. Having observed that a neighbouring authority was delivering an accredited management development programme she proceeded to lobby and establish senior management support for a similar programme to be adapted to the needs of North Council. After initiating contact with a local university (University of Humber) negotiations began over curriculum requirements. It is evident that both the CPA and iP form the backdrop to the development of this MD/ME initiative though it is also evident that it emerges from a much more localised interpretation of ‘what should be done’ in order to address those pressures. The HR professional demonstrates this when she says:

“The impetus came from the national agenda. ‘Best Value’ and of course the CPA have been really significant for us and lots of information came down to say what local government should be like. My ideas for what should be in the programme were really structured around what came out of those documents, like the community strategy, many of the things that we take for granted now but then they were a bit revolutionary”

(Alison – HR professional)

*“I guess there was a dilemma for us (in HR) between recognising that although we were doing a lot (of courses) on people management, we weren’t necessarily capturing peoples’ imagination to be better managers. In terms of external drivers the whole thing about ‘Best Value’ and the modernisation agenda for local government provided a basis for **not** managing in the way that we had always done. It was to see if we could do something different rather than just deliver a few new tools and techniques and facilitate the transfer of learning, new knowledge and actually doing something with it in the workplace, it could be about people becoming more aware managers”*

(Alison – HR professional)

Accordingly, the drivers from this perspective are distinctly about the strategic implications that flow from national developments in the sector which include the development of a strong cadre of ‘better’ managers, more responsive to change and doing things differently. In relation to the organization’s business objectives there is ambiguity about the relationship between the programme and what outcomes it might achieve. It is however, implied that the programme is conceived as an intervention with the potential to act as an ‘organization development process’ to bring about knowledge skills, and attitudes that can contribute to achieving a more progressive culture through the ‘transfer of learning’ and ‘doing something differently with it in the workplace’. Similar to East Council, the achievement of organizational objectives was not deemed to rest on the development of individual managers’ capacities but on the collective development of management and the improvement of management processes:

“its not about developing individual management competencies, though we do need those, but more than that, we need to be influenced by what the national agenda needs and we need to be doing that as a collective not just as individuals”

(Alison – HR professional)

Like many HR professionals, Alison subscribed to management development as the means by which corporate objectives might be furthered despite the ambiguity of what corporate objectives are, and what the relationship between the management development processes and the organization’s strategy consists of. Numerous commentators have observed this paradoxical situation in which the investment in management development is ‘more an act of faith’ than anything else (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 93; Lees 1992; Tamkin and Hillage, 1998). Indeed the HR professional at North Council is overt about this when considering the relationship between the MD/ME programme and corporate objectives she says:

“They (corporate objectives) weren’t at the forefront of my mind at the time, other than we (HR) weren’t doing any systematic management development, so I guess that it was a bit of a leap of faith on my part, to see what the impact could be, to get something on the agenda, actually deliver something that could make a difference”

(Alison – HR professional)

The pressure emanating from the failed CPA was also perceived by the participants as the Council's way of addressing corporate needs both in terms of strengthening management capacity and engaging in 'partnership working' with the university but there were more sceptical interpretations of the relationship of the programme to corporate objectives. Participants observed that the programme was more about being 'seen to do management development' rather than being interested in management development for its own sake. Moreover, there was a strong perception amongst the participants, and this was a view shared by the academic managers, that the programme, being initiated as a means by which 'managerial weakness' might be addressed, was underpinned by a 'corrective' or 'remedial' motive. These perceptions prompted a rather more cynical engagement in the programme on the part of the participants. Both these sets of stakeholders questioned the extent to which the programme authentically related to corporate objectives and attributed to it a rather more symbolic role through which the programme could be used to evidence good practice rather than enact it.

Curriculum and Delivery

The curriculum of the MD/ME programme in this case study closely followed the CMS/DMS as it was delivered on campus at the university. In order for the programme to be perceived as a management development programme rather than an exclusively management education programme, North Council's competency framework was used by the HR professional and the university academic manager as the basis of a mapping exercise to demonstrate alignment of module and programme learning outcomes to organizational competencies. After a fairly lengthy process the North Council in-house MD/ME programme mirrored exactly the on-campus open programme in 40 out of 60 credits at each stage of study of the CMS/DMS and the learning outcomes of the remaining credits (20 at each stage) were met by the requirements of work-based projects.

The programme was delivered week on week (one afternoon/ evening weekly) following semester patterns and delivered by the on-campus MBA faculty but at the host organization's training venue close to the Council's main office. Induction took place on campus and programme management was undertaken by the University administration

team. The programme was lead by the on campus MBA programme leader who also delivered on the programme (the academic manager in this narrative). To an extent this case study also conforms to aspects of Stansfield and Stewart's 'two way partnership model' (2007: 128) in the respect that the mapping took account of organizational requirements through the competency mapping exercise and, to a lesser extent, the work-based projects. However this was a process of managing each others' meaning in terms of the degree of 'fit' between organizational competencies and educational learning outcomes. Mapping the programme on to the organization's competency framework legitimised it as conforming to organizational requirements but in practice there was little difference in terms of content *and* delivery between the on-campus open programme and North Council's in-company programme.

From the academic manager's perspective this had the advantage of conveniently mirroring the on-campus provision and therefore avoiding a protracted and lengthy university programme approvals process and had a ready established staff resource that had ownership of their own specific subject disciplines.

From the participants' perspective this rendered the experience as one of being on an 'education' programme rather than a development programme. The curriculum was perceived to be relevant in a general sense but not in relation to their specific job roles or their own organization context. In commenting on the curriculum one participant observed that:

"It's a pity really, the subjects themselves, well I guess they are just what you expect on a management qualification but there wasn't much I could take back to my department. Of course the tutors obviously know their subjects but except in the odd case there's not much attempt to relate it to North Council. In fact there isn't any attempt to relate it to the public sector, some subjects, marketing for example – its all private sector – what's the point in that? I am not saying I didn't learn anything – I did – but I didn't learn much that's relevant to what I do"

(John – participant)

The only area of the curriculum that was explicitly focused on the workplace was the workplace projects and, partly because of the lack of connection between the projects and business objectives, generally they weren't much invested in by the participants or their line managers. Rather they were perceived to be 'a lot of hard work just to lie on a shelf'.

Senior and line management commitment

It is perhaps in this respect that this programme stands out from the other three case studies. Unlike the East Council model, University faculty was visible to participants through the delivery but the 'organization' was much less present. The presence of the Senior Management Team was evident only at the one point in the programme, that is, when the programme was introduced at a promotional event, and 'sold' to prospective participants as a significant opportunity for their own development as well as for the organization. Apart from this one occasion there was no presence, actual or symbolic, of any senior management.

The original competency mapping process linking the programme documentation which fore-grounded the organizations stated key goals (vision and core-values) were the sole means by which the programme's commitment to organizational development was reinforced. There were no symbolic presences of management on the programme, and no celebratory 'awards events'. Participants were not acknowledged within the organization as having undergone a management development programme and they were not drawn into organizational projects on the basis of newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Line managers seemed not to take an interest in the participants' work-based projects. Mostly they could not be persuaded to come to the presentations and in general they did not have much input or interest in the participants' choices of topics or progress on the course in general, other than a benign collegiate interest. There was little evidence of interest in whether or not the individual learning of the participants had wider organizational benefit or translated in any way as a contribution to more generic capacity building.

Progress on the programme was discussed at appraisals but only in so far as individual development was concerned. The programme was not perceived to be linked to promotional opportunities within the Council. Participants' reasons for joining the programme tended to focus on the extent to which it offered an insurance policy in the face of restructuring or downsizing rather than to render them more visible and promotable in the eyes of senior management. Certainly they did not see it even as an 'espoused' internal career route.

“Getting the DMS that’s what is important to me but internally that’s not what’s going to get you promoted. It’s still all about specific professional qualification not about general management qualification and you’re not valued for doing it, you’re not noticed, even my director didn’t know I was on it until really late on, maybe I am just cynical because they don’t want a lot of aggro about who does and doesn’t get funded.

(Keith - participant)

With the exception of the initial introductory event there was little internal publicity and participants had in some cases had difficulties in finding out about it. In another case the participant had been asked to 'keep quiet' about being part of the programme because his line manager didn't want a clamour of others requesting funding and putting unwanted pressure on the budget. Consequently there was not great competition to get on the programme as it was little known about and not seen as a progression route to promotion.

Admission to the programme was managed according to the University's admission process but candidates had been selected in or out prior to that in accordance with organizational perceptions of whether or not the applicant was at the right place 'hierarchically' to benefit. Application to the programme was made through Directorates to the HR department whose selection was then ratified or not by the academic manager. The selection process was, in that regard, remote from the normal line-management conduct of processes of appraisal and training needs identification thus reducing the line-manager's concern with and commitment to the MD/ME programme as a strategic initiative. Furthermore, although line managers were separate from selection decisions, funding had to be negotiated year on year by individual participants from their own

departmental budgets in competition with their peers requiring funding for professional updating. Funding for the MD/ME programme was therefore not seen by line managers as central to delivering core services and was potentially marginalised and participants were aware of this

“Really the Directorates are more interested in spending money on their functional areas, say ‘Health and Social Care’ but at the Corporate level they were more interested in demonstrating ‘Partnership working’ so that’s why they’ve got this course with the University.”

(Linda - participant)

Decentralised funding arrangements for the programme rendered it inherently less ‘stable’ than that of the East Council programme as pressures on budgets increased and participants knew that their participation in the current year might be the limit of their participation. These arrangements caused participants and the HR professional to question the degree to which there was real ownership of the programme by senior management and the university academic manager reinforced that perception in observing that

“To a great extent the programme was driven by Alison; yes the CPA agenda was the official rationale but without her there wouldn’t be a programme. She was keen to be seen to be proactive and this was a way to get herself noticed but as far as management was concerned I got the distinct impression that it was about ‘ticking boxes’. She had to continually argue for it and push it so she really was the main champion”

(Russell – academic manager)

Inter-organizational interface and issues

Programme management in all its operational aspects was managed by the designated MBA university administrative team. All scheduling, assignment management was undertaken within the remit of this administrative team and all quality assurance procedures of the programme ran together with the on campus postgraduate provision.

Academic leadership of the programme was under the auspices of the MBA programme director together with the nominated academic manager responsible specifically for the North Council programme and staffing was undertaken as part of the normal workload allocation of full and part-time members of faculty. Internal to the university, administratively, this was just another cohort of DMS/MBA students which of itself provided some difficulties.

The main interface between the university and North Council was between the academic manager and the HR professional who met on programme modules and held separate review meetings to oversee progress. There were some intransigent institutional issues that both found problematic. The university rules and procedures, particularly around assignment submissions, deadlines, getting extensions to deadlines for assessments “an absolute nightmare of bureaucracy” which impacted negatively on her in relation to the amount of time she spent negotiating the procedures on behalf of individual participants and soothing their indignation at being treated as ‘students’.

The academic manager sometimes struggled to get full-time faculty interested in delivering the programme because firstly it was off campus some one-hour drive away and inconvenient by comparison with normal duties. Secondly, students were challenging and constantly wanted to know how some aspects of the modules related to their work contexts, therefore putting staff under pressure to customise their delivery or be criticised for not being relevant. Third, delivering an in-company programme was sometimes perceived to be undermining academic integrity and something of an ideological ‘sell – out’. This was compounded when participants approached the programme as ‘training’ and applied their usual experience of training to it through the adoption of a more instrumental attitude than academics were used to. Where staff were working over and above their normal workload the fees paid for external work were regarded as ‘derisory’ and it was, for some staff, simply not worth the extra effort and exposure.

To some extent these issues were reiterated by the HR professional who, through programme feedback sessions had picked up on participant observations that members of the delivery team had commented adversely on how the programme delivery varied from the on campus pattern and how they didn’t agree with it, or why they didn’t want to teach

on it or how they thought it undermined academic principles. This contributed to her questioning the university commitment to the programme as an ‘in-company’ initiative:

“It’s like who is the client here? I mean there is a sense of just get someone to deliver but there is no sense that they are interested in the organization so what quality of staff are we getting on the programme? It’s a bit like offering a plumbing service but all we have got is electricians so we’ll send them along and see how they do. It’s like a lot of back stage stuff is coming out front stage but that’s not really on, it’s not really what’s being promoted”

(Alison – HR professional)

It is evident here that there are different perceptions at play as to what different roles are demanded by the shift in context from that of the university to that of the organization. Expectations of participants that they were ‘managers on a development programme’ were not harmonious with those of some academic and administrative staff whose perceptions were framed in more traditional role constructions of ‘students on an educational course’ invoking all the connotations of policing, monitoring, classroom autonomy and expert power commensurate with that construction.

Similar to East Council, the credentialing of the MD/ME programme was thought, by the HR professional, to be crucial to its credibility and a major draw in terms of getting participation and buy in from the participants. What is distinctly different here is that the participants on this programme are so much more committed to the programme at their own individual level of instrumentality, focussing almost exclusively on the extent to which the CMS/DMS qualification can bring benefit to themselves as opposed to the organization.

Summary

Although the presence of the university on the programme, through the curriculum and its delivery, was greater than that of the East Council, in terms of its presence within North Council it was much less so. There was no relationship between the university programme managers and the Senior Management Team and the relationship at an institutional level was not strategic. Despite participants’ views that working with the university was

deemed to be a management aspiration of ‘partnership working’ there was no evidence of this in any meaningful way and there were no symbolic opportunities to reinforce institutional links. The only links between the university and North Council remained at the operational level between the academic manager and the HR professional. It is evident in this case study that the programme’s existence owed more to the motivation of a local champion than to embedded commitment of senior management.

What is distinctive about this case study example, is that despite the fact that it was ushered in under the umbrella of a much heralded ‘strategic contribution’ and despite the HR professional’s aspiration for it to function as a vehicle for the alignment of individual and corporate values and objectives, it lived its life in the organizational shadows. The programme was largely invisible to management and peers. It was vulnerable to unfavourable budgeting practices and conflict between Corporate and Directorate competition over resources. The programme was not integrated with the North Council’s promotion or rewards structure even at ‘rhetorical’ level and though participants’ valued the achievement of their credentialed awards, they tended to value them as a defence mechanism more than as a contribution to career advancement. There is little indication that the programme functioned as an ‘organizational development’ process and appeared to do little other than furnishing opportunistic individuals with postgraduate management qualifications.

5.4 Caravan Co

Organizational type and HR orientation

Caravan Co is a caravan manufacturer and distributor. The company was founded in 1965 and at the time of data collection, had grown to a turnover of around £75 million and had around 600 employees. The company’s products (caravan and motor-homes) are innovative in design and attractive in the market. As a brand the products are in the upper quartile in terms of quality. Caravan Co is a family owned, medium sized, business and the owner and founder is the executive Chairman. The company has many typical features

of a family business and is very reminiscent of Handy's power culture (1993) with sovereign power emanating from the owner who heads the Board of Directors. There is deference to the owner and several close family members that are employed in relatively junior positions. Other family relationships are common amongst employees such as parent / child and sibling relationships. Some of the owner's family and friends were employed in the company.

Operationally the Managing Director, who was not a family member but a family friend, manages the company but reports into the Board whose head, the owner and Chairman, took a very 'hands-on' interest in operational issues. Some aspects of the culture and managerial processes are contradictory and perhaps evolving as the business grows and seeks to modernize. There is a level of paternalism in the business emanating from the owner and the Managing Director, who was nearing the end of his career, a factor which raised issues of succession. The issues faced by the business were huge however, related to output, quality, competition and profitability, typical of the caravan and motor-home manufacturing sector. These pressures caused tensions and at times the management approach adopts a very hard 'edge'. Despite some 'leanings' to paternalism, Caravan Co could be described as a 'hire and fire' culture. Most of the managers in the business had until recently been 'home grown' but the owner and MD were aware of the needs for change and recent senior appointments had been younger but experienced managers from outside of the business and family.

The issues and problems faced by the company were seen as a strong driver for management development. The company had traditionally been a low spender on employee development except for essential skills training and some mandatory professional development. The company has an HR team comprising an HR manager, who reports to the MD, and a Training Assistant. Such was the nature of the company that the latter post occupant was employed because she was the sister of the owner. She had no HR qualifications or credentials, much to the chagrin of the HR manager.

The HR manager held a budget but had little discretion over how it was spent. There was a company system of appraisal that was implemented but it operated at a mechanistic level and line managers were resentful of it, perceiving it to be a 'bureaucratic waste of time'.

Its outcomes are not monitored in any strategic or developmental way. Notwithstanding the appraisal scheme, senior management was concerned about the quality of its managers and fitness for succession, the MD/ME programme was, at least rhetorically, a strategic response to this.

The HR Manager was a new external appointment. He was a qualified member of the CIPD with a Master's degree and a background in the NHS and the Royal Air Force. He aspired to a rather more strategically proactive orientation towards the HR role and function than the company was used to. He continually argued for more strategic thinking in relation to employee development, and against the limitations of the appraisal scheme. He also lobbied for the need for more genuine performance management and for HR's wider involvement in the management of the business, wanting strategy to be determined beyond the Chairman's small 'power clique'. These aspirations and his arguments were not always welcome.

HR was not seen as an important function of the organization except to comply with legislation (discipline, dismissal etc.), to operationalize the payroll and to produce requisite policies and evidence the requirements of the Investors in People (IiP) which was seen by the senior management team as an important quality badge. On the contrary, the associated practices (communication, shared values, employee development and appraisal) were not seen as important! Consequently the HR Manager's role consisted in writing HR policies then lobbying production managers and heads of departments to implement them, against their inclinations, then monitoring compliance and progress chasing non-compliance. His was not an easy job in a hard-nosed production focussed environment with everyone's main agenda being production targets.

Training and development opportunities were minimally undertaken and only then to meet legislative requirements (health and safety), where the HR manager had developed courses to professionalise management practice such as 'recruitment and selection' and 'discipline and dismissal'. There was not much take-up. In terms of Burgoyne's model of integration (1988) and Ashton's patterns of management development (1975) the HR(D) function would be characterised as low level and not integrated.

“If they do identify any management development needs it’s just usually a one or two day course from the industrial society. But IiP has been a bit of an external driver, so they have introduced appraisals and team briefings which is a pre-requisite of IiP. There hasn’t really been any commitment especially to training, its pretty much been about “well we’ve got to do that to meet the ‘standard’ “. I have been trying to argue that it should be the other way round that as a result of what we do we will meet the standard but generally the thinking is “we’ll just do what we have to, to get it”.

(Robert - HR professional)

The HR function itself was weak and reactive, and HRD initiatives were ad hoc and not at all integrated with other aspects of HR. Career progression was typically nepotistic and driven by production achievements rather than by career succession planning. Managers typically ‘fought’ (metaphorically) their way into higher positions.

The focus of research in this company was participants on an accredited Post-graduate Certificate in Management (CMS) and Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) delivered in – company by a local university (University of Humber). As the participants progressed they joined the on-campus open programme to complete the MBA and, at the time of data collection had completed this. In this case study unlike the other three, the duration of the accredited programme lasted only for this one cohort of students.

Relationship to business objectives

Despite the comments above referring to the succession needs of the company and the perception of senior managers that it needed to engage in more professional managerial practice, the inception of the programme was the HR Manager’s interpretation of what this might mean. Part of this for him, and senior management, was about addressing the culture of the organization which was perceived as not conducive to good management practice:

“There’s a thirty year culture going on here that we are trying to change but hopefully more progressive practices such as proper recruitment and selection and proper appraisal will help that a lot. I said that to the MD, our approach is too fragmented and ad hoc and he agreed that we need to address that”

(Robert – HR professional)

He referred frequently to the need for change that facilitated better achievement of ‘business objectives’ and need to fulfil the requirements of the business plan if it were to get support from senior management:

“The focus of the programme really is about the development of business objectives, the training request form is geared around that, any request has to directly link in to the ‘business plan’, really it’s about the senior managers getting together and deciding who gets what. We’ve got a lot of change going on so any training has to directly link to that and the plan”

(Robert – HR professional)

From a HR perspective the means by which the MD/ME programme would address business objectives and the business plan would be through serving two internal organizational drivers. On the one hand it provided a platform to develop a more ‘professionalised’ management cadre which would be a ‘good thing’ and on the other, it would provide coherent and immediate evidence that the company were taking the iIP development agenda seriously. What was less clear was how addressing these two drivers would translate into organizational strategy. So whilst the primacy of meeting ‘business objectives’ provided a narrative which legitimated the programme, it did so even where there was no clear strategy, so for example:

“There is a corporate mission statement, but whether or not it is strategic, that’s another matter. I think they just look as far as the next season! I think the senior management team talk about the importance of strategy and having a supportive culture but it just isn’t happening”

(Robert – HR professional)

The absence of a clear shared strategy gave rise to some questions about the role of the programme in the eyes of the participants. When reflecting on this they speculated that perhaps management's motives were about 'developing senior managers to achieve culture change' or about 'developing potential managers' but generally there was not a coherent view as to how the programme aimed to achieve corporate goals and strategy:

“Well I know why I did the course, and the others have their own reasons but what is apparent to me and the others is that we don't know what the company's motivation is. I think there is a suspicion that the company doesn't know either! Only that it seemed like a 'good idea'”.

(Ian - participant)

The academic manager reinforces this ambiguity:

“They wanted to have a management development programme and to an extent it was driven from the top, but this wasn't unanimous by any means, though there was some thinking about the need to professionalise middle management. On another level it was about Robert making a name for himself. Getting some management development going was part of this but the connection with the university raised the stakes”

(Thomas – academic manager)

From this a more personalised rationale emerges in that it was acknowledged that there was a loose coupling of the MD/ME programme to some loosely defined corporate objectives but at least as significant is the desire, on the part of the HR manager, to enhance his position and to elevate the HR role to a more strategic level in the company. Elsewhere, the HR manager referred frequently to the programme acting as the vehicle by which he hoped the participants would see the importance of good HR practice and get them committed to 'doing things properly' in relation to recruitment, selection and appraisal.

This interpretation is supported by the fact that the development of the MD/ME programme as a rational solution to organizational pressures is only part of the story. Its

inception emerged from more serendipitous events prompted when two Caravan Co middle managers made an application to the ‘open’ on-campus MBA programme. They approached the HR Manager for funding and for budgetary reasons he was initially reluctant to support them. Subsequently however, he thought there might be some merit in broadening out the prospect to an in-company accredited programme. This would be cost effective and allow for a greater number of managers to be part of the programme and with the ‘carrot’ of University awards it might be an attractive feature in an otherwise ‘development averse’ culture. This would raise the HR function’s profile, getting some buy-in to good HR practice and meeting some IiP agendas – all boxes ticked!

The programme represented an ambitious departure from previous training and development offerings and a considerable investment in terms of freeing up managers’ time to attend as well as the up-front costs. As will be shown in Chapters 6 and 7 the programme did deliver on some of the overt and covert organizational (and HR) objectives ascribed to it but also there were some ‘unintended’ consequences due to the participants’ engagement in the processes of becoming ‘professionalized’ but also in the context of the implacable existent ‘power’ culture.

Curriculum and delivery

This MD/ME programme was the first ‘in-company’ accredited project engaged in by the University of Humber. It was lead by the then External Business Manager who is the academic manager in this case study. After the initial approach negotiations began over the curriculum again this conforms to the Stansfield and Stewart’s ‘Two way partnership model’ (2007: 128) in which the ‘university’ is cast as the provider/verifier and the organization is cast as commissioner. Despite this, the context and the dynamics here play out very differently from those at North Council. Agreeing the curriculum and content was a rather more fraught process with the academic manager attempting to ‘hold the line’ on university requirements; number of modules (credit); module content; the number of requisite study days and so on. The HR professional had his own ideas about organizational needs which tended to be more behavioural skill-based than the learning outcomes required of academic study

“Then the negotiation began. Robert thought he could tell us what should be in it and how long it should take etc. This was problematic bearing in mind this was a postgraduate award and had to have some equivalence to what was happening on campus. He was also keen to say what the content should be and he had his own idea of what would be relevant for them. There had to be a discussion about what was in the programme, that they had to meet certain criteria, pretty much as set by the learning outcomes of the on campus programme, but with some scope to do a weighty business project, but they couldn’t not do academic underpinning. The negotiation involved a discussion about the content, my argument was that what would make it ‘organizational’ would be the work based project, the class discussion of the different subjects would be grounded in their everyday experiences and the assignments could be tailored to considerations of Caravan Co’s environment, policies and practices. Not that different from an on-campus programme except that they would be putting their collective thoughts on it”

(Thomas – academic manager)

Some of these issues had cost implications (number of study days) and others were matters of differing perceptions of relevance (content) but despite these tensions the MD/ME programme was developed that sufficiently met these conflicting interests. The model described earlier for North Council pertains here too that is, all but 20 credits at each stage (excepting the MBA stage) mirrored the on campus CMS/DMS in structure and content and the remaining 20 credits (at each stage) devoted to a work-based project. The programme was delivered week on week following a similar format to the on-campus programme and by university staff but on the organization’s premises. At the MBA stage they joined the open campus based programme, thus moving towards Stansfield and Stewart’s ‘sponsored / open programme model’ (2007:128), though by this time they had bonded as an in-company cohort and became a ‘group within a group’.

The programme delivery was undertaken by faculty subject specialists from on-campus modules but delivered in a slightly more ‘blocked’ format with the work-based projects overseen by the academic manager.

Senior and line management commitment

Senior management commitment has been described above in relation to supporting the development of the MD/ME programme and it was clear from the outset that the programme would be financially supported from central budgets initially up to completion of the DMS. After some participant lobbying, the MBA stage was also funded. This did represent a considerable commitment by the company relative to previous investment in any training and development.

The programme was announced and introduced at a promotional event involving university personnel, the HR Manager, and the target group of potential participant managers. The ‘target’ group of approximately 20-25 managers held middle to senior positions. It is worth noting here that managers of the same rank and title differed in the power hierarchy (and salary) in relation to their proximity to ‘production’ as this function was deemed to be most crucial to achieving business objectives. Power radiated outwards from the production manager’s position so that the further away from the production function a manager’s role was, the further down the pecking order he (invariably ‘he’) was. ‘Design’ for example, was quite far away from the power nexus and ‘HR’ was off the radar.

An incident at the ‘promotion event’ shows some of the politics surrounding the start of the programme and the way that management both *supported* and *did not support* the programme simultaneously. After an opening pitch from the university academic manager and the HR Manager, the Managing Director spoke about the way the programme was a great personal and organizational development initiative and how he hoped that they would all get involved. It evolved that this ‘opportunity’ was far less optional than had been supposed by the university academic manager as the Managing Director expressed his aspiration that the entire target group would be involved. Suddenly it took on an implied coercive dimension that had not previously been envisaged by him and it was ambiguous as how intentional this was.

There were some complex issues here, for example, although the intention behind the programme from a university perspective was to offer a credentialed management development opportunity, it became clear from the nature of some of the groups’ questions

that it was being received, at least in part, as a critique of their current performance and that the programme was somehow intended to remedy this. Whilst this had not been the overt intention of the initiative, the presumed participation of the entire group by the MD moved the goal posts considerably, naively perhaps, revealing other more covert agendas. In any case, this was controversial for some members of the group, in particular those that were at the upper end of the middle-management hierarchy.

Subsequently it evolved that the production manager took umbrage at this and refused to have anything to do with it (an influential gesture from a powerful actor). Yet others may have been intimidated at the prospect of engaging in a programme where their academic ‘performance’ would sit alongside that of their peers, subordinates or managers in a relatively public way. The assessment would not particularly be open to public scrutiny, though that is a very significant issue to be addressed later. Other aspects of participants’ performance were open to judgement and in a context where their current status had been acquired through routes other than educational performance. Understandably some found the prospect daunting or threatening.

Despite these political complexities, a cohort of 15 put themselves forward (or, having less power than the production manager were put forward, or felt obliged to ‘volunteer’) and a cohort was formed. These initial ambiguities, about the purpose of the programme, and what senior management wanted from it was never really resolved as can be seen in some of the respondents’ puzzlement about its aims and what it was exactly that senior management was committed to.

At a more prosaic level however, line-managers and senior managers supported the programme by taking an interest in the progression of the work-based projects and attended the presentations of the findings and recommendations. Participants worked harder on those projects than on all the other assignments put together, so it can be inferred that they felt under scrutiny with this more work-place-visible element of the programme. The presentations took place on-campus at a symbolically high profile event attended by Caravan Co’s Chairman (the owner), the MD, other company manager’s and senior university personnel, teaching staff and the Dean.

There was another way in which the organization was ever present for this cohort and that concerned the extent to which they were so very frequently subject to ‘barbs’ from their peers (who had chosen not to, or resisted the pressure to join the programme), about their ‘college days’ off from work and ‘what were they doing to make up the time?’ This constant ‘drawing attention to’ the participants absence from the job, suggests a heightened organizational presence in evaluating their work performance over the duration of the programme.

There was never an indication, even at the level of rhetoric, that participation in the programme, was to be integrated into a coherent career path at Caravan Co. As described, such a path did not exist as promotion occurred paternalistically and in relation to one’s acceptability (or actual familial relationship) to the power holders. Participants did not expect otherwise and participated in the programme to fulfil their own objectives of achieving qualifications and personal development. Interestingly however, they did see themselves as becoming a ‘more professional’ and ‘more progressive’ layer of management and collectively felt frustrated when they were unable to enact this, back at the workplace.

Inter-organizational interface and issues

Administratively, the programme was managed entirely from the university campus by the postgraduate programmes administrative team (though it took place at the company’s training facility until the last stage of the programme). Apart from the politics of the participants’ ‘selection’ to the programme, admission decisions were in line with university regulations. All operational matters concerning the scheduling, staffing and assessments were managed by the administration team and student outputs were assessed and quality assured within normal postgraduate regimes of the academy.

The university presence in relation to the programme was prominent through its administration and through the delivery team. The academic manager ‘worked at’ his relationship with Caravan Co by meeting regularly with the HR manager and occasionally with the MD to foster the relationship at an institutional level and sought out other ways in

which company managers could be involved with the university, for example, by inviting them to do guest lectures, attending award ceremonies as local business heroes.

This programme arose during a period where business schools were being extolled to work more closely with external clients and demonstrate relevance of offerings by being seen to work in partnership as discussed in Chapter 2. The academic manager in this case study, with his remit of External Business Manager had an interest in making the relationship and the programme work but observes that it was not an easy interface: needing to get business is one pressure but how to make that work requires a different orientation:

“From my perspective I was keen to get the work and, at the time didn’t think too much about it as an OD initiative, so I had a selling orientation, I think I would approach that differently now”

(Thomas – academic manager)

Moreover, this was an ‘experimental’ first project of credentialed management development and the institutional arrangements on the part of the University centrally, were intractable and obstructive:

“There is a big issue about working in External Business and being involved with courses like this. You are in a minority and working for corporate clients can be seen as ‘selling out’, not to mention the whole thing about getting approvals, working with university procedures (assignment deadlines, mitigating circumstances, etc. etc. the list can go on forever). Corporate clients see the programme fundamentally as a MD initiative – even if they don’t know what to do with it – so from their point of view there is a lot of incomprehensible bureaucracy – everything from approvals, getting library cards, submitting work, getting certificates, the systems are just not geared up for non standard students who are not following the undergraduate calendar, every last little thing is problematic”

(Thomas – academic manager)

There is an interesting institutional issue here about the disconnect between the working systems and institutional arrangements of the academy and its fitness for purpose in

relation to delivering MD/ME programmes such as this. Moreover there is the allusion to more ideological incommensurability that impacts on this academic manager's role in getting internal support for the programme. It was difficult to get faculty commitment even to participating in the delivery of the programme and even when they did, getting commitment to buy into the programme as a 'management development intervention' not just another 'module to deliver' was even more challenging as reinforced by Alison's observations at North Council when she refers to 'wanting plumbers but getting electricians'. Persuading staff to customize module content, think differently about assessments and contextualize materials all provided major headaches for those tasked with organizing MD/ME programmes, similar to the trials described by Gustavs and Clegg, (2005). On the other, hand coaxing the clients (participants, HR and MD) to tolerate the 'university pace of working' over everything from managing applications and registrations to assignment feedback and return times, bordered on 'unmanageable'.

Summary

In this case study we can see that organizational and corporate objectives play some part in the rationale for the MD/ME programme but the ambiguity of what they are and how they relate to it prompts a consideration of what other factors were at play. This has some similarity with North Council in that in both cases there was considerable reliance on the interpretations of the HR professional to identify the ways in which the MD/ME programme might address corporate objectives. In both cases Senior Management adheres to it as a 'good thing' as the HR professionals strove to develop rationales and narratives that legitimised it as serving corporate objectives. It is possible also to discern more personal interests being served in these cases. For Robert and Alison, kudos, a more strategic role and a discourse of HR and HRD, more prominent personal profile are all significant. For Robert in this case there is also the agenda of persuading participants to be more compliant in enacting 'good HR practice' whilst being seen to meet the iIP requirements more concretely.

Differently from North Council but similar to East Council the participants on the programme were quite visible in the organization as 'participants on the MD/ME programme' and though not to the same extent, experienced a level of scrutiny that linked

their ‘development’ to their ‘organizational performance’ in ways not normally associated with management education per se. What is distinctive about this case study is that despite some complex politics in which it remained ambiguous as to whether or not its initial purpose was intended to be punitive or developmental, once on the programme, participants engaged fulsomely. Motivated by the opportunity for personal development and qualification they became the progressive cadre that HR and senior management claimed for the programme’s inception. When they became that professional cadre however and attempted to apply ‘best practice’ it was far from welcomed.

5.5 Glass Co

Organization type and HR orientation

Glass Co is a UK company manufacturing glass containers. The company was formed in 1900 based on a site in London that closed in 1973, subsequently it developed sites at Doncaster, South Yorkshire, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, Knottingley, West Yorkshire and Irvine, Scotland. Glass Co became a P.L.C. as part of a multi-national Glass Group in 2006. At the time of the research Glass Co held around 25% of the UK market for glass bottles and containers. Its products were used widely to package beers, dairy products, toiletries and cosmetics. The company had a good record of profitability and employed approximately 5000 people. Glass Co relies heavily on branding and its brand is strong but the nature of its business is such that it has a relatively *small* number of *large* clients. There was a shared positive outlook in the business but an underlying ‘fear’ of losing a client to a competitor and this is a driver to encourage a hard work and ‘long hours’ culture amongst managers in particular. The quality of customer service is a dominant agenda and, as a large manufacturing company, the functional focus of the business is ‘production and efficiency’ driven to keep costs down and maintain quality standards.

The leadership and management style can be described as unitarist and managerialist in that power is invested in the managerial hierarchy and that is acknowledge as the structure of decision making, status and reward allocation. Employees were expected to be

committed to the company culture and adopt a ‘work-hard’ attitude. Similar to East Council, Glass Co might be characterized as adhering to ‘high commitment - high performance’ HR values (Gould-Williams, 2004) in which the effective management of human resources is conceived to be key to deliver competitive advantage. To this end there is generally a favourable and supportive attitude to employee development.

The company HR policies and processes in the business appeared well integrated in so far as appraisal, performance management and reward are visible, and inform decisions, about promotion and management development. There was wide understanding that what constituted competency in the Glass Co context, revolved around achieving and exceeding targets. Despite this predominantly ‘task’ focused environment organizational development through efficiency gains and improved customer focus was believed to be achieved organically and incrementally, through the investments made in their own managers (as opposed to re-engineering for example) giving the culture a somewhat more ‘paternalistic’ orientation towards employees in this regard. The culture of the organization overall is strongly unitarist but this seems to be widely ‘bought into’ throughout the business, at least, in so far as the respondents in this case study, report.

The function of HR is represented at each of its plant locations with strategic leadership provided by a national team. Whilst in general, the HR function is seen to be concerned with the operational practices of ‘personnel’, the combination of a paternalistic inclination and the enthusiasm of an internal management development champion contributed to management development being seen as an important aspect of the company in achieving its corporate goals and objectives. The HR professional in this research is the national HR Director. His motivation for championing management development has been stated as *‘wanting to make the most of people who really understand the business’*. The company has always been strongly inclined to engage in learning and development employing consultants to provide supervisory and management training at all of its sites. For more generic management development, such as the MD/ME programmes reported on here, locations were identified at centrally convenient venues (hotels), to allow parity of travelling access to geographically dispersed managers.

The HR function with regard to management development, had generally been one of ‘commissioning’ rather than ‘providing’ in-house due to resourcing and expertise issues. A key relationship in this case study is that which concerns the HR Director’s long standing relationship (commercial and friendship) with a particular management development consultancy whose owner was instrumental in bringing Glass Co as a client, to the university and who continued to have a significant role within the MD/ME programme. The way in which this worked, together with some of its implications, is described below.

HR and HRD whilst being, to an extent, ‘integrated’ and ‘understood to contribute’ to company performance at Glass Co was nevertheless regarded as a peripheral function with remote (though important) contribution to the ‘bottom line’ by comparison with functions such as operations and production; sales and marketing. Importantly, the HR professional at Glass Co enjoyed respect from the national senior management team due to his long career and good reputation with the company, and had personal influence *beyond* that which his formal role/job title, would generally imply. This is a point of interest in this case study because, similar to the HR professionals at North Council and Caravan Co, it is the personalized context of the HR(D) role that becomes significant and the extent to which individual HRD professionals’ values and activities play a role in promoting (or not) particular practices.

The focus of the research in Glass Co was a cohort of MBA students who had already completed the accredited in-house CMS/DMS. These programmes, together with the MBA, were accredited by the University of Humber and the delivery arrangements comprised a combination of ‘external MD consultant’ and university faculty MBA programme team. It was delivered mostly off campus at central locations such as hotels but not at the company’s training facilities. The accredited provision was deemed by both parties, Glass Co and the university, to be a strategic initiative. It contributed to Glass Co’s achievement of corporate objectives and the University’s desire to be, and be seen to be, working effectively with corporate clients and developing commercial partnerships, particularly from the perspective of the academic manager (who was also the External Business Manager).

Access and admission to the programme was managed under university admission requirements but selection for it by Glass Co was very competitive, perhaps even more strongly than at East Council it was perceived to be part of a career development route and it was also perceived, unlike East Council, to deliver on this. Participants on the programme saw themselves, and were seen by others, as destined for higher management. Many past participants now held more senior positions and consequently getting a place on the programme was competitive with demand far out-weighting supply.

Relationship and relevance to business objectives

The drivers for management development were predominantly internal. It has already been mentioned above that the MD/ME programme operated under a discourse which reiterated ‘contribution to business objectives’ and ‘improved operational outcomes’ through its perceived contribution to the collective capacity of management and managerial processes. Similar to East Council, there was a clear narrative that related to these twin aspirations and this was acknowledged and to a large extent subscribed to by all three sets of stakeholders in this study, though perhaps not quite so unquestioningly by the university academic managers. They both though in different degrees acknowledged that the programme had to be seen to fulfilling a corporate agenda.

The work-based projects were the site of much ‘organizational’ interest (i.e. line and senior managers) in so far as the projects addressed ‘efficiency’ issues by achieving cost savings, meeting targets, streamlining systems and so drew managerial attention to them. Line managers supported participants during the project period and attended presentations. These were high profile and symbolic affairs at which senior managers would often attend and participants would be nervous about how their outcomes would be perceived.

The focus on corporately valued agendas, in this high profile scenario, had the impact of reinforcing the programme’s relevance to Glass Co’s stated objectives and of rendering the participants, senior managers and university personnel very visible to each other. Between the university and the senior managers it reinforced the ‘strategic relationship’ and commitment to the programme’s alignment to corporate goals. Between the participants and senior managers, the former could see the latter were interested and this was

interpreted as ‘commitment’ not just to management development but to themselves, the participants, who had put considerable effort into developing themselves. At the same time they, the participants felt acutely that this visibility could go well or badly in terms of their career progression. There was a similarity here with East Council who also had some high profile mechanisms for ‘valuing/judging’ participants’ work and organizational usefulness with some potential career (enhancing/limiting) implications that they were only too well aware of and sensitive to.

Whilst work-based projects were a relatively immediate way in which to demonstrate the programme’s contribution to corporate goals, showing relevance to longer term strategic goals was more difficult. However the HR Director had a clear rationale concerning succession planning. He had a strong view that business success would depend on the organization’s ability to develop its own management (and managers’) capacity. He articulated very strongly that business success would depend on this for the reason that the industry was ‘specialist-driven’ and appointing people from outside the business to very senior positions was suspect practice because it was widely believed that:

“you just have to know glass – no question about it, its all very well bringing in capable managers from outside but industry knowledge and experience is what counts in this business!!”

(Jack - HR professional, also in this case, the HR Director)

Participants shared this perspective knowing or believing that the company subscribed to a ‘Grow your own’ philosophy akin to Lees (1992) ‘agricultural’ rationale for ‘doing’ management development.

Curriculum and Delivery

The MD/ME programme at Glass Co at the time of data collection had recently developed an MBA stage of study (with University of Humber) to sit atop its long standing delivery of a CMS/DMS which had originally been accredited by another university in the north east of England. The delivery of the then CMS/DMS had conformed to the ‘validated’

model as described above in the case of East Council in that the provision identified by the company as relevant to their needs was credentialed by the previous university and quality assured by them in accordance with their policy and procedures.

Under these arrangements, the delivery of the CMS/ DMS had been contracted out to a third party provider, an external management consultant who had a long standing relationship with Glass Co in particular with the national HR Director, with whom he had established a successful business relationship and a high degree of credibility and trust. When Glass Co decided, or was influenced to, pursue MBA accreditation for the development of its provision, the external consultant brought the proposition to University of Humber which is the research site of this study. In effect the University of Humber ‘took over’ the provision (CMS/DMS), added an MBA stage of study, and accredited it with its own awarding powers.

Traditionally the CMS/DMS had an overly prescriptive/normative orientation imbued with a ‘personal development’ flavour commensurate with the offerings of mainstream management development consultants. These stages of the programme had historically been contracted out by the HR Director to the external consultant who managed the programme and delivered it along with one or two business associates. The existent orientation of the programme had accrued much positive organizational acknowledgement and was an approach favoured by the HR Director who perceived it to be very relevant to organizational needs.

The development of the provision to MBA level was predicated on the understanding that it would continue to be relevant to the organizational objectives and strategy. The intended development of the MBA originally proposed that the University would accredit the ‘package’ in its existing form i.e. that the external consultant would continue to be responsible for the delivery of the CMS/DMS stages and the MBA would be delivered by university faculty. Concerns were aired by the MBA course team that the existing orientation of the then current CMS/DMS was, although vocationally relevant, did not provided a sufficient academic basis for Masters level study.

After some negotiations between the academic manager and the external consultant on behalf of Glass Co, it was resolved that the university faculty should have some input prior

to the MBA stage via the creation of a ‘bridging’ programme that would provide a stepping stone to a more academically viable Masters stage, and that delivery of this stage would be entirely in the hands of the faculty, with the exception that there was organizational input regarding participants’ choice of dissertation projects. Whilst this proposition initially ruffled a few feathers, notably those of the HR Director and the external consultant, it was soon accepted as a workable model. However it is worth noting here, that although this issue was resolved ‘institutionally’, the change in orientation of the programme at the final stage (MBA) lead to some significant challenges for participants, university academics and the university programme manager alike. Issues for participants concerned their confronted expectations and questions of ‘relevance’ as the curriculum developed a more ‘critically reflective’ rather than prescriptive orientation.

The model adopted at Glass Co again conforms in some ways to Stansfield and Stewart’s ‘two way partnership model’ (2007:185) because there was some ‘co determination’ of what the programme content comprised. However the role of the external consultant as key deliverer of some elements of the programme adds another dimension to this and moves it closer to what Stansfield and Stewart call a ‘three way partnership’ model where some aspects of provision are in the hands of a third party. In the Glass Co case, the external consultant’s role gave rise to a few dilemma’s for the university personnel especially at the early stages when there were conflicting expectations about ‘whose programme was it?’ and ‘who was exercising control over it?’ and ‘just who was the client?’

Through the collaboration of the management consultant and the HR Director, Glass Co’s management exercised an interest in the MD/ME programme’s curriculum and though they ‘stopped short’ of trying to influence the university over the curriculum at the MBA stage, they expressed strong needs for the inclusion of projects that would be performance enhancing. Senior and line management presence at work-based presentations evidenced their support and interest but also transgressed traditional academic boundaries in relation to assessing student output. Work that was judged to be ‘good’ by the academic managers was criticized as ‘not useful or relevant’ by line managers. The authority of assessing clearly lay with the university academic managers but line-manager presence through the assessment process opened up conflicting interpretations concerning the quality of

participants' work and judgements about their current and future capability. There are some important issues here in relation to the power exercised through the assessment process and the extent to which in this case and that of East Council there is an unsettling (for academic managers and some participants) closeness between the developmental/educational aims of the programme and the organizational processes both, formal and informal, in relation to performance management.

The MD/ME programme was delivered through a series of 3 day block workshops each of the CMS/DMS stages taking a year and delivered by the consultancy team. The MBA stage was delivered to the same format but by university faculty over two years. The 'hotel location' was significant to the participants as it symbolized that they were being treated as special so this was not just about 'being on the programme' which in itself was a marker of being 'chosen', but the hotel experience was also taken as a symbolic reward for being a valued employee with future prospects.

In this regard it followed the pattern of other non-accredited piecemeal management development offerings of stand - alone short courses. In some respects, at least at the beginning, this mode and location of delivery set participants expectations that this programme was akin to other forms of 'training' they had received and they often referred to it in training terms. This was particularly so as the experience of the CMS/DMS had embraced a 'training culture', for example much of the assessment concerned portfolio evidence of skills and much of the teaching input tended to have a 'how to manage' orientation.

In its re-accreditation with the University of Humber's MBA the MD/ME programme required a 'gear shift' in expectations and a more conceptual and critical approach to theory and practice was introduced. Furthermore, it is important in this case study that participants' perception of their role as 'managers on a development programme' did not always concur with academic faculty's perception of them as 'students doing a management education course' with some important associated 'power' issues over the programme's relevance.

Senior and line management commitment

There were some contradictory indicators concerning the degree of support the MD/ME programme drew from the organization. Several factors gave strong weight to the programme and its organizational positioning. Firstly, it was a shared perception that the programme was a vehicle through which efficiencies could and would be achieved.

To this end work-based projects were taken seriously by participants, project presentations were attended and commented on by line and senior managers. Indeed, such was the internal attention given to the projects that this gave rise to some tensions about who was really assessing the work.

Secondly, the programme was regarded by participants and senior managers to be a succession planning vehicle through which the next cadre of senior managers were to be fostered thus the programme had strong legitimacy in the eyes of the participants. In this case study the programme's potential to act as a career stepping stone was not simply 'espoused'. The promotional success of participants from previous cohorts was commented on by all stakeholders and enough of these had reached sufficiently senior national positions for this to be seen to be as a 'real' promise of the course. This internal acknowledgement of the programme was reinforced through ritualistic and symbolic ceremonies at which members of senior management team, line managers and university personnel would be present and make affirming speeches about the participants' success and the successful relationship between the company and the University.

Thirdly, the programme was centrally funded and seen, from the participants' perspective to be a stable and consistent vehicle for management and career development. Actually, it 'appeared' to be more stable and on-going than it actually was as, despite the positive company orientation to the programme described above, the senior management support it received was, in no small part, reproduced through the on-going efforts of the HR Director who continually lobbied, argued for and promoted the discourse of 'management development equals organizational development' at every available formal and informal opportunity. This was significant in promoting the programme internally especially as senior management support was not unanimous in valuing it as the route to meeting corporate objectives. The HR professional here observes that:

“It’s quite something to keep as much interest in the management development training as we have. It’s not universally accepted that it’s what we should be spending money on. There are some tensions in the management team about the issue of ‘people development’ and the issue of ‘business development’; of course, I see them as the same thing, well at least closely related; but not everyone agrees with that and some are actively against it. So it’s just a question of being vigilant, keep making the point, keep making the connections between what the managers are doing on the course and what the company can get out of it”

(Jack – HR professional)

This perception of both the stability and instability of the MD/ME programme is one that is shared by the university academic managers who characterize the issue of management commitment as both ‘embedded’ due to its longevity and relationship to other HR organizational practices, but also ‘fluid’ due to its heavy reliance on the HR Director’s support. The organizational tendency toward ‘task rather than process’ and the complexity of working with and through external consultants for some aspects of programme delivery and management continued to be problematic in the eyes of academic managers. The significance they attribute to the working/institutional relationships with influential company staff willing to champion management development was not only a matter of ‘institutional relationship building’ or ‘symbolism’, it had consequences for whether the MD/ME programme had continuity of senior management commitment and support. For example, quite late in the ‘research window’ the HR Director left and his replacement was much less sympathetic to investing in the programme and began to campaign for its replacement by a lower level, less costly, ‘Institute of Leadership and Management’ accredited programme to be delivered exclusively in house by the management consultancy. However, by this time, the programme had been through three successful MBA cohorts, with many more cohorts of CMS/DMS graduates, at the time of this particular ‘challenge’ to the programme they had become their own advocates for the MD/ME programme and resisted attempts to undermine it.

What this emphasizes is the extent to which the on-going support for management development in this case the MD/ME programme cannot simply ‘read into’ the

organization even if it can be argued to align with corporate objectives. These matters are subject to interpretation and reinterpretation by the actors concerned and the causal relationship between management development and the achievement of corporate goals can be even more hotly contested. In this case study attention is drawn to the non-static nature of senior and line management commitment, the more political nature of support and the programme's dependence on sustaining allegiances in the context of shifting power relationships.

Inter-organizational interface and issues

The programme was administered largely by the University MBA administration team on campus according to university policy and procedure regarding quality assurance and examination boards but day to day operations issues such as venue booking, assignment collection and so on was managed by the external consultant who was much more visible to both the participants and Glass Co, particularly through the early stages (CMS/DMS). At these stages the University was 'present' only through its regulatory framework (despite the best efforts of the management consultant to evade this), through attendance at the celebratory ceremonies and through progress reviews between the University Business Manager, the management consultant and occasionally the Glass Co HR Director. One observation of this by an academic manager was that the relationship between the University and Glass Co was mediated or gate-kept by the management consultant who interpreted what would and wouldn't be acceptable to Glass Co in terms of costs, curriculum, work-based project work, line-manager involvement and so on. This was compounded by the management consultant's personal influence and power with regard to the HR Director which gave him a degree of power in relation to the University Faculty Business Manager (academic manager) who didn't want to lose Glass Co as a 'client'.

Managing the management consultant as a third party became part of managing the programme, in fact one of the most onerous aspects of it. Firstly as the key deliverer/co-ordinator of the CMS/DMS it was important to persuade him to adopt a culture of compliance (within his team and the participants) concerning mundane things such as submission deadlines, non-submission penalties, releasing student outputs in a timely manner to accommodate faculty moderation and exam board processes. These issues

though central to the academic manager's concerns of maintaining the credibility of in-company provision, particularly in the light of some faculty scepticism about the rigour of company based programmes, was very low down the list of the management consultant's list of priorities. His concerns were focused on getting good feedback on his delivery, getting repeat business with Glass Co and doing just enough to meet University procedural expectations to keep the credentialed awards.

All stakeholders agree in this case study that the 'awards' particularly the MBA, give credibility and legitimacy to the programme and they are an important motivator for participants to engage. In this respect there are similarities with the previous case studies. Where this is different from the others, though shares some similarities with East Council, is that participants' view it first as management development and secondly as a management qualification. Also, and this is where it differs from East Council, the programme potential for succession planning is not suspected to be rhetoric, rather it is perceived as the means to career advancement and therefore its relationship to corporate objectives is perceived to be legitimate.

Summary

In this case study there was a strong narrative about the MD/ME programme's relationship to operational and strategic corporate objectives and this was subscribed to by all stakeholders in the research, largely regarded as legitimate and, in the case of participants and the HR Director, 'necessary'. He largely attributed to it a 'return on investment' rationale and sustained this even in the face of some opposition. Similar to North Council and to a lesser extent Caravan Co, the HR professional's interpretation of corporate goals and personal values relating to management development can be seen as pivotal in promoting management development and in particular this initiative. What is interesting in this case study is the significance of power relations in sustaining or undermining the programme? The importance of the personal power of the HR Director and the potential threat to its continuance when he retired suggests the significance of shifting and emergent power relations. Furthermore there is something in this case study about the vulnerability of management development when discursively constructed as a 'cost' to be minimized

and how this construction competes for attention with that of a ‘return on investment’ rationale, particularly in a manufacturing ‘efficiency-focused’ environment.

A second area of significance centres on the involvement and presence of senior and line managers particularly their relationship to the conduct and assessment of the work-based projects which formed a substantial part of the MBA stage of study. This might be characterized as desirable in relation to reinforcing the relationship between corporate objectives and the MD/ME programme, its role as a career development tool and so on but also this ‘presence’ can be understood as impinging on decisions about the curriculum and can politicize the assessment process by informally insinuating a performance management agenda. From an organizational perspective this is not seen as controversial and there are similarities with East Council in this regard but viewed through a more critical lens there are some troubling aspects to this which are explored in Chapter 8 particularly.

Finally, in this case study the inter-organizational issues are made more complex by the existence of a third party (management consultant) not only in relation to managing compliance to University policy and procedures which is important but also in relation to managing the client’s (ie Glass Co) expectations regarding the philosophy and pedagogical orientation of the programme. In this case study the management consultant filtered the MBA teams pedagogical orientation out of his discussions with the HR Director, by understandably focusing on the programme’s organizational efficacy but in doing so, the faculty team had little power in asserting their own more challenging philosophy which became more marginalized, or at least, one member of the team was sacrificed to maintain the relationship.

5.6 Case Studies Conclusion

In this chapter the empirical material has been interpreted in order to construct workable case studies which both paint a rich picture of the contexts of the stakeholders in the MD/ME arenas. What might on the face of it be presumed to be similar social phenomenon (in-company accredited programmes) when more closely examined can be

seen to contain considerable variation according to the organizational and personal contingencies. Initiating and operationalising credentialed programmes requires substantial investment of resources on all sides and involve cross institutional arrangements which can be complex.

Despite having highlighted what is distinctive about each of them they share many features of communality. They were initiated and invested in by the organizations concerned as ‘corporate’ activity and in all cases they were designed and developed to take account of corporate objectives at some level, even where these were emergent and ill defined. Structurally they shared many similarities, required similar amounts of contact time, involving a balance of formal taught modules and work-based projects.

The observations show that each of the case study organizations, for different reasons, desired to have management development credentialed with university awards but the motivations for engaging and investing in such provision are varied both in terms of the ‘espoused’ objectives and in terms of the more ‘messy’ personal, political and symbolic motives. Despite the communalities the role the MD/ME played in the case study organizations and the significance attributed to them was different.

The perceptions and experiences of the HR professionals and academic managers vary according to the local contexts, institutional arrangements and ideological premises within which the programmes are enveloped and the case studies profiles here indicate that richness. However, in considering them in line with the five themes as outlined in the introduction, the themes suggest a means for comparison with regard to the extent to which they ‘function’ as a management development initiative. The five themes are adapted from Doyle (2000 : 586) and err towards a functionalist perspective in foregrounding, organizational commitment, strategic objectives and integration with HR as related to the effectiveness of management development. Table 2 overleaf categorises the respective MD/ME programmes in relation to the themes that have been elaborated in this chapter in order to suggest the extent to which they might (or might not) be seen to work as an aspect of management development and the next chapter provides a discussion of the extent to which they do.

Case Study Summary Table

	Organization type and HR orientation (specifically integration with appraisal, promotion and reward)	Relationship and relevance to business objectives	Curriculum and delivery: orientation	Senior and line management commitment	Inter-organizational interface and issues
East Council	Medium/large public sector: integrated HR systems relating MD/ME programme – medium to high – all stakeholders perceive the relationship to appraisal, only the HR professionals see a strong link with promotion and reward and this is regarded sceptically by participants as organizational rhetoric	High connection to business objectives reinforced through module delivery, foregrounding organizations’ strategy and practice through the curriculum, implemented work-based projects to achieve corporate objectives. Participants were generally approved of and ‘bought into’ this ‘work-based’ orientation.	High orientation to workplace issues through curriculum and reinforced by pattern of in-house delivery and work-based projects	Very high - all stakeholders cite symbolic and actual commitment, financial stability of the programme, internal mentorships and project champions, organization recognition for success, visibility of senior and line management at assessment events and ceremonious rituals	Low level interface through taught module – higher through MBA stage. Very high joint commitment to ‘symbolic’ events such as ceremonies. Both parties spoke the language of ‘strategic partnership’. East Council frustration with University bureaucracy.

	Organization type and HR orientation (specifically integration with appraisal, promotion and reward)	Relationship and relevance to business objectives	Curriculum and delivery: orientation	Senior and line management commitment	Inter-organizational interface and issues
North Council	Small/medium public sector: low integration of HR systems with MD/ME. Participants unable to identify even any rhetoric as to the relationship between the programme and promotional opportunities	Very low connection to corporate objectives, surfaced only through programme documentation and the introductory event. Corporate objectives mostly an issue for the HR professional but not owned by any of the participants who were cynical of management rhetoric, concluding that it was about ‘being seen to do’ management development	High orientation to tradition of subject disciplines, reinforced by faculty delivery and absence of ‘organizational interest’ in the programme, the participants and their outputs.	Very low - participants and university academic managers point to the programme’s invisibility in the organization and the lack of interest by senior and line managers in the participants and their work, the programme and the university as a partner.	High university visibility with participants but issues of being treated as normal students. Issues with HR professional re commitment of delivery team. North Council frustration with University bureaucracy.

	Organization type and HR orientation (specifically integration with appraisal, promotion and reward)	Relationship and relevance to business objectives	Curriculum and delivery: orientation	Senior and line management commitment	Inter-organizational interface and issues
Caravans Co	Small/medium size family owned manufacturing: very low integration of MD/ME programme with HR systems. Participants perceive no link between the MD/ME programme HR systems of appraisal, promotion and reward and there is no HR rhetoric to suggest links other than appraisal should be the vehicle for identifying MD needs, though actual selection to the programme revealed a more contradictory reality.	Very low connection with business objectives. These were ambiguous apart from the broad brush of profit maximisation but less ambiguously, from a HR perspective. There was a secondary set of objectives concerning the professionalization of managers but the participants viewed this sceptically and were inclined to the view that either there were no corporate objectives for the programme, or the programmes objectives were remedial to correct an inadequate management team.	High to medium orientation to tradition of subject disciplines, reinforced by university faculty deliverers but tempered by the interest shown in the workplace projects and the very visibility of this cohort in the organizational context	Weak/medium - senior management was ambivalent about doing management development but went along with this cohort experimentally, showed a symbolic interest in the workplace presentations early in the programme but not in the recommendations. Interest waned as students progressed through the programme and became increasingly vocal at the organization's short comings.	High level of university presence through delivery and academic manager liaison with HR professional and MD. Company tensions with university re 'rules/procedures' and general 'fitness for purpose' to work in-company. Issues surfaced about lecturers unwilling to customise away from normal campus delivery.

	Organization type and HR orientation (specifically integration with appraisal, promotion and reward)	Relationship and relevance to business objectives	Curriculum and delivery: orientation	Senior and line management commitment	Inter-organizational interface and issues
Glass Co	Large private sector PLC manufacturing: high degree of integration of HR systems and MD/ME programme. This is perceived to be real by all stakeholders, though stiff competition for a place on the MBA means it can only be ‘real’ for a very small number	Very high connection to corporate goals (efficiencies) perceived by all stakeholders reinforced through a strong organizational rhetoric and senior and line manager interest in the programme and outputs from projects. Also met a subsidiary objective of succession planning.	Very high orientation to workplace issues, reinforced by ‘training culture’ at CMS/DMS stages, the delivery by management development consultant at early stages, tempered at MBA stage by faculty delivery but with some adverse consequences concerning questions of relevance	High/medium – high because of the intense interest shown in students and their outputs in the programme and the commitment to use it as a succession planning and career development tool. . Medium because ultimately the programme’s fate rested on shifting coalitions of power and influence	Low quality interface at the CMS/DMS stage but much higher through the MBA. University concerns about company ‘interference’ re the curriculum. Concerns throughout concerning the role of the Consultant as a gate-keeper between university and company

Table 1

6. Looking through a functionalist lens: strategic value, organizational and individual outcomes

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave a narrative evaluation of the case study profiles in alignment with five themes as the basis for a means of comparison. The choice of themes from which to tell the organizational stories tend to foreground issues that incline towards a functionalist perspective, for example a consideration of the extent of ‘senior management commitment’ already presumes it is an important factor somehow relating to the efficacy or otherwise of MD/ME programmes. In developing an exploration of the empirical material through a *functionalist lens* it is possible to ascertain the MD/ME’s more performative aspects. Through this the chapter addresses and specifically contributes to the research question:

- In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development?

Furthermore a consideration of the compatibility of organizational purposes and outcomes with those of the participants the chapter begins to prise open the issues concerned with the research question:

- To what extent and is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached to the MD/ME arenas?

This chapter explicitly develops what has begun in the preceding chapter and pays specific attention to the extent to which the MD/ME programmes can be understood as management development initiatives in providing organizational as well as individual outcomes. A functionalist ‘lens’ is consciously adopted here as a metaphor to focus on concerns associated with a functionalist *discourse of management development*. The chapter begins by introducing theoretical and empirical preoccupations associated with a

functionalist discourse and proceeds with an evaluation of the MD/ME programmes in alignment with these. The chapter draws to a close with a consideration of the mutuality or otherwise of the MD/ME arena.

As a discourse functionalism is consensus orientated emphasising the ways in which social phenomenon ‘fit together’ to maintain the system. Thus it is under-pinned by an assumption of ‘universal’ needs and interests. Regarding management development this translates into the ways that managers can be developed to fit the needs of the organization. The dominant theme in functionalist discourse is the development of managerial expertise to enhance organizational performance (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 53) and central to this is the extent to which management development can be clearly linked to strategic goals (McCracken and Wallace, 2000; Luoma 2000; McGoldrick et al. 2001, Garavan, 1991).

The vast majority of the management development practice and research is conducted from within this discourse (for example, McCracken and Winterton, 2006; Doyle, 2000; Luomo, 2005). It is underpinned by a macro-economic perspective that adheres to a long standing belief that managerial capabilities can and do contribute to organizational (and national) performance. In this view management development is construed as a ‘tool’ through which the development of managerial skills and abilities are to be developed to improve and sustain organizational performance and this implies that there is a conscious attempt to provide the link between management development processes and organizational strategy (Brown, 2007)

A strong strand in functionalist discourse concerns the characterisation of ‘human beings’ as a *resource* to be developed for performative ends. It is predicated on the notion of ‘human capital’ in which managers’ development can be ‘invested in’ and ‘leveraged’ (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 54). The vocabularies here are deliberately ‘economic’ regarding human resources as either a cost to be minimized or a resource to be invested in but either way the crucial point is that the organizational interests are regarded as paramount and ‘universal’ (Alvesson 2000: 84).

Key questions in this discourse are concerned with management development’s capacity to motivate, develop, retain and cultivate managers in order to maximise the productivity and

efficiency of the organization (Swanson, 2001). Human capital may consist of individual *intellectual capital* so that management development is characterised as ‘value creating’ through the development of key knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual managers. It may also consist of collective *social capital*, which emphasises the way that managers work together, as management, to share knowledge, improve management processes and to build the leadership and managerial capacity of the organization (McCullum and O’Donnell, 2009; Stewart, 1997). This is reinforced by the distinction that might be made between the development of ‘managers’ as contrasted with the development of ‘management’ and there is a presumption within this discourse that the relationship between these is linear so that individual learning is seen to translate *unproblematically* into organization benefit (Antonacopoulou, 1999).

Within this conception, the emphasis is on the relationship between skills, capabilities and competencies of management and levels of organizational performance. Moreover, this is linked to a financial perspective of management development in the more efficient achievement of productivity or service targets (Kay, 2003). Learning and development are not so much characterised as ‘good in themselves’ but ‘good because they make a financial contribution’. This is typified by the CEO at East Council when he defended the training and development budget for the Master’s programme because it was the ‘vehicle through which budgetary cuts of 2% per annum would be achieved year on year’.

Functionalist discourse in relation to management development is predicated on a ‘resource based view’ of the organization and its human resources. That is to say that its human resources are one amongst other resources requiring ‘investment’ to renew and refresh its contribution to organizational goals and performance. In this way management development is more than individual skill development rather it refers to developing the ‘future potential’ of managers and management to better equip the organization to sustain competitive advantage (Kamoche, 1996). A ‘resource based view’ also comprises the notion that the development of human resources can be understood as developing an organization’s intangible assets by creating a developed internal labour market from which to recruit the next layer of management. In these regards management development in functionalist discourse circles on notions of the extent to which it can be seen as ‘best practice’ conferring superior performance, or best ‘fit’ demonstrating integration with the

organizations other HR systems and its external environment (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 56)

Mabey (2002) has argued that one useful way to understand the effectiveness of management development is to consider the priority accorded it in terms of its strategic coherence and in terms of the degree to which it (management development) relates to and sits within other organizational practices particularly those concerned with HR. In the former point the consideration is the extent to which management development activity is coherent with the organization's strategy and in the second consideration the issue is about its integration with other systems thus concurring with Burgoyne's (1988) notion of the 'strategic maturity' of management development. It is a consideration of these issues that now follows.

6.2 Strategic orientation of the MD/ME programmes

The external environment is a factor in shaping the nature and role of management development within organizations. For example, national level policy can shape regulatory frameworks (Felstead, 1995) or sector level changes can require restructuring of training and development priorities (Antonacopoulou, 2000). On the other hand it has been argued that the internal business needs and structural arrangements are key drivers of the priority accorded to human resource policies including management development (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). Pettigrew (Pettigrew *et al*, 1998) has argued that a key determinant in the importance given to management development concerns the way the organization chooses to respond to the pressures from the external environment and the implications for skills and knowledge.

With regard to the case study organizations there is variance between them as to the significance of external factors in both providing a rationale for the MD/ME programmes and for the priority attributed with them. For both local authority organizations, external pressures can be seen to an important driver. For example, in East Council the priorities centred on the need for efficiency savings relating to government cuts in public

expenditure whereas in North Council the trigger has been the negative and damaging results of external audit (CPA).

The significance of external factors are less immediately pronounced in Caravan Co and Glass Co where the programme's rationale was more about more internal requirements for culture management, succession planning, and meeting operational targets, though clearly this was to address externally related factors of productivity and competitiveness. Nevertheless in all cases the programmes were introduced under a rationale to address both internal cultural factors and external performance gains albeit in different ways.

Focussing on the relationship between the external context and management development orientation might lead to a consideration of the case study organizations by type. For example, North Council and East Council both public sector service providers with established HR systems, and Caravan Co and Glass Co both private sector manufacturing organizations but in explaining both the *strategic coherence* of the MD/ME programmes and the *strategic priority* accorded to them it is evident that these organizational dimensions do not account for the differences.

Mabey (2002:151) has argued that structural variables such as size and type of organization are not key determinants in accounting for the differences in management development practice. Whilst this may be generally the case, the findings in this study imply that the size, ownership and production focus of Caravan Co was a highly significant factor in the low level of priority it accorded to the MD/ME arena and HR generally. Similarly with Glass Co the nature of the business and the necessary preoccupations with efficiency gains provided a conflictual context for the MD/ME arena in which it was ambivalently supported by senior management.

On the face of it, the two public sector organizations East Council and North Council might have appeared to have a lot in common with each other than with the private sector manufacturing organizations. However, the *difference* between the two councils regarding the strategic coherence and priority attributed to the MD/ME programmes was stark. East Council appearing to show high strategic coherence and priority and North council showing very little, at least if we can take the 'relationship to business objectives' and

‘senior management commitment’ as indicators. Using those indicators I would infer that the MD/ME programmes in both East Council and Glass Co were more strategically orientated, whilst the programmes in Caravan Co and North Council were much less so, whatever was rhetorically claimed for them for the reasons explored below.

6.3 Linking management development to organizational strategy

A key concern in the normative / functionalist literature is the extent to which there is clarity of linkage between management development and corporate objectives (Luomo, 2000; Brown, 2003) as a prerequisite to ‘success’. However, it became clear in the case studies that this presented as something of a problem in several ways, firstly because organizations do not always have a clear strategy (Caravan Co). Secondly even where there is a clear strategy it is not necessarily integrated with management development initiatives (North Council). Thirdly, where the strategy is understood it may not be accepted by the participants (North Council). Fourthly, where it is understood and subscribed to it may not be fully able to deliver its promise (East Council). Finally, where it is understood, subscribed to and perceived to fulfil its promise, its ‘success’ can still be undermined by inconclusive senior management support (Glass Co). What follows here elaborates on the complex issues around these themes.

Thus in the case of Caravan Co it became clearer that there was *not* a strongly stated ‘strategy’ as such, or not one that was adhered to but instead an over arching aim to maximize production. Of course the programme documentation pointed to some strategic benefits but the HR professional’s references to the Chairman (owner) and a small power clique, ‘making it up as they go along’ attests to the prospect that if there was a strategy it was not highly visible to him nor was it to the participants for whom the programmes ambivalent purpose from the organizational perspective remained unresolved.

The prerequisite of organizational strategy was in this case problematic but even where it exists it is not necessarily easy to see its linkage to the MD/ME arena. For example, in North Council there was an overt organizational strategy though how this should surface in and through the programme was left up to the interpretation of the HR professional.

Similar to the HR professional at Caravan Co there was a degree to which they deconstructed what programmes should be about depending on their readings of the context together with discursively *constructing* what the MD/ME programmes should achieve, a practice previously observed by Sambrook, in considering the role of HRD (Sambrook, 2000 and 2007: 37). Moreover, even where organizations have a *stated* strategy, Gratton *et al.* (1999) have observed that the elusive aim of linking business strategy with management development is extremely difficult to achieve if at all possible. Thus “it is not uncommon for the link between business strategy and (management) development to be especially weak” (Mabey 2002: 143).

Whilst there is uniformity across the case studies that the MD/ME programmes embraced corporate objectives, however constructed, at the level of narrative (programme aims and documentation), there is nevertheless, divergence as to the extent to which the *participants* acknowledge such objectives or adhere to and believe in them. In this we can detect gaps between the programmes espoused objectives and what they were understood to be.

As can be seen from Table 2 at the end of this chapter, the case study organizations in which there is the greatest degree of commensurability between what is claimed for the programme and what the participants attribute to it are Glass Co and East Council. In both these cases the participants are clear about what the organizations priorities are and why; and they are clear about the way in which the programme relates to the organization’s objectives and strategy. So for Glass Co the programme’s role in relation to streamlining processes, making efficiency savings and developing its internal culture were subscribed to. Similarly in East Council the focus on ‘Striding Ahead’ together with all the implications that flowed from that in terms of addressing cross-directorate working and modernising service delivery was understood and largely adhered to as appropriate.

Moreover, in both these cases the role of the programme in addressing the organizations’ strategic and operational goals is regarded by them as legitimate. In considering their own aspirations for the programme, the participants in both these organizations, though rather more in Glass Co than East Council, explicitly linked the enhancement of their own performance to that of the organization. They conceptualized their own development as relating and contributing to the development of the organization overall. In this way the

programme is, perceived by the participants as a management development intervention and this legitimates the focus on organizational objectives, policy and practice, which are seen as highly relevant.

By contrast the participants at Caravan Co are at best ambivalent about the organizational rationale suspecting that there was no clear link to business objectives in the way that the HR Manager and the organizational rhetoric claimed. In this group there was not one clear response as to why the organization had thought fit to introduce the programme. The participants in this cohort, in particular, struggled to make sense of why the organization had put its resources behind the programme as it seemed ‘out of character’ in what was otherwise a cost averse culture. In the absence of a clear and shared vision for the programme the participants ‘read into’ the situation a rationale of their own.

“I guess they (senior management) must have decided that it’s about time to have a bit more coherence between managers and between departments. It’s one of the big things here seeing each other as internal customers and suppliers, which has its advantages, but the down side is that we view each other competitively and it gets tense if things don’t go right. There’s a lot of shouting at each other!”

(Charlie – participant Caravan Co)

Whilst this is a plausible rationale and one that would sit well with management development’s more generic aims it is not a rationale that was explicit for this organization or this programme. Indeed in some quarters it was believed that competition between the departments should be encouraged to keep everyone on their toes. Despite all its ambiguity the participants nevertheless related to the programme as a management development intervention in the sense that they articulate ‘*wanting to make a difference*’ to ‘*improve how things happen around here*’.

Interestingly, despite the ambiguity and the suspicion that management did not have a real purpose for the MD/ME programme, the participants here welcomed the opportunity to engage in ‘self development’ and were also committed to a general ethos of ‘change’ and ‘improvement’ identifying problem areas and seeking ways to solve or address them. Management development is frequently undertaken with ‘cultural change’ in mind and

Caravan Co participants also ‘read’ this into their participation on the programme though soon experienced negative consequences of this when they were later blocked by other powerful allegiances. Here, the participants initially related to it as a management *development* initiative, but when they were thwarted in making changes they reframed it as a management *education* programme after all, out of which they would get a credible qualification (MBA) and that was enough to sustain them.

In contrast to the other three case study organizations, North Council provides an example of where the organizational drivers for the programme are understood, in that they acknowledged the significance of the CPA results and that there was an implied agenda for culture change, *but they did not subscribe to that whatsoever*. Indeed they were adamant that the programme was not about taking management development seriously, or about addressing the culture change:

“ I don’t really think ‘organization’ I just think ‘Education Services’, this thing about us all wearing the corporate badge, well its laughable – I just ignore it – I think its all about us looking as if we have a corporate identity but we don’t. If anyone thinks we have I just think ‘well come and see what this job looks like on the ground.’ I think the council thinks it makes us proud to work here, and I am proud of what I do in my job but its not about wearing the badge”

(Andrea – participant North Council)

In this case the MD/ME programme could hardly have been further away from prevalent normative conceptions of effective management development. Of all the participant respondents in this research, the North Council cohort seemed least interested in applying any learning from the programme to the organization and the organization seemed least interested in the participants and their outputs. This group were most likely to fore-ground personal instrumental reasons for participating and more significantly from an organizational perspective, *least* likely to cite examples of where learning had been transferred from the programme to the work context. In this sense the programme could be seen to contribute to individuals’ personal development if only through qualification acquisition but here the learning was at best ‘individualized’ similar to that discovered by Thursfield in her study of in-company MBA participants (Thursfield: 2008: 295).

In the previous cases the majority of the participants cited an improved contribution to the organizations' goals in some way as part of their personal rationale, not simply at the level of job performance but in making a link between their improved capacity as managers and the way that this would make a positive contribution to corporate goals. At North Council this was not the case, participants commented on their job-related abilities but did not identify with, or commit to, corporate goals. The purpose that the participants attributed to the MD/ME programme's introduction was mostly cited as '*impression management*'. Several references were made to '*being seen to do*' management development, '*being seen to do partnership working*' but there was no sense from them that they believed the organization was really interested in 'management development' or 'partnership working' as worthwhile in themselves.

In the four case studies very different patterns emerge as to the relationship between the 'official' rationales for the programme and the participants' perceptions of its role (see summary, Table 2, at the end of this chapter). Glass Co and East Council provide us with examples where there is a high degree of commensurability between the 'official' rationale and that which is attributed to it by the participants, moreover these objectives are more inclined to be 'owned' by the participants as legitimate. At Caravan Co the ambiguity of purpose in the perceptions of the participants make it difficult for them to commit any specific rationale though this does not deter them from thinking about how the organization might benefit from their participation. In this regard North Council stands out from the other cases as participants know about but reject the 'official' rationale and instead impute a 'cynical' alternative which facilitates their own more instrumental involvement with the programme.

That does not imply that in the other cases individual, as opposed to organizational, objectives were not important, as will be explored below, they were. It is simply to observe here the absence of commitment to any organizational objectives at North Council and reluctance acknowledge any potential organizational benefits or subscribe to the programmes espoused objectives.

It can be seen, in relation to the case study organizations, that MD/ME programmes were an attempt in each case to align management development practice to the organizations'

strategic imperatives taking account of both internal and external drivers. However, the extent to which they were able to sustain a coherent and persuasive narrative about the relationship between the programme and organizational strategic objectives was variable, not least depending on whether or not there were any strategic organizational narratives to connect to. Moreover we can see that there is a link between the existence of a coherent ‘strategic’ narrative (regarding both the organization and the role of the MD/ME programme) and the participants acceptance of it as management development, as opposed to a management education, programme. One of the factors influencing this was the strategic priority which the MD/ME programmes were accorded.

6.4 Strategic priority

Each of the case study organizations committed resources and energies and claimed strategic and corporate objectives so at some level they all attributed significance to them. At the same time they behaved very differently and one factor in this is that they were accorded varying degrees of *strategic priority* and this was generally understood by the participants in their respective organizations.

Out of all the case study organizations it can be seen that the MD/ME programme at East Council had the greatest degree of priority at senior management level. The programme had formal standing with regard to the HRD policy and was committed to in budgetary terms going forward. The existence of policy alone does not mean that management development is a priority. The potential gap between rhetoric and reality in HR policy and practice is well known (Legge 1995) nevertheless it is a starting point. North Council and Glass Co had formal policy statements committing to management development and both showed commitment to it through the establishing the MD/ME provision. ‘Policy’ might only be a very small part of the story but it is notable that Caravan Co did not have a specific management development policy and did not give it strategic priority, quite the contrary.

In considering strategic priority, Table 2, as well as the case study profiles, points to the significance and variability of senior management commitment amongst the case study organizations. ‘Senior management commitment’ is a difficult concept to pin down and whilst neither Caravan Co and North Council’s senior management teams showed much interest in the programmes subsequent to their establishment, there were nevertheless commitments to other contingencies (CAP, IiP) which served to ‘bolster’ the programmes, though not necessarily in the eyes of the participants.

One way in which ‘strategic priority’ might be understood is through the funding of the programmes (centralized vs departmental) and though Mabey (2002) has observed that this is not a significant factor, I found it to be so in this study. For example, in the case of East Council the MD/ME programme had a ring-fenced centralized budget accompanied by senior management commitment that it was secure into the foreseeable future.

By contrast the funding for the programme at North Council had to be found from departmental training budgets upon which there were many competing demands some of which were legislatively imperative. Moreover, the programme was perceived to be initiated from the CEO/’centre’, without Directorate support so the location of funds at the departmental level operated as something of a political football, with departmental and Directorate heads being inclined to suppress demand. Thus it had a negative effect by fragmenting management support for the programme and putting severe limits on who could acquire funding for places, causing line managers and Directorate heads to actively ‘down play’ the programme as a development opportunity. One participant at North Council was told to ‘keep quiet in the department about it’ lest others put pressure on to get funding thereby revealing the gap between the corporate commitment to the programme and the participants ‘on the ground’ experience.

One participant observed that the programme might have had corporate backing from the top but that directors and departments didn’t expect to get anything out of it. The suggestion here is that senior management commitment alone is not enough to give it priority but that the MD/ME programmes must be subscribed to more widely amongst different levels of management and that this needs to be reflected in budgetary arrangements.

The priority accorded to management development generally at Caravan Co could be characterised as very low, so the MD/ME programme here was perceived as a novelty. The initiative was not interpreted as a long term commitment to management development but rather as a ‘one-off’ intervention designed to ‘develop’ the entire cadre of middle managers. Moreover, its political fragility and the hostility of the production manager (and his allies) were a persistent reminder of its fragmented management support.

A further way in which ‘strategic priority’ might be understood is in the extent to which there is senior management commitment to the processes and outcomes (Ashton *et al.* 1975). In this regard East Council can be seen to accord the MD/ME programmes a high priority as all respondents observe the attention the programme received in terms of delivery, the outcomes of the projects and the symbolic acclaim. A distinguishing feature of East Council is the extent to which senior management solidarity with it was interpreted from their visibility in relation to the programme. The presence in terms of delivery; award ceremonies; assessed presentations; undertaking mentoring roles; paying attention to dissertation projects; was perceived by all stakeholders as indicating it high priority in the organization. To a significant extent Glass Co too signalled its interest particularly through its focus on the outcomes of work-based projects which attracted much attention from peers, line-managers and certain members of the senior management team. The visibility of senior managers in relation to the programme signalled that it was endorsed by them and taken seriously and, by extension, so were the participants. In both Glass Co and East Council the ‘applied’ outcomes from the workplace projects could be seen to attest to the strategic priority accorded to the MD/ME programmes and conversely the low priority attributed to them by Caravan Co and North Council could be understood to undermine their strategic contribution.

Workplace projects: evidence of strategic priority?

A perspective of a ‘return on investment’ pertinent to functionalist concerns, (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 56) would require an economic calculation of the cost savings and efficiency gains made by the MD/ME programmes and though it is enormously difficult to apply this measurement, in both East Council and Glass Co much was made of the contributions of the workplace projects in this regard.

Both these organizations put a high value, metaphorically, on the work-based projects as the means by which the organizations recouped the costs of the programme and mechanisms were in place to ensure that where project outcomes met operational and strategic aims, mechanisms were in place to ensure their implementation. For example the HR professional at East Council cites one project which realised over £1m in cost savings for which the participant was much praised in the organization. In another example she cites the way in which the council changed its whole approach to project management because of the outcomes of participants' projects.

“There have been some obvious organizational gains especially through the project work. The whole approach to project management has changed because of the two dissertations on project management and they are making fantastic changes right through the OSD (planning and operations) side.”

(Wanda – HR professional, East Council)

Similarly for Glass Co, there was a strong belief that the work-based project outcomes were a key vehicle through which the learning from the programme was deemed to contribute to organizational gains. The HR professional here acknowledges the significance of this in an observation about the way in which the projects served to make financial gains and demonstrate organizational benefit in concrete ways:

“The profile of the programme and management commitment to it varies among different members of the management team. The projects have been particularly instrumental in raising the profile of the students and the programme. Part of the deal is that projects will be attended and assessed with the presence of a senior manager, a line manager if appropriate and myself from HR. Where the projects have resulted in savings the value of the programme is seen to have made an impact and this is what's valued. It's all about contribution to the bottom line. Our Finance Director has picked up on this big time. He has become quite a strong ally for the programme because he can see some of the results and benefits for the company. But it's quite a political place and amongst other senior managers there are different agendas”

(Jack – HR professional, Glass Co)

The company focus at Glass Co is extremely results orientated and the project outcomes became the means of justifying the programme in financial terms, a point agreed upon by the academic manager who observes this as a symbolic and political aspect of the programme:

“The projects are used strategically by the organization as well as the students, there’s lots of examples of cost savings, one of the DMS projects looked at production and logistics scheduling and came up with a £40,000 a year saving. Another did a competitor analysis and developed a training package which has been rolled out organization-wide. One project analysed the supply chain regarding sand supply, Glass Co couldn’t compete on price, so they developed a Quality Supplier Strategy with an accreditation process, the upshot was that the value was kept in the business. These projects are highly visible in the business so the organizational benefits are well recognised”

(Don – academic manager, Glass Co)

In effect, for these organizations the workplace projects and their outcomes, become a means by which the programmes strategic importance is underscored at both a practical level of implementation and symbolically by heralding those successful projects that make savings, both in public forums and through various organizational narratives. Moreover they become a means by which the programmes are evaluated in terms of their efficacy as management development initiatives.

In Caravan Co the projects were undertaken enthusiastically (perhaps with some trepidation) by the participants and as previously indicated presented them at a high profile event. Certainly the university academic manager envisaged that the workplace projects would be the means by which the company would get their ‘return on investment’ but despite evident cost saving suggestions emerging from them, most ended up, ignored. In contrast to all the early rhetoric about getting organization gain from the projects, in reality the respondents reflected ruefully, that throughout the duration of the programme only one, out of numerous projects, was taken up and implemented.

“Take the ‘Business Projects’, everyone worked really hard to produce useful stuff, and we did, the MD seemed really pleased with everyone’s achievement but ours was the only one that got put into practice, the others just got blocked by Section Heads”.

(Chris – participant, Caravan Co)

The lack of interest in the project outcomes at Caravan Co and especially North Council, is from a functionalist perspective quite startling, especially if adhering to a technician view of management (Rigg, 2007) in which management development’s conventional role is precisely to provide rationalistic solutions to identifiable problems (Roberts, 1996). In a functionalist diagnosis of why such little attention was paid to the project outcomes several possible problems of implementation could be suggested the first of which concerns the extent to which the MD/ME programmes could be characterised as ‘integrated’ with the organizations general HR systems and it is to this that I now turn.

6.5 Integration with HR policy and practice

Burgoyne’s (1988) ‘levels of strategic maturity’ of management development, are concerned with precisely this point and concur with Mabey’s (2002) proposition that there is more likelihood of management development being seen as a priority if it is systematically related to diagnostic processes such as appraisal and the identification of training needs.

Certainly this was the case at East Council and Glass Co where the appraisal systems were the means by which individual’s development was reviewed and where their career paths and trajectories were discussed and plotted. In both cases respondents from these organizations understood appraisal as an important mechanism in career advancement as it became the vehicle by which they could seek nomination for this MD/ME programme as well as other ‘developmental’ opportunities.

In the case of East Council this mechanism was reinforced by the existence of ‘Development Centres’ which assessed managers against the organization’s competency framework and which most programme participants had undertaken prior to joining the MD/ME programme.

Both North Council and Caravan Co had appraisal systems but in both cases they were seen to be more tokenistic than relating to career development, and particularly in the latter were perceived as a waste of time and not meaningfully engaged with. Similarly low priority was attributed to the appraisal system at North Council where participants tended to use them politically to ‘build the case for’ and leverage documentary evidence to obtaining financial support for development opportunities. This political use of appraisal was not exclusive to these respondents as those at Glass Co and East Council also utilised them in this way.

Mueller (1996) has observed the significance of career planning systems as part of an organization’s management development repertoire. Organizational practices and processes which facilitate discussion about career development and learning opportunities to progress advancement have been seen to be a factor in raising management development’s profile. Furthermore, it has been argued that companies that rely on its internal labour market for its staffing strategy are more likely to prioritise management development (Sonnenfeld & Peiperl, 1988). Both East Council and Glass Co are examples of this.

All except one (North Council) of the case study organizations cited more general HR reasons for focussing on these MD/ME initiatives. For example the HR professionals at East Council and Glass Co were explicit about the programme’s intention to promote managers internal to the organization. In the case of the former it was concerned with the difficulties associated with attracting and retaining professionally qualified staff to the region and to the public sector, particularly in areas like legal services where the rewards offered by a local authority are out of alignment with professional practice elsewhere.

Kleingarter and Anderson (1987) have observed that a focus on individual development opportunities and aligning them with career plans have become a focus for attracting and retaining ‘knowledge workers’ and the East Council case is a good demonstration of that.

Indeed, the programme was regarded as an attractive recruitment ‘perk’ to entice people to work for the authority with the HR professional reporting that she was frequently invited to speak to potential applicants about the opportunity to get an MBA.

At Glass Co, the programme was explicitly supported as a mechanism through which they could ‘grow their own’ cadre of future managers. Alignment of management development within wider HR practices is a strong strand of the ‘best fit’ literature. Alignment can be about managing the internal labour market for present *and* future requirements (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 56). In this Glass Co can be characterised as being proactive in ensuring the availability of an appropriately fashioned (skills *and* attitudes) ready pool of the next generation managers thus concurring with Lees’ ‘Agricultural / Socialization / Organizational Inheritance’, models of management development (1992).

It can be seen at Glass Co that the HR strategies and policies align with the MD/ME arena and participants’ understanding of it in terms of operating as a vehicle to fulfil career ambitions. From the perspectives of the participants this was a powerful feature of the programme. Access to it was perceived to be a career stepping stone and gaining access to it was highly sought after and competitive. Whilst this gave the programme much impetus and standing there was another side to this. Kamoche and Mueller (1998) have observed that whilst the integration of management development and career planning systems can be seen as motivational. This may be so only for the ‘lucky ones’ who get on the programme and who might be considered by others and themselves as ‘stars’? But this can have the effect for those who are denied access, as seeing themselves as secondary.

In such cases the programme can come to be seen as an institutionalized ‘mobility barrier’ (Kamoche and Mueller, 1998) and there was some evidence to suggest this at both Glass Co and East Council. Both academic managers and more especially the HR professionals were conscious of issues of jealousy and rivalry in relation to ‘getting on the programme’ as well as ‘doing well on the programme’ and the HR professional at East Council expressed relief at not being responsible for ‘selection’ and responsible for applicants’ disappointments or worse. The participants sometimes acknowledge this indirectly by being ‘glad to be one of the lucky ones getting this opportunity’ which of course they were in this regard.

In considering the relationship between the MD/ME programmes and the other HR activities in the case study organizations it can be concluded that there is a far greater integration between the two in both Glass Co and East Council. In neither Caravan Co nor North Council is there much relationship between the general HR systems and management development. Perhaps, given the nature of Caravan Co, with its somewhat ad-hoc orientation to HR generally, this is less surprising though it is rather more so in North Council where there are clearly HR systems relating to diagnosis of training needs, competencies and appraisal. However the MD/ME programme was evidently not clearly tied in with them. Furthermore, on the ‘measures’ of strategic priority and human resources policy and practice it is possible to see more clearly that the MD/ME programmes have more functional significance in the cases of East Council and Glass Co with rather less priority accorded to them at Caravans Co. and North Council. This attests to the significance of paying attention to what Mabey terms the ‘upstream and the downstream’ issues of HR policy and practice in the extent to which management development emerges out of appropriately identified ‘needs’ and flows into policies concerned with talent management, reward and promotion (2002).

The last measure of the efficacy of the MD/ME programmes in functionalist terms is that of the perceived outcomes. Mabey (2002) has argued despite there being no clear theoretical framework for assessing the value of management development, and despite its political and complex character (Easterby-Smith, 1994; Fox, 1989), it is nevertheless an important part of the functionalist project. Importantly, the consensual nature of functionalist discourse also proposes that management development can address both individual needs as well as meeting organizational objectives. The presumption here is that clearly identified training needs, appropriate training interventions, well defined development plans and so on will provide a rational basis for the development of the individuals capability (individual and social capital) thus facilitating their advancement in the organization. An important question then, is the extent to which the participants’ own objectives are met through their engagement with the programmes.

6.6 Individual outcomes

All the participants from the four organization case studies were able to identify a plethora of individual, personal development outcomes regardless of whether or not they could see the relationship of the MD/ME programme to corporate strategy, the relationship between the programme and better organizational performance or the relationship between their own learning and doing their managerial jobs more effectively. In this way there were many ‘personal development’ gains at the level of the individual. Table 2 summarises the differences between the espoused objectives for the programme, the participants understanding of them, their own aspirations and the programmes impact on them. As can be seen, there are differences between the case studies in relation to which the participants concurred with the espoused rationale but they all identified personal development as an objective and they all claimed some achievement of this. Amongst the factors identified, in equal proportions across the case studies, included greater confidence, greater self esteem, more knowledge of subject disciplines, greater self awareness and more confidence with management ‘language’. In all but the case of North Council, another important factor was ‘greater understanding of the organization’. Here more than the other case studies, the disconnect between the programme and the organization acted to maintain its role as a management *education* rather than management *development*.

In the cases of East Council and Glass Co this greater understanding was very positively regarded by the participants both at a pragmatic level where they cited ‘better networking’ as important and in East Council this greater understanding also included role affirmation and clarity. That is, for some, learning what was required of them as managers in the specific organizational context was significant and in this regard the programme can be seen in its ‘socializing’ aspect. Similarly at Glass Co the networking and organizational knowledge was seen as not only personally useful in more effectively performing one’s job but also crucial in introducing participants into the realm of ‘senior management’, getting noticed and becoming visible. Kamoche (2000) has observed that management development can function both as a vehicle for cultural transmission (which was an aspired organizational objective at both East Council and Glass Co) and as a symbolic rite of

passage signalling (to participants, senior managers and other organizational members) a trajectory of future positive prospects.

For the Glass Co participants this was both an aspiration and a perceived outcome as they ‘read’ the fact of previous participants’ success as indicative of their own future careers. For the participants at East Council there was a more mixed reaction on this point as participants pointed out the gaps between the organization’s rhetoric about promoting internally and not always following ‘disciplinary’ specialism in senior management promotions, and the reality of continuing to do so. Even participants who eulogised about the utility of the MD/ME programme in terms of organizational efficacy ruefully acknowledge that ‘cross directorate working’ did not extend to ‘cross directorate promoting’. Thus the ‘promise’ (Antonacopoulou, 2001: 329) of the MD/ME programme was, for many respondents, not upheld.

Greater organizational knowledge and networking was also frequently cited by the participants at Caravan Co. Bearing in mind the more overtly ‘political’ issues here, this was an interesting aspect of their responses. In this case many respondents claimed that their experiences on the programme and back at work had ‘opened their eyes’ about the organization, realising how far away it was from ‘best practice’ and ‘just how political an organization’ it was. At one level this could be seen as a dysfunctional outcome of the programme. On the other hand the HR professional observed that this cadre of managers better understood and subscribed to more professional conduct of the processes of appraisal and other HR practices, thus achieving some cultural compliance which might be understood as one of the programmes ‘latent functions’ (Lees, 1992; Preston, 1993).

Paradoxically this did not detract from ‘personal development’ gains cited by the Caravan Co participants. Indeed for some participants who because of their functional specialism (for example, Design) were academically well qualified but low down the organization’s power pecking-order, acknowledged the importance to them of the opportunity to ‘shine’ in a context other than the ‘organization’. Thus, using the programme as a means by which to reframe their peers’ perceptions of them, from ‘not worth bothering with’, to ‘that bright bloke Mick’. Similarly, although the networking did not work to break down Caravan Co’s power culture it did foster strong bonds within the MD/ME cohort who used that to be

more effective in their jobs and cut across boundaries maintained by other cliques. This could be understood as ‘functional’ if the organization is perceived to be an arena of rationality or dysfunctional if the organization is perceived to be a less rational political hotbed. In the event, the latter characterization prevailed and many participants found themselves regarded as ‘trouble makers’ disruptive of prevailing practices and cliques.

Importantly, for all the participants a key objective was to acquire the qualification and in this regard they met their objectives. Participants in all the case study organizations tolerated the programmes’ (lengthy and challenging) demands, the gap between rhetoric and experience, cultural discontinuities and personal disappointments. They acknowledged that ultimately the qualification gave them more leverage for promotion, protection against redundancy, insurance against restructuring fall-out and more transportability in the internal and external labour markets. In this one dimension the MD/ME arena remained ever a ‘management education’ programme as far as the participants were concerned. So, what can be said of the academy regarding this perspective?

6.7 The perspective of the academy

That the programmes functioned as management development is variable as identified but evident nonetheless in the achievement of organizational and individual objectives. A key motivating factor on the part of the participants is the achievement of an externally recognised credentialed award so it is pertinent to say something about this in the context of the phenomenon of accredited in-company management education programmes. Gustavs and Clegg (2005) in their consideration of credentialed work-based learning (WBL) observe that

“For universities, hard pressed financially to maintain their traditional approaches to learning in a new system of mass provision of higher education, WBL partnerships represent a means of entering new untapped markets to earn additional

revenue. Thus, for universities, WBL has a resourced based appeal – at least in principle”

(Gustavs and Clegg 2005: 10)

In this they identify ‘academy / organization’ partnerships as a response to sector funding changes and in this they concur with others who see a financial rationale from the perspective of the academy (Fox, 1997: 24). However, Gustavs and Clegg go on to say that this is far from clear cut as the management of partnerships is problematic from both structural and ideological view points and in any case organizing WBL is more resource intensive and specialist than it first appears. The MD/ME programmes here are only partially work-based in terms of the content as explained in Chapter 5. However they are situated (mainly) in the workplace (or workplace nominated environs) and occur under the auspices of the host organization. Many of the difficulties cited by Gustavs and Clegg; the difficulties of faculty engagement, the incompatibilities of structures and procedures, the cultural discontinuities, very much apply to the MD/ME programmes here and have been alluded to already in this thesis. Moreover, the MD/ME programmes in this study did *not* provide a significant source of revenue.

The academic manager at the University of Humber notes that the new HR Director at Glass Co had aspirations to cease the partnership with them and instead develop one with an alternate ‘Russell Group’ university, where he (the new Director) did his MBA but observes wryly, that “there’s not much chance of that because the costs will go up massively, we’ll be cheap by comparison”. Similarly the University of East Coast terminated its MBA with East Council in the preparations leading up to the accreditation of AMBA on the basis that any financial benefit (which was not great) was outweighed by its potential to threaten AMBA accreditation (a situation that is in my view, *ironic*).

The prevailing funding regimes under which the academy operates generally and business schools specifically (at the time of writing) preclude such partnerships and programmes from becoming a vibrant income stream because organizational investment in management development rarely matches up to the cost of providing management education by the academy.

In the academy the business model includes such factors as organizational overheads, ‘contribution’ to central services and must support a whole range of expensive but not income generating activities that inhibit the competitiveness of offering credentialed education as management development. This is especially so in a market where colleges of further and higher education and private providers are able to offer similar awards (NVQs, professional body awards such as the Institute for Leadership and Management). Clearly a move to e-learning and other ‘distance’ models ameliorate some of these problems but the cultural disparities remain. What then is in it for the academy and particularly, for the MD/ME programmes here?

One answer to this question is put forward by Coffield (2008) in which he asserts that quite simply (and wrongly in his view) concerns a prevailing ideology about how educational institutions should be run:

“The current orthodoxy would also have us believe that the private firm offers the most appropriate model for public-sector organizations and that to succeed educational institutions should be run like private businesses”

Coffield (2008: 1)

In this he concurs with Gustavs and Clegg (2005) who have observed that the language and tools of the business world are increasingly prevalent in the academy; business plans, performance management, performance agreements and audits. Moreover, it is increasingly incumbent on the academy to ‘prove’ its performative worth through the provision of useful knowledge (mode two) and show its alignment with governmental policies and aspirations to see more connectedness with industry, professional bodies and other social agencies thus:

“Forming partnerships with industry has become the ‘new’ mantra of the academy as well as that of government – which remains the universities’ major funding source . . . Such partnerships are best achieved by proving that as actors and as an institution they are not only ‘in’ but ‘of’ the real world”

(Gustavs and Clegg, 2005: 13)

In other words partnerships with organizations can be understood to act discursively in providing a narrative of performativity as the academy's position as an autonomous, independent knowledge producing / dispensing, entity is undermined. In this way the MD/ME programmes here can be seen to fulfil a symbolic role in demonstrating its 'real world' relevance necessary to demonstrating its credibility in a context where there are other 'players' in the 'knowledge game'.

Moreover, in this aspect the academy can be conceived of as possessing both cultural and symbolic capital in its credentialing role *and* in its heritage as a significant 'legislator' of knowledge (Bauman 1987). It is in this regard that all the cases studies can be understood as in each case the 'qualification' was seen by the HR professionals as crucial in the 'inducement to' management development and with regard to the responses of the participants, the HR professionals' assessments were accurate on this point.

Nevertheless the academy, like other work organizations are complex sites of competing meaning and discourses and as has been indicated many complexities surrounded the implementation and sustaining of the MD/ME programmes. The observations here throw some light on what functions they might be deemed to fulfil for the academy independently of whether or not they are financially viable.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has striven to advance an analysis of the empirical material building on the case study profiles in Chapter 5 and developing it in line with functionalist concerns. In considering the MD/ME programmes relationship to strategy, the extent to which they were a strategic priority and integrated with other HR systems, it can be concluded that the programmes at East Council and Glass Co were much more effective as management development initiatives than either of those at Caravan Co and North Council.

Considering the programmes in terms of outcomes provides a more variable picture. Whilst there were more observable *organizational* outcomes for East Council and Glass Co, there were nevertheless numerous *personal development* outcomes for the participants from all case study organizations. Significant among these is that of achieving a credentialed award as an aspect of 'human capital' increasing individuals' exchange rate in

the labour market. Moreover, an important aspect of the academy's role is its legitimizing and symbolic character, acting as an inducement to management development. Finally, the chapter proposes how the programmes might function for the academy explaining its involvement in such partnerships in the context of cultural discontinuities between the academy and work organizations and the fragility of them acting as a robust income stream.

In this exploration the functionalist lens has shifted from a 'classic' functionalist position of evaluating management development exclusively in efficiency/output terms and explored as well in its latent cultural possibilities. In this shift the prospect of 'less transparent' meanings and motives is suggested and this dimension is developed more specifically in the next chapter which takes the HR professionals' perspectives as its focus and adopts a more constructivist stance.

Table 2 overleaf summarises the identified rationales and objectives of the stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Rationales and Objectives

	HR Rationale/Objectives	Participants Perception of Programme Rationale	Participants Individual Objectives	Impact on Individuals
Glass Co	<p>Organizational development through ‘professionalisation’ of managers.</p> <p>Savings and efficiencies through project outcomes.</p> <p>Succession planning</p> <p>Manager development</p> <p>Reinforce positive training & development culture</p> <p>Retain and motivate</p> <p>Management development as a ‘good thing’</p>	<p>Organizational development</p> <p>Succession planning</p> <p>Gaining efficiencies through improved practice</p>	<p>Qualification</p> <p>Personal development</p> <p>Organizational contribution</p> <p>Career advancement</p>	<p>Greater enthusiasm for organization and job</p> <p>Access to management inner circle</p> <p>Networking</p>
East Council	<p>Organizational development</p> <p>Commitment to ‘Striding Ahead’ plan</p>	<p>Organizational development</p> <p>Commitment to ‘Striding Ahead’</p>	<p>Qualification</p> <p>Personal development</p> <p>Organizational contribution</p>	<p>Greater ownership of ‘strategy’</p> <p>Greater enthusiasm for</p>

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	HR Rationale/Objectives	Participants Perception of Programme Rationale	Participants Individual Objectives	Impact on Individuals
	Efficiencies Culture Change/cross directorate working Best practice in MD Retention Recruitment Manager development Management development as a 'good thing'	Modelling best practice	Career advancement Self esteem in relation to other team members Defensive in relation to organizational change and contracting out	organization and job Role clarity Language of management Access to management inner circle Networking Disappointment that rhetoric did not match reality re career prospects
Caravans Co	More 'professional' management cadre Achieving business objectives	Ambiguous	Qualification Personal development	Group solidarity Networking Individual learning and

Chapter Six – Looking through a functionalist lens:
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	HR Rationale/Objectives	Participants Perception of Programme Rationale	Participants Individual Objectives	Impact on Individuals
	<p>Succession planning</p> <p>Gaining compliance with HR best practice</p> <p>Meeting requirements of liP</p>		Organizational contribution	<p>development</p> <p>Critique of extant organization and leadership</p> <p>Frustration about not being able to enact change</p> <p>Re-framing others' perceptions</p>
North Council	<p>More 'professional' management</p> <p>Meeting requirements of CPA</p> <p>Consistency of good practice</p> <p>Culture Change</p> <p>Meeting requirements of liP</p>	<p>'Impression management' -</p> <p>Organization 'being seen to do' management development and responding to negative CPA</p> <p>'Being seen to correct' perceptions of failing management</p>	<p>Qualification</p> <p>Personal development</p> <p>'Insurance policy'</p> <p>Self esteem in relation to others</p> <p>Defensive in the face of organization restructuring</p>	<p>Individual learning and development</p> <p>Subject knowledge</p>

Table 2

7. Paying attention to sense-making: the HR professionals

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter, Looking through a functionalist lens, paid attention to the ways that the MD/ME arenas functioned to further organizational ends in preference to but not necessarily mutually exclusive of individuals' goals and interests. Indeed because such a perspective is premised on a consensual world view it would follow that these are not necessarily conflicting agendas. In exploring the dysfunctional aspects of these arenas however it has been revealed that there are many factors that can impinge of the efficacy of the programmes to translate individuals learning into organizational gains. Though these suggest some possible means by which to address them, for example better integration into HR systems and more strategic priority accorded to them, but these issues are not easily addressed against the backdrop of the politics of organizational life. Moreover the exploration of the programmes' functional effectiveness began to suggest other more covert meanings at play in the MD/ME arena suggesting the value of a more 'fine-grained' exploration of the empirical material (Weick, 1995). Consequently this chapter emphasises the concerns paid attention to in a constructivist discourse of management development (Mabey and Finch-Lees, 2008: 23, and see chapter 3).

This chapter begins with a discussion of the assumptions underpinning the use of an 'interpretative repertoire' (introduced in Chapter 3) and shows to how it contributes critical insight regarding the empirical material. Further the chapter draws on constructivist discourses of management development in paying attention to the intricacies of motives and meaning-making on the part of the respondents. In furthering this discussion the perceptions of the *HR professionals* are highlighted as the focus of elaboration. Accepting that constructivist discourse errs towards a *consensus* orientation that foregrounds the way that meaning is construed and constructed in *context* and in *concert* with others according to prevailing discourses. The chapter therefore progresses to prise open this consensus orientation to examine the arising issues from a more critical and 'dissensus' orientation. The chapter develops 'critical insight' by paying attention to construction of meaning and deconstructs it (Cunliffe 2003: 992), to surface more hidden themes and to explore issues

of ‘constraint’ and ‘interest’ drawing attention to issues of power (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000:150).

In this, the chapter begins to address and contribute to the following research questions:

- To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders to the MD/ME arena?
- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are their effects?

Drawing on and developing an ‘interpretative repertoire’

Drawing on and developing an interpretative repertoire (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000) involves, in the first instance moving away from the universalistic and ‘common sense’ managerialist and utilitarian perspective of management development. That is not to say that the functionalist discussion in the previous chapter is not meaningful, rather it is only one version of the meanings that might be attributable to the empirical material in this research. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) have observed that the prevalent assumptions of traditional science act as a blockage to revealing alternative interpretations to those which seem most immediately apparent:

“Unfortunately we have acquired a number of bad habits from the old philosophy of science which lead us away from understanding the importance of theory in directing attention and reclaiming dialogue against uncertainty. The metaphysical position that theory provides words to name characteristics of objects underestimates the inexhaustible number of things and relations our attention might be directed to see and hides important issues in theory selection. Our simple practices of defining terms operationally or according to attribution hides the constructs function in providing or collecting a stable object with presumed fixed attributes. Rather than seeking definitions and moving to categorize we should ask: what are we able to see or think about if we look at it in this way rather than in that way?”

(Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 43)

In drawing on constructivist discourses of management development an alternative story to that presented in the previous chapter, begins to appear to take less account of what is self evident and familiar and put forward less obvious meanings and motives. Alvesson and Deetz propose the concept of ‘defamiliarization’ (2000: 166) in surfacing less obvious meanings. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 80) have suggested the use of the metaphor of ‘drama’ in constructivist discourse, seeing the action unfold as a ‘live’ play on stage underpinned with plots and scripts akin to Goffman’s (1959) ‘Presentation of Self in Everyday life’ or Mangham and Overington’s ‘Organizations as Theatre’ (1983).

Roles are played out in unpredictable as well as predictable ways as social actors invest their own meanings in their undertakings and enactments which may be very different from those intended for them by the ‘authors’ of scripts. Thus the HR professionals adhere to normalised understandings of the role of management development and that of the MD/ME arenas but also invest their own meanings in them according to their own values motivations and concerns.

Searching for alternative meanings implies looking for less predictable themes and patterns. The purpose in taking a constructivist view of the data is to explore the multiplicity of meanings invested by the social actors in these arenas and to see how the actors construct their own meanings for the programmes and attempt to construct meanings for other stakeholders. What prevalent meanings do they each attach and what are the implications of these?

This question implies a more micro-political examination of what the empirical material suggests and a closer examination of what these actors say and do. Moreover, what are the wider implications of these multiple meanings in terms of the interests served by the MD/ME programmes in the wider contexts the organization within which they occur? The chapter is structured focussing the *HR professionals* (one from each organization) in turn to situate their perceptions in their organizational contexts, elucidating on each in turn before turning to a deconstruction of emerging themes relating to the MD/ME arena and the research questions.

The HR professionals in this chapter are:- Wanda (East Council), Alison (North Council), Robert (Caravan Co), and Jack (Glass Co). From the previous chapters, something of

their contexts is already known, their own and the organizations' aspirations and the issues they faced in initiating and sustaining the MD/ME programmes. In naming them, attention focuses on their identity and agency, drawing them as active participants in the construction of meaning and not simply as organizational mediators of HR practice.

What role do personal, professional and more political values play in the way they make sense of their roles and in what they aspire for themselves and for the participants? How do these concur within what the organization deems to be the purpose for the programmes and how do they negotiate between the potentially conflicting values and motives? I am going to look more closely at each of them in turn to explore different aspects of more complex meanings, motives to begin to surface a more political dimension to the MD/ME arena.

7.2 Wanda (East Council): adhering to an 'individual growth' discourse

Wanda had come to her current role from working in adult education and was very focused on values concerning individual development. She very much subscribed to the discourse of emancipatory education (in a general, rather than a Friirian way) in which personal development through education is a route to personal fulfilment, freedom of choice and ultimately happiness. Much of how she frames the programme concerns the way in which it can deliver on these outcomes and how these are equally as important for her as what the organization might get out of it:

"I am very focussed on individual development and it's thrilling you know when people like Dawn and Eve, despite everything, they got to the end! And it's changed them you know they are so much more confident and it's important that people get that from the programme. It has to be about individuals too it can't just be about the organization, just doing it for the organization it wouldn't have got off the ground to be honest"

(Wanda - East Council)

For her this gives rise to certain tensions, so for example when she describes the way in which some managers are unable to get access to the programme she expresses feelings of discomfort and anxiety. In one such case she recounts the situation of a potential applicant who had been persistently blocked by a line manager who refused to signal, through the appraisal process, the manager's suitability to apply for the programme.

"It's not fair sometimes, it can just depend on who your line manager is. I said to her you've got to get yourself into X's department, he'll get you on it. It can be quite political really. I am glad not to be part of the selection process. I don't want to be associated with those politics"

(Wanda – East Council)

This draws attention to some unsettling dimensions of the programme in which it can be seen as the means by which it acts to privilege some, and by implication disadvantage others in regard to accessing a symbolic and real organizational resource (Kamoche, 2000). It is a dimension which arouses uncomfortable feelings in contradiction to the beliefs to which she subscribes. A further way in which the programme challenges her beliefs concern the extent to which it raises peoples' expectations and aspirations for what they might subsequently do with the learning when they attempt to make changes back in their own departments as is sometimes the case.

"I think the worst thing for the students is that it is very frustrating for them because they have got this level of assurance, confidence, in what they are deciding and in what they think is best but then of course they come up against brick walls". A lot of people on the course find it very frustrating, the constraints of the organization and the way things are set up - they can see that things could or should be done better. Things are not necessarily being done in 'best practice' ways, so there are a lot of tensions from that point of view, like X but he just keeps crashing into the wall over and over again. He thinks things should be done this way but it's not happening so he is really frustrated by his managers, so yes there are definite tensions for them".

(Wanda – East Council)

In this, Wanda is acknowledging that despite all the rhetoric advanced for the programme in relation to claims that individuals can become instrumental in initiating ‘change and best practice’ it is not always fulfilled at a local level. Whilst these tensions are experienced by individual participants they are also experienced by Wanda as party to a process which promises to facilitate one thing but sometimes fails to deliver. Promulgating a ‘best practice’ vision of the organization as opposed to its messier, political reality also comes through an example of a teaching scenario in which the focus was the organization’s appraisal process:

“A classic example was when we were doing something on appraisal and so we said right, bring along your objectives and we will use those as a starting point for discussion, everyone is supposed to have SMART objectives set though the EDR process, but when we looked at them there was nothing SMART about them whatsoever – very vague and woolly- it hadn’t occurred to me that the EDR wasn’t really happening, so here we are saying things are like this, but then its not like that at all. There is a layer, not at the top but who have gone as far as they want to go”

(Wanda – East Council)

Wanda makes sense of this in terms of ‘organization blockages’ which is a perspective she feels more comfortable with, hoping in the long term that these will be ironed out as the ‘old guard are replaced or retire’. There is however, another less comfortable aspect of this which is to do with the more collusive role that HR might play in conspiring with processes and practices which act to sustain a ‘false’ view of the organization. This is a possibility and a tension that she recognises and suppresses quite explicitly by focussing on those managers who don’t have such negative experiences, as she states:

“I just try to focus on the good that comes out of the programme” (Wanda)

Gold and Smith (2003) have identified the prevalence with which HR professionals draw on a discourse of ‘personal empowerment’ as a means by which they make sense of their role and this provided Wanda with a powerful means by which to focus on the more ‘positive’ aspects of the process and the programme.

“You know a lot of our managers have come up through the ranks, I mean obviously some have professional qualifications but there are a lot who come on the programme and at first they are really scared but they chip away at it, and of course me and Karen, we give them tons of support. So they get through and that’s great, people who actually would never have even dreamt that they could be ‘university material’ and you see them at the awards ceremonies with their families, they look so proud of themselves and I feel proud for them. It’s just so rewarding. It’s lovely, really lovely.”

(Wanda - East Council)

Previously in Chapter 2, I explored the *powerfulness* and prevalence of the discourse that unquestioningly advances a view that ‘learning is a good thing’ (Contu et al. 2003; Coffield, 1999) and this provides strong narrative within which Wanda locates her motives and meaning. The ‘learning movement’ (Gold and Smith, 2003) discourse facilitates an optimistic and unproblematic relationship between learning and development, thus enabling her to downplay the potentially rhetorical and deceitful aspects of the MD/ME arena and thereby aligning its purpose and potential within her own value system.

Wanda’s belief that the programme is essentially fulfilling individuals’ objectives despite the sometimes contrary evidence is underpinned by the fact that whatever else is achieved or not, individuals will at the very least get a qualification out of it and this very ‘fact’ evidences the individuals benefit from the programme and enables the continuance of the ‘individual / personal development’ values that she adheres to.

Moreover, this implicates the academy as complicit in legitimising the narratives with which the organization describes itself and puts forward as working knowledge (for example ‘Striding Ahead’ as the basis for the learning) and this is emphasised in her earlier statement when she acknowledged that *“the university legitimises everything that we do”* (Chapter 5 – East Council case study profile) which can be read at the level of what the Learning and Development function do, that is the academy legitimizes the management development as management education, but it can also be read as legitimising organizational practices that inform the focus of learning.

7.3 Alison (North Council): discourses of organizational learning

Similar to Wanda, Alison worked as part of a team of HR professionals but unlike Wanda's context the training and development function was not so integrated with strategy and was reactive rather than 'organizational development' orientated. Very differently from Wanda, Alison was the initiator of North Council's MD/ME programme. It was she that spotted a neighbouring authority had an accredited in-company programme, she made contact with the MBA programme leader at the University of Humber and she lobbied her senior HR manager for it and provided the arguments for it to be accepted and supported by the corporate management team. When it was agreed it became her responsibility to make it work operationally. It was she who introduced the organization's competency framework into the programme and she who managed the day to day interface with initially the MBA programme leader (me) and then the academic manager, Russell who observed that she was crucial to it. She was its champion, it was her 'baby', she was extremely enthusiastic about it, very professional in getting it started and the force of energy behind it. She had high aspirations for it and she not unlike Robert (at Caravan Co) had recently acquired a professional HR qualification (CIPD) and believed qualifications were a route to the professionalization of managers. She had been employed at North Council for three years and had been disappointed and frustrated by its rather traditional and transactional culture.

In all her observations of the purpose of the programme recalled in the case study profile in Chapter 5, Alison articulates a strategic purpose for the programme. She refers to it as a response to the national agendas of 'best value' and the 'CPA' she ascribes its role in developing not just individual managers but the '*collective capacity of management*', she refers to it in relation to '*knowledge transfer*' and that in its facilitation of '*reflective learning*' it should be about '*doing something new with it*' in the workplace. In these ways Alison, more than any other of the HR professionals draws heavily on the classic discourse of organizational learning (Senge, 1990; Schon, 1983) and organizational development (Schein, 1989).

Additionally Alison drew heavily on a discourse of best practice in the way that she argued for the programme and rationalised its purpose not just in terms of the way that it should address organizational objectives but also in the way that it could serve to professionalise and support managers in their roles, for example when discussing poor managerial performance she observes:

“Actually I have quite strong feelings about that because I see the impact of bad managers, they make peoples’ lives at work either great or terrible and people will often talk negatively about ‘the organization’ when they are really talking about their relationship with their line managers. I think people want to be good managers but they don’t always know how to be a good one”.

In this way the programme was to serve the purpose of supporting individuals in their managerial roles and identities and to address the tendency for individuals to be more concerned with their ‘functional’ or vocational profession (such as engineers or social workers) to the detriment of being good managers and impacting negatively on those they manage. In this she understands the programme in its ‘socialisation’ prospects as an aid to transmitting organizationally desirable qualities and practices not just in treating their subordinates better but in the ethical delivery of public services:

“We as an organization are failing in delivery of public services, and that’s the bottom line, the liberal in me thinks people should do things how they want to, but that’s matched by an intense frustration of people who just will not - they take the money for being a manager but they don’t demonstrate any managerial action – so I see this as a way of managing those managers. It’s not like ZAP and they leave their personalities behind but about saying, ‘you work in the public sector and you do take home public money’ and wanting them to undertake their professional managerial role as seriously as they undertake their functional roles”

Additionally, she identifies the MD/ME programme, in concert with the organization’s competency framework, as instrumental in achieving a certain kind of managerial professionalism consistent throughout the council as an attempt to:

“To try to get some consistency, because we have had a big issue with consistency, some of the feedback from the Corporate Governance report focussed on this, we have got pockets of excellent practice but you know you could have a colleague sitting across the room from you who doesn’t follow any of the financial procedures, who doesn’t appraise their staff or give them regular feedback, and the impact on service delivery was commented on. So while we don’t want to create like, robot Managers it is about saying, this is what we have as an expectation. And it’s not just people managing other people it’s about planning, it’s about decision making and taking risks.”

These are high aspirations for the MD/ME arena powerfully and emotionally put. Moreover they suggest that when the participants suspected that the programme was initiated as a ‘corrective’ to improve poor management practice they were not altogether incorrect in this assumption even if it was directed at a ‘good cause’. Certainly the programme in embracing North Council’s competency framework was aspired to galvanize a different kind of management and leadership style to address the problems that Alison pinpoints in discussing her experiences of middle managers’ transactional orientations:

“They [the managers] were very passive, very reactive, and their management role was a secondary activity that they might get round to it after their technical work. I could see that the importance and added value that managers might make to the organization but didn’t feel that they were people who were actually taking that forward. Management for them was about checking peoples’ leave card and ‘were they at their desk at 9.00 o’clock?’ Even two years ago things like ‘managing performance’ even at an individual level was not something that people had as an expectation. So I guess it was about trying to move, find a way of moving people towards a more professional management role.”

It is difficult then to reconcile these aspirations towards, organizational learning and learning transfer, reflective practice and culture change as possible or achievable in the context of North Council amongst other observations that imply relatively low levels of senior management commitment to the programme and the recognition of her own

opportunistic agency in ushering the in programme, despite the contrariness of senior management support:

“There was never an articulation of why we should do this management development programme from my strategic management team. It was just about we ‘need’ one and then clearly they didn’t think we needed one because they didn’t actively respond to the suggestions that I made, so really I kind of got the CMS/DMS in through the back door”.

Looking back on the findings in the case study profiles and in the functionalist chapter (Chapter 6) it is very apparent that in its enactment the reality of the North Council played out in stark contrast to the meanings ascribed to it by the HR professional here. Moreover, in the absence of any significance attributed to the workplace projects and the general indifference to the participants’ progress by anyone other than themselves, by what measures did the HR professional consider the MD/ME programme to be management development? Certainly she took stock of participant reactions to the programme in informal ways rather than formally evaluating it, in fact it was only through the interview for this research that she began to reflect on formal evaluation though she was so committed to the programme that she emphasised the need for any such evaluation to be political

“No I haven’t really got into that, maybe I should think about it perhaps, not only evaluating the current cohort but last year’s as well. As long as it looks convincing – evaluative data! It would be interesting to run a focus group. Though I do bump into people, in fact the other day I did and he said ‘that’s the best course I have been on’ “.

Alison admits though that the learning from the programme so far has been at the level of the individual and in reflecting on its outcomes she is rueful that many participants’ learning and motivation has been driven by the ‘pull of qualification’ for those who are more “concerned with ambition”. Even those who she perceives to be “motivated by learning” are so at the level of their own learning rather than any commitment to wider processes of organizational development about which she observes:

“Yes, what hasn’t happened is the wider engagement of the organization and the lack of line manager interest in their staff and in the learning is an example but that’s maybe a cultural thing. I would love to hear how other organizations do that.”

Nevertheless she is convinced of the necessity of the programme as a vehicle through which managers’ can achieve personal development and despite the earlier ‘corrective’ undertones she subscribes in this to a humanist discourse:

“Its a good opportunity for a lot of people who really wouldn’t normally get it. People come into the organization and just start doing their jobs, but this (programme) it gives them something else and a chance to get a qualification. Its a big thing, really it is”

Here we encounter a complexity of motive and meaning because as well as being the prime initiator, organizer and champion of the programme she was also a potential student and keen to get the DMS. Already holding a professional qualification she was eligible to APEL into the DMS stage and was delighted at the prospect of being able to acquire a postgraduate management qualification in just over one year sponsored by the organization and when she was accepted on to the programme as a participant she was a model student. However this did bring with it some complexities in the meaning-management department.

Certainly she used her own experience as a student as a means through which to evaluate it, she was after all well placed to do that. Her own personal as well as professional inclinations rated personal development and academic achievement highly and she commented that the programme had offered opportunities to see things in a very different light especially through engaging in more critical theoretical approaches to decision-making and more political interpretations of management and managing, preferring its more critical aspects than its more normative ones (marketing, finance etc).

In this she was supportive of the programmes pedagogy, which in my experience is rare as the tendency is usually otherwise. But she was not so enamoured of other aspects of programme’s conduct and here we see the institutional frailties of the MD/ME arena when Alison the client/student is the focus for other students’ complaints that: - *some of the*

*lecturers moan to students about having to deliver their modules differently; some of the lecturers take ages to mark and return assignments; how ridiculous is it that late assignments get penalized when we are really busy managers and they don't stick to their own deadlines; there was no disabled toilet facility on the occasion of a campus visit and there's **no car-parking**, and what's the point of going on to the DMS when 'they can't organize a piss-up in a brewery'!!!*

In her recounting of these issues she is reflective of the tensions of being both student and client and the other participants' political use of her to 'put things right' by getting assignment deadlines changed and other concessions to which she is mostly resilient (though on other similar programmes I have observed that much depends on the workplace power hierarchies in the group). Though in her observations that lecturers seem ill-prepared for 'in-company' work she is much more critical and is aware of the issues of power. She deconstructs it thus:-

"Its like saying that 'here you go, it should be better than this, but it's not [and it's not my idea to be doing this anyway, therefore not my fault if its rubbish] so here you are, a second class citizen with a second class product, you wanted it this way so you've got it!' Where is the power in this relationship? I do a lot of digging around to establish how true these things are and how often it gets said etc. but even if they are isolated incidents the impact is potentially huge, how many others are they saying it to it creates a bad impression on the programme and outside of it?"

In this and in questioning 'who is the client?' as Alison does, she reveals the complex meanings that the programme has for her in her dual roles. It could be argued that her own 'student' perceptions of the programme 'as a good developmental thing' ultimately tempered her 'client' perceptions of it as in some ways not that 'fit for purpose' as the management development initiative she so much wanted as a culture change vehicle.

Additionally, she reveals that she also is vulnerable in her identity and association with it and the possibility that criticisms of the MD/ME arena are potentially criticisms of her in her professional HR role and possibly of the HR function. Rigg and Trehan (2008) have observed the tensions inherent in the management development in the workplace where the

usual distinctions between the roles of ‘student’ and ‘client’ can become entangled and political. In Alison’s visibility and vulnerability there are some resonances with Robert to whose story we now turn.

7.4 Robert (Caravan Co): adhering to a strategic HRD discourse

Robert came to Caravan Co from a background in the armed forces (RAF) and in the public sector. This is relevant to how he made sense of the HR function generally and his own role in the company. His previous experience had been acquired in a context where the role was generally accorded a greater degree of importance and where HR policy was developed in relation to ‘good practice’ principles and mostly adhered to or complied with. Caravan Co was something of a ‘culture shock’ with regard to which the HR function was minimal in terms of the importance, compliance and general respect it drew from all functions and levels. Robert was ambitious with regard to his role and very focussed on making a difference at Caravan Co. He envisaged that his career had an upward trajectory and he hoped that experience in the private/manufacturing sector would help with this. He had also recently qualified with an MSc HRM and saw himself as having a progressive orientation to ‘best practice’ principles and strategic orientation to HRM and HRD, a perspective that was hard to enact at Caravan Co. This facilitated a predisposition (Fox 1997) that formal education, as opposed to ‘learning on the job’ was a legitimate vehicle for management and organizational development. The not exactly ‘rational’ process of how the programme was initiated has been previously acknowledged but once he committed to adopt it as a management development initiative, he invested meaning and value in it at a number of different levels, many of which were to do with his conception of his professional role and the development of the HR function at Caravan Co.

His motives for the programme were framed predominantly in the language of strategic HRD concerning the need for senior management to have a clearer strategy; the current cadre of middle managers to be more professional; for more adherence to good practice; for the programme to contribute to culture change and to facilitate more compliance with HR ‘good practice’ as he saw it. The programme would, he hoped, assist a complete cohort of managers to see the strategic nature of HR and attribute it more importance. The earlier

references in the case study profiles Chapter 5 are indicative of his frustration at the non-existent or at best tokenistic adherence to the appraisal policy. As his objectives included the retention of IiP this made ‘appraisal’ a top priority for him but not for line managers.

The discourse of strategic HRD provided a strong narrative within which Robert could pursue some of his own goals concurrently with those of the organization. He had no difficulty with the prospect of management development’s rather more coercive potential; rather he takes this as ‘common sense’ from a strategic HR perspective. How he understands the benefit to the company is legitimately prioritized as the strategic justification for the programme.

“It’s my job to get that across (having a supportive culture) and one of the levers for doing that is the programme, to get people to buy into the culture and change, but some key managers have been allowed to exclude themselves, anyway we may get there but my attitude is that we need to change the behaviours (i.e. through management development) but if we don’t do that then we need to change the people (i.e. replace them) otherwise we’re stuck, if we need change then we need different behaviours and attitudes, we need to change the environment and that is what the programme is about”

(Robert – Caravan Co)

This is a powerful observation, rather starkly put, but it represents one underlying aspect of many of management development’s ulterior motives. Lees (1992:90) for example shows that there may be many underlying reasons for management development that would generally not surface in formal documentation and particularly not those which have the effect of social control. Behind the scenes though Robert is frank about the significance he attaches to getting some compliance to his idea as to what’s good for the company:

“I said to the MD, that across the organization there is a very fragmentary approach to appraisal, training and recruitment, its all very ad hoc and I really thought about the programme as a way of getting people thinking like I am thinking. I thought about management development because it’s the only way to get the changes that I am interested in.”

(Robert – Caravan Co)

There is also another issue at play here as Robert admits to his own agenda as part of this particularly in relation to retaining the Investors in People accreditation

“At the end of the day I had my own agenda, and it’s about me achieving my own objectives, getting them to take IiP more seriously, but the only way we were going to get any change and development is if they understand more about the business and the corporate objectives, we’ve got the Caravans Co Business Plan and we need to achieve this by what I understand as ‘best practice’.”

(Robert - Caravan Co)

It is interesting that Robert should identify his own goals as aligning with those of the company whilst sustaining the view that it is the participants, ‘managers to be developed’, who are potentially undermining the company objectives. The discourse of strategic HRD is drawn on to underline the relationship between ‘good practice’ and achievement of business goals and at the same time reinforcing the HR position as concerned with corporate objectives at the strategic level and not concerned merely with operational issues.

Writers elsewhere (Legge *et al.* 2007) have observed that the language of strategic HRD/HRM can be utilised as a device to elevate the HR role and invest its occupants with greater esteem and importance than they might otherwise accrue.

“Such language with its close association with business strategy is a godsend for the HRM function looking for status and credibility” (Legge *et al.*, 2007: 454).

Certainly this was an aspect for Robert who was keen to be seen as a more strategic player in the organization. Discursively constructing the MD/ME programme as a strategic initiative was a means by which he ‘talked up’ the programme and its role and together with that of his own. The association with the university was an important dimension because it drew on a source of external legitimacy which it wouldn’t otherwise have had thus reinforcing his professional legitimacy.

Robert invested the programme with meanings derived from the discourse that frames management development as a strategic activity despite his belief that decisions were not taken strategically. Also it was clear that the meaning Robert articulated for the programme was evidently not shared by other organization members who regarded it as ‘a distraction from’, as opposed to a ‘contribution to’ the achievement of corporate goals. This was evident in his frustration that the programme was not universally supported

“So what I believe is that every manager needs to be on the programme whether they want to be or not. That’s the reason why we won’t get as much of a cultural shift as we might, like because, there’s not everyone in on it, but then there’s the question of why don’t they want to be on it? I think some people basically feel threatened, and there again the senior management team don’t seem interested in putting their foot down. A lot of what happens at that level is driven by individual agendas and opportunism but that is reflective of the culture. They don’t operate as a team. It [a concern with management development] has got to happen at all levels really”

(Robert – Caravan Co)

It became clear to him throughout the programme that its role was not achieving the desired ‘culture change’ that he envisaged and one consequence of this was that as participants became more knowledgeable and confident they recognised the organization’s limitations in relation to ‘good practice’ and became a more influential and critical force against Robert, holding him responsible for the organization’s imperfections.

There’s a few issues around that and in some ways I am thinking ‘what have I created’? These managers on the programme have started to be critical of the way some things are done, basically challenging the culture which is a good thing in some ways but some senior managers see their authority being undermined and they do not like it. One thing I have learned is that you need to keep a tight hold on it ... in some ways they (programme participants) have become quite a powerful force but not always a force for good. Change is OK but what about when changes ‘bite the hand that feeds’? Once people start to get developed its hard to draw

parameters around it, you don't know where it's going to go and it can be quite dangerous when it comes back on your own doorstep”

(Robert – Caravan Co)

Furthermore, the participants' attempts to initiate change back in the workplace were *unwelcome* by other more senior line managers who were reluctant to let go of an 'empire building' and 'nepotistic' culture. The challenges the participants brought into this scenario had consequences for themselves but also for Robert when they found themselves the subject of criticism from senior management. Far from bringing the rewards of strategic inclusion and greater recognition for the HR role and himself, the programme increasingly attracted negative perceptions of the participants' attempts to enact change. This had the consequence of associating Robert with an intervention that was increasingly construed as a drain on costs and culturally disruptive.

The meanings Robert originally attached to the programme were not only 'not shared' by the participants but neither were they shared by other powerful and influential stakeholders. He became increasingly vulnerable and isolated as he was becoming perceived as the instigator of an initiative that was ambivalently tolerated. Other important stakeholders distanced themselves from the idea that it made a meaningful strategic or operational contribution to the organization as they questioned its costs and efficacy.

Roberts's adherence to the discourse of SHRD in which the 'unitary' notion of the necessary causal relationship between management development and organizational benefit led him to understand the actions and behaviours of the participant managers as being 'developed' in ways that were beyond or outside of his expectations. He regarded them as 'deviant' and 'out of control'. In making sense of it in this way Robert is relying on prevailing functionalist discourses concerning management development which ultimately do not equip him with a more political reading of the organization and leave him vulnerable in the face of other organizational contingencies.

7.5 Jack (Glass Co): advancing management discourse politically

In the case of Glass Co, we have seen previously that the MD/ME programme enjoyed a high degree of integration with other aspects of the organization but that it did not enjoy high strategic priority despite having the support of some of the senior management team. Every change in the top management team brought a fresh question mark over the continued support for the programme. Jack, an experienced HR manager with many years service in the company was respected by long standing members of the senior management team. He placed a high value on management development believing it to be a good thing in its own terms but also an important priority was about the extent to which it could be seen by others to relate to organizational objectives. Jack adhered to the notion that the development of individual managers and organizational development were entirely compatible aims. He strongly related to a discourse of the commensurability of individual and organizational development (Pedler *et al* 2006).

“the management development and organizational development part of the job is what makes it worthwhile, you know the whole HR thing in this environment is tough – everyone thinks you’re a drain on resources. They see the value, of course, and the company has a professional outlook to HR but at the end of the day you’re a distraction, of time resources and the lot. Keeping management development going, its an uphill trudge and if I didn’t keep pushing, it wouldn’t happen.”

(Jack – Glass Co)

He was well aware that the company’s orientation towards production efficiencies rendered management development a low priority particularly in the eyes of some senior managers who would not be natural allies in supporting the programme. The fact that the programme was credentialed with the MBA was contentious among some board members, firstly, because it made the programme more costly and secondly, because the managing university-related aspects of the programme were seen as a time consuming nuisance. This was partly about bureaucratic requirements and partly because of the additional energies that were required to manage the expectations of potential participants. Jack suspected another motive of reticence, even jealousy, among some of his colleagues who were not

MBA qualified themselves and who may have felt threatened or exposed by those who were. Jack's account emphasises the political way in which he championed the programme by taking actions and promoting it in a language that would facilitate its acceptance in the organizational context.

Firstly, he took every opportunity to produce and circulate documentary reports on positive programme outcome at senior management board meetings, (e.g. financial savings from projects or celebratory events). This kept the programme's profile high in terms of the way that it met organization agendas. Wherever possible he focused on the tangible and financial outcomes to tie the programme discursively to corporate objectives. In formal forums within the company he downplayed his own belief in 'personal development for its own sake' and drew on the language of 'return on investment' to make the business case for the programme.

Secondly, he initiated the use of the external management consultant to mediate with the university and to undertake some delivery. He saw this as 'normalising' the programme in the context of other HRD initiatives. That is to say, that this was a tactic to minimise its appearance as an 'academic' programme and to emphasise appearance as a 'management development' programme. Part of the purpose here was to 'manage meaning' by 'masking' those aspects of the programme he believed to be most contentious amongst some stakeholders.

Thirdly, he was conscious that the programme had a history, and a 'good story' particularly amongst managers who have benefitted from it through qualification and promotion and amongst those that aspire to. He observed that, when there had been some doubt over the programmes survival, it was the lobbying from past graduates that had been influential in retaining it. Jack used individuals from this group as a network to promote the value of the programme and to mentor those coming through it.

Fourthly, he knew that the project work was frequently the aspect of the programme most easily identifiable as producing tangible outcomes. One way to capitalize on this was to involve senior as well as line managers in the project presentations and to be involved in discussions about the projects' relative merits. He negotiated with the university delivery

team to allow the line and senior managers to be party to evaluative discussions on the relative merits of the work-based projects.

Finally, Jack is a long standing friend with two members of the senior management team with whom he regularly plays golf. He uses this opportunity to talk up the programme, the participants and the university whenever he can and tries to use them as strategic allies.

It can be seen from Jack's experience that he considers the arena in which the MD/ME programme exists is not overtly hostile but neither is it entirely supportive. Burgoyne (1997) uses the metaphor of the 'battlefield' in which to consider the plurality of interests at play in the management development arena and applying it here we can see that Jack surveys the 'theatre' and identifies friendly and enemy forces. He identifies strategies and tactics to strengthen the allegiances where possible (senior manager golf buddies and past students) and camouflage the programme from its potential 'enemies'. In this approach he is drawing on his skills and abilities to consider arenas in which to discursively construct the programme in line with corporate objectives and company values, recursively iterating the programmes inherent value and contribution to Glass Co.

Clarke *et al* (2008: 833) have observed the way in which HR professionals draw on their own personal dispositions and skills to advance the cause of development even where the circumstances are not especially favourable to it. Personal values and qualities play a role in the political defence of management development enabling the mobilization of commitment for management development in circumstances where support for it is fragmented and patchy. At Glass Co Jack influences and networks amongst his peers, senior colleagues and past students to rally support and as a counter to those views which seek to question it. He intervenes discursively with the language of accountancy and investment to resonate with more performative agendas recognising that this discourse rather than that of 'development for its own sake' is more likely to influence opinions and actions. Acting politically often involves an inter-play of overt and covert meanings and motives in building and sustaining the case and legitimacy for management development activities (Clarke *et al* 2008: 835).

For Jack, job satisfaction drives his energies in relation to championing the programme. The university and the awards, in this scenario, are instrumental in legitimising the

MD/ME programme for the participants but Jack sees it more of a necessary inconvenience than a vehicle for enhancing his own status. The awards in this context are seen as an inducement to encourage engagement in management development per se and to legitimise it in the eyes of the participants.

7.6 Developing critical insight: emerging themes

Making sense of management development

In the above accounts it is possible to identify some emergent themes concerning how these actors make sense of the MD/ME arena. ‘Making sense’ of management development in these contexts implies the active construction of meaning, for themselves and for others and we can discern some competing discourses at play in this process.

The HR professionals can be seen to inhabit their roles and worlds in different ways. In part this seems circumscribed by the organizational context which frames the purpose that management development should serve, even if only at the level of rhetoric. This is not the only factor influencing how the HR professionals ‘make sense’ of the MD/ME programmes. They differently draw on values relating to underlying assumptions about individual and organizational learning. Wanda, Alison and Jack, though in different ways, are inclined towards the discourse of the ‘learning movement’ in which learning is posited as unproblematically a ‘good thing’ (Contu *et al*, 2003). Gold and Smith (2003) have observed that this it is common amongst HR professionals to draw on this discourse to ‘advance the case for’ management development. I would argue something more than this. The discourse of personal development/personal learning as ubiquitously ‘good in itself’ is one that can inform and ‘produce’ particular values and worldviews concerning social phenomenon and imbue them with meaning. Robert, on the other hand is more motivated by instrumental concerns to do with defending his own organizational position. Attempting to consolidate and enhance his own role, foregrounding self preservation and more self interested outcomes, in an arguably hostile context. Consequently he draws primarily on the discourse of strategic human resource development to make sense of what the

programme should mean and his adherence to a unitarist perspective fails to equip him with the means by which to make sense of managers' development when it delivers more than or differently from what was intended.

It can be argued however that they make sense of the MD/ME programmes 'behind the scenes' in terms of personal values and motives, it is also the case that in the public domain the prevalent means by which the programmes are discursively constructed is through the unitary language of SHRD and the achievement of corporate goals. In the case of Jack, this is very evidently about legitimizing and justifying the programme and additionally, in the case of Robert, about talking up his own role and seeking to extend his own legitimacy through that of the programmes strategic contribution. The language of SHRD can be seen as a powerful narrative in promulgating the performative dimensions of the MD/ME programmes and marginalizing other, less organizationally acceptable discourses.

Meaning-making and the limits of a constructivist discourse

The accounts point to the way in which the arena in which the MD/ME programmes exist is one which comprises emotional (Vince, 2002) and political (Coopey, 1995) dimensions. The programmes serve their own as well as organizational interests but the accounts also show that there is nothing 'concrete' about the internal legitimacy of the programmes. Rather there is a sense that the programmes are emergent, temporary and subject to other competing discourses concerning 'value for money' and 'return on investment'. Especially in the cases of Glass Co, Caravans Co and North Council, they required the active agency of the HR professionals to argue for and defend them in performative terms and to act politically within the organization to achieve this. There is a strong sense that their own agency plays a significant part in sustaining the programmes as they work, with differing degrees of success at promoting its internal credibility. This emphasises the 'micro political' aspect of the programmes in which competing interests are at play and require attention and management. This is most evident in Jack's account where he orientates himself and his role politically to forge allegiances and consolidate perceptions of the programmes efficacy and legitimacy through the conscious deployment of political and discursive resources (Clarke *et al* 2008).

Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) have noted that constructivist discourse of management development privileges the way in which those involved make sense of their actions and roles. In looking more closely at the HR professionals here we can see that this paints an altogether more complex picture of the programmes and how they make sense of them in relation to personal values and political contingencies by observing that there are competing priorities and discourses at play in the arena. At the same time Mabey and Finch-Lees note that constructivist accounts, whilst divesting itself of a positivist and technicist view, remains compelled towards a ‘consensus’ orientation as the focus inclines to the ways that meaning is jointly (mutually) constructed and arrived at within and between groups. “For all their plurality, constructivist studies, like functionalist ones, remain largely consensus-orientated (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 80).

The consideration of the empirical material here suggests the extent to which meaning was jointly produced, or not, in these contexts with these programmes and in doing so suggests ways in which meaning might have been better ‘co-constructed’. So for example, in comparing the accounts of Jack and Robert a conclusion might be drawn that if Robert were to be as politically skilful as Jack he might have become more successful in drawing support for the programme by building a better shared understanding of its contribution. Equally, if Alison, had been able to devise discursive strategies to facilitate a wider ownership of how the programme was intended to address culture change, then perhaps it would not have run in isolation from ‘directorate and departmental’ commitment . Thus the constructivist discourse whilst generating more ‘fine grained’ stories is not inclined to emphasise dimensions of power tending as they do towards consensus and away from dissensus understandings.

7.7 Calling for a dissensus orientation

The accounts from the HR professionals and the wider empirical material begins to suggest other more problematic issues calling for a more ‘dissensus’ orientation (as explained in Chapter 3). We have seen here the prevalence of legitimizing and justifying the MD/ME programmes in terms of performative discourses; there is an immediate ‘common sense’

understanding in these discourses that management development, and therefore these MD/ME programmes, should in the first instance be legitimate in performative terms. Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 151) have argued that ‘critique’ implies paying attention to issues of ‘domination and constraint’. The language of performativity and the foregrounding of organizational objectives, have the tendency to collapse and therefore ‘mask’ the potential differences of individual and organizational interests in the management development arena.

This is an aspect of power whereby some discourses in the MD/ME arena, for example those that emphasize the primacy of organizational outcomes, come to the fore and appear as ‘natural’ and ‘commonsense’. Whilst other discourses, for example, those concerned with ‘personal and individual development’ are secondary as in the case of East Council, or marginalized as in the case of Glass Co, or nonexistent as in the case of Caravans Co.

Moreover, there might be *alternative discourses* that may serve a multiplicity of interests, such as discourses of career development, personal self interest, personal defence against organizational change and restructure, protection from redundancy – all of which are aspects of peoples’ lives in the act of sustaining a living, but they do not figure in the overriding and organizationally ‘legitimate’ discourse of performativity. In this way the performative discourse is *dominant* in promulgating some interests, those of the organization over all others. Alvesson and Deetz (2000: 178) have observed that the privileging of some discourses and by implication the marginalization of others can be seen as ‘discursive closure’ which acts to suppress interests that might be ‘other’ than those most dominant. In doing so discursive closure renders less visible the potential conflicts that might otherwise be visible:

“Closure is present with each move to determine origins and demonstrate unity. In each case the multiple motive and conflict-filled nature of experience becomes suppressed by a dominant aspect. With unity the continued production of experience is constrained since the tension of difference is lost”

(Alvesson and Deetz 2000:179)

From a Habermasian (1984) perspective this can be seen as an aspect of ‘distorted communication’ in which certain experiences, motives, meanings are suppressed and lost when individuals come to define their own experiences as aligned with organizational interests that may be other than their ‘real’ interests. Inevitably this errs towards a critical realist ontology (which is not entirely commensurate with a constructivist epistemology) and points to the need for a more ‘dissensus’ reading of the empirical material and there are aspects of the HR professionals’ accounts above in which a more political analysis vies for attention. For example, in Wanda’s account she alludes to the injustice and inequalities that exist in relation to participants’ selection to the programme.

This is not only an issue concerning differential practice between departments where line managers may themselves act politically in the process of distributing organizational rewards (as in the exercise of ‘sovereign’ [first dimension of power] Lukes, 1974). It is also one which draws attention to the role of the MD/ME arena as one complicit in relation to gate-keeping organizational rewards, and by implication, punishments through the processes of inclusion and exclusion to the programme (see for example Lukes [1974] ‘second dimension’ of power).

This is heightened where the programme is seen to be a vehicle for individual and career enhancement, in which case, exclusion from the MD/ME arena is the means by which individuals’ life chances and access to material rewards significantly diminish. This was most certainly the case at East Council where the applications were double the number of places and at Glass Co where applications were treble the available places. Even at North Council where the programme was not unambiguously linked to career development the reported competition over training budgets had the same effect of allowing some, and thereby disqualifying others, from opportunities to develop their own ‘individual capital’ and maximise their career potential. In this way, the MD/ME programmes are complicit in the organizations’ processes of the unequal distribution of rewards and aligned with whatever performance management criteria and practice is concurrent with this.

At Caravan Co the politics of ‘selection’ to the programme (see case study profiles Chapter 5) prisms open another political consideration and that is the extent to which they can be characterised as an aspect of social control. The ambiguously ‘coercive’ targeting

of a middle management cadre and senior management expectations that they should all ‘take up the opportunity’ again aligns the programme to the company’s performance management processes even if this was implicit more than explicit. Furthermore, in privileging the performative discourse it is apparent and ‘commonsense’ that the achievement of corporate goals is to be established through the behavioural alignment of managers to organizationally desirable ends, though these are differently constructed according to the specifics of the organizational contexts.

7.8 The prevalence and masking nature of performative discourse

The discourse of aligning management development to the achievement of organization change is very prevalent (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 88, Gold and Smith 2003). Such is the pervasiveness of the discourse that it masks the underlying power dimension that concern the changing of managers’ attitudes and or behaviours and skills in accordance with actual or rhetorically desirable ways. This applies irrespective of whether or not this is in the individuals’ interests. For example, the situation described by Wanda at East Council show how individuals on the programme do indeed accept the corporately desirable ‘behaviours’. However when attempting to put them into practice they frequently find themselves at odds with their line managers and others, in some cases making themselves vulnerable in their local contexts whilst striving towards an idealised version of organizational practice.

Similarly, the participants at Caravan Co, having reconciled themselves to the inauspicious programme ‘selection’ process, itself an aspect of explicit social control, participated in the programme out of personal as well as corporate motives. However, when attempting to apply ‘more professional’ management practice they met resistance from all quarters with career limiting consequences for some participants when they were perceived to ‘over step the mark’. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 139) have observed that from a critical perspective, management development can be characterised as an aspect of social control, through ‘ideology control’. Whilst I would not concur with the ‘determinism’ that this sometimes implies, ideology control does appear as a dimension of the programme in the

way that the HR professionals privilege organizational change agendas and discourses whether this be about getting conformance to ‘good practice’, ‘achieving efficiencies’ or developing ‘commitment to new ways of working’. However, it does not follow that the ‘control’ exerted may have the intended outcome. Participants may resist or reframe the intentions of the programme, reading into it their own meanings and act accordingly. They may even accept the espoused rationale only to discover its rhetorical nature when they attempt to enact what they believed to be its purpose.

Another way to make sense of the Caravan Co scenario is that it was espoused to bring about a cultural change emphasising a more idealized notion of the ‘professional’ manager, and in many ways the participants subscribed to that ‘new view’ of management and began to enact those different ways of being. In doing so however, they became a culturally disruptive force (Rusaw, 2000; Turnbull, 2001) that came to threaten the extant culture. This illustrates that learning from the programme had the effect of empowering the participants, and confident in the knowledge that the programme was managerially sanctioned, attempted to transfer the learning to the work place. In doing so they threatened existing power structures and norms of control which circulated on empires and nepotism.

This precipitated senior management action to marginalise and isolate individuals who were deemed to be ‘trouble making’ thereby reinforcing that culture change was only required to the extent that they do their jobs more efficiently and not to challenge basic structures and norms. Such actions served to reinforce the status quo and *strengthened* existing means of control by displaying to all the ‘boundaries’ of acceptable change. From a labour process perspective Braverman (1974) has observed that ‘learning’ that breaks out of the confines for which it was intended can become a liability ‘to those in charge’ (cited in Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 140). In this case the ‘liability’ was dealt with to reinforce norms which the programme was ‘rhetorically’ intended to disrupt but when it did, it was deemed to be too disruptive and action was taken to re-establish existing power relations.

This chapter has so far highlighted several aspects of the MD/ME programmes that were not visible from a functionalist perspective. From the accounts of the HR professionals it

can be seen that there are competing discourses through which they make sense of the programmes informed by the organization and through their own values, predispositions and personal motivations. It can also be seen that some discourses have more currency than others in legitimising and justifying management development and these are mobilised to promote and sustain the programmes in arenas inhabited by competing interests and values. The performative discourse is powerful in masking the complexity of meanings and motives which management development serves. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated the ways in which management development is to an extent socially constructed by those actors inhabiting the arena and the HR professionals are central to this by invoking discursive resources to present it as one thing or another, claiming for it this purpose or that purpose, irrespective of whether or not it can produce the intended effects.

7.9 The contested nature of the MD/ME arena

The discussion so far alludes to the programme's more *contested* nature dependent on the discursive constructions advanced for them and the extent to which other stakeholders (senior management and participants) are persuaded by them. It presents a more 'emergent' picture where meanings are not so much 'fixed' but more fluid and open to interpretation and reinterpretation. Clegg (1998: 43) has observed that 'meanings are ineradicably indexical in nature' and that readings of how actors make sense of their worlds must attempt to account for the complexity of meanings that organizational members and others engage with and how they seek to fix meaning discursively. The chapter has embraced an interpretive discourse in paying attention to the complex underlying meanings attributed to the MD/ME programmes and to ulterior motives of this set of stakeholders.

This points to the need for a more political reading of the MD/ME programmes, suggesting the necessity of deploying a 'dissensus' discourse which pays attention to issues of power and control, inclusion and exclusion. The potential gap between the rhetoric and lived experience is not merely of observational interest or one of conflicting

(or consensual meanings) but rather reveals issues concerning power structures and issues of ‘constraint’ and ‘domination’:

“In general we understand issues of domination when raised by strategy, manipulation and instrumental uses of communication...the more serious issues posed by modern analysis are the invisible constraints that are disguised as neutral and self evident...the outcome of discursive closure is the appearance of a well formed consensus that is flawed or premature in some way”

(Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 178).

That the programmes are complicit in the organizations’ distribution of rewards and resources suggests a more political and critical reading is warranted. Whatever the motives and meanings the HR professionals invest in the programmes, the discursive closure rests on the programmes appearance as a management development intervention. It is ‘natural’ that it should be made sense of in these terms and that it should appear as part of the organization’s HR practices designed to achieve strategic goals, be instrumental in succession planning, aligning individuals behaviours, promoting culture change and so on. The role of the academy is in the background of the HR accounts; acknowledged as an inducement to undertake management development, legitimising it symbolically through the institutional status of the academy and actually through the conferring of qualifications.

In this way the academy infiltrates the labour process as an aspect of the organization’s HR processes. It is complicit as part of the organization’s recruitment and retention strategies, party to the unequal distribution of rewards and even as a rationale for the suppression of rewards when used as a compensation for lower levels of pay. In inducing ‘efficiencies’ the MD/MD arena can be a means to intensify labour and to act ideologically to socialize participants into unitarist perspectives that normalises these practices as neutral, common sense and natural. Yet we have seen from this chapter and previously that the ‘promise’ of management development in fulfilling either organizational or individual goals is indeterminate. Individuals may or may not have access to the programme, thus ‘disqualified’ from improved life chances (Deetz, 1992). They may or may not benefit from career progression. They may or may not be ‘permitted’ to apply ‘new learning’ and initiate changes they were extolled to enact. They may become more ‘visible’, more

empowered or more vulnerable. Organizations are social sites which are shot through with micro-politics and larger issues of power. The academy's entry into this arena is complicit in these dimensions of power and yet it participates naively not taking account of what it is that it is legitimising and what power effects within which it is embroiled, in more localised contexts. The academy's collusive role is one that necessitates further investigation and I turn to this in the next chapter in which issues of meaning, power and control are explored through the experiences and perceptions of the university academic managers.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored the diversity of meanings constructed by the HR professionals to the MD/ME arena by adhering to a constructivist discourse. In so doing it was detected that although they make sense of the programmes and the purposes they fulfil according to their own reference points and values, the HR professionals draw differently on discourses with which to legitimize and justify the programmes in their own eyes and in the eyes of the organizations which are themselves political and heterogeneous arenas.

Despite this diversity and complexity, the performative discourses of management development, emphasising 'organization' prerogatives as uppermost, prevail and act to marginalise and mask other interests in the arena. Thus there is a complexity of meanings and interests in the MD/ME arena in which performative ones can be characterised as dominating.

In this way dimensions of power can be detected in the way that the MD/ME arena becomes embroiled with other organizational discursive practices concerned with managing human resources and organising working practices around 'efficiencies' and 'productivity'. Organizations are political sites of unequal distribution of resources and the MD/ME arena is inevitably complicit in the processes that serve to reproduce them.

The academy's collusive role is one that necessitates further investigation and I turn to this in the next chapter in which issues of meaning, power and control are explored more explicitly through the experiences and perceptions of the university academic managers.

8. Looking more critically: the academic managers

8.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter privileged a constructivist discourse which fore-grounded the complexity of meaning ‘read into’ and reproduced by the HR professionals, in doing so issues of power emerged as the prevalence of a performative discourse can be seen to marginalize or dominate others. This chapter advances a discussion of power by consciously drawing on a critical discourse and paying attention to its concerns of inclusion and exclusion, competing interests and control (Mabey and Finch—Lees, 2008: 23 and chapter 3).

The chapter pays attention to the perception and experiences of the academic managers. In doing this it adopts an explicitly critical stance by exploring issues of power and control as they surface through the curriculum and pedagogy together with the wider implications of these in the workplace as a political arena (Rainbird and Munro 2003: 30; Fenwick, 2008b). In so doing the chapter explicitly addresses the research questions:

- To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders to the MD/ME programmes?
- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?

The chapter begins with an introduction to the academic managers (pen pictures) and then proceeds by focussing on aspects of the empirical material presented thematically from across the case study organizations. These are grouped into four themes emphasising different aspects of the empirical material which are presented together with an analysis of each. Subsequently, the chapter develops a discussion of ‘emerging themes’ highlighting issues of power pertinent to the research questions above.

8.2 The academic managers

At the time of data collection, Dorothy is an academic, who has held academic and managerial roles with the University of Humber and had been Head of Department (Organizational Behaviour) at the time that the Glass Co MD/ME programme was validated. Latterly she was employed by the University of East Coast as programme manager for the East Council programme. As well as overseeing its conduct as an academic programme she participated in work-based project assessments, organized assignment moderation and was responsible for academic quality assurance. She is, in this research, the academic manager for East Council.

Thomas is an academic who was at the time of data collection Head of External Business at the University of East Coast with an external business rather than academic role but who had extensive experience of educational and consultancy delivery from his previous job at the University of Humber. He had been External Business Manager at the University of Humber at the inception of the Caravan Co programme responsible for its conduct and for delivering on two modules and facilitating the work-based projects. In this research he is regarded as an academic manager for both Caravan Co and East Council for which he had initiated the element of the MD/ME programme.

Russell is an academic employed by the University of Humber and had extensive experience of undergraduate and postgraduate business and management education. He taught on the on-campus DMS/MBA and contributed to various MD/ME programmes as well as the ones selected in this study. At the time of the research he was a member of the Organizational Behaviour department and was the involved in the delivery of and was programme leader for the North Council programme. He is North Council's academic manager

Jan is an academic who had extensive industry experience and now employed by the University of Humber and had extensive experience of undergraduate and postgraduate business and management education. He taught on the on-campus DMS/MBA and contributed to various MD/ME programmes as well as the ones selected in this study. At

the time of the research he was a member of the Organizational Behaviour department and had been the programme leader for Glass Co and for the delivery of MBA modules. He is in this research an academic manager for Glass Co. Both Jan and Russell had worked together on numerous consultancy projects.

Don is an academic employed by the University of Humber, he also has industry experience and an extensive record of postgraduate and undergraduate delivery, consultancy and was at the time of the research Head of Department with responsibility for external business as External Business Manager. He had contributed module delivery to numerous MD/ME programmes including North Council and Glass Co. Additionally he had taken over from Jan as programme leader at Glass Co In this research he is academic manager for Glass Co.

Just as the perspectives of the HR professionals assisted in the exploration of the programme as a management development initiative, the identification of the academic managers as educationalists assists in contextualising their observations with regard to the programmes ‘management educational’ dimensions, offering an alternative though not mutually exclusive interpretations of the MD/ME arena. It is however helpful in exploring the ways in which the separately constituted domains of the ‘organization’ and the ‘academy’ can be seen as blurring in MD/ME arena but in which different interests can be detected.

8.3 Academic managers’ stories: managing the curriculum

Thomas, Russell and Don tell stories about negotiating the interface through the curriculum

“When it was agreed that the programme was going ahead, then the negotiations began. Robert had fairly fixed ideas as to what should be in it and these tended to be absolutely instrumental. You know, ‘were bad at time management so well have some of that and were bad at project management so we’ll have some of that, bad a communication let’s have a module on that. I had to persuade him that these things could be achieved by addressing the issues more broadly and in ways that fit with the programme requirements,

after all they're going to get a university award and in any case there would be some concrete outcomes from the projects”

(Thomas on Caravan Co)

“Well Alison came along with the council's competency framework and I sat down with the programme learning outcomes and basically we just drew a sort of big map of how they related to each other. There were some gaps but we just slotted those into the requirements for the project. I mean in some ways it might be seen that we were just managing each others' meaning that this worked because yes we both wanted it to happen, but actually we did both feel that the programme could work and I was happy with that”

(Russell on North Council)

“At the induction of the DMS we introduce the programme and when we present it we dove-tail the language of the curriculum with organizational discourse about the company's goals and objectives, though the HR Director likes to produce his own documentation about the programme aims. There's a few things that they want that are not normally part of the curriculum –time management, project management- but I think that the negotiation of what modules and what's in them is a political process to be managed – we can tick all the boxes and all get something out of it”

(Don on Glass Co)

The above stories tell us something about the complexity of competing agendas around the curriculum and how the process of ‘customizing’ the curriculum is at one level a matter of negotiation, and one in which the parties are equivalent and construct a mutually acceptable compromise. Though to frame it in this way neutralizes the ‘interests’ at play in the MD/ME arena. The interests of the academy are served by the programmes maintaining coherence with existing provision that has been framed in a particular way to

meet academic institutional requirements and norms. In contrast, the interests of the organization are served by the demonstration of how the curriculum addresses the requirements of management development in the particular organizational contexts. So that in the cases of North Council and East Council it is incumbent on the university academic managers to show how the requisite programme learning outcomes align with the organizations competency frameworks. In the case of Caravan Co no such competency framework exists so the programme has to be argued for in relation to how it will develop managers in ‘corporately desired’ ways and moreover how it will, through delivery and through project work, embrace learning ‘for work’ as well as ‘learning about’ work (McFarlane 1997). In part, it can be seen that the academics and HR professionals are in the process of co-producing meanings of the programmes to accommodate what each other needs from the programme to be acceptable to their respective constituencies but it is also possible to identify some issues of power.

There are considerable discursive resources (Clarke, 2008) drawn on here, in terms of the way that they have to ‘frame’ management education as a vehicle for management development. At one level these discursive resources are dependent on the deployment of a vocabulary that is organizationally acceptable and is seen to foreground organizational need as the primary purpose of the programme and rationale for learning. One learning discourse that is particularly pertinent here is that which posits a subjectivist view of learning. That is to say that learning is meaningfully acquired through the engagement of learners in situ, working meaningfully on work-based issues and producing useful outcomes, for example the Communities of Practice literature, following on from Wenger, (1998) and Lave and Wenger, (1991).

In some characterisations ‘experiential learning’ (Kolb 1976), ‘action based learning’ (Raelin, 2007), and project based learning (*Management Learning Special Edition on project base learning: 2001*) have led to a radical re-conceptualization away from ‘expert knowledge’ to the co-construction of knowledge by active participants. This view of knowledge disrupts the convention that knowledge and learning are the exclusive domain of the academy and posits the workplace as an equally legitimate site of learning. The extent to which it is ‘radical’ though depends upon the power relations within which it is defined. The discourse of ‘work place projects’ as the means by which the MD/ME

programme will produce performative deliverables and the language of tailoring learning outcomes to competency frameworks serves to ‘mask’ the power effect of subjugating the curriculum to organizational perceptions of relevance. One consequence of this is the way that the learning arena, in terms of the ‘what and how’ of learning becomes contested terrain (Edwards, 1979; Fenwick, 2001). This is explored further in Jan and Don’s story below.

8.4 Politics of the curriculum

Don and Jan tell stories of ‘politics’ of the curriculum

“We were doing a ‘Resourcing’ module and the discussion turned to the nature of the labour process and a Marxist critique. Some participants got all agitated and were most unhappy that we were discussing it all. They couldn’t see the relevance, ‘what use is this in the workplace?’ ‘no relationship to the real world’ etc. etc. Actually it turned a bit nasty, one or two of them threatened to invoke the informal complaints procedure. I put a lot of effort in to try and resolve this behind the scenes, taking a conciliatory approach to try and calm things down. I think it’s important to explore alternative perspectives – but I guess we need to be a bit careful about how it’s done”

(Don on Glass Co)

“We thought we would orientate them to more critical thinking by running a residential and including some challenging ‘experiential’ interventions. The HR chap was there, to observe, not sure if it was them (the participants) or us (the academics) anyway there was a bit of a dichotomy because some participants found it really intriguing and wanted to get stuck in but some of them really did not seem to want to open up. I think it was in case stuff ‘got back’. There was a lot of defensiveness and they challenged the legitimacy of the process, you know – ‘how is this relevant to me in my job? This is a right waste of my time!’ normally we would ride that out but the HR chap joined in with the detractors and basically ‘bulled them up’ so that took the challenge out of it and undermined what we were trying to do, get them out of their comfort zones, get them to see things differently.

There was a bit of a storm about that when we got back, they said we hadn't respected their level of seniority as a consequence the whole incident was re-framed as my fault and I was taken off the programme"

(Jan on Glass Co)

"It's the elephant in the room, the clients have some boxes to tick. At the same time they want to know it's the 'real deal', that it has some academic rigour. Sometimes we have to rein in, but the line around that is fuzzy. It's hard to know where the line is, until it's tested out. I don't see management education and organizational development as mutually exclusive but it's not always a harmonious relationship"

(Jan on Glass Co)

There's a pressure to deliver what they want in the way they want it. We do try to stretch the boundaries but there's more at stake with a corporate programme. There is a pressure to have a performative orientation which is at odds with my ideals of a liberal education"

(Don on Glass Co)

Several issues are surfaced in these stories, the first of which is the question of relevance in relation to what constitutes academic rigour and what constitutes organizationally useful learning. It is evident that there are different perceptions of what properly constitutes learning in these arenas and that both 'theory' and 'criticality' in the curriculum are a source of tension and contested terrain. Fenwick has observed that learning in the workplace involves relations and dynamics amongst individual actors in the context of workplace power and politics. It is an arena 'filled with fundamental tensions related to what knowledge counts most and who says so' (2008a: 24).

The question of relevance has been explored in Chapter 2, but here the issue surfaces as a crucial one in relation to the MD/ME arena. From the perspective of the university academics, the freedom with which to explore organizational and management issues from theoretical perspectives is challenged by participants' notions of what will be more immediately usable in their workplace contexts. Calls for learning to be grounded in the 'real world' are familiar to many management educators and the subject of much

discussion. The ‘real world’ as constructed here errs towards an idealized and unitary perspective of management and organization in which ‘learning’ is conceived of as an instrumental tool in the employment of the organization and its performative goals, as interpreted by the participants. The participants’ critique of the curriculum and of the tutors is borne of a judgement made by them as to what the boundaries of ‘relevance’ are and in straying from this the academics become the object of complaint and criticism.

The framing of the programme as management development and its location in a performative discourse heightens the tension concerning its role and purpose. Some commentators have argued that corporate MBAs often flounder on the basis that the curriculum is not sufficiently customized to employer needs. For example, Legge *et al* (2007) have suggested that they may be not much other than the presentation of management education *as* management development without any real attempts to address or integrate with organizational agendas.

This could be one interpretation of the tensions reported above but such an interpretation is underpinned by an assumption and acceptance that the proclivities of the work place have the legitimate prerogative in what counts as learning and knowledge.

Conversely, I would argue that in the MD/ME arena the boundaries of what constitutes learning and knowledge in the context of the workplace becomes subject to expectations and interpretations framed by the organization, which redraws them eradicably. Thus the borders of what is acceptable knowledge and learning in these contexts are contoured with an implicit and often explicit pull towards more instrumental orientations.

Disequilibrium and even dissonance can result from many forms of learning situations. Even returning to ‘formal’ study can give rise to feelings of discomfort (Griffith *et al* 2005). The demands of engaging with even normative management theory can jolt learners out of their comfort zones, prompting a search for the nearest scapegoat and criticisms of irrelevance. In these cases though the MD/ME arena is one in which ‘education’ is explicitly posed as management development in a context where even more conventional theorising might be considered too abstract, esoteric, not-of-the-real-world. This is especially so as participants look to the programme, and join in with it, in its *management*

development dimensions to fulfil a host of objectives not necessarily concerned with knowledge acquisition (or construction) or learning.

Thus, how much more accentuated is that difficulty when attempting to work with notions of ‘critical’ pedagogy in the workplace (Rigg and Trehan, 2008)? I would concur with Rigg and Trehan that the dynamics and complexities of expectations, as the examples from the empirical data exemplify, do indeed make it difficult.

8.5 Technicist expectations and the tensions for critical pedagogy

Holman (2000) has characterised management development along four dimensions one of which is ‘traditional vocationalism’ in which learning is geared to the improvement of managerial skills and abilities in the service of workplace improvements. This is similar to the technicist orientation where the recipients of development expect the scientific honing of their managerial skills rather than a challenge to their managerial world views. In the examples above, the tutors identify the difficulties of working with both ‘critical’ content and with more experiential pedagogy both of which were intended to challenge conventional ways of thinking about management and organization (Anthony, 1986; Holman, 2000; Reynolds, 1999) but which were interpreted as confrontational and irrelevant.

Power relationships that exist in the classroom are recast in relation to management education in the workplace as they are enmeshed with organizational hierarchies and power. Critical management writers have explored the extent to which theoretical and pedagogical ‘challenges’ to more technicist and traditional expectations have met with resistance and confusion (Fenwick, 2005; Perriton, 2007; Perriton and Reynolds 2004). But the classroom has its own power dynamics in which the roles between educator and learner are not mutually equal but hierarchical in the last instance, despite any conscious efforts to introduce more egalitarian practices (Reynolds, 1997; Elliott, 2008).

In the classroom, resistance can be worn down or can ‘be ridden out’ and confusion can be ameliorated with time and other supportive interventions. But in the workplace other

power dynamics are present. Participants bring their organizational roles into the ‘classroom’ and use their organizational power to assert their own values and understandings (as drawn from organizational and normative management development discourses) about what learning should be and what it should equip them with. The above examples point to the punitive possibilities when the confrontation goes beyond the boundaries of tolerance. Don felt pressurised to avoid the invocation of a ‘complaint’ and for the sake of being ‘seen to take the organizational agenda seriously’ Jan was asked to step down from his programme leader role. Don didn’t feel that Jan deserved that but felt under pressure to be seen to respond in the way that Glass Co wanted him to, thus reinforcing the perceptions that Jan had after all been ‘out-of-order’.

The contradiction between more liberal ideals (in which education is perceived to be a path to personal growth and enlightenment) and a performative instrumentalism is exposed in these power relationships. The threat of invoking the organization’s regulatory processes is perceived as a pressure which results in the censorship (‘constraint’) of particular pedagogical practices and discourses. This occurs not only as a result of external pressure but as a process of self censorship, *‘I guess we need to be careful’*, in response to the actual or the metaphorical presence of the organization as the *‘elephant in the room’*. In these observations we see a shift from understanding the organizational power in ‘sovereign’ terms to conceiving it in more relational ways, incorporating more postmodern understandings of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977; Barratt 2008).

Simultaneously, the reference to the programme being about the ‘real deal’ serves to reinforce the presence of the academy as legitimising the programme as an academic programme whilst manoeuvring it to adopt a more performative stance. The necessity for the programme to be seen as academically robust and to be so in organizationally acceptable terms *‘in the way that they want it’* creates a fuzzy boundary around roles in the arena creating tensions and ambiguities that have to be managed and temporarily resolved. The allusion to *‘stuff getting back’* from the classroom points to the restrictions on autonomy not just for the academics but also for the participants who are mindful of the organization watchfulness of their performance and loyalty. This suggests that the arena is one of surveillance, in mind of Foucault’s panopticon (Barratt, 2008) in which the actors are subjected to and subjugated by the organizational gaze and in which their respective

performances as ‘providers’ or ‘developing managers’ can and are judged. This is a point which can be further explored by turning attention to the politics of assessment.

The politics of assessment

Jan, Don and Thomas tell stories of conflicts of interests in ‘assessment’ episodes at Glass Co and East Council

“It’s not unusual for participants to start off (on their dissertations) with a fairly functional orientation and of course we encourage them to be a bit more critically reflective. Many of them do get into this – engage with a more critical stance- but it often means that they have to edit the final version for internal consumption. It’s an example of the way that participants juggle the demands of organizational requirements and the contradictions of development”

(Jan on Glass Co)

“The project was about a comparison of the UK and German ‘costings’ model and the issue had arisen because the German subsidiary was constantly undercutting the UK. The student group realized half way through the project that there was a lot of internal politicking going on with the German counterpart playing games, withholding information, playing dumb while really these were just tactics to disadvantage the UK team and strengthen his own position. The HR manager had his own analysis of the situation (communication problems) and pretty much rejected the groups more political analysis, he wanted to downgrade the mark because he didn’t think they had done a good job but we thought it was an excellent project with a really subtle analysis ”

(Don on Glass Co)

“There is always more than one audience, multiple audiences with different agendas so I feel I have to be much more alert to that and try to manage it”

(Thomas on East Council)

“When managers are involved in the assessment of students, who are also managers in the same organization, it can become difficult to see where academic assessment ends and performance management starts”

(Thomas on East Council)

The work-based projects in all but North Council, were seen as an important symbolic and actual demonstration that the programmes contributed to performative outcomes. Educationally they were a demonstration of the extent to which the programmes were a space in which theory and practice could be seen to be harnessed in productive ways for individuals as well as for the organization. Typically, participants worked together or individually, at different stages on the programme, to focus on work based issues, explore problems and generate options.

This concurs with many notions of situated and collaborative learning the underlying rationale for which is to adopt a reflective practitioner stance (Schon, 1983) and to “question taken for granted ideas, beliefs, values and behaviours” (Hodgson, 2009: 129). Even in an exclusively ‘educational setting’ the unequal distribution of power between learners and educators has been problematized (Reynolds 1997: Reynolds and Trehan, 2000; Elliott, 2008) but in the context of the MD/ME arena this is accentuated by the ‘presence’ of the organization and its ‘interest’ in the outcomes. The tensions between a technician and a more critically evaluative approach can be detected even at the inception of determining how a problem might be explored with more instrumental concerns foregrounded in the choice of topic and the means of investigation. How easy is it to engage in explorations of issues in ways that challenge existing norms and assumptions that address issues of power and politics? Not very; even if the participants overcome their own reticence to engage with issues of more critical enquiry the above stories indicate that they are not necessarily well received.

Heron (1982) has observed that a significant anomaly in considering learning at work is that of assessment which is the most political of all educational processes and is an arena in which issues of power are most at stake (cited in Hodgson 2009: 130). Interestingly, his observation that tutors exercise unilateral, intellectual authority in assessment processes is, to an extent, challenged by some of the experiences of the academics cited above. Whilst they assume the role as the final arbiter of evaluating the participants' outputs it is also evident that the presence and in some cases the input from other organizational stakeholders plays an influential, tempering role in the judgement and value of project work.

8.6 The 'practice turn' in learning: 'hiding' the relations of power?

Current debates in learning and 'relevance in learning' have drawn extensively on what might be termed an 'epistemological break' with traditional forms of knowledge. Situated learning theory, following on from Lave and Wenger (1991), has recast knowledge from that of an 'acquisition' perspective to that which is 'produced' by the learner in context. Such a perspective has found favour in many quarters. In the UK context workplace learning has emerged from the discourses of 'competence' and NVQs and the broader discourse of the 'learning movement' which blurs the distinction between formal and informal learning, challenging the traditional power of the academy in the determination of relevant knowledge and professing the inherent value of learning from work as the means by which 'relevance' can be assured.

Contemporary discourses can be seen to elevate workplace learning as more significant than that which is acquired through the transfer of expert knowledge. Mintzberg and Gosling (2006), for example, extol the virtues of MBA students working collaboratively on 'live' issues as much more developmental and educational than previously held forms of pedagogy. Even writers of a more normative persuasion in the US academy have come to accept that this paradigm of learning has some currency in the way that knowledge and learning might be reframed. See, for example, Wankel and DeFillippi (2002) and Arthur *et al* (2001).

Whilst the sometimes tentative, acceptance of the pedagogical and epistemological turn in what constitutes knowledge and learning can be detected in these accounts, this is not of itself disruptive of an overriding performative discourse. Indeed, situated learning theory, in its many applications (work based learning, informal learning in the workplace, project based learning) can be deeply ‘consensual’ in nature. Indeed, Contu and Willmott (2003) have argued that even though Lave and Wenger’s (1991) original work alluded to the importance of organizational power relations in learning, this has been systematically ignored in the vast majority of subsequent theorizing in individual and organizational learning:

“we argue that Lave and Wenger’s embryonic appreciation of power relations as media of learning is displaced by a managerial preoccupation with harnessing (reified) ‘communities of practice’ to the fulfilment of (reified) corporate objectives”

(Contu and Willmott, 2003: 283)

They infer that the performative aspects of situated learning discourse have been widely taken up but without attention to the extant organizational power relations in the organizational context. In this way work based learning, and the work based projects in the MD/ME arena can be understood to be infused with the power relations embedded in the day to day hierarchy, practices and processes of the everyday workings of the organization.

Hodgson has observed that learning and education are not uncoupled from issues of power and control that are present in all social situations. Moreover she asserts that if this is not acknowledged such inequalities can give rise to a dynamic of compliance (Hodgson 2009: 136, citing Mann 2005). The academic managers’ reflections on the project work above in the MD/ME arena are pertinent to this very point. Where participants, perceptions, investigations and outputs challenge organizational norms and values, exposing unpalatable ‘truths’ they, and the academics, can be subject to negative public scrutiny and censorship.

Mann (2005) has identified that the learning arena can be one in which there is frequently the pull of ‘naturalized norms and assumptions’ of what is acceptable communication,

what can be said and what must be suppressed, closing down the space for the ‘critique and questioning’ which is so frequently proffered as the rationale for ‘work-based’ learning, acting instead to reinforce cultural norms and inequalities, revealing the

“potentially ideological nature of particular communicative events within the educational context: the power of the other in shaping identity of the individual in the group; and a dynamic of compliance which may pull teachers and learners towards a surface form of harmony in order to get through the business of the class without too much damage to oneself”

(Mann 2005: 137, cited in Hodgson 2009: 137)

The contradictions of ‘juggling’ organizational and academy requirements produce a context in which participants and academics collude to determine strategies which are intended to *conceal* conflicting interests, sanitising what might be seen to be unacceptable and damaging.

Critique (in work-place projects) which surfaces the pluralistic and political aspects of organization and which do not comply with prevailing unitarist assumptions are, through the assessment process as well as the curriculum, a source of tension between the academics and organizational members whose worldviews and prevailing organizational discourses are challenged. I have observed elsewhere that the MD/ME arena is one of negotiation and contestation in which what constitutes appropriate knowledge and how it might be framed (Kellie 2004:684). I would add here that it is also one which is impinged upon by the organization’s relations of power which enters not only the ‘what’ of knowledge but the value which is put upon it.

These aspects of pedagogy raise specific issues about the visibility of participants and the evaluation of their performance and this gives rise to other considerations regarding their exposure in the MD/ME arena.

8.7 The MD/ME arena: participants step into the spotlight

Thomas, Dorothy and Don tells stories of participants' visibility and vulnerability

“There was that time in the pub at Christmas, when Ged (one of the participants) rather misread the receptiveness of the MD, and said ‘The thing is Tim – we’ve got a blame culture round here’. The MD turned on him pretty forcefully and said ‘No Ged – what we have is an accountability culture’ really pointedly and among much meaningful looks from the others, I think we all read it that Ged had over-stepped the mark”

(Thomas on Caravan Co)

“I can recall one instance when I was supervising X’s dissertation. She was under a lot of pressure generally but she just burst into tears. One thing was about how worried she was that she wouldn’t do as well as her colleague had and how this would affect perceptions of how good she is in her job and her chances. They are all under a lot of pressure and this can add to it”

(Dorothy on East Council)

“There was an occasion where I had this dissertation student, she was not making much progress on it, but also she was off sick with stress, we were still in contact though. Wanda (at East Council) kept pressing me about what was going on with her work, because they thought she (the student) was being evasive (with the personnel department) , but as far as I was concerned it was not up to me to be breaching her confidentiality. I was asked to get in touch with her and say what her circumstances were at the exam board, but in the event I didn’t do it – I felt I was being drawn into the loop of performance management but I decided to just keep quiet about what I knew of her situation”

(Dorothy on East Council)

“The usual ethical and contractual relationship is with the student but corporate programmes have the potential to redraw this boundary. I could say that there’s a sort of triad between us, the students and the organization. Someone’s career can be made or broken by casually labelling them or colluding with a particular perception someone is performing well or not. This can be informal but also formal – at Glass Co we have a Management Development Forum- and circumstances have sometimes arisen where participants’ progress and performance are discussed. There is a fine line here, the students are our primary clients but it’s hard to tell the organization (usually the HR Manager) that they don’t have a right to view peoples’ performance when, from their point of view, they are paying for that performance to be improved”

(Don on Glass Co)

In these stories, the MD/ME arena became one in which the participants become more prominent in the organizational gaze, subject to scrutiny and judgement not only on the basis of their academic performance but also in the way that they undertake their roles as managers. So far, in this chapter attention has been paid to the programmes political aspects in which power and control can be detected. It can be understood as a political arena in which organizational agendas can impinge on educational ones in their intrusion in the curriculum and the processes of assessment.

This analysis can be deepened by drawing on the concept of the ‘panopticon’ in which the subject is open to the scrutiny of others via a central organising mechanism. In Foucault’s (1977) analysis of ‘Discipline and Punish’, attention is drawn to what he calls the orders of ‘visibility and invisibility’. ‘Visibility’ refers to the public display of power which, in the modern era is less important than the ‘invisibility of power’ whereby its exercise or its ‘power effects’, are not visible but what is visible are those who are subject to it:

“Power functions, in part, by making people visible. It involves a complex ensemble of practices which individualise persons and which constitute those individuals within a field of visibility such that they can be observed”

(Crossley 1993: 401)

The MD/ME arena, it can be argued, is a site in which individuals become visible and subject to the examination and judgements not only of the academics, whose interest is primarily constituted in academic performance (or at least, it is not primarily concerned with performativity). Rather, individuals are rendered visible within the organization in terms of the way in which they perform as managers and employees. Performance on the programme can be taken as an indication of current capability and a predictor of career potential and future opportunities. Performance in the classroom discloses individuals' levels of 'expert' or 'tacit' knowledge of organizational and conceptual knowledge. Therefore, performance in assessment and performance in project work; all reveal aspects of organizational commitment, levels of knowledge, future potential and so on, which are through the arena, exposed to the public scrutiny of one's peers and superiors, whose judgements are impactful.

The observations above concerning the potential impact on individuals' careers or job security are indicative of the precarious exposure that this visibility might bring. The discussions about students' progress in the management development forums, the pressure felt by students needing to 'perform', are ways in which the power effects of the MD/ME arena can be seen through the way that individuals' learning, and its demonstration, and evaluation become absorbed in the day to day practices, lived experiences and power relations of the organization. Performance on the programme might be taken as an indication of general capability, a predictor of career potential and future opportunities.

There are other implications of the 'panopticon' as an aspect of disciplinary power. Foucault suggests that surveillance offers the means by which deviance is identified and subject to correction (Crossley, 1993: 402). Through examination of the subject, the nature of the deviance is surfaced and available to correction. The seemingly 'harmless' incident observed by Thomas above, recounting the incidence of Ged 'overstepping the mark' is an example of the way that, emboldened through the programme, and believing that his insights would be taken in the context of 'critique' rather than criticism, he 'disclosed' his views and exposed himself to the negative perceptions of the Managing Director. In this exposure he came to be seen as disloyal and troublesome, ultimately he

suffered the consequences for these altered perceptions of his managerial loyalty.⁶ We can see from Dorothy and Don’s stories that the prospect of being drawn into ‘performance management’ or being culpable regarding individuals career trajectories and life chances is an area of discomfort and one which they regard ambivalently, trying to manage it in covert ways, both accepting and resisting the discursive closure of performativity. Still though, the pervasiveness of the performative discourse is one which presents troubling ethical-political aspects, criss-crossed with another powerful discourse in the ‘client-relationship’. This is a discourse in which the marketization and commodification of education provides a ‘common sense’ rationale and an apparent legitimacy that recasts ‘interests’ in the MD/ME arena in favour of the ‘client’ organization.

Another consequence of the concept of the panoptic suggests that increasingly the process of surveillance continues even in the absence of the ‘technologies’ of performance management as subjects feel they are ‘being watched’. Crossley has argued that:

“this is the very basis of Panoptic power. It is the effect achieved through the realization that one is subject to the gaze”

(Crossley, 1993: 403).

It matters less who the watcher is, only that the subject is aware of the gaze and can be seen by the watcher. Dorothy’s example of the ‘stressed out student’ exemplifies this point. The awareness of her peers and managers judging her academic performance and her work performance becomes a source of anxiety and fear (Garrick and Clegg, 2001). Foucault (1977) refers to the subject’s “anxious awareness at being observed” and it is this power effect that has the potential to create the situation whereby the subject of the gaze subjects him or herself to it through the awareness of the possibility of being watched. Thus the gaze becomes internalised and the subject subjects him or herself to examination.

Elsewhere writers have observed the way that the routine practices of HR and HRD, appraisal, mentoring, and performance management have become increasingly the means

⁶ not long after the end of the programme Ged was one among several members of this cohort who were ‘let go’.

of examination of the subject specifically with regard to their ‘governmentality’ (Townley, 1994; Du Gay, 1996; Barrett 2008). Governmentality is concerned with the way in which linguistic, or discursive and ‘technological’ activities and procedures capture particular ways or styles of ordering, defining and regulating human activity thus constraining other ways of being. The MD/ME arena can be characterised as a ‘technology’ of learning in which certain ways of being are marginalized in favour of others with certain power effects. This way of thinking about the MD/ME arena is one which pays attention not so much as one in which we can observe the processes of social or ideological control as sovereign power, but rather it is characterised as a more subtle, yet more pervasive, process in which it becomes inscribed in the individual’s psyche as normalised practice.

8.8 Emerging themes: progressing a discussion of power

The issues which emerge from the stories of the academics in this chapter resonate around the notion of power; power in and through the curriculum, power in and through pedagogical practices in the MD/ME arena and more pervasive aspects of disciplinary power. The accounts here cannot convey the whole array of meanings, motives and values conveyed through the research process. They, in concert with the HR professionals identified with wider discourses of learning – commitments to personal development and individual growth, widening participation, emancipation through learning all featured in the ways that they made sense of the programmes. So too did more instrumental motives, interest in getting business, developing and sustaining clients and being seen to be professional despite the incommensurability of institutional systems and difficulties of sustaining relationships.

It is noteworthy that the university academic managers did not reject the rhetorical ‘corporate’ representations and espoused meanings attached to the MD/ME arena but rather deferred to them as necessary discourses to legitimate them as facilitating organizationally desired remits. In different degrees they subscribe to the organizations legitimacy in influencing the curriculum and aligning it to organizational objectives and in the demonstration of this through assessment and work-based projects.

At the same time they can be characterised as inhabiting an inherently different domain in their employment within the academy and in their educational, pedagogical and business school concerns. The tensions referred to in this chapter attest not only to ‘institutional’ blockages and incompatible systems but also to differently aligned values and belief systems. The need to ‘find people who can relate to business’ and being ‘pragmatic’ refers to structural and value based distinctions between the academy and the corporate worlds.

When Alison (North Council) confronted Russell with her discontent at the staffing of the programme ‘sending plumbers not electricians’ and when Jan was no longer deemed suitable to ‘programme lead’ at Glass Co and when Thomas has to persuade Robert (Caravan Co) round to his way of thinking about the programme curriculum; there is a strong sense that the academic managers have to negotiate around these issues because they represent challenges to the extent to which the academy is able to accommodate a management development agenda. But ‘negotiation’ implies conflicting interests and different constituencies and negotiation occurs within particular configurations of power.

At one level this conflict might be construed as one of ‘role conflict’ as academic managers try to manage the conflicting priorities of the academy and the organization. More significantly it might be understood as a deeper conflict of interests endemic in the MD/ME arena located in the context of ideological, epistemological and performative tensions. From an institutional perspective difficulties arising from getting the right people to deliver and ‘buy in’ to the idea of management development is problematic in a context where academic careers are built on research and possession of expert knowledge. This is not merely an issue of professional self interest, more significantly it signals an ideological drift between what is considered to be academic and what is considered to be organizationally relevant.

The tensions over the development of a mutually acceptable curriculum are one aspect of this and the need to be seen to align the programmes to corporate objectives and in some cases ‘competency frameworks’ are part of this. The case studies demonstrated that there is a degree of instrumentality in the design of the curriculum such that there was a publically observable connection between espoused corporate objectives and programme learning outcomes reinforced through programme documentation and in the design of the

elements of work-based learning. The foregrounding of organizational objectives and competencies as the primary discourse in the MD/ME arena acts as a constraint on aspects of pedagogy and we have seen above that this plays out in the classroom in terms of the ‘what’ of knowledge as well as the processes of learning.

The pedagogical implications of the MD/ME arena

Much of the critical literature in Critical Management Studies and Critical Management Education concerns the need to approach the development of individuals and managers in line with two concerns. Firstly to inculcate an awareness of the social, political and economic dimensions of management, organization(s) and society and secondly in so doing, engage individuals to be reflective and reflexive of their own agency, decisions and practice and the ethical-political implications of these in their local contexts. In part this is to be achieved through pedagogical approaches that challenge existing norms and assumptions that posit ‘management’ and ‘managerial prerogative’ as natural and inevitable social categories and processes in two main ways. First through engagement with ideas, literature and discourses not associated with mainstream ‘business and management’ orthodoxy and secondly through the deployment of learning processes that encourage reflective and reflexive practice. In these ways, it is argued that learners will come to see social phenomenon in new light as taken-for-granted assumptions, practices, discourses are reframed and individuals can assess their own and others location in power relations and ethical contexts.

The potential for reflection in learning to open up new ways of thinking has a long history and many advocates (Revans 1987, Raelin, 2007; Knights, 2008; Pedler, 2005; Rigg and Trehan 2008) and as noted earlier can be characterised as a more ‘radical’ approach to learning embracing the learners ‘real’ experience in the production, not just the acquisition of knowledge. Schon’s (1993, 1987) notion of the reflective practitioner and the practice of ‘reflection in action’ presents a very ‘here and now’ situated approach to learning, embracing the possibility that lived experience is central to making sense of the world in its messy complexity (Kolb, 1976, 1984; Kolb and Kolb, 2009). This possibility includes the reflection on the ‘constraining’ as well as the ‘productive’ nature of the workplace. It is not simply a reflection on how better to achieve efficiencies or how to achieve change

but rather to question the assumptions that lie hidden beneath the construction of reified corporate objectives and competencies. Reynolds (1998) has argued that in the MD/ME arena, reflection must embrace an element of social critique to surface the complexity and political aspect of management and organization.

“Management and management education, like any other social domain, accumulate taken-for granted beliefs and values, reflecting the view of the majority or those in power so pervasively that they become unquestioned ‘commonsense’. The fundamental task of critical reflection is to identify, question and if necessary change those assumptions. It is the process of making evaluations, often moral ones and not simply exercising judgements of a practical, technical nature.”

(Reynolds, 1998: 198)

Drawing on Critical Theory, this advances the view that critical reflection has emancipatory potential because it can be instrumental in freeing the individual from the ideological constraints of the present which reflect particular historical and social configurations of power and ‘interests’. Thus ‘critical reflection’ challenges the status quo and challenges existing regimes of truths, pulling us away from the:

“dogmatic embrace of our current convictions and threatens with utter scepticism what we thought were adamantine crystals of truth [which] dissolve like fine sand between our fingers”.

(Kolb, 1984: 108)

Learning and development, then have a radical potential, a possibility to reframe things and ‘see’ more clearly things as they really are, or at the very least, to see things in a different light. But this depends on the extent to which, in the learning arena, there is access to discursive resources which disrupt ‘commonsense’ views of the world and this has been shown to be problematic in the MD/ME arena (Kellie 2004: 685) and in the empirical material here. The stories in this chapter allude to the ‘constraints’ of the classroom when it is framed by a performative agenda.

The presence and gaze of the organization is known and understood by the academic managers as a universal ‘audience’, party to the classroom dynamics and to the processes of assessment. Participants’ reflecting on and theorizing experience is possible, in so far as it can be perceived to be relevant to a more instrumental orientation. This is not to say that the boundaries of what is ‘acceptable’ cannot be pushed. Many critical educators advocate the strategy of exercising ‘autonomy’ in the classroom to engage learners in more critical enquiry (Bolden, 2009; Valentine, 2007) but we have seen here how those boundaries might be redrawn in the MD/ME arena. Theoretical and conceptual orientations that point to functional, normative and ‘problem-solving’ orientations are deemed more acceptable than those that raise more political and ethical problems or which challenge the very assumptions on which management and organizations rest. The example of the ‘participants revolt’ over the introduction of more ‘critical’ theory and the challenge that resulted from adopting more experiential approaches attest not only to the organizational presence in the framing of the curriculum, but also to the way that performative agendas infiltrate participants’ expectations and interests so that they become its guardians and advocates and can act to ‘police’ the arena to ensure its compliance. Writers elsewhere have observed these tensions and contradictions in working ‘critically’ (Perriton and Reynolds, 2004).

Competing and conflicting discourse on ‘reflection’ in the workplace

Garrick and Clegg (2001) have observed that discourses on the role of reflection in workplace learning can cast it as emancipatory but in contemporary characterisations of workplace and work-based learning, the attribution of reflection can be suppressed as it is more prevalently tied to a ‘human capital perspective’ (Garrick and Clegg, 2001: 123). The priority here becomes the instrumental utility it can provide rather than the extent to which it can deepen the learners’ experience and understanding. The above stories of the differential ‘value’ attributed to the work-based projects in which the academics acknowledged the participants’ more political reading of the situation but which the HR manager thought to be insufficiently useful, attests to conflicting interests as to what should be valued and judged to be good. Adhering to notions of human capital foregrounds the learners’ performative possibilities:

“the productive capabilities of human beings that are acquired at some cost and that command a price in the labour market because they are useful in producing goods and services. Thinking in terms of the value as a return on investment in a cost to benefit ratio, education is seen as a major means for the organizations and individuals to increase the net worth of the worker’s skills and abilities”

(Marswick and Watkins, 1990: 205)

The potential conflict between ‘reflection to surface deeper learning’ as opposed to ‘reflection as a means to instrumental cost-saving ends’ draws attention to underlying tensions, purposes and beliefs in the MD/ME arena. Tensions, which Garrick and Clegg point out, become over-ridden by more performative agendas couched in the language of economic gains so that work-based projects are compelled towards observable outcomes and measurable gains:

“In this scenario, learning must be directly aligned with the requirements of one’s job or else it raises questions that are considered dubious (and even subversive). Learning outcomes in this context need to be measurable. To make sense of the world through formulating and asking critical questions can be made ‘out of bounds’. Such questions might include the following: ‘Why are we doing this project? Do we really want this? Will it affect people in adverse ways? . . . Such questions have traditionally characterized formal or ‘academic’ education approaches to the subject of work. Today, they tend to be ‘un-cool’ in the drive for performativity because they might be interruptive of the privileged work-based sense making, and such interruptions are ‘bad news’ for already stressed out knowledge workers”

(Garrick and Clegg 2001: 124)

In their formulation, the language of work-based learning and work-based projects is discursively entwined with an economic discourse in which those aspects of learning that can be seen to enable organizations becoming more competitive or market ‘savvy’ prevail whilst dimensions of learning which orientate to surface underlying conflicts are suppressed. Such characterisations ignore the hierarchies of structural and implicit power.

Moreover, such an orientation implies a reductionist performativity in which the practices of work are discursively constructed with not only material outcomes but also ‘acculturated’ employees (Casey, 1995: 78; Turnbull, 2001).

8.9 Theorising questions of power and control in the MD/ME arena

Questions of power and control; domination and constraint; have been at the centre of Critical Theory and labour process analysis and are pivotal to extending and developing a ‘critical sensitivity’ in which the task is to disrupt the discursive closure in dominant discourses (Alvesson and Deetz 2000: 178). It can be seen in this chapter as in the previous one that performativity is a powerful discourse in the MD/ME arena and one which becomes enmeshed and dominates other discourses such as those that might be concerned with ‘personal development and learning’ or ‘education as emancipation’ because organizations are political arenas. I have also pointed to the ways in which the academy can be understood as complicit in the labour process through the ways in which it became entangled with performance management and other systems and practices of HR, even though resistances and struggles can be detected. This suggests that the MD/ME arena can further be characterised as an aspect of power in the way that it contributes to its incumbents ‘consent’ in the labour process. The chapter now turns to theoretical consideration of the extent to which the MD/ME arena can be construed as one in which relations of domination can be detected.

The position of managers in orthodox labour process theory is problematic on the basis that they can be construed as ‘agents’ of capital working to find ways of intensifying the process of the extraction of surplus value to the detriment and exploitation of workers. On the other hand managers are workers too and in this they occupy an ambivalent position characterized by Wright as being located in a contradictory class location (1978; 1990). It has also been argued that the ambivalent, arbitrary and indeterminate category of ‘management’ (which is not regarded as problematic in a functionalise discourse but it is in the context of social constructionist, critical and dialogic discourses) is itself an aspect which enables a conceptualization of managers as equally open to manipulation,

exploitation and oppression (Willmott, 1997; Johnson & Duberley, 2000; Garrick and Clegg, 2001).

From this perspective managers too are vulnerable in the labour process, subject to fears and anxieties. This draws attention to the way in which the MD/ME arena is complicit in processes of subordination and control in which management development might be less benign than is perceived in ‘commonsense’ discourse (Finch-Lees *et al* 2005). This revision is in part to do with more postmodern conceptions of management and organization which reject notions of the essential self with fixed identity and which is also concerned with understanding power, not as a sovereign possession, but in more relational ways. The rejection of the ‘essential self’ in favour of a conception of the self which is discursively constructed has, somewhat ironically, put the question of subjectivity at the heart of critical theory and discussions of power and control. In this reformulation the self is not so much an autonomous agent able to seek emancipation through the abandonment of ‘false consciousness’ and deconstruction of ideology, rather the self is constructed in and through the discursive practices within which it is enmeshed. It is a ‘self’ which is emergent rather than fixed and one to which it is not possible to identify ‘real interests’ but rather to discern the power effects of different and competing discourses as they are lived out in the micro contexts of the social world.

The idea of power in labour process analysis is ‘purposive’ in that it is conceived to be exercised in the interests of securing ever more favourable conditions under which surplus value might be extracted. Understanding the processes of control is central to this because of the indeterminacy of labour (O’Doherty & Willmott 2009: 932). All kinds of tensions and disputes threaten to disrupt the realization of labour’s potential (Batestone, 1984) and this is as true of ‘managers’ as it is of workers. More contemporary developments in labour process analysis accept that the reification of management as an agent of capital is thus flawed and subjectivity and identity have come to the fore as key aspects in making sense of how ‘consent’ is produced and reproduced in the workplace, particularly where organizations are preoccupied with initiatives designed to shape, or influence the ‘subjectivity’ of employees (Rose, 1990; Townley, 1994) that is to ‘constrain it’ or ‘be productive’ of it. Giddens’ (1991) has observed that systems do not produce themselves

but rather they require the active agency of actors to produce and reproduce them in all their attendant (unequal) social relations.

8.10 Ideology control as identity regulation: the implications for the MD/ME arena

Identity work has become part of the vocabulary of labour process analysis paying attention to the means by which the compliant employee comes to be constructed not in terms of ‘ideology control’ but in terms of the way that ‘consent’ comes to be ‘manufactured’ (Burroway 1979; Jacques 1996) or ‘orchestrated’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 88; Valentin 2006: 23). When the workplace is conceptualised as an arena of competing and conflicting interests the question becomes one of how do some interests prevail over (dominate) others? Gramsci’s (1971) conception of hegemony is important here showing how, through the daily routines of ordinary ‘normalized’ discursive practice ‘commonsense’ meanings come to prevail over and suppress others. In the MD/ME arena the performative and human capital discourse *potentially* perform such roles. The stories from the academic managers and the exploration of the tensions around the curriculum and pedagogy attest to this. As we will see in the next chapter this is not a ‘totalizing’ aspect of the MD/ME arena as where control can be exercised ‘resistance’ is also a possibility.

It can be argued that contemporary forms of work and organization, attached to discourses of ‘knowledge workers’ in the ‘knowledge economies’ as discussed in Chapter 2, precipitate more sophisticated forms of control than previously. There is widespread acknowledgment that shifts in the nature, as well as the discourses of work have been accompanied by a rise in strategies which embrace more subtle approaches to the management of labour than that of ‘direct control’ as underpinned by the principles of ‘Taylorism’ (Karreman and Alvesson, 2004). The shift away from direct control towards ‘responsible autonomy’ is one which can be conceived as a trend away from the bureaucratic regulation of tasks and towards the regulation of behaviour (Thompson, 1993: 193). Behavioural strategies of control emphasize desirable norms such as teamwork, flexibility, commitment (Blyton and Turnbull, 1992; Morrell and Wilkinson 2002; Gallie

et al 2001) with a focus on *culture* as normative control as a means to improved organizational performance ‘variously defined’ (Robertson and Swan 2003: 863). This resonates strongly with the aspirations articulated in the MD/ME arenas here suggesting it to be an ideological one in which some forms of knowledge and learning are privileged over others and yet other forms are marginalised or inhibited.

Increasingly the workplace and its priorities have become more significant in ‘the naming of valid knowledge’ (Fenwick 2001: 8). Thus, the MD/ME arena becomes one in which social actors can be characterised as being shaped by workplace contingencies in adapting to requisite behaviours, in producing ‘relevant’ outputs, in demonstrations of corporate loyalty in public forums; in the classroom, through work-based projects and through discursive practices in and around the organization.

That the MD/ME arena functions as an aspect of the organization’s distribution of resources and, in some cases (especially East Council and Glass Co), symbolizes organizational ‘favour’ ‘reward’ and ‘future prospect’ it can serve to align behaviours not only of current actors in the arena but also future hopefuls as they compete to participate and demonstrate their worthiness to join. Robertson and Swan (2003) observe that conditions of ambiguity in regard to the promise or realization of organizational rewards can create conditions in which employees can appear to engage ‘willingly’ in conditions of their own control, through their own subscription (and contribution) to a corporate identity based on elitism (2003: 832-833).

Karreman and Alvesson (2004) have argued that such processes can be understood as an aspect of ‘socio-ideological control’ as an extension, rather than a replacement of structural bureaucratic features, enhancing the prospects of power rather than de-centering or replacing it.

“new forms of control rarely substitute existing forms, rather they emerge as a complementary control structure that is added to and supplements existing forms.”

(Karreman & Alvesson 2004: 249)

Using the language of ‘structures of control’ as here and ‘ideology control’ as above, tends to locate with more orthodox labour process discourse, but Karreman and Alvesson also

pay attention to the way in which such ‘cultural-ideological modes of control’ have implications not only for the control of behaviour but for ‘identity’ as “such modes use social identity and the corporatization of the self as a mode of managerial control” (Karreman and Alvesson, 2004:151).

Thus the ‘subjectivity’ of the individual as a unit of analysis comes to the fore and this has become more important in making sense of routine practices of power that otherwise appear as ‘natural’ and unproblematic. Jermier (1998) has observed that increasingly, control strategies are as likely to explore the language of ‘empowerment’ ‘teamwork’ and ‘development’ as they are that of ‘rules, discipline (in a modernist sense), and punishment’, moreover, many managerial innovations introduced with ‘humanist’ rhetoric can be better understood as control in disguise (Jermier,1998: 235). In this regard the MD/ME arena can be understood as one in which some discourses are privileged in the promulgation desirable knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, serving to symbolically, if not actually, reward those that are favoured and to marginalize others.

From ‘identity regulation’ to postmodern notions of power

Characterisations of the notion of control as ‘that which circumscribes *behaviour*’ or ‘that which socialises *attitudes and values*’ both hold steady with modernist conceptions of the ‘self’ as autonomous. O’Doherty has observed that many labour process analysts draw on a Foucauldian *discourse* to avoid the worst excesses of economic determinism whilst retaining an ontological adherence to modernist notions of agency and autonomy (O’Doherty 2001: 121). The influence of Foucault in unravelling the nefarious ways in which power can be infused in the social and organizational worlds draws attention to the limitations of what Jermier calls the ‘traditional, bifurcated interpretation of control’ residing in either the ‘structures’ of the workplace or as in the ‘centred’ autonomous individual (1998: 294). Rather it is in the interplay between the two that power resides suggesting power as relational rather than sovereign calling for a dialogic exploration of how it occurs. Considerations of power then in the MD/ME arena, can be understood through the ways in which the processes of the curriculum and knowledge / learning production can act to *constrain* certain ways of thinking and being.

Critical discourse concerns with ‘control’ emphasises what is constrained, restrained and excluded but power is also productive of discourses and of identity which is discursively shaped and produced. In this more productive version of power the role of language, and relational power press towards postmodern post-structuralist understandings of the MD/ME arena thus providing the rationale for the next chapter.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I began with an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of the academic managers, drawing attention to aspects of the MD/ME arenas in which there are conflicting values and meanings as to the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of learning. Some tensions pertain to institutional constraints in what constitutes the curriculum and the requirements of credentialed awards, these are not insignificant. However, I have chosen to foreground the more ideological and pedagogical issues in the MD/ME arenas that point to areas of consensus and most significantly, dissensus in expectations and interests between the academic managers, participants and other organization actors.

Learning is a political process in which what counts as valid knowledge is an aspect of power. Workplaces are political arenas with performative agendas and particular conceptions of knowledge underpinned by discourses of human capital and performativity that can act as a form of discursive closure.

In the previous chapter I observed that the academy becomes unwittingly complicit in workplace regimes of resource distribution and in its attendant inequalities. Here I have explored the way in which the tensions of ideology and pedagogy are more evidently near the surface as these stakeholders recount their struggles and constraints and significantly issues of ‘domination’ in negotiating and managing the arena as one in which all interests can ‘appear’ to be satisfied. Nevertheless, circumscriptions on the curriculum and pedagogical approach suppress aspects of learning which might err towards approaches other than performative ones.

The power of the organization is present not only through the expectations of senior managers but also through those of the participants. They make sense of the arena indexically, in ways framed as much, if not more, by organizational contingencies rather

than the stipulations of the academy, sometimes using workplace power to ensure its conformance to those contingencies.

Of course this formulation masks other power dynamics. Members of the academy do not have ‘no power’ in relation to the ‘organization’. The MD/ME arenas here are contested terrain in which the organizations seek legitimacy through the academy, for what is implemented under the umbrella of management development. At the same time, that the ‘contest’ occurs on a certain ‘terrain’ is not insignificant. The organizations are understood as ‘paying clients’, ‘purchasing and consuming a commodity’. The academy can be conceptualized according to this discourse, with all its concomitant implications as ‘training providers’ subject to the scrutiny and discipline that this implies. The academic managers acknowledge that it not only the participants’ performance that is in the public arena and organizational gaze but also their own.

This chapter deliberately moves away from a ‘constructivist’ discourse to emphasise issues of power in relation to the curriculum and pedagogy, thus deploying a critical discourse to surface issues of organizational power. the politics and the ‘hidden curriculum’ in the MD/ME arenas. This invokes a dissensus orientation towards the empirical material that draws attention to aspects of power that are both ‘sovereign’ and ‘relational’. The use of management development to achieve organizationally performative objectives and to socialise managers into certain ways of being, simultaneously appears as ‘common sense’ and an aspect of social or ideological control. In this the power to influence what is relevant knowledge and what should be learned is impinged upon by prevailing organizational discourses. Moreover, these have hegemonic tendencies in which the subjects subscribe to these discourses as legitimate and align themselves to their requirements. This implicates individuals’ subjectivity as part of the ‘power equation’ and it thus becomes necessary to draw on not only ‘critical’ discourse, but to incorporate a more ‘dialogic’ perspective in which language, power and subjectivity come to the fore. This is the focus of the next chapter.

9. Struggles in identity and subjectivity: the participants

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter revealed aspects of the empirical material that required a more critical exploration of the MD/ME arena. In so doing it paid attention to the ways in which it can be characterised as an arena of socialisation, inculcating requisite norms and behaviours and privileging performative proclivities. In so doing it viewed the MD/ME arena through the deployment of a ‘critical’ discourse in which power and ideology featured strongly.

This chapter now develops an analysis of power further by an exploration of the ways in which the MD/ME arena can be understood as discursive practice and how this has implications for subjectivity and identity. In so doing it addresses and contributes to the following research questions:

- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?
- What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

This chapter emphasises the concerns of a dialogic discourse in which language and identity are central (Mabey and Finch-Lees’ 2008: 23 and see chapter 3).

The chapter proceeds with an explanation of the need to go beyond a critique based on ‘ideology control’ and embrace a ‘*dialogic*’ discourse in an exploration of power and its effects (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 88). This is followed by a discussion of ‘disciplinary power’ as a main focus of dialogic discourse before introducing the participants. It continues with a discussion of the experiences and perceptions of the participants in relation to aspects of disciplinary power. These are presented, as in the previous chapter, with stories collected from across the case study organizations and themed. Each theme is accompanied with an analytical narrative. First however I outline the theoretical concerns of a dialogic discourse.

9.2 Going beyond ideology control

The previous chapter characterised the MD/ME arena as one in which there is a complex multiplicity of interests. It was also suggested that the MD/ME arena becomes embroiled with the dominant interests of the organization. From a functionalist and even a constructivist perspective this can be understood not only as ‘common sense’ but also as properly the purpose and *raison d’être* of management development. Thus erring towards a ‘consensus’ discourse of organization and management. Conversely, from within critical discourse this is highly problematic as the discourses of performativity and investment in human capital, disguise hidden relations of power whereby some interests are served and by implication, others are subjugated.

The concept of ‘ideology control’ may, in contemporary analyses of power appear to be crude suggesting that individuals in the ‘MD/ME’ arena to be ‘cultural dopes’ (Johnson and Duberley, 2000) and promulgating what Wrong (1961) called ‘The Over Socialized Conception of Man’. However Critical Theory (CT), as advanced by the Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer 1987; Horkheimer, 1972; Marcuse, 1964; Habermas, 1984), drew attention to the ways in which forms of control could be conceptualized simultaneously as both invidious and sophisticated through the way in which power could be detected not as a sovereign possession but through residing in social processes and practices which frame human hopes, identities and the *sense of self*, thus fore-grounding subjectivity as an arena of control and subjugation:

“The distinguishing feature of advanced industrial society is its effective suffocation of those needs which demand liberation – while it sustains and absolves the destructive power and repressive function of the affluent society. Here the social controls exact the overwhelming need for the production and consumption of waste; the need for stupefying work were it is no longer a real necessity: the need for modern modes of relaxation which soothe and prolong this stupefaction; the need for maintaining such deceptive liberties as free competition at administered prices, a free press which censors itself, free choice between brands and gadgets”

(Marcuse 1964: 5)

In this critique of consumerism Marcuse makes the point that social control occurs not only by what is ‘done to’ individuals but through the social processes that contrive to shape desires and wants, the assimilation of human ‘needs’ into those which serve the dominant interests in society. In this way the ‘hegemonic’ tendency of power is such that ‘Man’s wants themselves may be a product of a system which works against their interests’ (Lukes, 1974: 34) and it is the very ordinariness of social practice that masks the relations of domination. Alvesson & Deetz have observed that hegemony in the workplace is:

“Supported by economic arrangements enforced by contracts and reward systems, cultural arrangements and enforced by advocacy of specific values and visions, and command arrangements enforced by rules and policies”

(Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 87)

In the light of this and the discussion in the previous chapter it is certainly possible to conceptualize the MD/ME arena as a hegemonic device in the reinforcement of organizational values (corporate objectives and competencies) and in its contribution to reward systems and cultural norms which serve dominant interests and suppress or marginalize others.

This might have been especially so at East Council and Glass Co where participants have been shown to be much more likely to subscribe to the espoused purposes and benefits of the programme, than in either Caravan Co and North Council. Though even in these latter cases it has been shown that the MD/ME arena provided a means through which corporate values were espoused even though the participants thought them ambiguous as in Caravan Co or disbelieved them as in North Council.

Hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) however, does not necessarily imply discursive closure as a totalizing prospect rather it suggests domination *and struggle or resistance* over meanings, language and action. Whilst traditionally associated with a Marxist heritage and a realist ontology in the sense that there are ‘false consciousnesses’ to overcome and ‘false ideologies’ to see through, the power of the concept flows from the way that it highlights the indeterminacy of meaning. This emphasises that ‘meaning’ occurs according to

prevailing social relations, socially constructed but historically situated and available to contestation. In these ways language, discourse and for Habermas (1964) ‘communication’, become central to the analysis of any social phenomenon prompting a ‘linguistic turn’ in management theory (Grey and Willmott, 2005).

A focus on language and meaning however is associated with subjectivist ontology, whereas a focus on power and emancipation are predicated in a realist ontology. The concerns of critical theory generally (and Critical Theory as defined by the Frankfurt School) together with postmodernist and post-structuralist discourse coalesce on the ‘problem’ of power and subjugation but they depart on the ‘problem’ of freedom or emancipation from the effects of power. Critical theory’s purpose is the search for a more enlightened way of being, whereas postmodernist and post-structuralist discourse poses the relativistic and nihilistic possibility that the displacement of one regime of truth (with its dominating effects) can only be replaced by another (with alternate dominating effects). The significance of this construction is the extent to which the possibilities for ‘freedom and emancipation’ can only therefore be understood as ‘utopian’ unattainable and naive.

How can this conundrum be addressed so that power asymmetries can be explored without assuming they emanate from inherent structural antagonisms as associated with (early) Marxism and all its attendant baggage? That is, structure/agency dualisms and a priori givens (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 128).

Alvesson and Deetz propose the term ‘*dialogic*’ to embrace both critical theory (CT) as descended from the Frankfurt School together with its concern with asymmetries of power *and* postmodernist, post-structuralist perspectives together with their concerns with the constitutive role of language (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000: 35). Thus ‘dialogic’ discourses negotiate the boundaries and the permeabilities between differing ontological, epistemological and theoretical positions, drawing on aspects of each, retaining an emphasis on the one hand of ‘language’ and on the other hand on ‘asymmetrical power relations’. Asymmetries of power that, when detected, offer possibilities for more ethical social action.

‘Dialogic’ discourse therefore draws attention to the socially constructed nature of people and reality and to the significance of language as central to the production and

reproduction of social life, identity and meaning, thereby eschewing the grand narratives of for example, Marxism or functionalism. Instead it emphasises knowledge / power relationships and the way that language is productive as well as restrictive of meanings and reality.

Simultaneously ‘dialogic’ discourse pays attention to aspects of domination, not in relation to the way that one class dominates another, but in relation to how the power effects of language and discourse play out in more localized contexts and the way that identity and subjectivity is not fixed but emergent, discursively produced and reproduced, ‘becoming’ rather than conclusively ‘achieved’. The implication of this for management development theorising is concerned with that of disciplinary power and the way that language is constitutive of meaning. This now elaborated as a precursor to introducing the participants and the issues raised by the empirical material.

9.3 Disciplinary power: the MD/ME arena as discursive practice

Deetz has argued that power, discursive practice and conflict suppression ‘requires a relatively new conception of political processes of everyday life’ (Deetz 2003: 23) and that increasingly the political arena is precisely to do with the content of the subjective world. Thus what is thought of as ‘identity’ is contested ground. The conceptual shift in critical theory from examining ‘exploitation’ as concerned with objective conditions of oppression to examining the systems which develop the subject’s role in ‘producing and reproducing’ domination is significant. Indeed Deetz (2003: 36) argues that the invocation of sovereign power or the “explicit and unilateral display of authority” in fact denotes the *breakdown* of power relations much more that it indicates the *presence* of power.

Power then in dialogic discourse involves invisible relations of domination which are socially and historically produced and emergent; and language and discursive practices are *constitutive* of the social world as it is experienced and given meaning. Deetz (2003) has observed that:

“modern human resources management (HRM) is clearly in the culture and meaning business, (as) its focus is on the production of a specific type of human being with specific self conceptions and feelings. Equally importantly much of the work promotes concepts of the person that makes critical investigation of his or her experience less likely and seeming necessary. The very notions of free contract, social relations and agency as well as personal identity as a manager, worker or secretary that are core to HRM can be seen as corporate productions and reproductions needing investigation”

(Jacques, 1996, cited in Deetz, 2003: 24)

This characterisation of HRM, of which the MD/ME arena is very definitely a part, locates it as a discursive practice implicated in power relations of the organization. Moreover, there are some specific assumptions underpinning HRM discourse which conceal the very power interests which it serves to perpetuate. Drawing on the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), Deetz argues that there are three misconceptions about the nature of individuals that HRM colludes in; firstly the illusion of the free autonomous individual freely subordinating him or herself in the work contract; secondly the illusion of the ‘hope’ of a well integrated, conflict free, consensual, democratic work environment; and thirdly, the illusion that individual is constructed as the fundamental site of meaning (as an autonomous freely choosing agent) thereby disguising the historical and social production of specific (unequal and power-laden) social relations. These misconceptions in Deetz’s persuasive formulation are ‘imaginary’, constructed as real within particular systems of domination. Thus, organizational processes organized as HRM, support and reproduce those ‘imaginary’ illusions, thereby rendering HRM discursive practice as inherently ideological or as an aspect of ‘distorted communication’ (Habermas, 1984).

The discursive practice of HRM, and its increasing legitimacy as an aspect of managing organizations can be understood in relation to processes which trace a shift from ‘sovereign’ to ‘disciplinary’ power both historically and conceptually. Clegg has argued that Foucault’s re-conceptualization of power is one which conclusively breaks with previously more ‘mechanistic’ and ‘sovereign’ conceptions and that the formulation of ‘disciplinary power’ as the means by which power can be understood is his distinctive

contribution (Clegg, 1998: 32). What this pays attention to is the way that power can be conceptualized as a ‘capillary form of power’ which reaches into the ‘very grain of individuals’ a ‘synaptic regime of power, a regime of its exercise *within* the social body, rather than from *above it*’ (Foucault, 1980: 39, original emphasis, cited from Clegg, 1998: 31). In this conceptualization power is not exercised by one over another, but rather it is inherent in the routine practices of daily life. The enactment of these multifarious discursive practices perpetuates (reproduces) the relations of power they embrace. Disciplinary power is therefore, productive and constitutive not merely restrictive. It exists in the rules and administrative regimes. McKinlay and Starkey have argued that “It is at its most potent and efficient when it operates through administrative rules rather than *force majeure*” (1998: 5)

Disciplinary power is distinctive because it is the expression of the relationship between power and knowledge and these two aspects are fundamentally bound up with identity production, constraint and reproduction, which is why the implications of HRM in perpetuating particular ‘imaginary’ notions of ‘being human’ is so significant. Power and knowledge are interrelated in the respect that:

“there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”

(Foucault 1983: 212)

The constitutive role of language

Foucauldian notions of the subject posit the centrality of language in the constitution of meaning and identity; we constitute ourselves through language; a myriad of discursive practices; identity is not fixed but “contingent, provisional and always in process”; and importantly, subject to discursive practices that have historical specificity (Clegg 1998: 29), what it is to be ‘a woman’ or ‘a manager’ is historical and socially located. In other words identity is contingent and contested in relation to the discursive practices in which it is embroiled and in which some discourses prevail over others. Disciplinary power suggests that identity is constituted in and through the texts, narratives, talk, argumentation

and so on to which it is exposed. The discursive practices associated with HRM and HRD are implicated in this in the way that certain ways of thinking about the subject become ascendant. Individuals come to know themselves or accomplish identity in linguistic categories of the social and psychological discourses which take on a quasi-scientific quality as they become crystallised as competencies, learning outcomes and so on (Covaeski et al 1998: 295). The accomplishment of identity includes the adherence to particular conventions, rules and language that in the MD/ME arena we can characterize as the “discourse of management” (Mabey and Finch-Lees 2008: 107).

The characterisation of the MD/ME arena as a site of discursive practice or even, a possible site of discursive closure is important here. HRM/HRD knowledge and practice provides the vocabulary with which to distinguish and discriminate between individuals, to categorise them as effective or not, performing or not and worthy or not. This occurs in relation to prevailing organizational discourses generally circulating on that of performativity, and to use those judgements as a basis for the allocation of rewards (and punishments) and life chances. Being subject to, and subjugated by, the organizational gaze becomes possible through those practices which have become possible through the normalized language of the HR profession and there are several aspects of this in the MD/ME arena that can be explored by paying attention to the voices of the participants and also drawing on aspects of the empirical material raised in the preceding chapters. Before moving to this though it is pertinent to introduce the relevance of Foucault’s (1979) concept of panoptic power, for this is a powerful analytical tool through which to explore the participants’ accounts.

Panoptic power

Central to a discussion of panoptic power is the notion of surveillance. Originally embraced in the physicality of architectural design of ‘total’ institutions such as prisons and asylums (McKinley & Starkey 1998: 19), surveillance as a means of power is increasingly treated in Foucault’s (and now many others’ work) as concerned with the presence of power through the prospect, rather than actuality, of the ‘gaze’. The subjects’ awareness of the possibility of being observed becomes the means by which they survey themselves, subjecting themselves to normalized discursive practices and judging

themselves accordingly. Covaleski *et al* (1998) have argued that Foucault's (1979) notion of disciplinary power is based on the 'action of the norm' which stipulates the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, action and thought. It is against these norms that individuals judge themselves, and are judged in the MD/ME arena.

Having outlined the theoretical concerns of this chapter and explained the assumptions within a dialogic discourse I now turn to my last set of stakeholders, the participants, as a precursor to showing how their experiences relate to these specific concerns.

9.4 Introducing the participants

Altogether there are forty two participants in this data set, too many to convey each individual's profile. However it seems pertinent to say something about them in general, to give a rather more rounded view of them than just 'participant X from abc company'. The participants in the research are representative of the wider population of participants on these programmes in that they were all between the ages of twenty five to fifty eight. They can be characterised in job-terms as being in higher supervisor / team-leader roles at the lower end and middle-senior manager level at the upper end though there were no members of the Senior Management Teams of the case study organizations on these MD/ME programmes. The majority profile would be a 'mid thirties, middle manager, white and male'. Of the forty two participants, ten are women. There are no black or ethnic minority respondents in the research or in the wider population of their specific cohorts at the time of data collection. In East Council the numbers of women and men were five out of twelve respectively; North Council, four out of ten; Glass Co one women out of ten and in Caravan Co there were no women on the programme, in fact no women managers and not many women employees.

With the exception of Caravan Co they had put themselves forward unambiguously voluntarily through their organizations' appraisal processes and had usually had to be persistent and political to get sponsored for a place. They were pleased to have been on the programme and proud of their achievements. As might be expected, they all have

responsible demanding jobs, busy lives and family responsibilities and obligations. Many participants had first degrees or professional qualifications in functional disciplines (e.g. engineering, design, social work) or higher level NVQs (social care, printing, construction).

For some participants the programme represented a shift from vocational specialism to more general management qualifications, mirroring their career trajectory. For others, the programme and qualification represented the opportunity to transcend a specific vocational specialism and to move into more generic management roles. For many participants the programme represented an important opportunity to crystallize their experience in ways that have symbolic meaning (DMS, MBA) both inside and outside of their specific organizations which was an important factor for them. A small minority had postgraduate level qualifications in functional disciplines (more typically, participants from the public sector organizations). For the vast majority however the programme represented an opportunity that they wouldn't otherwise have had and to acquire qualifications they wouldn't have dreamed of. They were glad of it. They worked hard at being serious students. They were thoughtful, lively, interesting, interested and demanding: a joy to work with.

Whilst this generalises the participants' profiles it must also be recalled that their organizational contexts were distinctly different. Irrespective of this some common themes emerge from the data relating to the theoretical concerns identified in the preceding section of this chapter. It is to this which I now turn.

9.5 The MD/ME arena: 'surveillance and calculation'

Stories from East Council, North Council and Glass Co

"I felt a bit vulnerable in my job because I have worked my way up but don't have the qualifications to back up my experience and there's talk that the council is saying that every manager has to have a qualification"

(Linda - North Council)

“To be frank its really been about protecting myself from the ‘contracting out’ business, my service is bound to go, if I am to stand a chance of keeping my job, I’ve got to measure up well to the competition”

(Brian - East Council)

“I put myself on it because two of my team had done it and I thought, ‘I can’t be managing people who have management training when I don’t, I wouldn’t be credible’ “

(Sheila - East Council)

“The course is just about keeping my options open, so often you are judged by your qualifications – that’s what this authority is geared to ‘qualifications’ whether or not you can do the job, you need the qualification just to apply”

(Andrea - North Council)

“Getting on this course and getting this qualification, it’s the way you get on here, it marks you off from the others it’s how you get valued and promoted”

(Harry - Glass Co)

These observations from the participants emphasise that they are keenly aware of themselves as subject to calculable processes in their respective organizations. In the previous chapter I identified the MD/ME arena as one in which social actors become more visible and potentially more vulnerable to the organizational gaze. The above participants’ observations reinforce this in the extent that there is an implied organizational ‘other’ ascribing a value to them with consequences that could be to their advantage or detriment.

One important aspect of disciplinary power regarding the ‘action of the norm’ is that of its concomitant ‘penalty’ and Foucault (1977: 182) elaborates this in relation to four dimensions. Firstly, normalization situates individuals in the wider context of ‘ordering and arranging’ in accordance with the norm. Secondly, it implies optimum and minimum standards – thereby facilitating the differentiation and comparison of individuals. Thirdly, this advances the prospect of hierarchically differentiating between them through the ascription of values. Lastly, the process of evaluation entices ‘adjustments and correction’,

“targeting them for programmes of normalization” (cited in Covaleski et al 1998: 295). I will return to the point about ‘correction’ shortly but for the moment it is worth considering further the effect of calculability for the participants.

It is evident from the above, that participants are aware of their respective organizations’ processes of measuring and calculating them and that the MD/ME arena is one in which they aspire to optimize their position in relation to the ‘norm’. Academic assessments and qualification are complicit in the processes of rendering them visible and calculable through formal assessments, projects and group work. Clegg has rightly noted the potency of “the files, the repository of all that is formally recorded and known about concerning an agent or agency” as a device in the calculability of the subject (Clegg, 1998: 39). Nevertheless, the organizational hierarchies, the participants’ location in it, the means of measurement (formal academic assessments and qualification) to achieve job security or the prospects of promotion appear to them as ‘naturalized’ processes of the organization.

That is not to say that they are unaware of the organizational issues of power. The expressions of vulnerability and insecurity are testimony to this, but they learn to evaluate themselves in the same ways that the organization and the academy is complicit in rendering them visible and calculable. The ‘qualification’ and ‘assessment’ aspects of the MD/ME arena become enmeshed in this political equation as assessment becomes a measure of performance.

Participants’ progress on the programme, whilst subject to formal confidentiality is nevertheless available to informal public scrutiny. Formal confidentiality was maintained at all times with regard to examination board procedures but behind the scenes casual conversations took place between academic managers and other organizational members about progress and participants were encouraged to discuss how things were going. Assignment marks as well as project performance becomes available to public scrutiny, evaluation and calculation. Thus, in informal ways participants’ academic progress becomes part of the organization’s general discussions of their organizational worth and informs systems of appraisal and reward allocation.

The ‘*achievement of qualification*’ is a short phrase but has a long meaningful tail; the politics and power of assessment were raised in the previous chapter but here, from a more

dialogic perspective we can consider the way in which the assessment process is party to the inculcation of a particular ‘self’; one that is normalized within the organization through the adoption of a curriculum which emphasises, to a greater or lesser extent, particular competencies, organizational objectives, preferred ways of being and thinking according to local contingencies.

‘Obedience’ is an effect of surveillance, and central to an analysis of power. MD/ME arenas can be conceptualized as one in which individuals become subject to the ‘action of the norm’ through the discursive closure on performative inclinations. The dual achievement of qualification on the one hand and de-facto demonstration of organizational and managerial competence on the other become the participants’ measure of themselves as well as the organizations means of rendering them calculable. Self-surveillance and self evaluation in relation to the organizational norms could be argued to be a more complete form of power:

“Thus subjects learn to survey themselves, to be reflexively self-regarding as if under the ever present and watchful eye of the surveillance”.

(Clegg, 1998: 35)

The participants’ subscription to the ‘action of the norm’ is emergent rather than complete. The underlying allusions to organizational power and their vulnerability in it, does not conform to the notion that they have altogether ‘idealized’ notions of the ‘conflict free’, consensual work place as suggested in HR’s underlying assumptions. Rather, job security and safety as well as career advancement are reasons for accepting the ‘rules of the game’ including the rules by which they are rendered calculable, measurable and valuable.

“Normative control seeps into the unspoken codes of the workplace, the dress code, acceptable behaviour towards colleagues and clients and so forth....there is a more or less explicit trade-off between self-subordination inherent in normative control and the job security and personal development opportunities open to them”

(McKinlay & Starkey 1998: 11)

It is interesting that McKinley & Starkey should present this as a conscious ‘trade off’. Posing it in this way suggests that the norms, definitions, discourses are conformed with, in recognition of ‘suppressed’ interests in which what is at ‘stake’ for the participants is access to resources and rewards in pursuance of a decent material life. As Przeworski (1980) and du Gay (1996) have argued, “the desire to live well and to engage in a consumption-based society provides the pressure towards active consenting participation in the corporate system” (cited from Deetz 2003: 27). Such a view is reinforced by the participants’ observations of surveillance as a restraining character in the MD/ME arena.

9.6 Restraint and suppression in the MD/ME arena

Stories from East Council, North Council, Glass Co and Caravan Co

“The corporate agenda is good, I believe in it, but on the programme there is a sort of underlying cynicism because the trainers and us, we have to be ‘on message’ and there is a real tension because if you are critical it doesn’t go down well, it’s like you have to come up with a solution if you say anything negative so it’s hard to have a proper discussion. There is defensiveness around and so if someone does say critical things it’s not like ‘Let’s all think about that’. There is very much more a sort of ‘disciplinary feel’ to it”.

(Andy - East Council)

“I was a bit wary at times, like being careful not to be too critical, and wondering who exactly would read what was in my assignments, who else was in the classroom and what would be the perceptions of me, its not just about the politics but the last thing I need is other people thinking I am organizationally naive”

(Dermot – North Council)

“It’s a bit freaky, saying things that they might not want to hear, you might sound critical, and though they say the point of it is to challenge and for SMT [Senior Management Team] to get honest feedback, it’s hard to give it when you feel vulnerable. It does give an ‘edge’ to it, when you are doing assignments and things, and maybe you are pointing a critical finger. They say ‘be honest’ but how honest can you be?”

(Stewart – East Council)

“It came clear that our project didn’t find the things they wanted to hear so we got a bit of a slating for that, there are limits on what you can say, there’s a line that’s not to be crossed but it’s not always evident where that is because the tutors encourage us to get stuck in”

(Daniel – Glass Co)

*“It would be good to think that we were all just ‘learners’ but there is an interface between us and the organization. Occasionally things have been said in the sessions, and they have got back to the ‘Management’, and it’s been twisted and got picked up as a big issue, when actually it wasn’t a big issue at all at the time. But the fact that it was reported back is a **big** issue and it has repercussions for whether or not we are seen as positive or not. It can be career limiting as well as enhancing but it is something to manage”*

(Max – Glass Co)

“There was often an atmosphere of protecting your own area and not being seen as the weak link, it was important you know, in the classroom and in the project work to give a good account of yourself and your department, so that you couldn’t just be picked off later”

(Gerald – Caravan Co)

In these examples, there is much to point to the MD/ME arena as one in which the participants demonstrate a political understanding of it as one which is embroiled in the

power relations of the organization. Their visibility and openness to scrutiny is hardly lost on them with the references to a '*disciplinary feel*'; '*being wary*'; '*how honest can you be*'; '*there's a line not to be crossed*'; '*things getting back*'; '*protecting your own area*'. In functionalist discourse such observations could be understood in the extent to which these more political aspects of the arena constitute barriers to learning and learning – transfer, but in the deployment of dialogic discourse, these effects are inevitable in the accomplishment of specific managerial identities. The 'action of the norm' is precisely to achieve the conformance within prescribed, if ambiguous, boundaries and clearly the participants are 'learning' where these are; a process which is intensified through the very ambiguities of those boundaries, which vary according to organizational contingencies and cultural norms.

For example, the competitive cultures at Caravan Co and at Glass Co contrive to inculcate a stance of defensiveness within participants who perceive the potential threat of not being seen as 'organizationally loyal' or the damaging consequences for one's department as being seen as weak in an overtly 'macho' culture. Even in the relatively more benign (overtly, not necessarily covertly) contexts of East Council and North Council, participants there too are similarly aware of the power of surveillance and of the requirement of obedience.

Self surveillance is more complete than being externally observed as the subject is never sure "who might use what against him or her or when a statement might come back to cause their own demise" (Deetz, 2003: 37). The participants' observations above demonstrate an awareness of the organization's gaze and the implications of it for themselves. Self-surveillance and self-censorship as a consequence of the organizational 'gaze' renders the subject complicit in the production and reproduction of the social relations of power, in this way it could be said that the subject "assumes the responsibility of power...and becomes the principle of his (sic) own subjugation" (Foucault, 1977: 202-203). In this way the mechanisms of surveillance can be understood as part of the array of 'disciplinary technologies' of the self that "enable the meticulous control of the body" (Foucault, 1977: 137).

Covaleski *et al* (1998: 298) make an analytical distinction between *disciplinary technologies* and *technologies of the self* when considering the accomplishment of identity. The former can be understood as those technologies that define identity from ‘the outside in’ for which they give the example of ‘categories’ and language that are subsequently internalized (competencies, team roles, psycho-assessment categories such as ‘team worker’ or ‘shaper’ etc). The latter can be understood by the way that these very same categories are subscribed to *and* inscribed in the subject’s identity. Although this is an analytical distinction in that the categories (technologies) of for example, competence, learning outcomes, organizational strategy or whatever, are *both* the means of acculturation (from the outside) *and* the means of identity constitution (from the inside), the distinction is helpful in revealing the extent to which such regimes of power are embodied. That is to emphasise the extent to which they are *both* the *active* conformance for reasons of suppressed interests, *and* the unconscious but embodied enactments of obedience. We can explore this further in considering more explicitly respondents’ accounts of what they have learned about becoming better managers.

9.7 Identity and ‘correction’ - ‘becoming’ a managerial identity

Stories from Caravan Co, East Council and Glass Co

“I think the key things are about personal development, team-working and communication, not really my cup of tea (coming from an engineering background) but those were the most important things in the end, the ‘soft’ stuff”.

(Tim - Caravan Co)

“When I got this job I didn’t really know what would be expected, but all that we have done on ‘Striding Ahead’ I know now what this organization is about, where we are going and what we should be doing. I know more even than my own boss who is not so good with the big picture (being rooted in the traditional library service) he doesn’t know how to

move things on, but, and the course has really been helpful in this, we should be more strategic, especially about promoting the service”.

(Francine - East Council)

“Really, its been a revelation getting to know how the business works, but more than that, its about what they want from me as a manager, how I need to be to get on and get up the ladder, that’s what’s really useful, and I have changed a lot through doing it, no doubt about that!”

(Kevin – Glass Co)

“They (the team) are glad to be ‘in the know’. Two years ago the team knew nothing about it (‘Striding Ahead’), they just kept their heads down and now they have all benefitted because of the wider understanding we have of Striding Ahead. It’s not just about being committed to achieving targets but being committed to why those targets are important. Regarding the impact on the team, maybe its variable, I come back from the course with all these ideas about what we should be doing to improve the service, we need proactive people and I have become much more demanding of them. They would say I am more effective but not as nice!”

(Anna – East Council)

As we have seen previously in Chapter 6 the majority of respondents identify their learning in terms of personal development, better organizational knowledge and practice and accept these in relation to a performative agenda of organizational performance. This, I would argue, is not only on the basis of a ‘trade off’ (McKinlay & Starkey, 1998) but in relation to their emergent subjectivities, with regard to their identities as ‘managers’; learning to become what the organization wants (or says it wants) them to become, subscribing not only to the requisite behaviours but in some cases to the underlying reasons for them i.e. ‘*why those targets are important*’. *(Anna – East Council)*

What might be understood from a functionalist perspective as the acquisition of skills and qualities defined as ‘personal development’, might in the context of a dialogic discourse be reformulated as ‘corrective’ as the participants learn to speak of themselves and account

for themselves in “the terms made available by the new disciplinary practices” (Clegg 1998: 35). This is reinforced by the many participant statements to the effect that they have now ‘*learned the language of management*’ and that they ‘*know how to join the conversation*’, using the ‘*language of strategy*’ and so on. Clegg has observed that power works not by silencing the subject but by giving the subject ‘voice’ and that:

“Power, rather than occasionally imposing itself on the subjectivity of its subjects, now in its actual exercise, must be ever constitutive of the subjectivity of the agents’ power relations (Minson, 1986: 113-114). Power *subjects* and now, in its disciplinary mode *subjectifies*

(Clegg, 1989: 35).

In the MD/ME arena, subjectification can be seen to operate through the calculability of individuals in that the discourses surrounding assessment and qualification construct the subject to “comparative scalar measures and related forms of training and correction” (Minson 1986: 13). The accomplishment of ‘personal development’ and ‘learning’ can be seen as discursive practice complicit in discursive closure as the individual is inscribed in technologies of the self in such ways that they may come to define themselves in relation to the organizational ‘reality’ and see themselves in accordance with organizational norms (Covaleski *et al* 1998: 303).

Moreover, Covaleski *et al* (1998: 303), following Townley (1994, 1995), have argued that ‘regimes of calculation’ are intensified through the process of ‘avowal’ in which the subject is enticed to articulate (confess) themselves in accordance with organizational ‘norms’. Individuals subject themselves to self examination in comparison to the norm and engage in outward expression (confession) so as to affirm and transform themselves. They cite ‘mentoring’ and ‘management by objectives’ both of which are evident to different degrees in the MD/ME arenas in my study, but it could also be argued that the tying of organizational objectives and competencies to formal assessment processes and qualification, significantly intensifies the extent to which the ‘discipline’ has effect.

In both East Council and Glass Co organizational mentors were appointed to oversee and support the work-based project to ensure that project outcomes were embedded in practice

and implemented. In the MD/ME arena participants are constructed as ‘students’ and ‘mentors’ are, however loosely, constructed as ‘tutors’ and are in the arena as an adjunct to faculty with ‘temporary’ hierarchical power relations of the academy.

Just as easily, mentoring can be read as a mechanism which serves to anchor not only the ‘learning’ from the arena but to anchor the subject’s organizational identity (Beech and Brockbank, 1999). Mentoring provides guidance in which mentors can be understood to ‘act as judges of the norm’ invoking a “discourse between a novice and a guide” (Foucault 1979: 304) and I have noted previously the ways in which, through the evaluations of participants’ work, the way that some subjectivities are privileged over others. Similarly mentoring is imbued with organizational power relations in the way that the student/novice is constructed as inferior to the guide/mentor whose role it is to imbue a sense of what the organization stands for and to help the mentee better understand their role and identity. Importantly mentors can be perceived to be the gatekeepers and distributors of the organizations material and symbolic rewards (Kamoche, 2000: 761), thus giving emphasis to the sovereign as well as disciplinary aspects to the role.

Disciplinary power is distinctive in the ways that it extends the ‘span of control’ through its enactment in a myriad of discursive practices, but more than this, it is not only constraining but productive of identity and power. It does not only limit, punish and correct, certain ways of being rather, and especially, it endorses and enables “obedient wills” and is constitutive of “approved forms of creativity and production” (Clegg 1998: 39). It is this productive, constitutive prospect of disciplinary power that precisely pinpoints subjectivity and identity formation and re-formation as a most significant site of analysis. I turn to explore this further outside of the processes of formal assessment for this is not the exclusive site for rendering subjects calculable. Performances in the classroom, at daily work, in networks are all areas in which the actors are on display thus extending the area of self and ‘other’ examination. I turn to give some consideration of this now.

9.8 Extending the site of ‘examination’ and ‘calculability’ in the MD/ME arena

Stories from Glass Co, East Council and Caravan Co,

“The big thing I got out of this was the chance to network, it’s really important in a company like this, you’ve got to get yourself known nationally, it’s a chance to get your head above the parapet, well that’s got its downside of course, you need to get noticed in a good way!”

(Julie - Glass Co)

“I always felt that if you were talking to Darren you weren’t talking to the chief executive you were talking to Darren the man, humans all in a room. We saw a lot of Thomas and Anthony [members of senior management team] and it was really talking to them as people”

(Anna - East Council)

“I think the programme gave us an alternative way to relate to each other, for example Robin on the programme, usually people are scared stiff of him because of his reputation in the company but to me he is just Rob”

(Charlie – Caravan Co)

O’Doherty and Willmott (2009: 941) ‘have observed that organizations are sites of informality as well as formality and that these are both locations of disciplinary space.’ In particular, they examine the ways in which a consideration of subjectivity and identity might be explored so as to account for the ways in which social practice in the workplace, and its consequent reproduction of power relations, is embroiled in a ‘complex mix of aspiration and ambition’ in which subjects and subjectivities are ‘self-fashioning and self-disciplining’ (2009: 941). From the statements above, the participants show that the

MD/ME arena is one in which they become enmeshed in circles of relationships with others, including more senior colleagues, to whom they are simultaneously ‘exposed’ but in which they ‘disclose’ and expose themselves.

Kamoche (2000: 758) has explored the extent to which management development may provide a context in which participants explicitly acknowledge its acculturation possibilities. They can be conceptualized as willingly consenting to its conformative inclinations by accepting its appeal to self-interests of ‘inclusion’ and ‘career advancement’ thereby rendering themselves as ‘obedient wills’. Participants in his study at IP Organization, and in the empirical material here, make frequent reference to the intangible and indecisive nature of ‘learning’ from the MD/ME arena, but are unequivocally clear about the ‘benefits of networking’, ‘being made more visible in the eyes of senior management’, ‘getting marked out for promotion’ and so on. Kamoche makes sense of this in terms of the ‘trade off’ (McKinlay and Starkey, 1998) in that the promise of a lucrative career is consequent on the internalization of corporate values; material and esteem rewards in return for ‘managerial accomplishment’ (2000: 759).

Networking through the MD/ME arena in particular, is cited as an important means by which participants ‘get themselves known’ not only as aspiring selves, but as ones who have, in the eyes of others and their own, ‘been on the course’, ‘joined the club’ by becoming privileged members of the elite group. Thus, networking can be seen to serve interests beyond that of ‘better communication’ and a ‘short cut to getting things done’. The significance of this, more functional view, was evident from participants across the case study organizations but from those at East Council and Glass Co, far more cultural and symbolic significance was read into their participation in the MD/ME arena. In Kamoche’s (2000) terms, the MD/ME arena became a symbolic rite of passage which confers status on, and confirms the status of, its members by signalling their own worth materially and symbolically. Metaphorically, they enter a more ‘sacred’ world:

“The experience of having gone to IP University [the corporate university in Kamoche’s study] is worn like a badge . . . it accords them a coveted identity that unites them in their unique status.”

(Kamoche, 2000: 765).

The MD/ME arena, and the positive exposure it brings, can be seen to act as a ‘totemic’ discourse in which inclusion signifies past success in being ‘one of the chosen few’ and future reward as one is ‘destined for higher things’. Interestingly, in the observations above, the very closeness to ‘senior management’ and specifically in the case of East Council the Chief Executive, the very proximity in the classroom, at the coffee breaks, serves to underline the intimacy of the arena and inclusion in the ‘sacred’ sanctum of senior management.

Rites of passage as constitutive of identity

It is not only complicity-driven-by-self-interest that Kamoche draws attention to; it is the way that management development acts as a discourse of identity. He suggests that ‘rites of passage’ can be productive of identity in distinctive ways by extolling specific behaviours and acting as a role model for others. Thus, acquiring privileged knowledge from the ‘oracle’, strengthening one’s membership of the club of the privileged and acquiring the authority with which to ‘preach’ the organizational mantra (2000: 766). It can be seen from the participants here and from the case study profiles at Chapter 5 that there are strong resonances here most especially in the East Council and Glass Co MD/ME arenas.

However, following Kamoche’s analysis it is worth pursuing further the ways in which subjectivities are implicated as the site of power and power relations. The discourse pertaining to rites of passage determine three main phases that of separation, that of transition and that of incorporation (2000: 766). He observes that it is the transitional phase through which the management development arena can be seen to contribute to identity work, citing socialization as socio-psychological preparation for career advancement. Aspects of the transitional stage related to the MD/ME arena here might be understood as; acceptance on to the programme; passing each element of assessment and in particular each stage of study; acquiring funding/sponsorship for the next stage of study; presenting work-based projects (unscathed); graduating and attending formal ceremony and so on.

Certainly in the case of Glass Co in particular, the transition was reinforced by pay rises attendant on the acquisition of qualifications, and similar to East Council through the ritualistic in-house (as well as University) ceremonies and publicity celebrating

individuals' successes along the way. Kamoche likens the transition to that of 'initiation rites' in which novices are imbued with new knowledge which confers their admission to a new and higher status (2000: 767).

Through this 'passage', the incumbents achieve enlightenment and transformation commensurate with Lees (1992: 103) notion of the 'enriching of the inner psyche'. Participants made frequent mention of '*this has been so worthwhile*', '*its the best thing I've done*', '*it shows that the organization really knows what it's about, valuing us in this way*'. Such comments are suggestive of the transformative powers and 'conversion' possibilities of the MD/ME arena (see for example, Ackers & Preston, 1997) in which the workings of senior management are 'revealed' to participants and in this process they, now enlightened by the demystification of the corporate agenda '*its been a revelation*' and through the demystification of senior managers '*to me he's just Rob*', '*were just all humans in a room*' participants feel more included in what was previously alien territory and more able to 'preach' the organizational mantra and proclaim the importance of organizationally desired practice.

The vocabulary of 'enriching the inner psyche' (Lees 1992) is more commensurate with an objectivist/subjectivist dualism than dialogic discourse would permit, as the latter is one in which that dualism is collapsed but the power effects are arguably the same whereby the MD/ME arena is one in which the productive possibilities for identity can be detected.

'Conversion' as 'correction' in the MD/ME arena

In a dialogic formulation, 'conversion' can be understood as correction, where the MD/ME arena becomes a site for the promulgation of corporate ideology and in which the subject is extolled to acquire the prevailing values and beliefs. Moreover, the arena is one in which participants are invited to translate these into 'desirable' actions (useful projects, efficient ways of working, cutting costs) thus reproducing discursive practices deemed performative. It is in these embodied enactments, the routine doing of things, that shifts the emphasis from that of 'ideology control' to that of 'disciplinary power' as these combinations of thought and action become inscribed in the subject's experience of him or herself; her or his sense of self and sense of identity.

This is not a totalizing process, as previously suggested, in any given moment subjects are *subject* to competing even oppositional discourses relative to both the macro and micro contexts in which they are embroiled and they make sense of the world according to the available (albeit circumscribed) discourses. Sense-making occurs in specific sites that are multi-dimensional and plurivocal, better conceptualized as ‘contested terrain’ than ‘total institutions’ (Clegg 1998: 41). Whatever the power effects are, ‘obedience’ is not guaranteed. Clegg has argued that the problem of power can be conceived as not only about restricting action to that which is obedient but also to conceive it as productive, *creative*. Surveillance is not simply about direct control then, it is also about the “cultural practices of endorsement, enablement and suasion” (Clegg, 1998: 38). Any given organization however, is complex in the way that power is inscribed in its rules and routines though, opening up the possibility for discretion and resistance and it is to a consideration of this that I now turn.

9.9 Resisting the discourse of management: resisting the managerial identity?

Stories of resistance from East Council, North Council and Caravan Co

“I sometimes wonder if what they want is a sort of ‘Stepford’ manager, where we all think the same, buy into the corporate agenda, sing from the same hymn sheet, not that they want a load of robots, but basically that we are like they want us to be”

(Anna – East Council)

“Well there is always the thought that we are like Russian dolls. Just all fitting in with what SMT wants, and you look inside us and there’s an identical doll, it’s like they are getting under your skin. You are immersed in corporate agendas for the whole four years of the programme, thinking about them writing about them, no wonder we can all talk the talk”

(Sheila - East Council)

“You would hope that the programme would provide the possibility for a ‘One Caravan Culture’ but it’s difficult because you get back from the course and you are back in your corner”

(Chris – Caravan Co)

“I have become more aware that this is not an ideal organization, I am just a resource not a person and I realise now that there is a ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ thing going on. I am just part of the ‘periphery’ and ‘core’ people get taken notice of and treated better in terms of pay and everything. It’s disillusioned me. Learning changes things and makes you want to change things and if you can’t, what then? You see things differently and you don’t necessarily like what you see”

(Paul – Caravan Co)

“Recruitment adverts still emphasize experience in that functional area, a job came up last week specifying three years of managing ‘development control’ officers so straight away 99% of experienced managers would be ruled out and having a Masters degree wouldn’t make any difference, so its not been worth it from that point of view and it contradicts why they set it up”

(Stephen – East Council)

“The MBA qualification is very useful in terms of learning but equally it is something that I can take elsewhere to say ‘this is what I do’ so largely they are the two motivating factors for me”

(Clive – East Council)

“The qualification was the key issue for me so when they weren’t going to fund the next stage I just gave them a choice that they spend £1,500 on the course fees or £1,500 on a job advert – mine!”

(Keith – North Council)

“I am now looking for other jobs, I did everything right, I’ve got my MBA, I got good feedback from the process, they said my presentation was excellent, I’ve been acting up and doing the damn job for six months ; but they went for the other guy!! ..I do think its worrying if they say things and don’t follow them up. What’s the message that’s being sent? There’s not a lot of thought gone into what they are going to do with these people when you have trained them”

(David – East Council)

So far this chapter has explored the ways in which the MD/ME arena can be characterised in the way that it acts as a disciplinary technology of the self, inscribing organizational discourse, values and managerial codes into the site of subjectivity and identity. Contrarily, the above observations from the participants, tell, at least at first sight, a rather different story. The first three of these observations concern the ways in which the participants acknowledge the extent to which the MD/ME arena can be perceived to be one in which an intention of cultural transmission is evident. The respondents from East Council self consciously identify the possibility that their very subjectivities are the target of correction and transformation.

The reference to ‘*Stepford*’ managers (which is a reference to ‘cloned’, dutiful , duped housewives) and ‘*Russian Dolls*’ directly implies a cognition of the socialising prospect of the programme as both a vehicle for the transmission of corporately desired culture and for the inculcation of specific managerial identities. That these observations identify the *potential* to be drawn into the corporate agenda the participants express their separation and relative distance from its ideological propensity. It does not follow necessarily that a declarative distance is the same thing as ‘resistance’, though I have, elsewhere imputed this as one meaning of it (Kellie, 2004), but it does imply a degree of reflexivity on the part of the participants about their participation on the programme and its impact on them.

Dis-identification as resistance

Interestingly the ‘*One Caravan Culture*’ ‘*core and periphery*’ and ‘*back in your corner*’ comments point to another aspect of self recognition and ‘distance’ from the ideological aspects of the MD/ME arena and concerns the way in which it can prompt the unintended consequences of ‘unmasking’ the organization’s more political aspects.

In providing the space in which heightened awareness of the gap between the MD/ME programme’s *rhetorical* purpose and the *experienced reality* is surfaced, the hollowness of Caravan Co’s *espousal* to inculcate cultural change and be committed to a certain type of ‘professional’ managerial identity is thus exposed.

The attempt to be productive of a certain kind of culture and identity becomes subverted into new forms of knowledge, organizationally unanticipated and unwelcome. This is resonant of Kunda’s (1991) ethnographic study in which the organizational intention to ‘produce’ staff devoted to the organization’s core values had the unintentional consequence of instead producing ‘ambivalent and ironic selves’ engaging in distancing games that problematized their authority. Of this phenomenon Willmott has observed:

“In practice, by contriving to generate loyalty and commitment . . . the constructed quality of corporate norms can become exposed in a way that makes them a resource for the articulation of an alternative form of self knowledge and self identity”

(Willmott, 1997: 1345)

Thus the MD/ME arena might be seen as a technology of the self, restraining and producing subjectivity and identity, but not inevitably in ways that serve the dominant interests, so from the Caravan Co respondent ‘*You see things differently and you don’t necessarily like what you see*’. Hegemony, as conceived by Gramsci (1971), focuses on the way in which the discourses of dominant interests came to prevail over and suppress others but in a dialogic (especially Foucauldian) discourse it is re-conceptualized as a “more free floating set of conflicts and incompatibilities but which still maintain asymmetrical power relations” (Deetz, 2003: 36). It cannot therefore be assumed that attempts to ‘govern the soul’ can necessarily be achieved in any causal way (Rose, 1990).

The above participant observations, including those that refer to *'getting the MBA'* and *'getting jobs elsewhere'* attest to this. At one level this can be understood in terms of the gap between the 'promise' of the MD/ME arena and the lived experience of the 'realization' (as in 'becoming *actual*', as well as 'becoming *aware* of') of material and esteem rewards. One consequence of the distinction between the discourse of 'the promise' and the indeterminacy of reward is the prospect that identity work might involve the subjects' disengagement from and dis-identification with the organization.

Many studies have emerged demonstrating the ways in which attempts to inscribe 'commitment' to 'soft' HR practices have met with active or passive resistance. The construction or orchestration of 'consent' (Levy and Egan, 2003) simultaneously invites an exploration of the possibility of 'reframing' and 'resistance' (see for example, Huzzard 2000; Ezzemel, Worthington & Willmott 2001; Robertson and Swan 2003). In such studies attention is drawn to the ways in which those subject to such cultural interventions 'see through' and become 'cynical about', (as in Kunda's 1992, study and the discussion of my empirical material above). But the vocabulary of 'resistance' is more compatible with a dualist ontology which is predicated on the separation of structure and agency and which simplifies the discursive construction of the subject.

Is it really resistance?

Spicer & Fleming (2003) for example, purport that the process of dis-identification is not necessarily to be read as *resistance* for a number of significant reasons. The multifarious practices of 'subjective distancing' can be read in an entirely different way. Following Willmott (1993), Spicer and Fleming propose that subjective distancing such as those proclamations from the participants above, can be characterised as 'unplanned ideological phenomenon' because although the impression is that the strictures of 'disciplinary power' are resisted at a narrative level, nevertheless the implied discursive practice is complied with. In other words, at the same time as noting above, the propensity for ideological control that same participant (*Anna – East Council*) claimed earlier that she had *'become a better manager'*, worked herself and her team harder and thought that they would say she was not as nice a person. Similarly, the cynicism from the Caravan Co respondent (*Paul*), whilst evident, did not compromise his view that he was now a *'much better team worker'*

and did his job more efficiently' and so on. In other words developing a resistant narrative does not, of itself, translate into or mediate action *which disrupts prevailing power relations* nor indeed, disrupt the propensity for the MD/ME arena to precipitate the subjects' complicity in their own domination.

As Spicer and Fleming (2003) observe, counter cultural tendencies are not of themselves a challenge to extant power relations. Rather they could be understood as reinforcing them in much the same way that 'game playing' observed by Burawoy (1979) and served to inculcate a *sense of*, a *feeling of* 'freedom'. This, they identify as a "specious sense of freedom, (I am not a dupe, I am outside of power)" (2003: 162) that allows subjects to 'cope' with circumstances outside of their control. Perversely the very possibility of 'subjective distancing' and 'dis-identification' can be read as reinforcing relations of power in the way that the 'appearance' is one of openness to criticism and freedom of expression but this masks the hidden power of prevailing power relations and suppressions. In just the same way the MD/ME arena can be espoused as one which welcomes critique and theory so that it can be seen as the '*real deal*' (Jan speaking of Glass Co, Chapter 8), evidenced by its legitimacy with credentialed awards and the weighty symbols of the academy but which simultaneously suppresses marginalised discourses and interests by privileging some forms of knowledge over others.

Ideology is not just about a system of ideas it is also about social action and in this way it resonates with the dialogic conception of discursive practice. Subjective distancing becomes ideological, precisely because of the subjects 'illusion' of freedom from it (Spicer & Fleming, 2003:164). Moreover, ideology works because although the subject embraces 'an enlightened false consciousness' this does not impede, indeed can act to intensify performative discursive practice, so as to allow the 'corporate machine to get on with its job and commandeer the organization's productive system' (ibid: 164). The implications of this and the point is, that despite the adoption of 'subjective distancing' or 'dis-identification' or 'enlightened false consciousness' as a narrative critique in the MD/ME arena, if the subject reproduces those very discursive practices which perpetuate subjugation and domination then they are complicit in, not resistant to it.

In considering the participants' observations above there is a further and related aspect to be elaborated, still concerning the issue of resistance and identity but with an emphasis on the role that 'qualification' plays in the MD/ME contexts. I noted previously in the thesis that great emphasis was attributed to the significance of gaining awards (DMS/MBA) and the quotes above attest to this. Similarly, in their different ways all stakeholders adhere to the importance of the credentialed awards as a powerful inducement to the MD/ME arena. But in the purposes and objectives of the participants it assumes greater importance as they very frequently cite it as their primary reason for undertaking a decidedly arduous process. How does the 'management education' dimension of qualification-acquisition contribute to a discussion of managerial identity formation and resistance in the MD/ME arena, this is a question to which I now turn.

9.10 Acquiring management qualification: securing managerial identity or resisting dominant power relations or both?

I will focus here on to the prospect of 'qualification acquisition' as an aspect of the participants' struggle in the attempt to define themselves with managerial identities and bolster themselves in the internal and wider labour markets. The contested and indeterminate nature of management as a profession is part of this equation. In rejecting ideas that frame managers as 'agents of capital' pursuing its 'interests' by acting as 'functionaries' (Willmott, 1997: 1339), dialogic discourse prides open two interesting possibilities. First is the prospect that managers are also vulnerable in capitalist relations of production and the second is that how they act as managers is not predetermined by their role.

These two aspects are inextricable bound together as Willmott (1997: 1340) observes that the role of managers is to 'secure co-operation and surplus; the manner in which they interpret and enact this is not predetermined'. It is subject to managerial discretion and is exercised in accordance with a multitude of subjective considerations including the consequences for their own job security, career prospects, desire for a life style, dreams,

hopes, fears, fantasies and so on. In other words managers too share the same subjugation as those constructed as non- managers.

The instability of what constitutes the profession of management is significant because identity is not a ‘given’, rather subjects’ ‘struggle’ to achieve and develop a sense of purpose through language which is historically and culturally articulated (ibid: 1343). The historical and cultural conditions of the contemporary world are predicated on capitalist social relations of production, precipitating among other things competitiveness of market relations and processes of individualization. Thus:

“Anxiety and shame haunt capitalist labour processes, as each seller of labour ‘strives to ensure that he is not driven from the field by other sellers of the same type as himself’ ”

(Willmott 1997: 1345, citing Marx, 1867/1976: 1031)

Thus the characterisation of the vast majority of middle managers may be one of deep anxiety and insecurity. Indeed, Watson (1994) observed of the managers at ZTC Ryland:

“The more I saw of the managers at Ryland, the more I became aware of the extent of human angst, insecurity and frailty among them ... and they have all the frailties and anxieties as those people whom they seek to influence”

(Watson 1994: 179; cited in Willmott, 1997 1346)

As sellers of labour in a competitive labour market subject to various inducements (rewards) and controls (measurements) to suspend their own priorities and values for the corporate good it can be seen that they, like non-managers will draw on whatever discursive practices available to them to secure themselves in earning a living. Empire building or politicking might be such examples, but so too in securing perceived opportunities for securing and advancing a ‘melee of identity-securing concerns and values’.

In this regard the MD/ME arena might be seen as *both* the vehicle for the inculcation of a particular (compliant) managerial identity but *also* it can be characterized as ‘identity work’ on the part of managers in their struggle to see themselves, affirm themselves as just

such managers. There is no stable managerial identity which predicts what managers should do and how they should be, it is context specific and the MD/ME arena offers the possibility according to the participants, especially at East Co and Glass Co, of reducing the anxiety of what management should be because the programme reveals that for them, they can get on with ‘becoming’ whatever ‘it’ is

Moreover and very significantly, the acquisition of qualification reaffirms that identity work, as participation and success in the arena confers the tangible legitimacy of qualification. Such is the indeterminacy of the managerial role, managers have in common with those they manage only the “capital they have in their knowledge and skills or at least the *credentials* imputing this” (Willmott, 1997: 1350 citing Ehrenreich, 1989).

In this light ‘qualification’ becomes the means by which managerial identity is both inscribed in their selves and is also the outward means of proclaiming that identity to others, now and in the future. In this way, the efforts demanded by the acquisition of qualification can be understood not only as an ‘investment in one’s own intellectual and social capital’ which it is, but also more significantly, as identity work in becoming a managerial identity, legitimized through qualification, which others will recognise and acknowledge.

Thus it can be conceived of as part of the bargaining weaponry in securing better rewards or insuring against job insecurity; in themselves these are very important to the participants in the MD/ME arena. But it is also a mechanism to reduce the inherent insecurity and instability of the category and undertaking of management in their day-to-day roles.

In this way the MD/ME arena can be interpreted as one of control *and* resistance simultaneously but there is one last aspect of the identity issue to explore. In exploring the processes that shape identity and subjectivity O’Doherty and Willmott (2009) conclude that along the way participants are as much empowered as subjugated through the conflicting discourses and identity work.

Then again?

One such discourse pertinent here and to this study is that of *career*. The great majority of the participants in the case study organizations concern the extent to which their purpose

and motives, their endurance and risk taking, circulated on the discourse of *career*. Dialogic discourse emphasises that the *self* is constructed as a ‘self governing subject’ through the processes of self-surveillance and work is an important site of identity production. We are alerted to wider discourses of ‘individualization’ and ‘marketization’ and the objectification of the subject Foucault (1983). Giddens (1991) has observed that:

“The self is seen as a reflexive project, for which the individual is responsible. We are not what we are but what we make of ourselves”

(Giddens, 1991: 75)

The ‘project of self management’ is one which, through the powerful discourse of ‘career’, provides a vehicle for how we understand our identity in its past and present forms and future indefinite possibilities. Grey (1994) persuasively shows how specific practices of HR contribute to those technologies that infer a certain sense of self but more powerfully demonstrates the extent to which every aspect of the subjects being may be discursively constructed by the articulations of what it takes to advance in ones profession, not simply in behaviour conformity but in attitudinal and emotional subscription to the professional identity.

In so doing, Grey explores “The willingness of the subject to discipline themselves in the operationalization of the category of the career” (Grey 1994: 484). The techniques of hierarchical surveillance and normalising judgement are mobilized through appraisals and other informal means, monitoring enthusiasm, social connections and even the social capital offered by a ‘well packaged wife’ (1994:493). Grey’s point is not so much about the external technologies of surveillance but the extent to which they are inscribed into the very subjectivity of the professionals he studied.

Managers in the MD/ME arenas explored here concurred with discourses of ‘personal development’ ‘personal learning’ ‘self esteem’ and so on as reasons for ‘investing’ the time energy and commitment but this was so frequently subsumed within a primary discourse circulating of that of ‘career’.

One important consequence of this in the context of the empirical material is the extent to which the prevailing discourses concerning managerial identity and career served to mask

significant underlying power relations and inequalities. Specifically the way that the MD/ME arena comes to be complicit in the production and reproduction of existing social arrangements that privilege the category of ‘management’ over that of non-management replicating and reinforcing unequal access of rewards and resources. One only has to look back at the ‘majority profile’ of the participants in this study and on the programmes as ‘mid-thirties, white and male’.

Thus the MD/ME arena simultaneously masks its role in the production and constitution of unequal relationships by appearing as a meritocratic opportunity. Also it serves to ‘discipline’ those that participate *and* those hopefuls whose future ‘career’ aspirations manoeuvre them to ‘self discipline’ in their aspirations to be included.

From the empirical material and the discussion in this chapter, one conclusion could be that the functionalist interpretation that the MD/ME arenas at both Glass Co and East Council were more effective as *management development* interventions. This is because the self disciplining technologies were more coherent or more complete thus, promulgating desired managerial identities through technologies of self surveillance. Nevertheless even in these cases we can see that they do not act as discursive closure entirely as we can see that participants detect the frailties in their constructions and promise prising open the possibilities for resistance and reframing. However along another dimension it can be detected that the MD/ME arena acts to legitimize not just specific managerial identities but the category of management itself reinforced by the circulating discourse on management and career. I would therefore conclude in all case study organizations here, the effect was to reinforce the ‘normalized’ distinctions between management and non-management to reinforce not only the norms of managerial behaviours but the legitimacy of ‘management’ itself as privileged in the hierarchy.

“While managers sometimes gain in these structures, the structures are not simply or directly owing to those gains. . . and in doing so instantiate *inclusions* and *exclusions* in decisional processes” (my emphasis)

(Knights and Willmott, 1985 cited in Deetz, 2003: 27)

In these ways the MD/ME arena can be understood to reinforce and reproduce the inherent existing organizational power relationships.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have continued from the previous one by persisting with an exploration of issues of power in the MD/ME arena. It has drawn more self consciously on dialogic discourse and adheres to a dissensus orientation which seeks to disrupt familiar, taken for granted versions of social phenomenon. Moreover in problematizing the objectivist / subjectivist dualism and collapsing this distinction the centrality of language as constructive, rather than representational, has been emphasised.

The exploration of the way in which management development ‘technologies of the self’ has shown the multifarious means by which the panoptic power of surveillance acts to render subjects amenable to calculation and correction. An exploration disciplinary power provided a powerful discursive resource through which to analyse the effects of power in identity formation, subjugation and resistance in the MD/ME arena.

This is not simply about the way that individuals come to identify with ‘corporate goals’ or performative agendas, rather, it suggests the way that power relations are constituted and reproduced in the discursive practices that ensue from ‘identity work’. I have mentioned earlier that discursive closure is not a totalizing ‘given’; to suggest otherwise would be to replicate the pitfalls inherent in determinist reductionism (O’Doherty and Willmott, 2009). Instead it is appropriate to conceive of subjectivity and identity as historically and culturally situated but also productive and contested.

In this chapter together with Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I have explored the empirical material in detail paying attentions to the ways in which it has illuminated the areas related to the research questions in the thesis. I have, as the thesis has progressed, provided analytical insights as necessitated in the deployment of an ‘interpretative repertoire’ which has in turn given emphasis to the different concerns within the discourses of functionalism, constructivism, critical and dialogic, whilst also being mindful of the overall conceptual commitment to develop critical insight. I turn now to the final chapter of the thesis.

10. Drawing Conclusions and concluding

10.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the lines of argument developed previously address the aim of the thesis and its' research questions. The aim of the thesis is stated as an:

‘Exploration of the ways that the management development and management education arenas be understood as one in which there are conflicting purposes and values and to what extent are these reinforced, reconciled and proliferated’

This exploration required a consideration of the following research questions

- In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development?
- To what extent are there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders in the MD/ME arena?
- How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?
- What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

The chapter takes each of these in turn to substantiate the thesis as having fulfilled its remit. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of how the thesis makes a contribution to the literature and to knowledge. Subsequently the chapter elaborates the implications for practice as well as further research and finally the chapter ends with reflexive reflections.

10.2 Research question: In what ways and to what extent can management education act as an aspect of management development?

This question was a major focus for Chapter 6 of the thesis which sought to examine the empirical material through the discourse of functionalism to establish the MD/ME arena's credentials as management development. In this formulation emphasis was given to the extent to which the MD/ME programmes could be seen to fulfil their remit along several dimensions in achieving organizational and individual outcomes. The first of these was the extent to which the MD/ME programmes could be seen to be strategic in their relationship to organizational goals and by being attributed strategic priority. In all of the case study organizations the MD/ME programmes could be seen to embrace organizational goals in relation to claims that were made for them in programme documentation, the high profile initiation events, and through organizational and HR narratives pertaining to them. Thus at a rhetorical level we can see that there is a similarity across the case studies as to the supposed role of the programmes in their attachment to organizational goals and achievement of organizational benefit.

Here it is possible to distinguish Caravan Co as the organization which was most ambiguous in relation to the programmes MD/ME's 'fit' with strategy and this can be understood as to do with the perception that 'strategy' in the organization was subject to adhocery, reactivity and the proclivities of the power clique of the Chairman as might be typical in family-owned medium sized enterprises aligning with Handy's (1983) 'power culture'. Nevertheless it did function to bolster the organizations claim for IiP which was of strategic importance to retain client and supply chain confidence.

At North Council the programme was aligned to corporate objectives in so far that it both articulated links to strategy and it was believed by all parties to be strategic in the sense that it demonstrated to the outside world that it was addressing its strategic priorities of capacity building its management cadre as required by the CPA and IiP. In both Caravan Co and North Council it could be seen that though strategic claims were made for the programme in terms of capacity building and culture change these aspects remained very

aspirational and rhetorical, arguably with the negative outcome of participants' frustration or cynicism. The gap between the participants and the HR professionals' view of both the objectives of the programme and its outcomes were more pronounced in these contexts, though for different reasons.

In contrast, in both East Council and Glass Co the ME/MD arena is more evidently subscribed to by all stakeholders as *management development* in pursuance *primarily* of organizational outcomes. Moreover this is perceived, in the main to be both legitimate and desirable with participants accepting its role in both transmitting and shaping organizational culture, inculcating managerial values and identities in return for access to qualification and the 'promise' of career advancement.

What explains the gap between East Council and Glass Co on the one hand and Caravan Co and North Council on the other? I have argued that one factor is the extent to which East Council and Glass Co could both be seen to have clearer integration between the programmes and the wider 'upstream – downstream' HR policies and practices (Mabey, 2002). In both cases the relationship with 'development needs' appraisal and 'promises' of reward and advancement was much more coherent than in either Caravan Co and North Council where the relationships were weak or non-existent.

A further factor was seen to be the degree of strategic priority accorded to the programmes where in East Council and Glass Co senior management commitment was much more evident in the security of programme funding and the interest taken by them in the programme outcomes and the participants' progression through it. However, even here there were differences between these 'more effective' examples. Senior management support for the programmes at East Council could be understood to be galvanised through the higher levels of management from the CEO, Senior Management Team, Directorate heads and, though more patchily, line management. This coherence is partly constructed on the basis of the belief that the programme and its outcomes will be the vehicle for the achievement of savings and efficiencies in service provision, that is it is constructed as an 'investment' and this acts to build the case for continued funding. Moreover the solidity of its partnership with the University of East Coast is premised on not only a 'business

relationship’ but on its construction that they are ‘strategic partners’ connected in ways other than through this programme

By contrast in Glass Co the senior management commitment to the programme and to the University of Humber is much more fragile and political. The university’s relationship with the organization, being managed partly through the external consultant, also contours political relationships and allegiances. The programme’s primary construction is that it is a ‘cost’ in an otherwise ‘cost averse’ culture and its continuance depends upon the continuous demonstrable financial benefits it can deliver despite its secondary but important role as a ‘succession’ planning vehicle. This fragility renders it vulnerable in some quarters making it dependent on the championing and political abilities of its proponents especially the HR Director.

Meanwhile as far as the academy is concerned the difficulties of maintaining the MD/ME programmes as management development is an ongoing struggle while institutional inflexibilities and the normalized constructions of ‘expert knowledge’ and ‘students as subordinate’ in the educational hierarchy, give rise to tensions in a context where middle-manager learners expectations’ of management development might construe it as a perk or symbol of one’s importance. This results in much indignation when it takes an inordinately long time to get a library card, or there is no designated car-parking space or lecturers imply they don’t have time to customize materials to the organization.

Whilst the ‘strategic’ possibilities at both Caravan Co and North Council were not capitalized on in the same way as in East Council and Glass Co, the programme could be understood to symbolize, at least for external parties that they were taking management development seriously and Gustavs and Clegg (2005) have noted the significance of the academy as a ‘broker in the knowledge game’ conferring symbolic cultural capital on those with whom it has partnerships. In just the same way those partnerships can be understood to bolster the cultural capital of the academy as evidence of its engagement with and relevance to business organizations in its endeavours to appear to be taking seriously new epistemologies of knowledge and be of the ‘real world’.

This presses towards an examination of the mutuality of the MD/ME arena but before turning to this the question of management education as management development

warrants a further observation. The discussion above demonstrates that management education can act as management development but there are many complex factors impinging on this concerning the host organizations' purposes for it and its internal processes and policies relating to HR practice.

From the organizational perspective, where these have not been thought through the consequences might not only *not* produce the intended or aspired outcomes, they may instead produce organizationally harmful or disruptive consequences for the organization and for individual social actors. In the case of North Council, producing cynicism and distance and in the case of Caravan Co acting to empower managers to initiate change that was culturally unwelcome and thus drawing negative attention to themselves and causing, in some cases, their marginalisation.

From the perspective of the academy it would seem also that management education can act as management development but that similarly there are 'upstream and downstream' issues to pay attention to if organization / education partnerships are to be successful. Mundane issues such as 'staffing the programme' and 'managing the interface' occur in the context of other 'pulls' on the academic labour process in which any commitments other than research are subsumed in performance measures and are not constitutive of the academic career.

Moreover it can be suggested that managing the interface from both the organizational and academy perspectives is one that is much more dependent on the development of sustainable relationships and building coalitions of influence than has usually been addressed in the literature concerning accredited in-company programmes. It can be seen that both HR professionals and academic managers drew extensively on discursive resources with which to 'construct' the arena as legitimate' for both the occupants of the arena and also for their own respective constituencies.

I turn now to address the next research question:

10.3 Research question: To what extent is there a consensus / dissensus of meanings and interests attached by the different stakeholders in the MD/ME arena?

To an extent this question is addressed in Chapter 6 in an exploration of the compatibility of purposes and objectives (see Table 2, Chapter 6 for a summary) in the MD/ME arena but also the question of ‘meanings’ is explored further in Chapter 7 and ‘interests’ in Chapter 8. Here I draw conclusions from across these chapters in addressing the question above.

The very notion of stakeholders immediately suggests the way that social actors have potentially conflicting interests and purposes in the management development arena (Burgoyne, 1997). Even an exploration of the stakeholder perspectives through a ‘functionalist lens’ pointed to areas of consensus and dissensus. One key aspect was the extent to which there was general agreement in the powerfulness of the credentialed awards (DMS/MBA) as an inducement to management development and indeed the participants generally cited this as their primary interest in the MD/ME arena. However for the HR professionals the qualification aspect of the programme was more likely to be seen as a means to an end (of management development) for the participants it was a primary goal.

Nevertheless, the participants also imputed more organizationally useful meanings for the MD/ME arena and for their own participation in it. Consequently the participants drew heavily on the discourse of personal development through which to define their objectives and outcomes variously citing self esteem, confidence, more assertiveness, networking and so on. In this way they shared similar meanings to those of the HR professionals who similarly, though in different degrees, drew on the discourse of ‘personal development’ and wider ‘learning discourse’ as a ‘good thing’ (Contu *et al.* 2003) emphasising more altruistic and emancipatory aspects of the MD/ME arena. Similarly, the academic managers concurred with these attributions for the programmes, subscribing to their possibilities for personal learning and development as of value to individuals personal growth and career prospects. Additionally, they understood the MD/ME arena as one

which must also act to enhance the organizational capability and in concert with the HR professionals and participants drew on discourses relating to ‘organizational development’ (Schein, 1989) and ‘organizational learning’ (Easterby-Smith *et al.*) to articulate the meaning of the arena as both individual and organizational benefit. These aspects of communality point to a consensus of meanings in the MD/ME arenas.

However, there are also ways in which the meanings attributed by the stakeholders are more messy and individualised so that for example in the exploration of the HR professionals’ perceptions and experience it could be seen that they each invest meanings in the arena according to their own value systems, organizational locations and aspirations. Whilst the discourses on personal development for example were to an extent common, the priority invested in them revealed a more complex picture. For example both Wanda (East Council) and Alison (North Council) made sense of it in idealised terms emphasising ‘personal growth’ or ‘public values’ for the participants whilst Robert (Caravan Co) invested in it a more strategic role for his function and himself and Jack (Glass Co) understood it as part of his own job satisfaction. Thus revealing that the meanings of the programme could be understood here in the complex mix of ‘ambition and desire’ (O’Doherty and Willmott, 2009) as they negotiated their professional and personal identities. However in considering the participants there was some acknowledgement that any humanistic aspirations that they read into the MD/ME arena were sometimes confronted by organizational practices that treated people unfairly or cultures that perpetuated inequalities or didn’t support the ‘newly empowered’ individuals to enact change.

Similarly, in the exploration of the academic managers’ motives and meanings it could be detected that they variously understood the arena as one in which the participants learning could be expanded through engagement with new forms of knowledge and enquiry or conversely that learning could be circumscribed by the organizational ‘elephant’ in the room. Indeed it could be said that they simultaneously understood that the MD/ME arena existed in its both repressive performative aspects and in its emancipatory possibilities.

It has already been acknowledged that there was a dissensus of the meanings attributed to the MD/ME arena between the HR professionals and the participants at Caravan Co and

North Council where it was understood ambiguously or cynically. However, participants in both these organizations were clear where they stood and didn't expect rewards from the programme other than the personal objectives, including qualification, which they determined for themselves. This was rather different in the case of East Council where the rhetoric of the MD/ME programmes role as a vehicle for culture change didn't extend to it changing the culture of reward and promotion leaving some participants frustrated and disappointed even cynical. Yet they simultaneously valued the opportunity to become better managers learning how to work more effectively, efficiently and in some cases harder.

In Glass Co the MD/ME arena and the meanings attached to it by the participants can be seen in the way that they imputed to it a symbolic significance by signalling their current worth in the company and by their inclusion in the promise of future reward. In this these participants share similarities with those of East Council imbuing the programme with significance beyond the actual perceived 'promise' of reward, as it confers on them the status of 'inclusion' into higher spheres. Whilst simultaneously understanding the vulnerability that flows from this very visibility as they render themselves more 'scrutable to judgement and calculation' (Gustavs and Clegg, 2005). In these ways we can see that the meanings attached to the MD/ME programme are contradictory as well as consensual. Not only are the meanings of the arena differently, as well as similarly, construed between the stakeholder groups but also within them and significantly, contradictory meanings can be attached to this by individual subjects simultaneously.

These contradictory aspects of the meanings attributed to the MD/ME arenas can also be detected in the way that the academic managers inhabited their realms in two ways both as academic educationalists and as 'business managers'. This was especially so for Thomas and Don, who had formalised roles in 'getting business' but it was also the case for Dorothy, Russell and Jan, who in their respective institutions were attached to departments with 'external business' orientations. It was therefore important to them to keep face with the clients, accepting their agendas for performative outcomes and negotiate the complex interface between themselves, the academy, the participants, the HR professionals and the organization.

Through their roles they understood the arena as one in which academic integrity was important in upholding the curriculum, valued pedagogical practice and student confidentiality but it was also one in which the tensions of managing educational practice as *management development* was also shaped by the presence of the organization as a paying client and this brought with it certain constraints. These constraints were manifest in the classroom through competing discourses of acceptable pedagogy and through assessment processes in which performative agendas and the organizational gaze were ever present, stalking the arena, contouring the perimeters of acceptable knowledge and practice. In the Glass Co example where Jan was replaced as programme leader to appease the students and the organization's expectations (Chapter 8), Don ruefully accepted that this was a more symbolic sacrifice than any judgement that Jan actually was 'out of order' in how he was working with the participants but it was deemed necessary in his role as 'Business Manager' to be seen to take their concerns 'seriously'.

In Dorothy's concerns (regarding East Council) that she is being drawn into 'performance management systems' and in Don's (regarding Glass Co) concerns that careless remarks about participants performances might damage organizational perceptions of them and consequently their careers, they show that the arena is one in which they perceive to be conflicting interests as well as conflicting meanings. This is evident also through the requirements of the project-based learning where understanding of 'critique' are framed by organizational norms and culture prompting students (East Council, Chapter 9) to query '*How honest can you be?*' even when extolled to be so by the Deputy CEO who was delivering the 'Strategic Management module'. Similarly at Glass Co when despite the tutors encouraging the students to engage in more critical deconstructions of organizational practice it soon surfaces that this is not what their line managers are looking for.

These examples point towards the complexity and conflictual nature of interests in the MD/ME arena and also to the ways in which they temporarily reconciled through the agency of the social actors as they negotiate their way through them. This suggests that they can be managed or reconciled through the very continuance of the programmes as the stakeholders engage in the mutually constitutive possibilities of co-constructing meaning but it also suggests that reconciliation occurs in the context of power relations that shape

the contours of knowledge and learning according to ‘normalised’ perceptions of organizational utility.

The discussion also points to the way these conflicts can be understood not only as a free floating plurality of interests, as suggested in Burgoyne’s (1997) arena thesis, but as framed by the politics of the workplace so that interests are reconciled but in relation to the social relations of power in which they occur. This presses towards a consideration of the following research question:

10.4 Research question: How do dimensions of power become manifest in the MD/ME arena and what are its effects?

This question was a strong focus for Chapters 8 and 9 and I here I draw on the issues raised there to draw conclusions. Adopting a ‘critical stance’ as I argued for in Chapters 3 and 4 involves an exploration of the more hidden aspects of power and the disruption of normalized accounts and perceptions of the MD/ME arena. Management development per se is acknowledged to be part of the array of the techniques (disciplines) of self surveillance and the practices of HRM are party to the ‘problem’ of the indeterminacy of labour (Barratt, 2003) that is, to secure labour as ever more productive.

Whilst normative constructions of management development construe culture control as a desirable in the achievement of organizational goals (Peters and Waterman, 1982) from a critical perspective it can be viewed more suspiciously (Casey, 1995; Karrman and Alvesson, 2004; Turnbull, 2001, Grugulis et al 2000).

Control of work, of employees and managers, is not of dispute in either mainstream or critical management research, though the vocabularies used to articulate the reasons for ‘control’ differ considerably. What O’Doherty and Willmott (2009) and Thompson and Smith (2009) would identify as the necessity, in specific relations of production, to address the inherent indeterminacy of labour (power), others writing from a functionalist perspective would cite its necessity as the means by which to maximise ‘efficiencies’, ‘productivity’ and ‘cost savings’. In this way the MD/ME arena could be regarded on the

one hand, as the (re)producer of exploitative relations or conversely as a tool to secure ‘commonsense’, ‘universal’ organizational interests.

The arguments in this thesis point to its particular significance in considering the education of managers in their own workplaces where it is inevitably embedded to a greater or lesser degree in the specific mechanic, processes, practices and discourses of organizational control. There are three main ways in which we can detect power and its effects in the MD/ME arena these are:-

- the way that it serves to privilege performative knowledge
- the way that it serves to reproduce workplace inequalities
- the way that it has implications for subjects’ identities.

I will address the first two of these here whilst the third aspect of power will be discussed below in answering the last of the research questions.

Privileging performative knowledge

One important aspect that emerges here relates to the question of what counts as managerial knowledge, what it is and what it is for and who decides and the extent to which it is ‘contested terrain’ (Fenwick, 2001: 24)

Rhodes and Garrick 2002) and Garrick and Rhodes (2000) show how ‘what counts as knowledge’ has historically shifted to embrace the notion that knowledge of and ‘*in work*’ is increasingly an insufficient category, as a ‘pressing pragmatic orientation’ demands that it should embrace knowledge of ‘*what works*’ (2002: 88). In this re-conceptualization of knowledge they follow Lyotard (1984) in questioning what discourses frame knowledge and what constitutes the boundaries of legitimate knowledge.

“who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?”

(Lyotard 1984: 9; cited in Rhodes and Garrick, 2002: 90)

The concept of performativity alludes to the notion that knowledge can come to define workplace practices that seek to reinforce and privilege certain ways of being and knowing; specifically those which fore-ground organizational interests, and other forms of

knowledge as not, or less legitimate. Performativity poses that knowledge is useful only in so far as it is saleable or efficient and thus is central to the ‘mercantilization of knowledge’ (Lyotard 1984: 48) or what others call the ‘commodification’ of knowledge (Garrick and Usher, 2000: 2). In this construction the discourse of knowledge is harnessed to corporate interests as a dominant tendency. An aspect of this is that knowledge now can be construed to other purposes than ‘enlightenment and progress’ as the prominence of a performative discourse of knowledge comes to the fore (Gee *et al.* 1996).

This is significant in the MD/ME arena where organizational interests are insinuated into the curriculum and into pedagogical space as the workplace and workplace practice is both the site of and party to the (re)production and judgement of knowledge. This is most evident in East Council where workplace narratives and practice are fore-grounded as the basis of learning. But it is evident too in all of the case studies and where the MD/ME arena is not seen to emphasise workplace practice this is perceived to be a failure of the programme especially by the participants and the HR professionals.

It thus becomes embroiled as ‘means to an end’ and concerned with organizational effectiveness, the production of goods and services; the achievement of efficiencies and savings. Of course it seems common sense that it should do so but these are not neutral activities, they serve some interests whilst suppressing others. Moreover organizations are not rational entities as could be seen at Caravan Co when the participants attempted to act in their newly refreshed ‘technicist’ roles in finding more efficient ways of working they encountered cultural oppositions to retain the status quo whatever its inefficiencies were.

In the MD/ME arenas the academic managers were constrained in their pedagogical approaches by other organizational actors’ perceptions of ‘useful’ knowledge and ‘applicable’ project work. Don and Jan at Glass Co comment on the need to be sensitive in enabling students to identify projects that can be seen as functionally useful but which also enable a more evaluative critique. The pressure this creates is intensified by the HR professional’s need to justify the costs of the programme through its performative outputs.

Moreover the participants’ expectations of the programme that, it will serve their longer term career aspirations by enabling them to publicly demonstrate their organizational acumen, further presses on the need to produce outcomes that will be perceived ‘useful’

rather than ‘critical’. In Glass Co the participants (some not all) are most vociferous in their demands for ‘useful’ knowledge perhaps because for them there is more at stake. That the MD/ME programme is acknowledged as a career route and that it confers symbolic acceptance of them towards higher management, acts to suppress the use of the arena as one for purposes other than performative ones.

Producing work-based projects that are overtly ‘critical’ of the organization’s culture and practices could be absolutely counter-productive to the meanings they ascribe to the programme in the first instance. Achieving higher marks whilst limiting one’s career might not look like a good proposition. Thus the possibilities for critical reflection even of normalised organizational practice is circumscribed by the politics of the workplace and is even more accentuated with regard to deeper critical reflections that challenge underlying assumptions and power relations (Reynolds, 1999; Trehan, 2007; Vince, 2005; Raelin, 2001).

Similarly at East Council and Caravan Co, participants did not have the same confidence that career advancement would flow as a result of undertaking the programme or indeed believing that it would not, as in the latter case. It was nevertheless evident that producing successful outcomes (in organizational terms) was both an opportunity to shine but also one which brought great stress knowing that they would be judged and compared with others in their performances both in the classroom and in the undertaking of projects. Hence *‘the last thing I need is to be seen to be organizationally naive’* (participant - East Council) and the disproportionate amount of work the Caravan Co participants put into their workplace projects suggests their sensitivity to the implications of being so acutely in the organizational gaze.

At both East Council and Glass Co, participant respondents would frequently refer to feelings of intimidation that their own projects and outputs would not yield the same level of financial savings as other, previously much heralded, ‘success stories’. They were anxious about the implications for them of having lower self esteem and not being as clever as other participants. In one memorable incident a participant was extremely overwrought, crying, deeply stressed at the implications of ‘under achieving’ in relation to

other colleagues and not being able to ‘hold her head up’ because her project was not going to achieve the material outcomes expected of her.

People come to see themselves as a ‘resource’ constructing themselves as such and judging themselves accordingly in relation to organizational measures of success at least as much and often more so than academic ones. Though this too was important because the credentialing of performative outcomes legitimates it as ‘knowledge’.

The MD/ME arena is one in which the symbolic power of the academy and its credentialing powers, works to present performative knowledge as legitimate, as much so, if not more so than other forms of knowledge or alternative suppressed discourses, that are not deemed useful to performative ends. Of course, this is also a site of struggle of competing interests some of which surface, as we have seen in and some of which do not, through self-censorship or lack of reflexivity.

Power is situated, not in either ‘the organization’ or ‘the academy’ and their respective incumbents, but in *both*, mediated in and through the MD/ME arena and relational to each other. This struggle however occurs within a dominant discourse of performativity in which certain kinds of reflection are preferred over others. Barnett (2000) has observed that the organization’s positioning in relation to knowledge has changed such that it is much more able to influence the knowledge agenda in ways deemed to develop employees skills and abilities to produce useable knowledge “with likely productive value for the organization” (Barnett, 2000: 20). In this way we can identify the MD/ ME arena as one in which we can detect constraints on what counts as knowledge at the same time that it serves to constitute and privilege certain other specific forms.

Re-producing workplace inequalities

If the credentialing powers of the academy can be understood as legitimatizing work place knowledge through the MD/ME arena there is one more important aspect of power to be unravelled here and that concerns the extent to which workplaces are not power-neutral environments. They comprise structures, narratives, discourses, linguistic distinctions that locate individual subjects in unequal relationships to each other. When workplace discourses are themselves the objects of knowledge acquisition/production the

credentialing power of the academy can be construed as legitimating ‘how things are done around here’ and this is accentuated when the space for reflection and critical reflection is circumscribed. The Glass Co example of the conflicting interpretations of the academic managers and other organizational members, and crucially different ‘values’ placed on workplace projects that explore the politics of workplace attest to this. It is ironic that just such explorations might, in the end, yield more performative outcomes were they to be permitted. It matters not that the academic managers ‘won’ that particular battle, as what is significant is that participants learn what is really required of them.

Workplace practices concerned with the management of ‘human resources’ including managers are complicit in (re)producing these inequalities. For example, the majority of respondents and participants on the programme were men, thus the MD/ME can be understood to be complicit in reinforcing gender inequalities. All of the participants might be perceived to have relatively good jobs with better prospects than many other organizational members therefore the programme is embroiled in the power relations of ordering, measuring, calculating individuals’ worth in the melee that is the distribution of organizational resources and reward.

That the academy manages formal admission to the programme does not in the least detract from the organizational power in selecting who is eligible to participate. Organizational life chances and life chances generally can be increased for some organizational members who are included but this has exclusionary implications and Fenwick has observed that this can be understood as the reproduction of inequalities where:

“workers learn to accept and even support exploitative hierarchical structures that exploit them and reproduce (inequitable) power relations”

(Fenwick 2008: 23).

In this way the MD/ME arena is one in which the academy colludes with the cultural practices, organizationally determined, with all its attendant promises and possibilities, but more significantly here, injustices, imperfections and unequal power relations. Thus, recursively reinforcing and reproducing any such inequalities inherent in processes

concerned with appraisal, payment systems, career advancement and so on in which individuals within and without the arena may be ‘winners’ or ‘losers’.

The outputs from the MD/ME arena themselves, workplace projects, more efficient ways of working, more articulate and strategically ‘savvy’ managers, have implications beyond the arena for other organizational members which may be enhancing or detrimental or both. Indeed, the very rubric underpinning management development and the MD/ME arena is to seek more efficient production of goods and services which most frequently implies labour intensification or labour cost reductions through suppression of wages, redundancies, restructuring. Such an interpretation aligns with the observations of Lee *et al.* on how workplace learning can lead to

“various forms of job intensification which is obscured through workplace cultures, discourses of flexibility and the new worker subjectivities that are produced through them”

Lee *et al* (2004:20)

The effects of these are experienced not only by those managers who are ‘being developed’ but those other organizational members that they manage, or relate to, in a myriad of ways.

In the reproduction of organizational practices the MD/ME arena is complicit in the reproduction of organizational power hierarchies. Power can be detected in both sovereign and relational ways through the unequal distribution of rewards and resources. Moreover knowledge in the MD/ME arena is circumscribed by performative organizational agendas which act to suppress other possible interests. In this way the arena can be seen to perpetuate and proliferate dominant organizational interests. Thus the enactment of the arenas outcomes, it can be suggested, can be to the detriment of other organizational actors through labour intensification or other realignments of working practice. This is also applies to the participants of the MD/ME arena whose own jobs can become more intense (as they seek and embrace ever wider responsibilities) and can render them more vulnerable as they become visible and exposed to calculation and judgement. This aspect

of the arena as a site of cultural reproduction has implications for managerial identity and it is in the exploration of this that I turn now to the last research question of the thesis.

10.5 Research question: What are the implications for subjectivity, identity, subjugation and resistance?

Legitimizing workplace practice (narrative and action) has identity implications. Rhodes and Garrick (2002: 90) point to the way in which prevailing performative constructions of knowledge can be seen in tandem with performative constructions of identity. They point to the discursive closure inherent in the construction of humans as ‘human resources’ and the way that this is underpinned and inscribed in the economic and financial vocabularies of ‘human capital’, ‘investment in’ learning and ‘intellectual capital’. In this discourse people are constructed only in relation to the dimension which frames their financial contribution to the organization where they will be ‘cost’ or a ‘return on investment’.

Such constructions are powerful in producing specific identities and in hiding inherent power relations which privilege managerial prerogatives and unequal power relations and the HR professional as well as the academic managers and participants demonstrate a keen awareness of this. On the part of the participants at both East Council and Glass Co in particular they frequently commented on welcoming the opportunity to understand more about what was required of them in their managerial roles.

This is significant not only for how individuals are perceived by others, though this is extremely important in the context of being judged to be worthy of material or symbolic rewards, but also because individuals come to see themselves in these terms. Their very ‘sense of self’ (O’Doherty and Willmott, 2001: 124) is in part discursively constructed in relation to a performative vocabulary.

Participants in all the case studies cited personal development and becoming better managers as outcomes in the MD /ME arena, though it was most evident in East Council and Glass Co that learning the managerial identity of those specific contexts was especially important and had most impact. The significance for East Council participants of learning

about ‘Striding Ahead’ and what it meant for their service, departmental teams and their own attitudes and behaviours attests to this.

This points to the MD/ME arenas as ones that are both constraining and productive of identity though not in a deterministic way as was shown earlier that especially in the cases of North Council and Caravan Co that there was much more, ambiguity of, ambivalence and even resistance to, the corporately espoused objectives of the MD/ME arena. Equally, other examples would point to participants being proud of academic achievements and project outcomes feeling empowered and more confident. The point here is that language is productive, not of what it is to be a person, but that it generates productive tendencies that contribute to the reality of being oneself in a particular way. With the prevalence of a performative discourse, notions of self-hood both “shape the character of the modern self and delimits the context of our thinking on self” (Casey 1995: 50)

This suggests that in the MD/ME arena, ‘being oneself’ in some particular ways, can be fore-grounded whilst other possibilities and alternatives might be marginalised. This is particularly pertinent to the constitutive possibilities regarding ‘managerial identities’ specifically, as ones which resonate with organizational imperatives are likely to be favoured over others. In the discourse of performativity knowledge is valued to the extent it can produce financially measurable (or inferred) outcomes. Therefore to be a knowledgeable human being is to contribute in those ways that are valued. Rhodes and Garrick pose it thus:

“If one is not a cogito-economic subject (knowledgeable in performative ways, human being), what might be implied? – because the discourse of performativity works to ensure that people recreate themselves in the image of a self which will further efficiency and productivity”

(Rhodes and Garrick, 2002: 95)

The implication of the rhetorical question is pertinent because if an individual is not *knowledgeable in performative* ways, it could be construed that they are not contributing to efficiencies, not destined for a good career and so on. This is not concerned with others perceptions but ones perceptions of self. There exists a recursive relationship between

discourses of the self and performativity which is reinforced and reproduced in the MD/ME arena. Thus, it can be characterised as one which is (re)productive of identity in ways constrained by a performative discourse.

The reproduction of organizational cultural practices involves the reproduction of specific managerial identities, ‘acculturated’ or ‘designer employees’ (Casey, 1995) in which, as discussed above, the MD/ME arena frames what management knowledge is and what it is to be a manager in the specifics of the organization. But we have observed that this is inconclusive as participants can be seen on the one hand to acquiesce (for example, Glass Co) yet on the other resist (for example, North Council).

One way to make sense of this might be to conclude that the discursive closure was more *incomplete* in both Caravan Co and North Council as the MD/ME arena was more loosely connected (or even unconnected) with other self disciplining technologies (appraisal, mentoring, the promise of career advancement, payment systems etc.) than in Glass Co and East Council. However, even in East Council and Glass Co it would be misleading to characterize the MD/ME arena in an entirely homogenous way as there were distinct differences between them regarding the extent to which the ‘promise’ of management development was accomplished with the participants at East Council demonstrating more scepticism that promotion would follow their academic success.

Thus the factors concerning identity and its reproduction must account for the contingencies of the workplace. If performativity is central to this one must look to how that is understood in the specifics of the organization. Clearly Glass Co and East Council required the demonstration of this through material as well as symbolic outcomes. Whilst for both North Council and Caravan Co, it was enough to be seen to be doing management development as impression management was enough. Either way this suggests that how workplace learning is shaped by performative agendas is context-specific.

Thus the elements which shape ‘learning in work’ and the ensuing managerial identity are many and the workplace context is part of this, Hager (1999) has observed that the elements which shape ‘work knowledge’ and identity include the specific combinations of features that characterize the work situation at a given time, the changeability of the workplace and social forces shaping perceptions of and response to the workplace context.

A fragile settlement of contending forces: *resistance* and its possibilities

Work organizations can be understood as is ‘a fragile settlement of contending forces’ in that they are

“a partial accomplishment of order, made up of cross-cutting tensions – and of allegiances that are plural, contested and fragile”

(O’Doherty and Willmott 2001: 115).

It is the complexity of the ‘cross cutting tensions’ that notions of self-hood and one’s sense of self (identity) are mediated in the social organization of work and in the context of contemporary economic insecurities. As such identity, and what O’Doherty and Willmott characterize as the ‘machinations of identity politics’ is central to understanding the multiple sites of contested struggle inherent in work and organizational practice. Moreover, emphasising identity and subjectivity, as a site of struggle offers the possibility to explore the points and ways of acquiescence and acceptance, subjugation and resistance. Furthermore such a focus permits a closer inspection of the ‘complex mix of aspiration and ambition’ in ‘self-fashioning and ‘self’-disciplining individuals. (O’Doherty and Willmott, 2009: 941)

In other words the participants in the case studies though subject to the constraints of the workplace as it impinges on the MD/ME arena cannot be ‘read off’ as victims of capital, managerial oppression and deluded by false consciousness. Rather they could be understood as complex mixes of desires, ambition and commitment in the context of their workplace dynamics including power relations. What O’Doherty and Willmott call the experiential and existential dimensions of subjectivity and identity?

Certainly, it could be vouched, that by the time the participants, gained their qualification they had sustained up to four and a half years of lectures, assignments, projects and evaluations; making many sacrifices and negotiating all life’s hurdles along the way. They travelled through it as full people, not merely as ‘managers’ or ‘employees’, ‘participants’ and ‘learners’, though they were these *as well*. Thus subjectivity and identity can be understood as constituted in the context of the dynamic (changing) and contradictory tensions of the workplace and as both media (vehicle of) and outcome of these forces. In

this way analyses would pay less attention to the ‘collective’ identities of ‘managers’ and more attention to the uniqueness of individual creativity. This is not to suggest an essentialist interiority of the subject but rather to point to the ‘noise construction’ in identity (re)formation which is understood as an unstable performance both ‘incomplete’ and in ‘excess’ of any disciplinary constitution. In other words identity is precarious and emergent, informed by a multiplicity of relationships and discourses, realized out of the indeterminacy of subjectivity.

“It is helpful therefore to understand identity as a site of struggle and contestation that helps trace the limits of contemporary capitalism beyond the economic confines of the wage-labour relationship”

(O’Doherty and Willmott, 2009: 943).

The participants in the case study organizations endured the ups and downs *and* stresses *and* pleasures of their engagement in the MD/ME arena from a complexity of identity-making motivations.

It could be suggested that participants strived to ‘commodify’ themselves to make themselves more ‘sale-able’ and ‘trade-able’ in a ‘self-disciplining’ way (McKinlay and Smith 2009). Certainly, this could be one aspect of identity work for the participants in the MD/ME arena, as they cited career ambition, job security and ‘transportability’ as different or sometimes simultaneous, reasons for seeing it through and achieving qualification. O’Doherty and Willmott see such characterizations of identity work as rather crude reductions (ibid: 944) but my own view is that it is one of many important elements of the equation. In support of this construction Fenwick observes that identity work can involve learning in which

“workers learn to position themselves in an organization, how to perform the identities that are acceptable to their immediate peers but which also allows them freedom and some autonomy and control”

(Fenwick, 2008:22)

It is also the case though, that in progressing and achieving success through the MD/ME arena there was much to observe in the participants' pride, pleasure, confidence and self esteem. These cannot be dismissed as being merely, or exclusively, the products of a deluded consciousness which suggests that the affective, experiential and existential dimensions of work are important. In the context of the empirical material presented in this thesis there are certainly unexplored possibilities in 'looking again' at each of the stakeholder groups to surface these ambivalences and tensions in relation to identity work; to explore the conditions of possibility and *impossibility* for the construction and stabilization of identity and work relations, and this applies as much to the HR professionals and academic managers as it does to the participants.

The exploration of identity in the context of the actual content of work (including its relational aspects) and in its mind / body / affective dimensions, gives rise to O'Doherty and Willmott's concept of the 'subject-in-formation' in which identity is emergent, processual and unstable (ibid: 945). Such a proposition seems theoretically and analytically far away from the totalizing and 'closure' implications of some interpretations of panoptic power as 'disciplines and technologies of self-surveillance', which in themselves leave little scope to detect moments of uniqueness, creativity, ambivalence and resistance. This posits participants in the MD/ME arena adhering, as they did, to the significance of qualification, educational success, raising their organizational profiles and advancing their careers, in a more refracted light.

A perfectly valid interpretation of the participants could be suggested by Deetz's characterisation of the 'self-manipulating, upwardly mobile, well integrated worker' (Deetz 2003: 38) but he also suggests that identity is a more fractured and complex affair requiring further scrutiny in localized contexts.

In theorizing the MD/ME arena as a component of the "new epistemological 'infrastructure' for working knowledge" in which performativity is central to identity work, draws attention to its subjugating and dominating aspects (Rhodes and Garrick 2002: 89). As well it could be argued that the MD/ME arena facilitates identities and subjectivities which are 'empowered' (albeit in complex ways) such as through the acquisition of new knowledge and language; confidence and self esteem; and materially,

through the achievement of qualification, which can act to reduce the insecurities of capitalist economic relations of production, for the individuals who hold them.

It is certainly the case that the majority of the participants in the MD/ME arena articulated the, not insignificant, personal and professional benefits that accrued from having ‘learned the language of management’. Thus, the vocabularies that they used to ‘strategize themselves’ and ‘objectify themselves’ is precisely the language they used to defend themselves; and their departments; and their colleagues; and their values; and their jobs; careers; mortgages; lives, from the insecurities arising from the potentially oppressive consequences of being a seller of labour (power). Lee *et al.* (2004) have observed that whilst Foucault’s concept of panoptic power is most often referred to, a rather lesser cited concept of ‘reverse discourses’ (Foucault 1980) suggests that subjects can appropriate discourses for themselves and use them to “gain rights and resist social control” (cited in Lee, 2004:21).

The complexity of ‘interests’

This points to the very complexity of ‘interests’ served by the MD/ME arena and it is only in the exploration of the tensions, inter-relationships of meaning and realities that the contested nature of lived experience can become (partially, temporarily) revealed (Chia, 1996). It is not insignificant that participants, accepting the possibility that they are ‘disciplined’ in ‘performative subjectivities’, felt more able to survive in their respective organizations (perhaps with the exception of Caravan Co) and if not there, survive better in the wider labour market. It is in this way that aspects of suppression and oppression in the MD/ME arena are also, paradoxically, aspects of resistance and emancipation. Cunliffe (2003: 988) has observed that the accomplishment of ‘self’ is an “effect of discourse constituted by symbolic, discursive, socio-historical, often contradictory forces (citing Linstead, 1993)” and that oppositional logic can be used to suggest that acts of oppression are also acts of resistance and vice versa.

This is reiterated by Finch-Lees *et al* (2005: 1187) who have also observed that specific social phenomenon can be understood to simultaneously “work *for* and *against* the interests of any particular agent” reiterating management development as multi-faceted (Lees, 1992). Furthermore, it could be argued in the MD/ME arenas here, that just as the

academy could be characterized as complicit in the organization's unequal power relations, so too it (the academy) is implicated in any resisting and emancipatory prospects, 'buttressing' individuals attempts at micro-emancipations. This too, is an area worthy of further research in management learning.

It could conversely be argued that 'learning the language of management', whilst appearing to offer the prospect of 'empowerment' for individuals, is largely illusory. It inevitably perpetuates a discourse together with its concomitant subjugating power effects (Newton 1998).

Alternatively, where the 'self' is conceived of as a 'site of discursive re(production)', which I have argued, the discourse of empowerment is one which facilitates discursive acts (e.g. '*I can join the conversation now*', writing business plans defensively, performing better at meetings and interviews etc) and identities ('*I am a strategic manager now*') that would otherwise *not* have been available to the subject in the accomplishment of identity. In this sense we can detect some emancipatory possibilities and Finch-Lees et al (2005: 1206) observe that it is entirely plausible that individuals engaged in management development understand their experiences at different levels drawing on different and conflicting discursive resources.

So it was in the case studies here, where irrespective of organizational context, there were frequent mentions of both *believing in* and *not believing in* what was claimed for the MD/ME arena, (the likelihood of ensuing rewards, being able to enact change), thus surfacing the gap between rhetoric and experienced reality.

In these spaces the MD/ME arena could be construed as an arena in which there are *politicising* possibilities, where micro-emancipations can occur in relation to identity and knowledge, sometimes culminating in subversive critique. There is much evidence of this throughout my exploration of the case study material. However, these subversions are generally individualized and taking place in covert spaces, over coffee, talking to me, private discussions with trusted others and so on.

(Re)producing hierarchical power relations

It is important to acknowledge that the MD/ME arena is one in which established discursive constructions of managers and management remain unchallenged. On the contrary, such constructions are discursively reinforced and the ensuing ‘credentialing’ through qualifications can be understood to further reinforce the discourse and contribute to its discursive closure. This hinges upon, not so much in terms of what is exchanged ‘in the classroom’ but in terms of the MD/ME arena itself acting as a discursive practice in the ways I have pointed to in this thesis. As Hodgson has indicated, learning at work is:

“embedded in socio-cultural processes where dialogue and language are the means through which learners construct reality, establish social relations, act in relation to each other and develop professional identity. There are issues in all social situations and processes, including within education, of unequal power and control. In collaborative (workplace) learning approaches, if ignored, this inequality can lead to a dynamic of compliance.”

(Hodgson, 2008: 136)

A compliance, it could be argued, that is not only about individual compliance of managers (though this could also be the case), but of a greater compliance with established ‘normalised’ categories of ‘managers’ and ‘management’, compliance with the discourse and the ‘code’ (re)producing systems of inequality and performative versions of knowledge and identity.

This is significant to the MD/ME arena and particularly so, in considerations of how the academy engages with the corporate world in their pursuance of partnerships, in education, in research and the myriads of ways that are extolled to facilitate relevant knowledge and learning opportunities.

The discursive reconstruction of knowledge and learning to that of performativity has implications far beyond the MD/ME arena and far beyond this thesis but its consequences have importance at many levels including research, teaching and learning and in all its dimensions of management learning. The vocabularies that evaluate the worth of

knowledge and learning in terms of ‘employability’ and ‘return on investment’ enter the stage as emergent (but gathering momentum) discourses.

It is pertinent then to reframe the points and possibilities of resistance, and despite much emphasis on individuals as the subject and effect of power there is also much in Foucault’s, (1980) work to suggest that the subjects themselves can be construed as “thinking reflective actors with potential for acts of imagination” (Barratt, 2003: 1077). It is therefore suggested that socially situated actors, can interpret and resist dominant forces in the way that they:

“shape disciplinary rules and practices in their own ways or in human bodies incapable of adapting to an imposed regime, the resistances of subjects habituated to think in ways that question prevailing rationalities . . . or in the struggles and counter-offensives which Foucault takes to be the ubiquitous feature of governing economic and political life”

(Foucault, 1977 cited in Barrett, 2003: 1078)

This posits the possibility that self-fashioning and self-disciplining subjects can, with varying “capacities, resources and possibilities for action” (ibid), conduct themselves, self consciously (albeit in the context of available discourses) within ‘particular relations of force and meaning’ (Rose, 1999: 279). This prisms open a conception of resistance and reframing as something that can take forms other than, and more than, the ‘individualized’ micro-resistance.

10.6 Concluding: Contribution to knowledge

In the exploration of the research questions as posed, this thesis contributes to knowledge in the following ways. First, it contributes to the research domain of critical management studies and critical management education in the analysis and theorising of an empirical domain that has hitherto received relatively little attention from either mainstream or critical management researchers that is, the domain of accredited in-company management development programmes.

Second, in undertaking this it has explored the extent to which management education can be understood as, and act as management development, and the constraints and tensions of this as well as the possibilities. The exploration of management development and management education programmes in four case study organizations with two UK universities enabled a rigorous exploration of rich empirical data from the perspectives of three stakeholder groups, HR professionals, academic managers and the participant learners.

Third, the findings of the research provided the means by which to explore the ways that these arenas embraced a complexity of meanings and interests in the ways that the actors made sense of them and in the ways that the arenas served to meet their interests and purposes. The examination of these interests revealed complexity in the way that the programmes fore-grounded performative agendas in knowledge and learning. Manager-learners are part of wider constellations of power relations and party to their reproduction but also subject to them in just the same ways as other workers.

Fourth, the analysis explored the way that through its credentialing authority. The academy can be understood in some regards to legitimate not only workplace knowledge but also workplace practice and the reproduction of workplace hierarchies. Thus the thesis shows how the institution of the academy can be understood as becoming embroiled in the labour process and complicit in the reproduction of unequal relations of power in the workplace. These reproductions however are not characterised as discursive closure but as a dominant tendency in which there are struggles and resistance as well as the proliferation of dominant interests.

Fifth, this exploration facilitated an analysis of the ways that the social relations of power have implications for the reproduction of managerial identity and found this to be context dependent, but in all cases reproductive of the managerial category. The analysis of subjectivity revealed a complex picture of the possibilities of acculturation but also detected aspects of resistance and dis-identification.

In these ways the thesis contributes a rigorous analytical account of a hitherto under researched empirical domain that of accredited in-company programmes. Moreover existing research on these arenas is predominantly descriptive and / or normative, in

extolling the common-sense, taken-for granted, unproblematic mutual benefits of such provision. The contribution here seeks to contribute a theorised example which accounts for the MD/ME arena from a *critical* stance by disrupting ‘normalised’ understandings of ‘unproblematic mutual benefits’ through revealing more hidden meanings and power in the attempt to produce ‘critical insight’.

Furthermore following Alvesson and Deetz (2000) proposition that critical and interpretive research requires an ‘interpretative repertoire’, emphasising that empirical material be examined through multiple lenses, the thesis has sought to explore the case studies and the stakeholders from a multi-discourse orientation. In this the empirical material was explored through the management development discourses of functionalism, constructivism, critical and dialogic respectively, whilst in each case surfacing points of consensus and dissensus as commensurate with an overall ‘critical stance’. In this way the thesis makes a strong contribution to theory in the adoption of a multi-discourse analysis whilst accepting that the boundaries between them are sometimes fuzzy and permeable.

Lastly, the thesis contributes to practice by drawing attention to an array of pedagogical and institutional complexities in the management and conduct of management education as management development indicating areas of ethical as well as practical concerns so that the academy and workplace organizations, and the social actors therein, can be cautionary with regard to the contradictions as the possibilities inherent in such partnerships.

Further research on the implications of the pull towards performativity in educational and workplace partnership is suggested as education is ever more subject to the forces of marketization.

The question reaches far beyond the particular partnerships and institutions cited in this thesis. It can be argued that the tensions identified and explored here are set only to become more inexorable in contemporary society as observed by Giroux

“Beset by the growing forces of neo-liberalism and the ravaging politics of the culture wars, progressive educators and advocates of democratic education are increasingly pressured to become either servants of corporate power or detached

intellectuals defined by a steadfast allegiance to the dictates of narrow professionalism”

(Giroux, 2001: 1)

Certainly the process of the marketization and commodification of education continues to press for consideration of what knowledge, education and learning is and what it is for. Giroux specifically questions the moral and ethical implications of the dissolution of the separate public and commercial spheres as the obligations of citizenship are increasingly narrowly defined by the imperatives of consumption and the dynamics of the market.

The legitimacy of the workplace in determining contours of learning and knowledge continues apace whether this manifests as a predominance of the discourse of ‘employability’ as education’s exclusive rationale or foregrounding of perceived ‘useful’ subject disciplines at the expense of those condemned as traditional but not geared to the ‘real world’. Performative dimensions of knowledge supercede speculative or emancipatory (Lyotard: 1984) ones where education is a commodity to be paid for and learning is little more than an investment as a means to achieve a stable standard of living. Humanistic and liberal motives fall by the wayside in this context.

How can management educators and developers respond to these tensions? There are different levels of response to this question. The first level concerns institutional arrangements through which the academy attempts to respond to the challenge of relevance. Here it is important that the industry/education interface is not left as a silo function with institutional structures that separate it from academic enquiry. Instead those very processes that question and challenge this ‘space’ need to be engaged with contemporary developments and their implications. As in Gustav and Clegg’s (2005) analysis of a WBL initiative, siphoning off controversial or non-standard provision to administrators does not resolve the issues it just reduces their visibility, indeed it could be argued that the lack of an evaluative critique, constructively channelled, left everyone adrift – the academy, the client organization, the programme managers and above all the participants. The point here is that there needs to be an ongoing informed debate about the implications of the workplace/learning interface rather than taken for granted assumptions that it is non-problematic. The ‘practice turn’ in learning has sometimes been used as a

smoke screen in which the political and emotional aspects of learning have been subsumed under the prerogative of the workplace and the question of relevance. Educators and developers might concern themselves more with the ethics of this in the practice of education and development not only in the ‘classroom’ whatever form that takes, but in the development of partnerships, relationships, placements, e-learning and whatever form the ‘interface’ takes. Employers and student’s are not only ‘commissioners’ and ‘clients’; and education and learning are not only commodities. The academy and its agents, can, does and should resist the totalizing prospects of such a discourse.

Secondly, taking responsibility does also have ‘classroom’ or ‘site of learning’ implications and here I follow Trehan’s (2011), and other exponents of CME, analysis of the need to surface underlying assumptions in the learning process through critical reflection (Reynolds, 1997) by continuing to push against the boundaries of naturalized ‘commonsense’, however these are drawn. Such a challenge continues to be bolstered by a rich stream of critical research which, although open to the charge of self-interested hypocrisy, nevertheless provides a strong, multifaceted discourse from which to pursue alternative questions and critiques of social norms, values and institutions.

It follows from this that research has an important role to play and there are two significant responsibilities here. Much critical management education literature concerns itself with the implications of pedagogical practice from within the academy (for example, the MBA curriculum, teaching, classroom dynamics etc). If the ‘space’ in which industry and education/development meet is an increasingly predominant agenda we need to fix the research spotlight on it and ask ‘What is it that we are doing in this space?’ Thus problematizing what it is that we see and what it is that we are complicit in. Secondly, I concur with the reflections of Judi Marshall in a frank and sincere piece about the ‘practice and politics of living enquiry’ (2011: 173). In this she explores the role research in contributing ethically to a more sustainable and socially just world. Inquiry (research) can invite questions, challenges, reframing and ongoing re-definition of how things are and should be. Unsettling established understandings can open up new ways of thinking and orders of things, but this requires a degree of reflexivity to think about what one is doing in teaching, researching and writing. In fact it is to consider one’s impact in perpetuating or disrupting those discourses that we deem to be flawed, or dominating or wrong.

Finally,

“Possible voices in this dialogue are many and knowledge (and its management), learning and education can contribute to greater freedoms and choice in working lives, while taking care that people are not restrained and restricted by new forms of oppression. People in contemporary work (including ourselves) sometimes need to be reminded that, although it might not always seem the case, there has to be more to life than being a cogito-economic subject. The immediate challenge, as we see it, is to interrupt the monologue and to invigorate possibilities for dialogue and choice.”

(Rhodes and Garrick, 2002: 96).

In addressing the aim and research questions of the thesis I hope to have contributed to that interruption and participated in the dialogue.

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Post script

It is worth noting here that East Council’s programme with the University of East Coast continued for a further eight years until the university’s aspiration for AMBA precluded its accredited in-company provision which East Council then took to another university. Glass Co continues its programme with the University of Humber despite the ongoing need to defend it. Caravan Co’s programme was only ever intended to be a one-off and the North Council programme finished when Alison left, subsequently North Council set up an alternative arrangement with the Institute for Leadership and Management, that continues.

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Appendices

1. Ethics Clearance