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Developing Leaders in the Workplace: An Empirical Research of Line Managers' Wants and Needs from Leadership Development Programmes

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Abstract

Over the past decade, leadership development has been identified as the largest expense in the overall learning and development budget of many organisations across various industries worldwide (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Despite substantial investments, Leadership Development Programmes (LDPs) have consistently faced criticism for their perceived failure to develop the leadership capacity of line managers and, ultimately, produce the desired organisational outcomes (Hieker & Pringle, 2021). This recurring issue is commonly attributed to the challenge of 'training transfer', which entails the effective application of newly acquired knowledge, skills, and behaviours from training to the trainees' job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). To unravel the intricate dynamics surrounding training transfer within LDPs, this research explored the wants and needs of line managers, the targeted participants of these programmes, and their perceptions of how these wants and needs could be fulfilled.

Situated in an interpretivist paradigm, this empirical research adopted a qualitative research design, involving semi-structured interviews with line managers employed by large (over 2,000 employees) international companies across various industries worldwide. Eligible participants possessed a minimum of two years of managerial experience and had previously participated in LDPs. The collected data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflective thematic analysis method.

The research findings illuminated several critical elements of LDPs valued by line managers, including the importance of relevant and personalised content, experiential and interactive programme delivery, and opportunities for practical application in an enabling work environment. The analysis revealed that, according to the perceptions of line managers, content personalisation and relevance can be achieved through a systematic learning needs analysis, meticulous participant selection, alignment of programme objectives with participants' leadership needs and challenges, and the contextualisation of the programme's content. Participants also emphasised the value of experiential methods and interactive learning environments, underlining the pivotal role of competent leadership facilitators, whose desirable characteristics were also identified. Additionally, this study underscored the value of post-programme evaluation and feedback, on-the-job opportunities for practice, and the support provided by the participants' direct manager as critical components of effective LDPs.

The distinctive contribution of this research lies in its integration of a combined theoretical framework that blends Baldwin and Ford's (1984) model of training transfer with adult learning theories (Knowles, 1984; Kolb et al., 1986; Vella, 2002), introducing a theoretical approach not previously applied in the study of leadership development. Furthermore, this study distinguishes itself by employing a qualitative research design in a field traditionally dominated by quantitative methodologies (Mabey, 2013), thereby providing nuanced insights and understandings of the intricate and multifaceted dynamics of leadership development.

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Acknowledgements

Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of designing and facilitating countless leadership development programmes for managers. I always imparted a fundamental principle to those who participated in these programmes 'As a people leader, you are the most important person in your team members' [at least] working lives. Your leadership will either be a positive or a negative contribution to their lives. Choose to be a positive one every day'. I am delighted and grateful to have witnessed managers demonstrating outstanding leadership that has left a positive impact on people's lives and contributed to their organisation's growth. However, I have also experienced the negative side of leadership - one marked by power, narcissism, unfairness, discrimination, and micromanagement. Both positive and negative experiences have fuelled my passion to explore how leadership development programmes can better help individuals grow as leaders.

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the contributions of a number of people, all of whom supported the process in different and indispensable ways. It is only fitting that I acknowledge each of them here. First and foremost, I would like to express my immense gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Bonnie Slade, whose kindness, guidance and support have been instrumental in the completion of this dissertation. Your feedback has been exceptionally clear, insightful, and timely throughout this process. I must also express my appreciation to Professor Nicki Hedge, who, among many things, has taught me a vital research skill - that of critical thinking and reflection. Your influence on my doctoral journey has been immeasurable. A very special word of thanks is reserved for my research participants who generously dedicated their time. Your commitment, professionalism, and courage in advancing this important topic are deeply appreciated.

To the managers who participated in my leadership development programmes and shared their experiences and best practices, I extend my gratitude. Your inspiration has been instrumental in shaping the direction of this research, and I consider it a privilege to have learned from your leadership journeys. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge my current and former team members. Your support and encouragement have served as a constant reminder of why leadership, despite its challenges, remains a profoundly rewarding endeavour. I hope that I have led, and continue to lead, by example, embodying the very leadership principles I teach in my programmes.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Abbreviations

DPIA   Data Protection Impact Assessment

GDPR   General Data Protection Regulation

KSB   Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

LNA   Learning Needs Analysis

LDP   Leadership Development Programme

ROI   Return On Investment

RTA   Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1.   Problem Statement

Over the past decade, leadership development has been identified as the largest expense in the overall learning and development budget of many organisations across various industries worldwide (Ardichvili et al., 2016). According to Latshaw and Shannon (2020, p.2), the 'global annual budget spend for leadership development and training [is] over $50 billion'. In addition to financial investments, organisations also devote considerable time and effort to leadership development (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). This substantial and widespread investment is underpinned by the prevailing belief that leadership development can result in improvements in leadership capacity, and, ultimately, leadership performance (Martin et al., 2021). Companies allocate significant resources to leadership development because they view leadership as a source of competitive advantage and a driver of overall organisational performance and growth (Allen & Hartman, 2008; DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Lantu et al., 2021).

The importance of leadership for the establishment of high-performing organisations is widely recognised by both researchers and practitioners (Jacobsen et al., 2021). Leaders are expected to shape the organisational culture and values, articulate a vision, devise strategies to achieve the vision, and build necessary networks to execute on the designed strategies effectively (Amagoh, 2009). Additionally, leaders are expected to foster innovation and drive their team's performance to adapt to the ever-evolving demands of the global market (Amagoh, 2009). Consequently, leadership development is regarded as a strategic imperative for organisations operating in a highly complex, ambiguous and competitive market (Dalakoura, 2009). As affirmed by Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis, this makes leadership development a business priority for a multitude of organisations across industries.

Despite the substantial investments made, Leadership Development Programmes (LDPs) are often perceived to fall short of expectations (Beer et al., 2016). Anon (2015) contended that a significant portion of the annual investment in leadership development proves futile since there is no observable improvement in line managers' performance following their participation in LDPs. Turner et al. (2018) noted that LPDs often struggle to meet the needs

of today's business landscape. Furthermore, Botke et al. (2018) asserted that, despite the sizeable resources allocated to leadership development, many programmes reportedly fail to transfer the desired knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) back into the workplace. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2018) argued that, while LDPs aim to enhance leaders' self-awareness, identity, and self-efficacy, participation in such programmes may lead to a decline in line managers' self-efficacy. Lastly, Lantu et al. (2021) underscored that the lack of comprehensive programme evaluation methods often contributes to the perceived failure of LDPs since their impact remains challenging to measure accurately.

On the contrary, Avolio et al.'s (2009, p.764) meta-analysis found that overall LDPs 'produced a 66% probability of achieving a positive outcome', although the effectiveness varied considerably based on the leadership theories underpinning these programmes, such as transformational leadership. Similarly, Collin and Holton's (2004, p.232) meta-analysis on the effectiveness of LDPs revealed substantial variation in outcomes, since 'some programs were tremendously effective, and others failed miserably'. More recently, Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis found that LDPs are considerably more effective than previously believed to be, leading to improvements in participant reactions, learning, knowledge and skill transfer, and organisational results. Nonetheless, Lacerenza et al. (2017) argued that the range of effects varied substantially across studies, depending on factors related to the programme's design, delivery, and implementation. In light of these nuances, Tafvelin et al. (2021) argued that the inconsistency and lack of conclusiveness of research findings concerning the effect of LDPs necessitates further investigation into when and how the design and delivery of these programmes are more likely to help participants enhance their leadership capacity, meaning their ability to lead others.

1.2. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

In a world with unlimited resources, organisations could potentially invest in developing their leadership capacity without being overly concerned about the Return on Investment (ROI) of their sponsored LDPs. However, in today's fiercely competitive global market, organisations are urged to optimise their learning and development budgets, and ensure that, upon completion of the deployed LDPs, participants will have acquired or enhanced the KSBs necessary for effective performance in their current and future leadership roles (Bawany, 2019). Consequently, designers and/or facilitators of LDPs bear the responsibility of designing, developing, and implementing LDPs that enhance the leadership capacity of

the organisation's line managers, and, ultimately, contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organisation. However, concerns are often expressed by organisations about the produced ROI of LDPs (Hieker & Pringle, 2021).

Recognising the reservations surrounding the effect of LDPs and the inconsistency and inconclusiveness of previous research on leadership development (Tafvelin et al., 2021), a series of critical questions emerge, such as: If the claim that LDPs fall short of their objectives is valid, what exactly do these programmes fail to achieve, why, and according to whom? Conversely, how could LDPs succeed and what factors contribute to their effectiveness?. In light of these inquiries, this study sought to explore what line managers want and need from LDPs. Moreover, this study investigated the perceptions of line managers in terms of how their wants and needs from LDPs could be met. Given that line managers constitute the targeted audience for these programmes and bear the responsibility of transferring the KSBs acquired from LDPs into their leadership roles, it was considered important to provide them with a platform to express their wants, needs, and perspectives in terms of how LDPs could best serve them. To shed light on this issue, the present study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What do line managers want and need from leadership development programmes?
2. How do line managers believe that their wants and needs from leadership development programmes could be fulfilled?

1.3.   Research Significance

While leadership remains one of most extensively studied phenomena in the realm of social sciences (An et al., 2019), leadership development is still a nascent field of scholarship. Avolio et al. (2010, p.634) asserted that 'leadership development is the least explored topic within the field of leadership research and theory'. In a similar vein, Day et al. (2014) noted that, compared to the long history of leadership research and theory spanning over a century, the study of leadership development has a relatively short trajectory. Additionally, Jackobsen et al. (2021) emphasised that the value of leadership development remains contested due to the scarcity of rigorous research examining the impact of LDPs on leadership capacity.

As argued by Day et al. (2014, p.64) following their comprehensive review of 25 years of leadership development research:

There is a widespread misconception that if the field could just identify and agree on the 'correct' leadership theory then the development piece would inevitably follow.

However, leadership development is a longitudinal, relational and multi-level process that requires an understanding of intra- and inter-personal changes occurring over time (Day et al., 2014). Consequently, leadership development extends beyond the mere selection of a leadership theory and the subsequent training of individuals based on that theory (Day et al., 2014). While leadership training is often presumed to provide proven solutions to known problems, the intricate and ambiguous nature of the challenges confronting contemporary leaders renders short-term, one-size-fits-all programmes inadequate in yielding tangible improvements (Day et al., 2014). To address this issue, Grunberg et al. (2017) emphasised the necessity for systematic research into the design and implementation process of LDPs, whilst also acknowledging that this endeavour may not result in a single universal approach. Instead, research was recommended to focus on exploring how LDPs could be designed, delivered and implemented to meet their diverse objectives. Similarly, Kragt and Guenter (2018) advocated that research should focus on advancing our understanding of the circumstances under which LDPs result in enhanced leadership capacity, along with a deeper exploration of the mediating processes and moderating factors at play.

Given the persisting inconclusiveness of research on LDPs (Tafvelin et al., 2021), this empirical research aimed to provide further insights into the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs and how these wants and needs could be fulfilled. This research holds personal significance for me as the researcher, as it has provided an opportunity for self-reflection regarding my role as a designer and facilitator of LDPs. Participants in this study were also given a platform to share their thoughts, reflect on their experiences as participants of LDPs, and express their concerns while safeguarding their anonymity. Furthermore, the findings of this research have the potential to benefit other designers and facilitators of LDPs. Ultimately, companies that offer LDPs to their line managers may find value in this research by gaining a deeper understanding of how these programmes can better align with the preferences and needs of their target audiences. The 'Conclusions' chapter delves deeper into the implications for my own professional learning and practice, while also shedding light on their broader contributions for the professional practice of designers and/or facilitators of LDPs.

From a scholarly perspective, this research offers a distinctive contribution through the introduction of a combined theoretical framework that has not previously applied in the context of leadership development. Detailed in section 1.7, entitled 'Theoretical Framework', this approach provides a novel lens through which to explore the phenomenon of leadership development. Furthermore, by adopting a qualitative research design in a field traditionally guided by quantitative methods, this study provides in-depth insights into the intricate dynamics underpinning leadership development. Having established the research purpose and its significance, the following section outlines the context of the study. Having established the research purpose and its significance, the following section outlines the context of the study.

1.4. Context of the Study

Whilst various approaches exist for leadership development, such as facilitator-led training programmes, coaching, mentoring, assessments, job assignments, and practical exercises, this research focuses on investigating the wants and needs of line managers from facilitator-led training programmes. Historically, facilitator-led programmes have been the most commonly used method for leadership development (Collins & Holton, 2004). Notably, research by Latshaw and Shannon (2020) showed that a significant portion of many organisations' learning and development budget is allocated to facilitator-led LDPs. Drawing on Allen and Hartman's (2008) definition, in this study, leadership development programmes are defined as structured educational initiatives with prescribed curricula and dedicated facilitators, with the explicit aim of enhancing the leadership capacity of line managers, meaning their ability to effectively lead others. It is worth noting that prior research has identified limitations associated with this development method, including its often fragmented implementation and the absence of a comprehensive leadership development strategy, both of which can hinder the application of acquired leadership KSBs in the workplace (Conger, 1993; Day, 2000; Weiss & Molinaro, 2006). Nonetheless, facilitator-led programmes remain the predominant method for developing leaders in organisations worldwide (Lantu et al., 2021).

1.5. Positionality

This study is situated in an interpretivist paradigm. This choice was grounded in the belief that a richer understanding of leadership development can be attained by investigating the perceptions of those who are the at the forefront of this phenomenon, meaning the targeted audience of LDPs. Through the analysis of their words, I sought to delve into their wants and needs, and interpret the meanings they ascribe to LDPs within their unique contexts. This approach recognises the intricate nature of leadership development and its susceptibility to the influence of broader contextual factors. Drawing upon Kivunja and Kuyini's (2017) conceptualisation of the interpretivist paradigm, I adopted a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and a balanced axiology. These terms are briefly outlined below and will be thoroughly explored in the forthcoming 'Methodology' chapter. In essence, my subjectivist epistemology implies that I have analysed and interpreted the research data through my own cognitive processes, shaped by my interactions with the research participants. Hence, this approach dispels any pretence of objectivity in this study. Rather, I considered myself an integral part of the research process, recognising that my positionality influenced the nature of my observations and interpretations (Bukamal, 2022). Regarding my ontological stance, I viewed 'reality' and the phenomenon of leadership development as situated, multifaceted, and socially constructed. Thus, I refrained from making sweeping claims about the universality of my research findings in other contexts. Further, my chosen naturalistic methodology involved the collection of data through interviews, facilitating an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. Lastly, I adhered to a balance axiology, which allowed me to present the research findings fairly and impartially, while acknowledging my own values as a researcher (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). These foundational principles guided my methodological decisions, including the data collection and analysis methods. In the 'Methodology' chapter, I critically reflect and elaborate further upon my research positionality, approach, and methodology.

1.6. Methodology

As emphasised by Krauss (2005), it is crucial for the research methodology to align with the specific phenomenon under investigation, rather than attempting to force-fit the phenomenon into a preconceived methodology. In the field of leadership development, there is a proclivity to favour positivist paradigms and quantitative methods, driven by a

functionalist agenda primarily focused on discovering the ideal approach to LDPs that can maximise organisational performance (Mabey, 2013; Ardichvili et al., 2016; Klenke, 2016; Kniffin & Priest, 2022). However, it is contended that positivist approaches often come up short in addressing the multifaceted and context-dependent nature of leadership development (Klenke et al., 2016). Additionally, such approaches often fall short in providing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse meanings that line managers ascribe to this phenomenon (Klenke et al., 2016). Hence, this empirical study adopted a qualitative design. The rationale behind this qualitative orientation was grounded in the understanding that the relationship between the quality of a LDP and the improvement of its participants' leadership capacity and/or the organisation's performance is not causally related, as cause and effect are interdependent rather than analytical separable (Klenke et al., 2016). Consequently, the conceptualisation of a set of effectiveness measures in terms of the design, delivery, and implementation of a LDP is unlikely to produce a 'success recipe' that can be generalised to all LDPs through inductive inferences (Klenke et al., 2016). In light of these considerations, a qualitative approach was deemed more fitting for the proposed research due to its exploratory nature. This approach allowed for a deep analysis of a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon that required contextualisation (Klenke et al., 2016). To ensure the richness of the research findings and to capture the diverse perspectives and voices surrounding this subject, I opted to engage in co-enquiry with participants in LDPs, employing a relational lens.

Regarding the research participants, I employed purposive sampling and recruited line managers through LinkedIn, all of whom met the following criteria: a) had direct managerial responsibility for other employees in a large international company with over 2,000 employees, b) possessed at least two years of managerial experience, and c) had participated in in-house LDPs offered by their current or previous companies. The rationale for selecting each of these criteria is presented in the 'Methodology' chapter. I conducted online semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of ten line managers, spanning different managerial levels (first-line, mid-level, and senior). The participant group comprised of six male and four female interviewees, representing a range of age groups, industries, and business functions. The detailed breakdown of the participants' demographics can be found in section 3.4, titled 'Participant Selection and Recruitment' of the 'Methodology' chapter. The semi-structured interview format was deliberately chosen to provide a balance between a degree of structure with pre-defined questions and a degree of flexibility that allowed the

generation of new themes during the interviews (Galletta, 2013). Subsequently, I transcribed the interviews verbatim.

The transcribed interviews were then analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis, which is well-suited for exploring participants' experiences and perceptions. This method was selected to produce themes, which represented patterns of shared meaning organised around a central concept across the generated dataset, in order to offer insights into the research question (Braun et al., 2019). Specifically, I adopted an experiential orientation and sought to produce patterns of partial, multiple and/or contextually situated meaning at both the explicit (semantic) and implicit (conceptual/latent) levels (Clarke et al., 2015). Although this research was guided by a theoretical framework, I adopted a primarily inductive orientation to the coding phase, meaning that the data was the starting point of the analysis, rather than attempting to fit the data into pre-existing coding frames derived from the selected theoretical framework (Braun et al., 2019). The themes presented in the 'Findings' chapter were generated following Braun et al.'s (2019) six-phase process. This process involved a comprehensive examination of the transcribed interviews, the creation of codes to identify significant data features relevant to the research question, the generation of potential themes, a subsequent review and refinement of these themes, the precise definition and naming of the themes, and finally, the integration of the analytical narrative and pertinent data extracts. This comprehensive approach, which is explained in the 'Methodology' chapter, served to contextualise the analysis within the existing body of research and theory, as advocated by Braun et al. (2019).

1.7.   Theoretical Framework

In this study, I used a combined theoretical framework consisting of Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer and adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Kolb et al., 1986; Vella, 2002). This theoretical amalgamation served as both the foundation and a tool for the systematic integration and interpretation of the research data. It is worth noting that Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model holds a distinguished position as one of the most influential conceptual frameworks of training transfer, as underscored by Wenzel and Cordery (2014) and Seeg et al. (2021). Empirical validation and support for this model have been demonstrated through several studies and existing meta-analyses, as pointed by Tafvelin et al. (2021). However, it is noteworthy that despite its established validity, this

model has not received extensive application within the field of leadership development (Tafvelin et al., 2021).

In the 'Literature review' chapter, I delve into the core components of this model, including individual (trainee), characteristics, programme design, and work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The effect of these components on the training transfer process within LDPs is discuss through the review of previous research. Additionally, I delve into adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Kolb et al., 1986; Vella, 2002), elucidating its practical implications in the context of LDPs. This combined theoretical lens, which has been scarcely adopted by previous studies, has offered nuanced insights into the design and implementation of LDP (Kolb et al., 1986; Knowles et al., 2005; Allen et al., 2022; Scholtz, 2023).

1.8.   Dissertation Outline

This dissertation consists of six chapters. In this introductory chapter, I identified the research problem, explained the study's purpose and significance, and stated the research questions. I also briefly introduced the theoretical framework and research methodology that guided the study.

In the 'Literature Review' chapter, I review existing research to contextualise my study within the broader scholarly discourse and highlight existing research gaps. The chapter begins by defining the concept of leadership development and its core components. I also explore relevant literature concerning the effect of LDPs and the challenges associated with training transfer. Furthermore, I discuss the rationale behind incorporating Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer and combining it with Knowles (1984) adult learning theory.

The 'Methodology' chapter discusses aspects of the methodology that I employed to address the research questions. I first discuss and justify the interpretivist paradigm that guided this empirical research, which follows a qualitative research design, presenting my positionality as a researcher. I describe my chosen data collection method, namely semi-structured interviews, and detail the application of Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis method that I employed to analyse the research data. The chapter also covers the participant selection and recruitment process, ethical considerations, and data management procedures.

In the 'Findings' chapter, I present the study's findings in the form of themes, which were produced using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase thematic analysis. Each theme is presented sequentially, offering a detailed exploration of its sub-themes, supported by relevant data extracts. A thematic map illustrating the generated themes and sub-themes is also included.

The 'Discussion' chapter synthesises the study's findings with existing literature, unravelling the wants and needs of line managers who partake in LDPs. Furthermore, it delves into their perceptions concerning the potential ways to fulfil these wants and needs, with a focus on addressing the issue of training transfer within LDPs. Additionally, this chapter integrates leadership development with adult learning theory to offer new insights.

The deliberate separation of the 'Findings' and 'Discussion' chapters in this dissertation adheres to the interpretivist paradigm that underpins the study. This distinction ensures clarity and integrity in presenting the data, emphasising the importance of portraying the participants' perspectives as accurately and vividly as possible. By isolating the findings, the research honours the voices and views of the participants, ensuring their experiences and opinions are clearly articulated and stand distinct from theoretical interpretations drawn from the literature. The 'Discussion' chapter then builds on this foundation, weaving the empirical data with the existing body of literature and the overarching theoretical framework, thus enabling a comprehensive analysis and richer interpretation of the findings.

Finally, the 'Conclusions' chapter directly addresses the research questions and explores the implications of the research findings for my professional learning and practice. It also delves into the potential contributions to the professional practice of other designers and/or facilitators of LDPs. The chapter concludes with a reflective assessment of the research, acknowledgment of its limitations, and the presentation of recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

As explained in the 'Introduction' of this dissertation, leadership development has become a key objective for many companies. The rapid technological advances and the instantaneous distribution of information have necessitated organisations to be agile and respond to challenges with increasing speed and efficiency (Vandergoot et al., 2020). Due to these demands, there is an amplified need for effective organisational leadership. Managers are required to navigate the financial and market instability, rapid technological advances, and shifting employee demographics (Holt et al., 2018). This heightened need for effective organisational leadership has led companies to invest heavily in the leadership development of their managers (Kwok et al., 2021). Hence, leadership development has become a core focus for both public and private organisations across industries with the ultimate aim of enhancing their leadership and performance (Jacobsen et al., 2021).

However, research on the effect of LDPs has yielded mixed results, with numerous studies indicating a poor ROI (Burke & Day, 1986; Collins & Holton, 2004; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Taylor et al., 2009; Avolio et al., 2009; Avolio et al., 2010; Powell and Yalcin; 2010; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Lacerenza et al. (2017) emphasised in their meta-analytic review of leadership training research between 1951 to 2014 that, despite organisations allocating a significant portion of their learning and development budgets to LDPs, the majority of them do not believe that these programmes are effective. Consequently, there is a strong financial incentive to understand the potential reasons why LDPs may not achieve the desired outcomes (Anon, 2015). This interest is also reflected in industry reports and academic publications that are in search of more effective approaches to leadership development (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Despite the unprecedented global investment of resources in leadership development, there is insufficient research-based guidance on how to design LDPs (Sørensen, 2017), and our understanding of how leaders develop during and after LDPs remains limited (Kwok et al., 2021).

From a scholarly perspective, Day and Dragoni (2015) and Kjellström et al. (2020) have emphasised that research in the field of leadership development is still in the early stages of scientific development. As expected in any nascent scientific discipline, there remains a lack of common understanding and agreement regarding definitions, theoretical frameworks,

other conceptual considerations and measurement indicators (Kjellström et al., 2020). Furthermore, Hotho and Dowling (2010, p.614) noted that 'we know very little about the participants of LDPs'. Additionally, the prevailing scholarly trajectory in this field favours positivist paradigms and quantitative methodologies, driven by a functionalist agenda aimed at identifying the optimal design of LDPs to enhance organisational performance. The dominance of positivist approaches in leadership development is documented in studies by Mabey (2013), Ardichvili et al. (2016), Klenke (2016), and Kniffin & Priest (2022). However, with the increasing recognition of leadership development as a strategic priority for companies worldwide, compounded by the prevailing narrative that LDPs fail to produce the desired outcomes, there emerges an urgent need for a deeper understanding of the wants and needs of participants of LDPs through qualitative research approaches. This understanding is crucial for formulating theoretically rigorous and practically applicable insights that can advance the science and practice of leadership development (Day & Dragoni, 2015).

This chapter reviews previous research to establish the context of my study, situate it within the broader scholarly discourse, and demonstrate existing research gaps. Further, it seeks to inform the formulation of my research questions, theoretical framework, and research methodology and methods. To this end, the chapter begins by defining the concept of leadership development and its core components, namely leadership and development. Furthermore, I review relevant literature that explores the effect of LDPs and the challenges associated with training transfer. Moreover, I discuss the rationale behind adopting Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer and combining it with Knowles (1984) adult learning theory. Specifically, I delve into the core components of Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model, including individual (trainee) characteristics, programme design, and the work environment. The effect of these components on the training transfer process within LDPs is discussed through the review of previous research. Additionally, I delve into Knowles' (1984) six principles of adult learning, and explore their practical application in the context of LDPs. This combined lens offers a valuable perspective to better understand the wants and needs of participants of LDPs. By employing this combined lens, a valuable perspective emerges, enabling a deeper understanding of the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs.

2.2. Defining Leadership Development Programmes

Before attempting to define the concept of leadership development and clarify how it will be used in this study, I believe that it is necessary to articulate its core components, meaning leadership and development. I will start with the term 'leadership'. According to Stogdill (1974, p.259), 'there are almost as many definitions [of leadership] as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept'. To this day there is no universally accepted definition of leadership. This is why Ryan et al. (2021, p.300) characterised leadership as an 'empty signifier' and the birthplace of conceptual confusion and ambiguity. Moreover, the concept of leadership is often linked to value-laden maxims, such as authentic, servant, or transformational leadership, which may promote heroic, leader-centric conceptualisations of leadership, disregarding the complex environmental factors that come into play when leadership is enacted. As argued by Schweiger et al. (2020), leadership is a socially constructed concept, subject to diverse interpretations by various stakeholders and in different circumstances. Consequently, Schweiger et al. (2020) contended that LDPs should avoid promoting a singular definition and approach to leadership.

On the other hand, as noted by Day and Harrison (2007), the lack of a singular, concrete and widely accepted operational definition of leadership has led critics to raise concerns about the scientific foundation of the field. Specifically, critics have questioned how something that cannot be defined be studied scientifically. And more pertinently to this study, how something that cannot be defined be developed (Day & Harrison, 2007). In response to these concerns, Day and Harrison (2007) argued that the study of leadership development should recognise the complexity, multidimensionality, longitudinal nature, and relational aspects of leadership. They argued against the notion of a single universal definition and instead proposed that leadership development be understood as an ongoing, dynamic phenomenon. They asserted that leadership involves various individual, relational, and contextual factors that shape and influence its construct at different levels, including the individual, team, and organisation (Day & Harrison, 2007). By adopting this perspective, leadership development can be realised as a nuanced and evolving process.

To ensure conceptual clarity within this study, which seeks to explore the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs, the term leadership will refer to the formal managerial responsibilities held by line managers, defined as employees who directly oversee one or more employees, involving tasks such as goal-setting and performance management. Amidst

this exploration, this study acknowledges the concerns around managerialism, defined as the tendency to prioritise procedural efficiency over organisational values (Bush, 2008). Such an emphasis, particularly when detached from core organisational values, risks alienating the organisational mission. Criticisms of managerialism extend to its potential to diminish professional autonomy, favouring control and uniformity at the expense of employee expertise, and its narrow focus on quantifiable success measures, neglecting important yet less measurable performance aspects. Despite these issues, this study adopts the interchangeable use of the terms leadership and management, echoing Avolio et al. (2010) and supported by Blumenthal et al. (2012), who argue that leadership and management are intertwined, with no clear-cut distinction between them. While leadership is primarily associated with creating and articulating a vision and influencing others to pursue it, and management is argued to be primarily concerned with objective setting, work planning, budget management, task delegation, and performance monitoring, line managers are expected to fulfil both leadership and management duties simultaneously (Blumenthal et al., 2012). This stance is reinforced by Lacerenza et al.'s (2017, p.1687) meta-analysis, the most recent and comprehensive review of the leadership development literature encompassing 335 studies, which noted that the terms 'managerial, executive, leader, and leadership training/development programs' are often used interchangeably. Considering this argument, this study adopts Day and Dragoni's (2015) conceptualisation of leadership, which is articulated as the responsibility of individuals in leadership positions to provide direction, align employees with the established direction, and influence, motivate, and develop them to accomplish organisational objectives.

I will now delve into the second component of the term 'leadership development'. The question of whether leaders are born or made has been a long-standing debate in the leadership literature. For decades, trait theorists, including Carlyle (1852), argued that individuals are born with innate leadership traits. However, over the past decades, research has shown that leaders can be developed (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Nonetheless, leadership development is far from being linear or sequential due to the complex nature of leadership, which involves the dynamic interplay between a leader, their followers and various contextual factors (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Leadership development programmes typically take the form of formal education programmes with prescribed curricula and dedicated facilitators aimed at enhancing the leadership capacity of line managers (Allen & Hartman, 2008). This approach remains the most commonly employed method in leadership development to date (Lantu et al. 2021). Hence, this study specifically focuses on LDPs that

involve facilitators and intentionally engage line managers in development activities designed to enhance their leadership capacity. To do so, LDPs strive to foster line managers' conceptual understanding of leadership theories, enhance their leadership skills, facilitate a process of self-reflection on their values and behaviours, and provide feedback and opportunities for reflection to increase their self-awareness (Allen & Hartman, 2008; Johnson et al., 2018; An et al., 2022).

Furthermore, scholars often distinguish between leader development and leadership development when articulating the concept of LDPs. Leader development focuses on building the capacity of individual managers to lead by emphasising intrapersonal attributes such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Day et al., 2014; Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lantu et al., 2021). It involves training interventions, feedback, coaching, mentoring, and work assignments to promote intrapersonal changes (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). On the other hand, leadership development views leadership as a fluid and socially constructed phenomenon focusing primarily on interpersonal attributes like social awareness, mutual respect, and trust (Day, 2000; McDermott et al., 2011; Grunberg et al., 2017). It emphasises relationship-building, collaboration, and the co-creation of vision, alignment, and commitment through interaction (Clark, 2012; Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). While leader development is traditionally seen as individual-centred, a relational lens can also be applied by utilising collective learning methods such as after-action reviews, action learning projects, communities of practice, and communication skills training (McCauley & Palus, 2021). Scholars further argue that both leader and leadership development are necessary for developing an organisation's leadership capacity (Day, 2000). This is because, leaders, particularly in large organisations, rarely operate in isolation. Rather, their performance is heavily influenced by the prevailing organisational context in which they function (Bilhuber Galli & Muller-Stewens, 2012). However, leadership development is argued to transcend but not replace leader development (Day et al., 2014). This is because leaders influence the performance of the collective through activities such as sense-making and motivating others (Wallace et al., 2021). Consequently, enhancing the capacity of individual leaders is expected to yield positive changes at the collective level. Thus, it is recommended that efforts to bolster an organisation's collective leadership capacity should begin with a solid foundation of leader development (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). Given these insights, in this study, the term 'leadership development programmes' encompasses the concepts of both leader and leadership development. Having outlined the concept of leadership development and its scope for this study, the next step is to explore the existing literature regarding the

effect of LDPs. This discussion will help demonstrate the necessity for further research focused on the design of LDPs to address their participants' wants and needs.

2.3. The Effect of Leadership Development Programmes

The effectiveness of LDPs has been a subject of scrutiny for both practitioners and scholars alike. To my knowledge, there have been seven meta-analytic reviews conducted on the effect of LDPs to date, yielding mixed results. These meta-analyses are briefly presented below in chronological order from the oldest to the most recent. First, Burke and Day (1986) examined 70 studies conducted between 1951 and 1982, showing a moderately positive effect on learning and behaviour. Second, Collins and Holton (2004, p.232) analysed 83 studies conducted between 1982 and 2001, revealing substantial variation in the impact of LDPs on individual, team, or organisational performance, underscoring that 'some programs were tremendously effective, and others failed miserably'. Third, Taylor et al. (2009), investigated 107 studies between 1967 and 2006 and found positive transfer of management training across all four rating sources, namely self, superior, peers and subordinates, albeit with significant variability. Fourth, Avolio et al. (2009, p.764) encompassing 200 studies, indicated a '66% probability of achieving a positive outcome'. However, they noted that the effectiveness of LPDs varied significantly depending on intervention types, organisational contexts, leadership levels, and underlying leadership theories. Fifth, in a subsequent meta-analysis, Avolio et al. (2010, p.633) reported that 'the expected return on investment from leadership development interventions ranged from a low negative ROI to over 200%'. Sixth, Powell and Yalcin (2010) reviewing 62 studies conducted between 1952 and 2002, did not find a significant improvement in the effectiveness of LDPs over 50 years of research. Lastly, Lacerenza et al. (2017) conducted the most comprehensive meta-analysis to date including 335 independent studies between 1951 and 2014. Their analysis investigated the effects of LDPs across four criteria: reaction, learning, transfer, and results. In addition, they identified 15 moderators related to the programme design and delivery. The findings demonstrated a positive effect of LDPs across all four criteria. However, the range of effects varied considerably between studies, depending on factors related to the programme's design, delivery and implementation, such as: training needs analysis, feedback, delivery methods, space between sessions, training location, content, attendance policy, and duration.

In addition to meta-analyses, several pertinent empirical studies have been conducted on the effects of LDPs, showing mixed results. Notably, the following studies have found that LDPs did not achieve the desired outcomes. Johnson et al. (2018) discovered that while LDPs aimed to enhance leaders' self-awareness, identity, and efficacy, participants often experienced a decrease in self-efficacy as a result of their participation in these programmes. Similarly, according to a Fortune survey, Feser et al. (2017) observed that only 7% of Chief Executive Officers believed that their companies developed effective global leaders, and a mere 10% stated that their LDPs had a clear business impact. Finally, Turner et al. (2018) highlighted that contemporary LDPs fail to meet the needs of today's dynamic business environment. On the other hand, there have been studies that found a positive effect of LDPs. Hirst et al. (2004) conducted a one-year mixed-method longitudinal study involving 50 Research and Development teams led by 25 novice and 25 experienced leaders, with 313 team members and 22 project customers. Their findings revealed a significant positive impact of leaders' learning on various aspects, including relationship-building, conflict resolution, information sharing, and team performance eight and twelve months later. Another study conducted by Brown and May (2012) found that an intensive one year-long LDP focusing on transformational leadership resulted in significant improvements in the targeted leadership behaviours demonstrated by the participants, as well as notable increases in employee productivity and satisfaction. A more recent study conducted by Vandergoot et al. (2020) employing a mixed-method design and utilising baseline, post-training and three-month follow-up data, found that LDPs have a positive influence on individual and organisational outcomes. Similarly, Soderhjelm et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study and reported that participants in a LDP showed improvements in various areas, such as communication of organisational plans and objectives, delegation skills, ability to give and receive feedback, self-awareness, ability to express their emotions, responsiveness to employees' needs, ability to influence others, and overall confidence in their leadership role.

Considering these mixed research findings, McCauley and Palus (2021) concluded that there is a growing narrative questioning the effectiveness of LDPs, with explicit claims suggesting that the entire leadership development industry is falling short. Furthermore, Seeg et al. (2021) argued that researchers still have doubts about the long-term effects of LDPs. Building on this, Tafvelin et al. (2021) argued that due to the inconsistent research findings, there is a need for further investigation into the circumstances under which the design, delivery and implementation of LPDs are more likely to enable participants to enhance their

leadership capacity. Finally, Martin et al. (2021) asserted that the extent of causality between LDPs and leaders' performance remains undetermined. Building on this argument, I will now discuss some concerns raised by earlier research regarding the evaluation of LDPs.

The current methods used to evaluate the effect of LDPs are facing a notable lack of confidence. Collins and Holton's (2004, p.236) meta-analysis showed that 'a problem exists of comparing apples and oranges when comparing effect sizes' of LDPs. Additionally, their analysis revealed that 'less than 10 percent of studies located through this meta-analytic review were focused on the organizational level' (p.239). Based on these findings, Collins and Holton (2004) concluded that the competencies required to be an effective leader are complex and interrelated, which makes it difficult to measure the extent of their development resulting from LDPs. In a subsequent study, Avolio et al. (2010, p.634) found that 'only 10 to 20% of organizations investing in leadership development ever actually evaluate the effectiveness of a leadership development program on anything approximating performance outcomes'. More recently, Lantu et al. (2021) affirmed that despite many organisations investing in LDPs, a significant number of them fail to adequately evaluate the impact of these programmes. Furthermore, Wallace et al. (2021) have emphasised that the existing methods used to evaluate LDPs fall short of capturing the multidimensional and temporal nature of learning experienced within these programmes. To appropriately assess the effect of LDPs, Wallace et al. (2021) supported the view that evaluation should encompass the development occurring at both the individual and collective levels, including skill acquisition, leadership maturation, and a range of behavioural, cognitive and affective outcomes. In an earlier study, Day et al. (2014) noted that job performance is not the most suitable measure for gauging the extent of a leader's development resulting from their participation in LDPs, as it is mediated by other factors beyond the individual leader. Similarly, Blume et al. (2019) distinguished between performance, which can be directly influenced by a participant's KSBs, and performance outcomes, which are shaped by contextual factors and extend beyond individual performance. Consistent with this viewpoint, Day et al. (2014) argued that LDPs aim to enhance leader effectiveness; however, the authors raised the question of 'effectiveness according to whom?', since perceptions of effective leadership may differ among managers, peers, direct reports, and other stakeholders, suggesting that 'effectiveness may be in the eye of the beholder' (p.72). Consequently, Day et al. (2014) argued that although a connection should exist between leadership development and job performance, this link is neither immediate nor straightforward. According to Jacobsen et al. (2021), for LDPs to impact performance, they

need to modify both participant behaviour and stakeholders' perceptions of effective leadership, as leaders drive organisational performance through the performance of their employees. Nevertheless, isolating and measuring the acquired KSBs is challenging due to the complex nature of leadership, which primarily involves perceived leadership attributes (Lantu et al., 2021).

2.4. The Issue of Training Transfer

The concerns surrounding the effectiveness of LDPs are commonly centred around the concept of 'training transfer'. Incorporating insights from the study of training transfer, as suggested by Sørensen (2017), has the potential to enhance the design and delivery of LDPs. Training transfer, as defined by Baldwin and Ford (1988), refers to the extent to which learning acquired through a training intervention is effectively applied in the work context, resulting in meaningful performance changes. As highlighted by Botke et al. (2018), only when participants apply the learned KSBs in their job can provide benefits to their organisation through their enhanced performance as leaders. On this account, Sørensen (2017) emphasised the distinction between the terms 'training transfer' and 'learning transfer', noting that while they are often used interchangeably, they do not carry the same meaning. This implies that individuals who undergo training may not necessarily learn from it. On the other hand, learning is likely to occur beyond the confines of formal training. Therefore, learning, defined as the process of acquiring or developing KSBs through study, reflection, experience, and practice (Sørensen, 2017), is a desired outcome of training. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term 'transfer' will be used to describe the process through which line managers acquire and develop KSBs associated with leadership through LDPs, and subsequently apply and maintain them in their actual work contexts.

Research on the issue of transfer, pioneered by Baldwin and Ford (1988), aims to investigate the extent of learning that is transferred from training to the job, as well as the factors influencing this transfer (Vandergoot et al., 2020). Within the field of Human Resources Development, transfer has become a central concern for both researchers and practitioners (Seeg et al., 2021). Despite some progress, significant knowledge gaps and inconsistencies persist regarding the understanding of transfer, the maintenance of leadership skills, and their application in the work environment (Vandergoot et al., 2020). Baldwin et al. (2017) argued that transfer has become entangled in its complexity and, despite the increase of research

conducted on transfer in the past three decades, relatively little of this research has informed professionals regarding the design and delivery of development programmes.

2.4.1. Baldwin and Ford's Model of Training Transfer

Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer constitutes one of the first systematic reviews and continues to be the most influential and frequently referenced conceptual framework of training transfer to date (Wenzel & Cordery, 2014; Blume et al., 2019; Vandergoot et al., 2020; Seeg et al. 2021). As argued by Tafvelin et al. (2021), the model has been empirically tested numerous times and existing meta-analyses support its propositions. However, the model has not been extensively applied in the context of leadership development (Tafvelin et al., 2021). This model originated from a qualitative review aimed at consolidating a fragmented body of empirical research on training transfer conducted across various disciplines from 1907 to 1987 (Ford et al., 2018). Baldwin and Ford (1988) defined transfer as the degree to which trainees utilise the acquired KSBs in their job contexts. As noted by Tafvelin and Stenling (2021), in the context of LDPs, transfer is ultimately evidenced by the participants' behavioural changes.

The model comprises three main components: training inputs, training outputs, and conditions of transfer. Training inputs include the trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment. The trainee characteristics encompass individual factors, such as cognitive ability, personality, and motivation (Blume et al., 2010). The training design includes elements such as learning objectives, principles of learning, training content, sequence of training materials, and delivery methods (Blume et al., 2010). The work environment comprises factors such as support and opportunities to apply the learned behaviours on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010). Training outputs refer to the extent of learning that occurs during the training as well as the retention of that learning after the training. Training inputs are posited to directly impact training outputs, and both inputs and outputs are argued to have direct and indirect effects on the conditions of transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). However, while training outputs, such as learning and retention, are necessary for generalisation and maintenance, they alone are not sufficient (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Finally, conditions of transfer include the generalisation of acquired KSBs to different settings and situations, and the maintenance of that learning over time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). However, generalisation entails more than merely replicating learned KSBs; it requires their application to similar but not identical settings, situations and contexts (Ford

et al., 2018). Additionally, the maintenance of applied KSBs over time may be hindered by inadequate opportunities to demonstrate them, lack of motivation to implement the learnings, and various work-related contextual constraints (Ford et al., 2018). Blume et al.'s (2019) study further emphasised the dynamic and iterative nature of training transfer, wherein individual characteristics, programme design factors, and the work environment mutually influence and are influenced by the transfer process. This recognition underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of training transfer (Wenzel & Cordery, 2014). In the context of LDPs, Vandergoot et al. (2020) highlighted the lack of clarity regarding the factors that influence the extent of training transfer due to the integration of hard, soft and technical skills. As a result, training transfer in LDPs necessitates more than simply mimicking leadership behaviours. Instead, participants are required to generalise and appropriately apply the learned KSBs in new contexts and settings (Vandergoot et al., 2020). The subsequent sections of this chapter will present the three primary components of Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model.

2.4.2. Individual Characteristics

In this section, I will delve into the first training input of my chosen theoretical framework, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer, which revolves around the individual participants' characteristics. Specifically, Burke and Hutchins (2007) argued that the cognitive ability, personality, self-efficacy, and motivation of participants of LDPs are likely to considerably influence the extent of transfer. More recently, Kwok et al. (2021) noted that participants of LDPs do not develop uniformly, indicating that there are distinct between-person characteristics that predict their developmental readiness. In a subsequent meta-analysis on leadership development research, Vogel et al. (2021) concluded that the individual characteristics most commonly discussed by researchers include leader identity, self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-regulation, learning orientation, motivation to learn and motivation to lead. However, despite the identification of individual characteristics as influencing factors of the training transfer process, there has been relatively limited research on their specific impact on the transfer of leadership skills (Vandergoot et al., 2020). In the following sub-sections 2.4.2.1. to 2.4.2.6, I will analyse the individual characteristics that have been indicated to influence the training transfer process as part of LDPs. These characteristics include cognitive ability, leader identity, personality, self-efficacy, motivation, and experience.

2.4.2.1. Cognitive Ability

Cognitive ability, as defined by Crossan et al. (2021), encompasses mental processes related to information processing, thinking, learning, memory, communication, logic, emotion, perception and intuition. Burke and Hutchins (2007) provided evidence supporting the influence of general cognitive ability on training transfer. As argued by Avolio et al. (2010), cognitive ability is a significant predictor of work performance, indicating that, all things being equal, individuals with more developed cognitive ability, are more likely to transfer the learned KSBs to the job more effectively. Furthermore, O'Loughlin (2013) noted that aligning the content of LDPs with participants' cognitive abilities is crucial to ensure that programmes are intellectually challenging and stimulating, thereby maintaining participant engagement and preventing boredom. In a similar vein, Day and Dragoni (2015) stated that an individual's leadership development journey is influenced by their predisposed levels of leadership ability, primarily shaped by individual characteristics like personality and intelligence. Nevertheless, through deliberate practice, accumulated experiences, and developmental interventions such as challenging assignments, training, and mentoring, individuals can enhance their leadership capacity over time (Day & Dragoni, 2015).

2.4.2.2. Leader Identity

Leader identity refers to how individuals perceive themselves as leaders and the meanings they attach to their leadership role (Wallace et al., 2021). Leader identity is argued to be important for leadership development because it influences the willingness and ability of individuals to participate in leadership processes (Day & Dragoni, 2015). An individual with a well-developed leader identity would be expected to articulate what it means to be a leader and be self-aware of their own leadership values (Wallace et al., 2021). However, Day and Dragoni (2015) argued that leader identity is a multidimensional construct influenced by both personal factors, such as the extent to which an individual views themselves as a leader, and social factors, such as the social groups that the individual is a member of. Rather than being a singular identity, leader identity involves the interplay of multiple sub-identities tied to different social contexts (Day & Harrison, 2007). On this note, Kragt and Guenter (2018) argued that individuals' self-identity, which reflects their perceptions of themselves within their leadership roles, is socially constructed based on negotiated expectations of appropriate leadership behaviours. The authors further asserted that a strong leader identity, characterised by alignment between self-perception and perceived role expectations,

motivates leadership behaviour. Moreover, Kragt and Guenter (2018) proposed that leader identity acts as a mediator between the participants' responses to LDPs and their capacity to perform as leaders. However, they also emphasised that leader identity is malleable and can be influenced through participation in LDPs as leaders clarify and reflect upon their role expectations, thus enhancing alignment between their identity and leadership role (Kragt & Guenter, 2018).

2.4.2.3. Personality

Personality is another individual factor that is widely debated for its influence on leaders' performance (Hannan & Avolio, 2011). A leader's personality reflects their values, moral reasoning, and identity, thereby shaping their behaviour. However, Hannah and Avolio (2011) highlighted that a leader's personality is multifaceted, and different aspects (within-person differences) may be activated and exhibited based on the leadership context. For instance, courage as a personality trait may only manifest in rare situations demanding decisive action. Additionally, Day et al. (2014) emphasised the diversity in personalities among leaders at the same hierarchical level, asserting that the development process should be viewed holistically. To shed light on the long-held debate of whether leaders are born or made, Avolio and Hannah (2008) noted that, based on existing research conducted by behavioural geneticists on the influence of heritability on human development, there is no convincing evidence that individuals' capacity for leadership is innate or inheritable. Instead, research has shown that leadership capacity is better explained by environmental factors, meaning the individuals' developmental experiences, including their participation in LDPs. Similarly, Burke and Hutchins (2007) concluded that, although conscientiousness, openness to experience, and sociability have been shown to positively influence training transfer, there is insufficient evidence to support the impact of certain personality traits on training transfer. Furthermore, Avolio (2007) affirmed that personality traits are not fixed in their influence on leadership development and performance. Instead, they can evolve over time, driven by the dynamic interplay between the leader, their direct reports, and the context.

2.4.2.4. Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is considered to be another individual characteristic that is likely to influence the training transfer process. According to Burke and Hutchins (2007), individuals' level of self-efficacy, which reflects their confidence in their own ability to develop skills and

perform tasks, has garnered support for its impact on training transfer. Specifically, it is argued to affect the generalisation and maintenance of training. O'Loughlin (2013) asserted that there is strong evidence that self-efficacy positively correlates with enhanced performance, as individuals are more inclined to actively seek opportunities to develop their skills, apply the acquired knowledge, and tackle more challenging tasks in their roles. Moreover, Johnson et al. (2018) noted that there are empirical links between leader self-efficacy, meaning an individual's confidence in leading others, and leader performance. Similarly, Vandergoot et al. (2020) highlighted the consistently positive relationship between self-efficacy and post-training performance, as revealed in their comprehensive mixed-method empirical study. They found moderate correlations between self-efficacy, motivation to transfer, and transfer generalisation, both immediately after training and three months later. However, it is important to note that this relationship between self-efficacy and performance is reciprocal in nature, meaning that increased leadership self-efficacy can lead to improved performance, and vice versa (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Furthermore, Burke and Hutchins (2007) asserted that self-efficacy is a malleable characteristic that can be enhanced through various learning experiences. They suggested supportive feedback, the utilisation of goal-setting and self-management strategies post-training as integral components of a development programme. Finally, Avolio and Hannah (2008) noted that self-efficacy can be nurtured in leaders through developmental experiences, role modelling, and feedback.

2.4.2.5. Motivation

The developmental readiness of leaders is also argued to be influenced by their motivation to learn and lead (Allen & Hartman, 2008). According to Vandergoot et al. (2020), motivation to learn refers to the desire for learning and indicates the level of persistence and effort individuals exert during and after a LDP. Day et al. (2014) emphasised that the development of leadership capacity is influenced by motivation, identifying key factors such as job involvement, organisational commitment, and learning goal-orientation (including self-efficacy, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and intellectual maturity). Stiehl et al. (2015) highlighted the complexity of leadership responsibilities, stating that managers need to invest significant time and energy in developing their capacity to fulfil them. Therefore, a higher degree of motivation to learn is likely to result in greater persistence and endurance, leading to a higher likelihood of implementing learned KSBs (Stiehl et al., 2015). In support of this argument, Stiehl et al. (2015) found that participants with high motivation to learn continued to benefit from LDPs even one year after completing the programme.

Consequently, leaders with a strong motivation to learn experienced increased team effectiveness, as their team members exhibited enhanced motivation and satisfaction due to their leader's elevated motivation and optimised leadership capacity (Stiehl et al., 2015). Moreover, Griffith et al. (2019) suggested that individuals seeking career progression opportunities are more inclined to learn from LDPs and effectively apply their newly acquired knowledge to their jobs. Avolio et al. (2010) further distinguished between the motivation to learn the content of a LDP and the motivation to lead, emphasising that participants with high motivation to lead are more likely to apply what they have learned due to their intrinsic desire to perform effectively as leaders.

Training transfer is also argued to be influenced by the participants' perceived utility of a LDP (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). In turn, the participants' perceptions of utility are shaped by their judgement of the need to improve their leadership capacity, the likelihood of the LDP in facilitating improvements, and the practicality of applying the learned KSBs (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). On this account, Gentry et al. (2014) noted that an individual's behaviour is, in part, the result of their belief that the behaviour will lead to a certain outcome. Therefore, if participants of LPDs believe that the programme will be useful and relevant in achieving desired outcomes following its completion, they are more likely to actively participate, thus increasing the likelihood of training transfer (Gentry et al., 2014). Consequently, understanding the wants and needs of prospective participants before designing the content of LDPs is crucial, to ensure that it will be perceived as meaningful and relevant, to, ultimately, maximise their overall effectiveness (Gentry et al., 2014).

Although empirical evidence has demonstrated a positive relationship between motivation and training transfer, as highlighted by Blume et al. (2010), it is important to note that this correlation may not necessarily translate into improved job performance. This is because other factors, beyond the direct control of the participants, may mediate this relationship, such as the type and quality of the development programme and the work environment. In a similar vein, Stiehl et al. (2015) argued that the motivation to lead may be moderated by situational variables, such as organisational support, group cohesion, appropriate role models, organisational structure and culture. These contextual factors can moderate the relationship between motivation to lead and leadership performance.

2.4.2.6. Experience

The final individual characteristic that I will explore in this review is experience. Clarke and Higgs (2016) noted that participants of LDPs should not be viewed as blank slates, since they often possess considerable leadership experience before undergoing training. Additionally, even participants without formal leadership experience may still have certain leadership predispositions. Avolio and Hannah (2008) asserted that leadership development is an ongoing process in which individuals interpret and derive meaning from life experiences, contributing to their self-understanding and growth as leaders. This lifelong developmental process allows leaders to construct their unique narratives, which shape how they perceive and interpret future experiences (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Considering this, LDPs might need to address participants' predispositions, while also reinforcing new ones (An et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the extent of leadership experience has been identified as an important factor influencing the training transfer process as part of LDPs. Day et al. (2014) found that less experienced leaders tend to benefit and learn more from their participation in LDPs simply because they have more to learn and are more likely to be exposed to novel situations in comparison to their more experienced counterparts. Moreover, novice leaders are less likely to have fixed perceptions of effective leadership, making them more open to change (Day et al., 2014). These findings align with Hirst et al.'s (2004) longitudinal mixed-method study, which demonstrated that novice leaders acquire significantly more knowledge and skills through LDPs than experienced leaders. Hirst et al. (2004) attributed this difference to the steeper learning curve experienced by new leaders. That said, although experienced leaders may still acquire a substantial amount of new knowledge, particularly in areas associated with complex organisational and strategic concepts, their overall learning is comparatively less than that of novice leaders. This is because experienced leaders possess well-established mental schemas that enable them to efficiently process and respond to novel stimuli. However, these existing schemas may also impede their ability to alter current behaviours and incorporate new learning experiences (Hirst et al., 2004). In addition, if experienced leaders have held formal leadership roles without having undergone appropriate training, they may have developed sub-optimal and self-limiting behaviours (Griffith et al., 2019). In a similar vein, subsequent research by Kragt and Guenter (2018) revealed that more experienced leaders often operate closer to their maximum capacity and have a solidified understanding of their roles, resulting in smaller improvements from LDPs. It has also been

noted that participants with more experience may feel that they do not require further development due to their perceived success in previous leadership roles (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Consequently, it is suggested that the level of leadership experience plays an important role in determining the extent of learning and training transfer within LDPs and should be taken into consideration when designing programmes based on participants' needs.

In addition to participants' level of experience, their hierarchical position in their organisation is also considered to influence the training transfer process. Mumford et al. (2007) found that managers at various organisational levels require different types of leadership skills to varying degrees. Specifically, while cognitive and interpersonal skills are necessary for managers at all levels (junior, mid-level, and senior), senior managers are argued to require a greater degree of strategic skills. Cognitive skills encompass fundamental leadership skills related to communication, learning, and critical thinking (Mumford et al, 2007). Interpersonal skills involve the leader's capacity to interact with and influence others, while business skills are specific to managing material resources, operations, personnel, and financial resources. Finally, strategic skills refer to highly conceptual abilities that enable leaders to navigate complexity, handle ambiguity, problem-solve, create a vision, and influence the organisation (Mumford et al., 2007). However, Mumford et al.'s (2007) study, which involved over 1,000 managers of different organisational levels (junior, mid-level, and senior) working for an international company across 156 different countries, found that the aforementioned skill types are subsuming. This means that as leaders move up the organisational hierarchy, the skills required at the lower levels continue to be necessary. That said, senior managers still require cognitive and interpersonal skills, but the acquisition of business and strategic skills becomes more important. Therefore, Mumford et al. (2007) suggested that LDPs should focus on both the continuous refinement of existing leadership skills and the development of additional skills as managers progress through different organisational levels. In practical terms, this implies that LDPs should provide a comprehensive approach that addresses the evolving skill requirements at each level.

Despite the existing research exploring various aspects of the concept of leadership experience and its effect on leadership development, the empirical evidence supporting the long-held assumption that experience determines leadership development is inconclusive (Day et al., 2014). This is because leadership experience involves a complex interplay between leaders and their social and organisational contexts. Thus, equating a leader's

experience with their tenure in formal leadership roles is likely to be limiting in capturing the full effects of their nuanced experiences (Day et al., 2014). Hence, it is recommended to consider the relevance of previous positions held, as different leadership experiences can vary significantly (Day et al., 2014). Day's (2010) earlier work emphasised that expertise in leadership is a longitudinal construct directly tied to deliberate practice, given the intricate and interpersonal nature of leadership. Subsequently, Day and Dragoni (2015) argued that experience should be conceptualised as a multifaceted construct based on the developmental challenges associated with job roles. For instance, experiences involving exposure to international work environments across national borders, especially in countries whose culture is considerably distinct from the leader's own culture, are likely to enhance the development of strategic thinking, tolerance towards ambiguity, and cultural flexibility. Additionally, activities that stimulate self-reflection, such as after-action reviews, are argued to help individuals systematically and critically analyse their behaviours as well as their impact on performance outcomes, facilitating experience-based leadership development (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Therefore, it is argued that LDPs should recognise and address their participants' individual needs, instead of adopting a one-size-fits-all approach (Holt et al., 2018; Griffith et al., 2019). Building on this argument, this study is set to explore the wants and needs of the participants of LDPs and how they can be met based on their own perceptions and experiences. By understanding and catering to the preferences and needs of participants, LDPs can enhance their effectiveness in fostering leadership development and facilitating meaningful learning experiences.

2.4.3. Programme Design

In this section, I will explore the second training input of the chosen theoretical framework, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer, which focuses on the programme design. According to Baldwin and Ford (1988) the programme design comprises of three key elements: principles of learning, sequencing, and content. To provide clarity, I will now briefly explain the four factors identified by Baldwin and Ford (1988) that can influence training transfer within the first element, principles of learning. The first factor is identical elements, which refers to the level of resemblance between the training and the work environment where the transfer will occur. By incorporating similar elements, the likelihood of effective transfer is increased. The second factor is the teaching of general principles. This involves imparting general rules and theories that support the programme's content and the taught skills (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). In the context of LDPs, these theories could include

various leadership and management theories, such as transformational leadership or leadership styles. The third factor is stimulus variability, which emphasises the utilisation of diverse programme delivery methods and tools. This approach is argued to strengthen participants' ability to apply acquired KSBs in new and varied contexts. Lastly, Baldwin and Ford (1988) identified conditions of practice as the fourth component of principles of learning. Within conditions of practice, four design issues were investigated: massed versus distributed training, whole versus part training, feedback, and overlearning. Massed versus distributed training refers to whether the training is provided as a whole or divided into modules or segments. According to Baldwin and Ford (1988), distributed training enhances training maintenance over time. Whole versus part training pertains to whether trainees learn a segment and then practice it or wait until the completion of the entire training programme before practicing as a whole. Whole training is argued to improve learning outcomes under specific conditions, such as highly intelligent learners, practice divided into segments, and low complexity tasks. Feedback refers to the provision of performance-related information to trainees. Finally, overlearning involves providing learners with practice opportunities beyond the point where they have performed the task correctly. By understanding and incorporating these factors into the programme design, organisations are argued to be in a better position to optimise training transfer and enhance the effectiveness of their training and development programmes.

Despite the extensive research conducted by Baldwin and Ford (1988) on the effect of programme design on the training transfer process, the existing literature on the design of LDPs presents inconclusive findings. Day et al. (2021), in their review of empirical and conceptual papers published on this topic since 2001, noted that LDPs are often designed without a solid theoretical framework, adult learning theory, or leadership model as their foundation. Moreover, a recent study conducted by Martin et al.'s (2021) observed significant variations in the content of LDPs, making it challenging to find studies that examine LDPs with similar content. Consequently, research on the effect of the content of LDPs remains inconclusive. To address some of these limitations, I have chosen to complement Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer with adult learning theory, Knowles, 1984; Kolb et al., 1986; Vella, 2002). This decision is rooted in the recognition that participants of LDPs are adult learners, and the application of adult learning theory can greatly enrich the analysis and interpretation of research data. In the subsequent sections (2.4.3.1. to 2.4.3.4), I will discuss the key elements of programme design that previous research has identified as influential in the training transfer process of LDPs. These elements

include content, delivery methods, and the facilitator. Additionally, I will delve into Knowles' (1984) six principles of adult learning to explore their practical application in the context of LDPs.

2.4.3.1. Content

Drawing on Ismail et al.'s (2017) definition, in this study, programme content is defined as a syllabus consisting of leadership topics, theories, concepts, and models. As noted by Gentry et al. (2014) little is known about the extent to which LDPs meet the needs and desires of the actual participants. Hence, an important question arises, which revolves around the content that should be included in the curriculum of LDPs to meet the participants' wants and needs (Gentry et al., 2014). According to Blume et al. (2010), there is a paucity of research on the content of LDPs, which typically focus on imparting generalisable concepts and principles. Hence, the effect of specific types of content on the training transfer process within LDPs remains insufficiently understood. On this account, Burke and Hutchins (2007) asserted that LPDs should commence with an assessment of the root causes of participants' performance issues or deficiencies to ensure the use of appropriate programme design methods. This is because performance issues can stem from factors such as unclear performance expectations, insufficient resources and support, lack of feedback, or other work environment-related factors. The authors further emphasised the benefits of conducting a needs analysis as the initial step to determine if there are any deficiencies in KSBs that warrant the implementation of a LDP. Furthermore, even if a LDP is deemed suitable for addressing the performance issue at hand, explicitly stated learning objectives and programme outlines are more likely to enable participants to comprehend the performance expectations, and, consequently, regulate their behaviour accordingly, resulting in increased levels of training transfer (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Thus, when the content of LDPs is perceived by participants as relevant and consistent with their job tasks, it is more likely to yield increased levels of training transfer (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Similarly, Taylor et al.'s (2009) meta-analysis of 107 studies on the effect of management training on transfer highlighted that the participants' perceptions of the job relevance of the content significantly impacts the extent of training transfer. To ensure alignment between the content of LDPs and job requirements, Taylor et al. (2009) suggested conducting an analysis of the tasks or skills necessary for job performance.

In support of this argument, Collins and Holton's (2004) meta-analysis on leadership training effectiveness found that a thorough Learning Needs Analysis (LNA), which incorporates both organisational and individual perspectives and addresses obstacles and challenges related to the implementation of organisational objectives, is a strong predictor of successful leadership development. Similarly, Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis supported the view that, although needs analyses are infrequently conducted, a comprehensive needs analysis is likely to enable designers of LDPs to align the content with the participants' needs, thereby enhancing their perceptions of the programme's utility. Specifically, Lacerenza et al. (2017) emphasised the importance of involving various stakeholders and identifying and prioritising desired outcomes to avoid the risk of designing programmes that promote leadership behaviours that are not aligned with the organisation's culture. The authors warned that failing to do so may lead participants to perceive the programme as irrelevant, resulting in decreased training transfer (Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Moreover, Clarke and Higgs (2016) asserted that the content of LDPs should align with the organisation's strategic goals, which may require leaders to adopt specific behaviours necessary for implementing the company strategy. Leskiw and Singh (2007) found that a comprehensive LNA incorporating the company strategy, elements of effective leadership, and any identified leadership gaps is essential to create relevant LDPs. According to the authors, elements of effective leadership should be derived from both external factors, such as business challenges and market trends, as well as organisation-specific information gathered through internal stakeholders, providing a clear understanding of what leadership looks like based on the organisation's unique circumstances and culture (Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Similarly, Tafvelin et al. (2019) argued that the content taught in LDPs should be congruent with the organisation's objectives and senior management's perceptions of desired leadership behaviours. In a subsequent study, Tafvelin et al. (2021) also emphasised the importance of ongoing feedback from participants to continuously revise the content as needed, following a systematic LNA reflecting the participants' learning needs. However, Hotho and Dowling's (2010) earlier study warned that there is a risk of designing the content of LDPs solely based on the input of senior management. Specifically, the authors argued that participants of LDPs interpret and translate the programme's content based on their individual characteristics and contextual factors specific to their work environment. That said, the authors argued that participants of LPDs should be treated as co-creators instead of mere recipients of the programme, emphasising the importance of involving them in the programme's design.

In conclusion, additional research is required to gain a deeper understanding of the content design for LDPs and the process of identifying learning objectives. This research aims to address these inquiries by examining the perspectives of line managers who have participated in, or are currently involved with, LDPs. By gathering insights from these key stakeholders, valuable information can be gleaned to illuminate the content and an effective process for the identification of learning objectives for LDPs. Such research will contribute to enhancing the design and implementation of LDPs, ensuring they align with the needs and expectations of line managers, ultimately leading to more impactful leadership development outcomes.

2.4.3.2. Delivery Methods

Despite some existing research on the effect of different delivery methods of LDPs on training transfer, the findings remain inconclusive. Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis revealed that LDPs that incorporate multiple delivery methods are significantly more likely to result in higher training transfer compared to those relying on a single method. The authors categorised the studied delivery methods into three distinct categories: 1) Information-based methods primarily focused on delivering information through lectures and presentations, 2) demonstration-based methods aiming to demonstrate the desired skills and behaviours through practical examples and case studies, and 3) practice-based methods focused on providing experiential opportunities for participants, such as role-plays, simulations and hands-on guided practice. Similarly, Tafvelin et al. (2021) found that LDPs employing a variety of delivery methods, including lectures, role-plays, and casework, were more likely to enhance training transfer. Moreover, Wisshak and Barth's (2022) qualitative analysis of interviews with leadership facilitators showed that training transfer was enhanced when LDPs used a combination of role-plays, peer-feedback exercises, learning journals and practice-oriented training.

The studies discussed above highlight the benefits of adopting a blended approach in the delivery of LDPs, but concerns about the effectiveness of different methods still persist. Generally, LDPs that incorporate the element of application or practice are believed to be more effective in enhancing training transfer (Turner et al., 2018). Leskiw and Singh (2007) found that action learning, which involves problem-solving of real-time organisational challenges, as well as challenging work assignments and job rotations, is a particularly

advantageous method for leadership development. This finding aligns with Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis, which demonstrated that practice-based training is more likely to enhance training transfer by enabling participants to fully grasp the taught content and implement it within real work environments, whilst also reflecting on their leadership experiences. Similarly, Griffith et al. (2019) emphasised the importance of providing participants with opportunities to practice learned behaviours in various contexts shortly after completing a LDP. Lehtonen and Seeck (2022) further expanded on the concept of leadership development as practice, asserting that leadership is developed in situ through conscious reflexivity, observation, experimentation, and the incorporation of participants' contexts and lived experiences into classroom activities. They argued that setting up communities of practice, consisting of leaders from different levels within the same organisation, can enhance the relational aspect of LDPs through action and reflection.

On the other hand, Lacerenza et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of combining practice-based methods with information- and skill-based methods in LDPs. They argued that the exclusive utilisation of practice-based methods, which promote active experimentation and reflection, may not provide participants with a conceptual understanding of why certain behaviours occur (Lacerenza et al., 2017). In an earlier study, Day (2010) also challenged the notion that leadership is best learnt on the job, noting that on-the-job learning often occurs ad hoc and can be challenging for managers to recognise and conceptualise. Additionally, the focus on performing well in stretch assignments that may have important career implications might hinder individuals from experimenting, making mistakes and learning from them (Day, 2010). Considering these concerns, this study aims to explore the preferences and perceptions of line managers regarding the delivery methods LDPs.

2.4.3.3. Facilitator

Although the role of leadership facilitators, who are responsible for the design and delivery of LDPs, is considered to be crucial in the training transfer process, it has been scarcely researched (Wisshak & Barth, 2022). This is because, the quality of LDPs relies not only on the content but also on the facilitators' performance and other contextual factors (Patrick et al., 2009). Drawing on Burke and Hutchins (2008) and Ismail et al.'s (2017) definition, in this study a leadership facilitator is defined as a professional responsible for designing, developing, and delivering LDPs. Such facilitators require expertise in leadership as well as teaching and facilitation skills (Ismail et al., 2017). Moreover, according to Burke and Day's

(1986) first meta-analysis on the subject, the level of the facilitator's experience may significantly impact the effectiveness of LDPs. This is because the facilitators serve as role models for participants, influencing their motivation to learn and self-efficacy (Ismail et al., 2017). Similarly, Luria et al. (2019) found that effective facilitators who successfully model desired leadership behaviours and provide relevant examples are more likely to support participants in replicating those behaviours. However, it is worth noting that Luria et al.'s (2019) study was conducted within the context of a real organisation's LDP, which limited the researchers' ability to isolate the specific elements of the facilitators' behaviours from other contextual factors that might have influenced the participants' enhanced leadership capacity.

Nevertheless, Patrick et al.'s (2009) earlier study, which was conducted in the context of a military LDP, provided some insights into the effect of leadership facilitators' behaviours in the training transfer process. The study involved 123 facilitators and 1,149 participants from the UK Armed Forces, and examined 1,150 reported incidents of effective and ineffective facilitators' behaviours. The findings of this study were grouped into eight categories of facilitators' behaviours that were deemed important: 1) showing and demonstrating (leading by example), 2) using instructional strategies (such as breaking down the content into manageable pieces), 3) leveraging knowledge and experience (such as communicating clearly, answering questions adequately, pacing the content appropriately, and being prepared), 4) incorporating feedback and practice, and being flexible (such as tailoring the content to the trainees' needs, encouraging practice and correcting behaviours), 5) utilising rewards and control, 6) encouraging behaviours through praise and enthusiasm, 7) guiding, coaching and mentoring through individual interactions, 8) demonstrating commitment by taking on additional responsibilities beyond regular duties. Notably, the reported behaviours did not differ significantly between the perspectives of facilitators and participants (Patrick et al., 2009).

In a more recent qualitative study conducted by Wisshak and Barth (2022), interviews with leadership facilitators shed light on their sense of responsibility for their trainees' level of training transfer. Whilst facilitators acknowledged their role in facilitating the transfer process, they recognised that the ultimate outcome was influenced by various factors, including the trainees themselves, their supervisors, and the organisations involved. Hence, exploring the desires and requirements of line managers from leadership facilitators through

further research would provide valuable insights into the behaviours that are deemed effective in promoting training transfer in LDPs.

2.4.3.4. Adult Learning Theory

As explained earlier in this chapter, this study combines Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer with Knowles' (1984) adult learning theory, widely known as andragogy. Recent research by Allen et al. (2022) and Recigno and Kramer (2022) has underscored the significance of systematically designing LDP curricula based on adult learning theory. These scholars have proposed an integrative approach to LDPs, combining Knowles' (1984) adult learning theory of andragogy with experiential learning and leadership theories. In this section, I outline Knowles' (1984) six principles of adult learning: learner's self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation, and the need to know. Knowles' (1984) adult learning theory of andragogy advocates for the design of active and reflective learning environments, wherein facilitators serve as role models and enablers of participants' self-directed learning. This theory recognises the value of incorporating learners' unique perspectives and experiences into the learning environment. It emphasises the importance of contextualised learning, active exploration and real-life application (Allen et al., 2022). I will now delve into Knowles' (1984) six principles of adult learning and explore their practical application in the context of LDPs.

The first principle of Knowles' (1984) andragogy centres around the learner's self-concept. In the context of LDPs, each manager is argued to possess a unique biography characterised by diverse experiences, needs, motivations, goals, teams and organisational context. Therefore, LDPs should be designed to incorporate and respect participants' biographies and personal experiences, encouraging them to integrate their context into their individual development journey (McCauley et al., 2017; Scholtz, 2023). This is because, according to Knowles' (1984) andragogy, adults have a deep psychological need to be recognised and treated as self-directed individuals. When learners feel that others are imposing their desires upon them without involving them in the decision-making process, it can generate feelings of resentment or resistance, distracting them from the learning process and diverting their attention on such internal conflicts. This factor is often cited as a significant reason for high dropout rates in voluntary programmes (Knowles et al., 2005). Therefore, adopting a learner-centred approach, where participants assume ownership of planning and facilitating learning activities, is argued to lead to increased engagement and motivation, ultimately resulting in

enhanced training transfer. To ensure that development programmes meet the learners' expectations, mutual planning between the facilitator and learners is considered to be important (Knowles, 1984). An example of the successful application of this learner-centred approach is a development programme for line managers at a large international manufacturing company. In this case, line managers actively participated in assessing their learning needs, planning the programme, designing and implementing the learning modules, and evaluating the programme. Upper management was also involved to ensure commitment, support, ownership, and financial investment. According to Knowles (1984), this approach proved to be successful, demonstrating the effectiveness of a learner-centred approach in LDPs.

However, it is important to note that while the andragogical model aligns with the principles of Human Resources Development in treating individuals as responsible for their own development, there are differences in the emphasis placed on learner control. Knowles et al. (2005) pointed out that andragogy promotes learners' full control over the identification of learning needs and the design of learning methods. On the other hand, Human Resources Development often prioritises performance outcomes and business results, sometimes overlooking the learners' personal wants and needs. Additionally, the andragogical approach assumes that learners possess a high level of self-awareness regarding their learning needs, can accurately identify specific learning requirements, and are motivated to participate in the identification process (Knowles et al., 2005). However, it is acknowledged that some adults may have a significant degree of personal autonomy but still prefer a highly instructor-led setting due to limited knowledge on the subject, lack of confidence, or considerations of convenience, speed, or preferred learning style (Knowles et al., 2005). This approach has also been criticised by Brookfield (1986) for implying that the facilitator is a technician within a consumer model that is exclusively focused on providing whatever satisfies learners. Said that, Brookfield (1986) asserted that ignoring the learners' preferences and needs is arrogant and unrealistic. However, he also suggested that it would be misguided to completely disregard facilitators' perspectives of learners' needs and appropriate learning and teaching methods.

Building upon the first principle of the andragogical model, the facilitator assumes a dual role: the primary responsibility of designing and managing the programme's content, and the secondary role of serving as a content resource (Knowles, 1984). This approach recognises that learning sources extend beyond the facilitator and encompass the learner's own

experiences, peers, and other learning material resources. In the context of LDPs, the facilitator's role shifts to that of a learning partner rather than an expert who unilaterally determines the content, sequence, and learning methods (Scholtz, 2023). This approach underscores the notion that facilitators should not merely act as dispensers of knowledge and wisdom. Instead, their role should be to manage and facilitate the learning process, enabling managers to leverage their personal experiences to formulate their leadership philosophy and values, and incorporate abstract concepts and theories of leadership and management into their practice as leaders (McCauley et al., 2017).

The second principle of Knowles' andragogy emphasises the role of experience in adult learning (Knowles et al., 2005). According to this principle, adults learn best when they draw from their experiences and share their leadership insights during class discussions (McCauley et al., 2017). While not all learners possess prior leadership experience within an organisational setting, they likely have experienced leadership in action in other domains of life, such as family and school. Knowles (1984) argued that adults themselves are the richest source of learning for themselves and one another. Disregarding or undervaluing adults' experiences can lead to learners feeling rejected and less engaged in the learning process (Knowles, 1984). This is noted to be particularly true for adults with limited formal education, as their professional identity often hinges on their accumulated experiences (Knowles, 1984). However, it is important to acknowledge that the longer one's experience, the more likely they are to have formed entrenched mental habits and biases that can impede learning (Knowles et al., 2005). To address this, adult learners require personalised teaching and learning approaches (Knowles et al., 2005). Experiential learning methods, such as group discussions, simulations, field experiences, problem-solving exercises, case studies, and assignments, have been identified as effective methods for adult learners (Knowles, 1984; Knowles et al., 2005). By prioritising personalised and experiential learning, facilitators can help learners forge meaningful connections between new concepts and theories and their own real-life experiences. However, as noted in section 2.4.2.2., research on the effect of different delivery methods of LDPs on training transfer remains inconclusive.

The third principle of Knowles' (1984) andragogy underscores the significance of adults' readiness to learn. According to this principle, adults are more inclined to engage in learning when they perceive the programme's content personally beneficial and immediately applicable to their daily work. As individuals progress through different stages of life, they

become increasingly receptive to learning that they perceive relevant to their circumstances (McCauley et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important for the programme's content to clearly demonstrate the practical benefits to help learners develop an appreciation and readiness for learning (McCauley et al., 2017). Knowles (1984) further explained that readiness to learn can be cultivated through purposeful career planning, exposure to role models, participation in simulation activities, and self-assessment of one's ability to perform a task. By creating programmes that are immediately relevant and applicable to learners' lives and experiences, facilitators can increase the motivation and readiness of adults to engage in the learning process. This raises the question of what line managers perceive as relevant and practically applicable in LDPs, an aspect that will be examined in this research.

The fourth principle of Knowles' (1984) andragogy emphasises the importance of adults' orientation to learning. According to this principle, adults learn best when they are confronted with real-world problems that necessitate solutions and enable them to apply their learning in practical situations (Knowles, 1984). In this regard, hands-on experience becomes a crucial source of learning (Scholtz, 2023). This is because adults are more focused on tasks and solving problems in their learning efforts, prioritising the application of knowledge over the subject matter itself (Knowles, 1984 Knowles et al., 2005). Consequently, the effectiveness of lessons is heightened when they are situated within the context of real-life scenarios and perceived as immediately applicable (McCauley et al., 2017). Moreover, adult curriculum should be structured around life situations rather than according to subject matter units (Knowles, 1984).

The fifth principle of Knowles' (1984) andragogy highlights the importance of motivation in adult learning. According to this principle, while external factors, such as power, prestige, and financial rewards, can serve as motivators for adults, their primary motivation stems from intrinsic factors, such as self-esteem, goal attainment, recognition, personal growth or the desire to better serve their team or community. Consequently, the incorporation of proactive goal-oriented assignments that provide learners with a high degree of control and autonomy can yield positive outcomes (McCauley et al., 2017). However, learners may encounter internal and external barriers that impede the effectiveness of such assignments. These barriers could include negative self-concept, limited opportunities to apply newly acquired KSBs, time constraints, and restrictive learning environments (McCauley et al., 2017). Furthermore, Knowles et al. (2005) asserted that adults seek to engage in learning experiences that are enjoyable and fulfilling, enhancing their capacity for growth. Therefore,

learning should be approached as an exciting and enjoyable discovery process (Knowles, 1984). The role of the facilitator in motivating adults to learn is crucial, as highlighted Knowles et al. (2005). Facilitators can foster motivation among adult learners through their expertise in conveying relevant and useful information, empathy in understanding learners' needs and expectations, enthusiasm in demonstrating an appropriate level of emotion and energy, and clarity in communicating effectively with learners. By sharing personal experiences, offering examples from others, and utilising analogies, facilitators can showcase their expertise and connect with learners on a meaningful level (Knowles et al., 2005).

The sixth principle of Knowles' (1984) andragogy stresses the importance of 'the need to know' adult learning. According to this principle, adults are more motivated to learn when they perceive the programme's content as personally relevant to their current circumstances (McCauley et al., 2017). Therefore, they require a clear understanding of what they will be learning, why it is important, and how it will be taught. It is also important for adult learners to grasp the benefits of learning something as well as the potential consequences of not learning it (Knowles et al., 2005). To address this need, Knowles et al. (2005) argued that learners should be actively engaged in a collaborative planning process that appeals to their need to know and their self-concept as independent individuals. Such an approach can lead to increased self-efficacy, commitment, and motivation to apply the learned KSBs. In the context of LDPs, this raises the question of what line managers desire and need in terms of the content of LDPs, and how they would prefer to be involved in the planning process, an aspect that will be explored in this research.

2.4.4. Work Environment

In addition to trainee characteristics, and factors related to programme design, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer recognised the importance of work environment elements for the effective transfer and maintenance of training over time. As noted by Burke and Hutchins (2007), development programmes do not exist in a vacuum and as such the work environment plays a significant role. Similarly, Avolio (2007) emphasised that organisational leadership cannot be modelled adequately without consideration of the context in which it is enacted. Avolio's (2007) definition of context encompasses the historical context, which shapes perceptions of desirable leadership and followership styles, the proximal context, including team characteristics, task characteristics, and performance

domains, and the distal context, which comprises the organisational culture and the broader socio-cultural environment. Avolio (2007) specifically conceptualised leadership as the interplay of multiple organisational stakeholders, culture, group maturity, and the specific task at hand. Further, according to Vardiman et al. (2006), while leadership is often viewed as a dyadic relationship between leaders and followers, it is crucial to investigate the context in which leadership emerges and develops to gain a better understanding of the environmental factors that facilitate the development of leaders in conjunction with their individual characteristics.

Hotho and Dowling's (2010) empirical research, which utilised focus groups and semi-structured interviews with participants of LDPs, found that participants' interactions with LDPs were influenced by various individual and contextual factors. This finding challenges the linear and unidirectional logic often employed in the design of LDPs. In their qualitative research, Hotho and Dowling's (2010) identified several impediments to participants' application of learning, including conflicting and changing demands and priorities, lack of role models, the constant need for firefighting, a lack of time for reflection, subordinates' unwillingness to assume more responsibility, and insufficient empowerment and challenge. Further studies have explored the impact of an organisation's structure, mode of governance, overall objectives, industry dynamics, as well as cultural and historical contexts on the development of specific leadership approaches (McDermott et al., 2011). Baron and Parent (2015) found that the organisational context plays a crucial role in the training transfer process. Specifically, participants mentioned the importance of feedback provided by their managers, colleagues, and team members, the presence of an agile organisational culture that embraces change, and the provision of support as influential factors determining the extent to which learned behaviours are applied. According to Botke et al. (2018), a supportive work environment is particularly critical for the transfer of soft skills training, requiring active support from participants' managers, colleagues, and team members. Botke et al. (2018) further emphasised that training transfer is enhanced when the work environment promotes autonomy, supervisor support, peer support, subordinate support, and an organisational culture that encourages and rewards the application of learned KSBs. Similarly, Ford et al. (2018) suggested that work context factors significantly impact the transfer of training over time, while acknowledging the need for further research to provide clearer definitions of these contextual factors. Previous studies have also highlighted a significant gap in the training transfer literature, which has not sufficiently examined the effect of the post-training work environment (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007).

A recent study by Vandergoot et al. (2020) highlighted the influence of work environment factors on training transfer within LDPs. The authors asserted that factors such as organisational systems and policies, manager and peer support, as well as the provision of opportunities and time to apply learned skills, can either enable or inhibit transfer. However, the specific mechanisms through which these contextual factors impact transfer from LDPs remain unexplored (Vandergoot et al., 2020). Moreover, Vandergoot et al. (2020) found that organisational factors played a significant role in the longer-term transfer and maintenance of skills acquired through LDPs. They observed that organisational support systems, perceived support (in the form of shared reflection and feedback), and opportunities to practice were moderately correlated with transfer generalisation and skill maintenance three months after the training, although these correlations were not immediately apparent following the training. Furthermore, Soderhjelm et al. (2021) discovered that participants in LDPs encountered unsupportive behaviours from their direct reports and other leaders when attempting to implement the leadership KSBs learned during the programme. Participants also faced challenges such as high workloads, a lack of time for reflection, and inadequate provision of feedback, all of which hindered the training transfer process.

In the broader context of workplace learning and development, Fuller and Unwin (2004) highlighted the significance of enabling work environments that offer a spectrum of learning and development opportunities. The authors introduced the concept of the expansive-restrictive continuum as a framework to analyse workplace learning dynamics. According to this theory, expansive environments —distinguished by an abundance of development opportunities, participation in diverse communities of practice, and supportive job designs— facilitate deeper learning and development experiences. In contrast, restrictive environments limit these possibilities. Fuller and Unwin (2004) posited that expansive environments benefit both the individual, by broadening their learning horizons and potential for growth, and the organisation, by aligning individual capabilities with broader organisational objectives. Similarly, Billett (2001) underscored the significance of the workplace's readiness to provide developmental opportunities, conceptualised as affordances, alongside the necessary support, in shaping the quality and outcomes of workplace learning. However, Billett (2001) acknowledged that, while structured learning strategies, such as modelling and coaching, can enhance employee performance, the effectiveness of these approaches is contingent upon the work environment's readiness to support learning.

Building upon these insights, Eraut (2004) delved deeper into the mechanics of workplace learning by examining a variety of influencing factors, including the physical and cultural setting of the workplace, the specific characteristics and intricacies of the tasks undertaken, and the modalities of communication and collaboration among employees. This comprehensive analysis by Eraut (2004) positions the work environment as an implicit curriculum, whereby employees acquire skills and knowledge not solely through direct instruction but also via the subtleties of everyday experiences and interactions. This approach underlines the notion that learning is a continuous, embedded aspect of the work process, frequently occurring through observation, practice, problem-solving, and the sharing of knowledge within the daily flow of work activities.

In contrast, a longitudinal study conducted by Stiehl et al. (2015) involving 132 managers revealed that organisational support, defined as the extent to which organisations acknowledge participation in LDPs, provide role models for desired behaviours, and cultivate a positive reputation for the training, did not directly impact the acquisition of leadership KSBs. However, Stiehl et al. (2015) emphasised that organisational support played a crucial role in enhancing the relationship between participants' motivation to lead and the acquisition of leadership skills, thereby facilitating the learning process. Specifically, participants, whose organisations demonstrated interest in the programme's content and expressed appreciation for their involvement, exhibited greater perseverance in mastering the new KSBs (Stiehl et al., 2015). In the following sections, I will explore the main work-related factors identified in previous research that have been argued to influence training transfer within LDPs, including organisational culture, and supervisory and peer support.

2.4.4.1. Organisational Culture

In this dissertation, the definition of organisational culture draws upon Sackmann et al.'s (2021) literature review. Culture is conceptualised as a dynamic composition of enduring and collectively held values, beliefs, expectations, norms, rules of conduct, and goals within an organisation. Culture is distinct for each organisation and has the potential to influence the behaviour of leaders and employees. While the impact of leadership on organisational culture has received significant attention in previous research, the effect of organisational culture on leadership remains largely unexplored (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007). Consequently, there is a need to investigate how organisational culture acts as a contextual

factor, shaping the definition and interpretation of effective leadership by line managers and other stakeholders (Avolio, 2007).

Existing research on the effect of organisational culture on the outcomes of LDPs has yield limited findings. Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007) found that participants are more inclined to apply learned KSBs, when they believe that their actions are understood and accepted by other employees because their organisation's existing norms, expectations, and mental maps are aligned. Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe's (2007) study further identified the fear of breaking cultural norms as a primary barrier to training transfer. Amagoh (2009) suggested that a supportive organisational culture should involve active engagement from top management in LDPs, along with the reinforcement of taught KSBs through the organisation's performance appraisal and rewards systems. Similarly, Dalakoura (2009) opined that leadership development practices should be integrated into the organisation's day-to-day operations to become an integral part of its overall organisational culture.

According to Vardiman et al. (2006), an organisational culture that enables leadership development exhibits the following characteristics: has a learning orientation, facilitates change, encourages collaboration and information-sharing, rewards leadership development, holds leaders accountable for the development of others, views failures as learning opportunities, and invests in developing individual leaders as well as building networked relationships among them. On the other hand, Vardiman et al. (2006) noted that organisational cultures that do not support or value leadership development can even hinder the growth of leaders who possess the necessary individual characteristics. For instance, individuals with influential leadership qualities and a drive for change may be perceived as disruptive or problematic by their direct managers or senior management, who prioritise short-term business continuity and goals. To address this concern, Leskiw and Singh's (2007) preceding research suggested the establishment of a direct link between an organisation's LDP and its values, mission, and strategy. Furthermore, Leskiw and Singh (2007) emphasised that the responsibility for embedding leadership development into the organisation's systems, including performance management, rewards, succession planning, and the daily work of managers, should be shared across the different functions and levels, including the Chief Executive Officer and executive team, Human Resources, line managers and employees.

In a more recent study, Botke et al. (2018) the challenges of isolating the influence of direct managers and peers on participants' behaviours, as these often reflect the broader organisational culture. When the organisational culture fails to encourage participants to actively apply newly acquired KSBs, take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them without fear of punishment, the likelihood of maintaining these learned KSBs over time decreases (Botke et al., 2018). Conversely, Botke et al. (2018) conceptualised an enabling learning culture as one that facilitates learning, promotes appreciation for learning, and allows learners to make mistakes and learn from them. Based on this conceptualisation, an enabling learning culture was argued to enhance leadership development. However, Botke et al. (2018) acknowledged that the negative effect of an unfavourable organisational culture can be partially mitigated by peer support. Contrariwise, Burke and Hutchins (2008) found that peer support may not enhance training transfer in companies with hierarchical and bureaucratic cultures and structures. Moreover, Sackmann et al. (2021) asserted that changes in organisational culture require time and a combination of interlocking interventions at all hierarchical levels. Finally, according to Wisshak and Barth's (2022) qualitative analysis of interviews with leadership facilitators, the organisational culture is an important determinant of training transfer. For instance, a facilitator stated that although they had been tasked with training line managers on more participative leadership styles, the organisation demonstrated and rewarded strictly hierarchical leadership. Consequently, the training transfer process was hindered. Considering the inconclusive and incomplete findings from previous research on the effect of organisational culture on leadership development, this study aims to explore the desires and needs of line managers within their organisational context regarding the practical implementation of KSBs obtained from LDPs. Additionally, the research aims to gain insights into line managers' perceptions of how the organisational context could support their development as leaders.

2.4.4.2. Supervisory and Peer Support

In addition to the organisational culture, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model emphasises the influence of trainees' direct managers on the extent of training transfer. According to the authors, direct managers play a crucial role in facilitating the application of learned KSBs by providing trainees with opportunities to practice and apply them after completing a training programme. Furthermore, it is suggested that direct managers offer praise, relevant assignments and other extrinsic rewards to actively reinforce and encourage participants who demonstrate the desired KSBs. This is because, according to Baldwin and Ford (1988)

employees tend to imitate their supervisors in order to be accepted and potentially receive rewards. Consequently, the extent to which a supervisor behaves in ways that are congruent with the training programme is likely to enhance the trainees' level of training transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Supporting Baldwin and Ford's (1988) theory, DeRue and Wellman (2009) found that supervisory and peer support, particularly through feedback, can significantly enhance participants' performance by increasing their motivation. Such support encourages trainees to maintain focus despite developmental challenges and reduces performance anxieties and evaluation uncertainty. Building on these findings, a more recent study by Botke et al. (2018) highlighted the positive influence of managers and peers on the training transfer process. They found that these stakeholders played a critical role in helping participants understand the relevance and application of the learned leadership KSBs through feedback, examples, and role modelling (Botke et al., 2018). Similarly, Sackmann et al. (2021) noted that the participants' direct managers are the most important influence since they have control over the participants' roles and responsibilities, priorities, degree of autonomy, rewards and sanctions, resource access, and career progression. As a result, participants may imitate their direct manager's behaviour in their quest for success. This argument is also supported by Avolio and Hannah's (2008) earlier study, who opined that the participants' direct manager can significantly accelerate their development by serving as role models for the taught KSBs. Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe's (2007) qualitative analysis further supported the notion that involving the direct managers of the targeted participants involved in the LDP is a strong predictor of post-training transfer. To this end, the authors recommended delivering the programme sequentially to different hierarchical levels, starting from top management. Additionally, Dalakoura (2009) found that when managers develop the leaders they supervise, they not only transfer their knowledge and experience but also enhance their own leadership capacity. Furthermore, Day and Dragoni (2015) asserted that supervisory support, including role modelling effective leadership, setting performance standards, and providing job-related information, can significantly enhance leadership development. However, the value of supervisory support was found to depend on individuals' needs and prior experiences (Day & Dragoni, 2015).

Finally, Tafvelin et al. (2021) acknowledged the prevailing notion in the literature that supervisory and peer support generally have a positive impact on training transfer. This effect is attributed to individuals' tendency to derive their sense of identity from their group

memberships, which can provide them with security, companionship, intellectual stimulation, and emotional bonds. Accordingly, when participants receive support from their supervisors, they may emulate behaviours they perceive as significant and relevant to their social identity. However, Tafvelin et al. (2021) found no evidence to support this claim and instead argued that this discrepancy may arise because leadership development differs from other types of training, as supervisors and peers are not directly involved in the leader-follower relationship. Nevertheless, Tafvelin et al. (2021) emphasised the need for further research to elucidate this finding. Similarly, in their literature review, Botke et al. (2018) found that the specific behaviours encompassed by supervisory support, as examined in the majority of studies, were either unclear or inconclusive. Given the lack of consistent evidence linking supervisory support to training transfer among participants of LDPs, further research is warranted (Botke et al., 2018). Since previous research has interpreted and conceptualised supervisory support differently, it is necessary to conduct additional research to better understand its influence on training transfer.

2.5. Conclusions

This chapter serves the purpose of reviewing previous research to establish the contextual background of my study, position it within the broader scholarly discourse, and identify existing research gaps. Baldwin et al. (2017) emphasised the need for future research to delve deeper into participants' expectations, personal experiences, and the dynamic context within training and development programmes. Baldwin et al. (2017) further proposed a shift towards examining how to enhance and optimise training transfer rather than simply seeking to establish relationships between contextual factors and the extent of training transfer. To this end, they recommended expanding the use of qualitative research to gain insights into training transfer and its contextual dynamics. Similarly, Vogel et al. (2021) argued that the future of leadership development research lies in in-depth qualitative research-practice partnerships that foster collaboration between scholars and key stakeholders in leadership development, including learners and designers of LDPs. This collaborative approach enables the exploration of complex and practical questions pertaining leadership development. By narrowing the research-practice gap and capitalising on multiple perspectives, research can contribute to the improvement of LDPs (Vogel et al., 2021).

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology that was employed to address the research questions. I first discuss and justify the interpretivist research paradigm that guided this empirical study, which follows a qualitative design. I then describe my chosen data collection method: semi-structured interviews. The next section (3.3) of this chapter presents my positionality. The following sections (3.4-3.6) outline the participant selection and recruitment process, and discuss ethical considerations as well as data management. Section 3.7 explains the transcription process of the recorded interviews. The final section (3.8) details the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis process that I employed to analyse the research data.

3.2. Research Approach

As highlighted by Krauss (2005), the research methodology should correspond to the phenomenon under investigation, rather than attempting to force-fit the phenomenon into a preconceived methodology. That said, researchers should begin their inquiry by identifying the research phenomenon or problem they wish to investigate, and then proceed to select a methodology that aligns with the nature of the phenomenon and the research questions. The research questions and investigated phenomenon of this study were explained in the 'Introduction' and 'Literature Review' chapters. In the following section, I explain why I selected the interpretivist paradigm and how it informed my research.

3.2.1. Interpretivist Paradigm

Drawing on Morgan's (2007, p.49) definition, a paradigm is a system of 'belief and practices that influence how researchers select both the questions they study and methods that they use'. In educational research, the term 'paradigm' describes the researcher's worldview with particular respect to their research context (MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006). Paradigms guide the researcher on how to ground their research, frame their approach to a research issue, offer suggestions on how to address it, and how to interpret their research data (Kivunja & Kuiyini, 2017). As noted by Mackenzie and Knipe (2006, p.32), if researchers do not nominate a paradigm from the beginning 'there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design'. In other words, a paradigm influences

the researcher's epistemological, ontological, ideological and axiological premises, and, in turn, the selected research methodology and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Research in the field of leadership development frequently privileges positivist approaches and quantitative methods driven by a functionalist agenda primarily concerned with discovering an optimal design for LDPs that will enhance organisational performance (Mabey, 2013; Ardichvili et al., 2016; Klenke, 2016; Kniffin & Priest, 2022). According to Mabey (2013), the interpretivist paradigm features occasionally in leadership development studies (10.5% of the total of 228 cited studies), and, interestingly, it is almost exclusively confined to European authorship and journals. Previous research, as shown in the seven meta-analytic reviews on leadership development (Burke & Day, 1986; Collins & Holton, 2004; Taylor et al., 2009; Avolio et al., 2009; Avolio et al., 2010; Powell & Yalcin, 2010; Lacerenza et al., 2017), has primarily sought to discover cause-and-effect relationships between leadership development and leadership capacity and/or organisational performance. Hence, most studies included in the aforementioned meta-analyses sought to provide explanations and to make predictions about the effect of LDPs on leadership capacity and/or organisational performance based on measurable outcomes. This approach is often rooted in a deterministic presumption that the events observed are caused by certain factors, and, therefore, if we understand the causal relationships between these factors, we will be able to make predictions and control the potential effects of the explanatory factors on the dependent factors (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, research guided by the positivist paradigm mainly aims to inductively produce explanations about the relationship among variables through direct observation and collection of 'facts' about the social world. For this reason, the collected data is viewed as a reflection of reality and replicability is a key concept. Subsequently, theories are formed and then further tested against additionally observed facts.

Positivism is a philosophical approach grounded in an objectivist epistemology, an ontology rooted in naïve realism, an experimental methodology positivism emphasises the importance of presenting an objective, context-free, and perception-independent understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, which, in turn, commonly promotes the use of quantitative methods (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Specifically, positivism's experimental methodology involves manipulating one or more variables to determine their effect on other variables, with a focus on distinguishing and analysing cause-and-effect relationships. This approach is underpinned by a deterministic view of epistemology, which is concerned with how we

come to know the world (Krauss, 2005). As a result, this methodology requires control over the variables and subjects being studied (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

However, in line with Klenke et al. (2016), I believe that positivist approaches are not best suited to effectively address the multi-disciplinary and context-dependent nature of leadership development, nor are they capable of providing a deep understanding of the multiple meanings that line managers ascribe to it. As explained in the 'Literature Review' chapter, leadership development is seldom linear or sequential due to the complex nature of leadership, which involves a dynamic relationship between the leader, the followers, and the context (Day & Dragoni, 2015). Furthermore, the relationship between the quality of a LDP and the enhancement of its participants' leadership capacity and/or the organisation's performance is often not causally related, as cause and effect are interdependent rather than analytically separable (Klenke et al., 2016). Consequently, generating a set of effectiveness measures concerning the design, delivery, and evaluation of LDPs is unlikely to produce a 'success recipe' that can be applied to all programmes through inductive inferences (Klenke et al., 2016).

For these reasons, I have situated this study within an interpretivist paradigm. My choice was based on the belief that a more profound understanding of leadership development is possible by investigating the interpretations of the phenomenon by those experiencing it, and by using their own words as the basis of analysis (Shah & Corley, 2006). The purpose of this study was to explore the subjective wants and needs of line managers from LDPs, interpret the meanings they attribute to the phenomenon in their context, investigate the factors that may influence leadership development, and explore its implications and relationship with other phenomena. An interpretive approach enabled me to identify new variables and relationships, acknowledge the complexity of leadership development, and recognise the influence of the organisational and broader context. Rather than being confined to causality or an explanation of measurable facts, I viewed relationships between variables as complex and fluid, with reciprocal rather than unidirectional influences (Klenke et al., 2016).

3.2.2. Epistemology, Ontology, Ideology and Axiology

This section provides an overview of the interpretivist paradigm's four key elements that guided this research, namely epistemology, ontology, ideology, and axiology, following Lincoln and Guba (2000). Based on Kivunja and Kuyini's (2017) conceptualisation of the

interpretivist paradigm, I adopted a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, and a balanced axiology. My subjectivist epistemology entails that I have analysed and interpreted the data through my own cognitive processes, which were informed by my interactions with the research participants. My relativist ontology acknowledges that leadership development is a socially and contextually constructed phenomenon that presents multiple realities, which were explored through my interactions with the research participants. I employed a naturalist methodology that involved data collection through interviews. Lastly, I followed a balanced axiology, which involved presenting the research findings in a fair and impartial manner, while acknowledging my values as a researcher (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The remaining of this section offers a more in-depth discussion of each element.

In regard to my epistemological stance, which refers to how knowledge is acquired (Trochim, 2006), I view the relationship between the researcher and participants as crucial to the interpretation of the beliefs and experiences shared by the latter, as their meaning will be influenced by how they are interpreted by the researcher (Geertz, 1973). As emphasised by Bukamal (2022), interpretivist research is premised on the notion that knowledge is situated in the relationships between people, and therefore, experiences do not speak for themselves like facts. The researcher plays a critical role in the discovery and interpretation of situated knowledge. Hence, I do not claim that the findings of this study are objective, generalisable, or transferable. I share the view of Geertz (1973) that the lived experiences of the participants cannot be captured or mapped like facts that stand on their own, as often assumed in positivistic quantitative and qualitative social research. Rather, my positionality as the researcher influences the nature of my observations and interpretations, making me an integral part of the research process (Bukamal, 2022). Thus, my research is an outcome of my interaction with the research participants and my interpretation of their views, perceptions, and stories (Geertz, 1973).

In terms of my ontological position, which refers to my understanding of the nature of the social world and 'reality' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), I believe that the phenomenon of leadership development and 'reality' are situated, multiple, and socially constructed. As Mabey (2013) suggests, the context of leadership development is shaped by structures such as the leadership ideology within each manager's organisation, the meanings conveyed in the communication about the offered LDPs, and the relationships between the programme's materials, assessment, and appraisal processes. In turn, these meanings, practices, and

relationships are sustained by the programme's participants, who may either be aligned with the organisation's ideology or opposed to it (Mabey, 2013). However, I do not claim that my research findings are necessarily generalisable through inductive inferences or transferable to other research contexts (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Instead, I acknowledge that while certain elements may be shared across social groups, multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals with varying experiences and subjective views of reality and the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

From an ideological standpoint, I recognise that research is inherently value-laden, influenced by my perceptions and broader ideological convictions as a researcher (Lincoln & Cuba, 2000). Gergen and Gergen (2000) argued that research methods cannot be separated from ideology. However, as Aper (1995) suggested, methodological and ideological debates need not result in unresolvable relativism in the quest for meaning. Rather, the primary focus should be on discovering relevant research findings that can bridge the gap between research and practice. To that end, this research focused on investigating the needs and wants of line managers from LDPs, as well as their perceptions of how these needs and wants could be met. The aim was to inform my own practice, as well as that of other designers and/or facilitators of LDPs.

Axiologically, as Rhodes (2000) posits, I view research as a dialogic process that recognises the researcher's subjectivity in producing textual representations of participants and their experiences. It is important to note that my values as a researcher are reflected in this study's ethical considerations, my relationship with participants, and the methods of data collection and analysis (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Throughout the research process, I have been mindful that my epistemological, ontological, ideological, and axiological stance shape my decisions in terms of research design and analysis. By exercising reflexivity and being transparent about my values and ethical considerations, including explicitly articulating my positionality later in this chapter, I aimed to enhance the transparency, rigor, and credibility of this study's findings.

3.2.3. Qualitative Design

As noted above, research in the field of leadership development has traditionally relied heavily on quantitative methodologies, such as surveys, laboratory and field experiments to collect data and develop scientifically tested solutions to identified leadership development

issues (Klenke et al., 2016). However, dissatisfaction with the limitations of these methods has been expressed, particularly due to the complexities of multivariate research, the need for large sample sizes, and difficulties in interpreting results (Klenke et al., 2016). While quantitative methods are useful for developing explanatory and sometimes causal models and allow for replication across contexts, they are not well-suited for understanding the nuanced meanings and experiences that leaders ascribe to leadership development in their organisations. As a result, there has been a growing interest in qualitative research methods to provide a deeper understanding of leadership development experiences and meanings (Klenke et al., 2016).

According to Kniffin and Priest (2022), qualitative research is essential for fully comprehending the complexities of leadership development. Given the dynamic nature of leadership theory, practice, and education, research in this area should incorporate reflection and interpretation. However, rigid research processes that are insensitive to context and inflexible to the unexpected are less likely to yield a comprehensive understanding of what line managers want and need from LDPs before, during, and after their participation. Therefore, using inflexible quantitative methods can lead to an incomplete understanding of this context-dependent phenomenon. On the other hand, qualitative research in the field of leadership development aims to obtain a deeper and richer comprehension of human experiences, challenge current assumptions, and envision new possibilities (Kniffin & Priest, 2022).

In the 'Literature Review' chapter, I explained my view of leadership and leadership development as a co-constructed and fluid phenomenon (McCauley & Palus, 2021). As Kniff and Priest (2022) have noted, the more complex our understanding of leadership becomes, the more responsive our research methods need to be. Qualitative research, with its naturalistic and in-depth exploration of leadership phenomena in their natural context, allows for the direct experiences of human beings as agents of meaning-making to be discovered (Klenke et al., 2016). To produce thick descriptions of the studied phenomenon and capture multiple voices and perspectives, I chose to engage in co-enquiry with participants of LDPs through a relational lens. That said, as a researcher with my own biases and professional experiences, I became the primary data collection instrument. To address my potential biases, I employed reflexivity and adapted the research process as needed. For example, following the first few semi-structured interviews, I changed the interview protocol by adding some questions to better address the 'individual' and 'programme' dimensions of

my selected theoretical framework, namely Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer. Further, when some participants struggled to answer what they believed the learning objectives of LDPs should be, I asked them about the Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSB) they believed were needed to lead themselves, their teams, and the organisation, as well as what leadership challenges they faced. This approach allowed me to better explore what participants perceived as important in leadership and what potential learnings they would want or need to acquire from LDPs.

In conclusion, a qualitative research design was chosen because it aligned with my philosophical stance and theoretical approach to the research questions and context. I believe that leadership development is a socially constructed phenomenon, shaped by the experiences and meanings ascribed to it by those who engage in it. Hence, my qualitative research approach, data collection, and analysis methods allowed me to capture the complex and dynamic nature of leadership development through the direct experiences and perspectives of the research participants. However, as Moses (2002) noted, quantitative and qualitative research methods should not be polarised and set in opposition to one another. Adhering rigidly to one paradigm can limit our reflexivity and narrow our vision (Klenke et al., 2016). Therefore, although this research collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and coded using reflexive thematic analysis, there were instances where the number of occurrences of some codes was counted.

3.2.4. Semi-Structured Interviews

To gather data for this project, I used semi-structured interviews as my data collection instrument. As noted by Klenke et al. (2016), interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods in social sciences for conducting systematic social inquiry. Related to my research topic, Douglas et al. (2021) suggested that qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews can help identify relationships and provide nuanced understandings of the wants and needs of participants in LDPs. I chose to use this qualitative research design because of its exploratory nature, which allowed me to attend to the complexity and multidimensionality of leadership development. Between the 6th of January 2023 and 26th of April 2023, I conducted ten interviews with an average duration of 42 minutes. I did not view the interviewees as mere repositories of knowledge; but, rather, I treated them as co-creators of knowledge in collaboration with me as the interviewer. Thus, I considered the

interviews as search-and-discovery and meaning-making activity (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004).

The semi-structured format used in this research provided a balance between structure and flexibility, allowing for both pre-defined questions and new themes to emerge during interviews. According to Galletta (2013), this format offers versatility for data collection providing opportunities for clarification and reflection. However, as noted by Agee (2009), although good questions do not necessarily produce good research, poorly constructed questions can negatively impact the data collection and analysis. I chose to use semi-structured over structured interviews, as the former allowed for greater flexibility in question wording and sequencing. This was important given the diverse backgrounds, experiences, functions, companies, industries and countries of the research participants.

Moreover, it is important to note that the participants had varying levels of English proficiency, although they were all able to communicate clearly since they worked in international companies where English served as the official language. Nevertheless, interviewing non-native speakers presents certain limitations, as they might not always be able to express complex thoughts in an additional language, which could result in limited depth and detail in the information gathered during the interviews. Additionally, non-native speakers may feel compelled to conform to perceived cultural and linguistic norms of the research environment, possibly giving answers that align with what they think would be appropriate, instead of producing authentic answers that exhibit subtle nuances (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). To ensure data accuracy, authenticity and rapport-building, I remained vigilant throughout the interviewing process. I consciously avoided complex questions, idiomatic expressions and technical jargon. Whenever necessary, I asked clarifying questions and prompted the interviewees to elaborate. I also asked them whether my questions were clear or if they required further clarification (Welch & Piekkari, 2006).

As explained in the previous sections of this chapter, I did not regard the data collection as a one-way process, in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but does not provide information (Klenke et al., 2016). What is more, I wanted to avoid creating an asymmetrical power relationship with my interviewees, which is typically more pronounced with structured interviews (Klenke et al., 2016). By using a semi-structured approach and not confining myself to the boundaries of a rigid interview protocol, I aimed to invite the interviewees to share their perspectives freely and express different opinions (Klenke et al.,

2016). My primary aim was to gain authentic and nuanced insights into the subjective experiences of the participants, to understand their perspectives and contextualise their wants and needs. Although semi-structured interviews have some limitations, such as decreased comparability between participant responses and increased complexity in data analysis (Patton, 2002), these were not significant concerns for this research. This is because the study did not aim to uncover universally accepted 'truths' about line managers' needs for LDPs, but rather to contextualise the individual perspectives of participants.

To ensure some consistency in the data collected, the interviews followed a semi-structured format with some pre-defined questions. However, the wording and sequence of these questions were flexible and adapted to each participant based on their answers and the flow of conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The pre-defined questions focused on the investigation of LDPs, based on the theoretical framework of Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer. This was to ensure that the same aspects of the topic would be covered with all participants. The pre-defined questions were designed to be relatable to the participants' experiences and provided a starting point for discussion. The list of these indicative interview themes/questions can be found in Appendix A. This document was shared with the participants a week before their scheduled interviews to allow time for self-reflection and preparation. Feedback from participants indicated that this approach was helpful and put them at ease during the interviews.

To ensure accuracy and depth in the interpretation of data, additional probing and follow-up questions were asked during the interviews based on the participants' responses. During the interviews, I also took notes of questions that I wanted to go back to when I felt that I needed more elaboration on the participants' responses. The semi-structured interview format allowed for flexibility and enabled me to create a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged participants to share in-depth information (Klenke et al., 2016). It also facilitated exploration of complex and contradictory matters (Garot, 2009). The participants were informed beforehand that additional questions might be asked to ensure clarity and to potentially elicit further insight, and this seemed to ensure they were comfortable with the approach. As a coach, I have received training and gained experience in asking probing questions, which allowed me to be comfortable with asking additional questions to explore topics in greater depth.

Establishing rapport with interviewees is critical to ensure that they become co-creators of knowledge and meaning (Klenke et al., 2016). To build rapport, I explained the purpose of the research and invited the interviewees to ask questions or discuss any concerns. For those who were not acquaintances of mine, I also provided a brief introduction to myself, including my background and role in the research, to make them feel more at ease. I demonstrated respect, attention, interest, and non-judgment to establish a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees to share their thoughts and experiences. In the upcoming section 3.3, I delve into the nuances of my positionality as both an insider and outsider in relation to the research participants. As Trochim (2006) emphasised, interviews require personal sensitivity, adaptability, and the ability to follow a protocol. To ensure that the semi-structured format would not increase the likelihood of leading questions, I avoided showing any signs of agreement or disagreement during the interviews. I asked neutral questions and avoided expressing approval or disapproval of the responses. Although I provided responses such as "I see", "I understand", and "this is interesting" to encourage the interviewees to elaborate, I remained as neutral as possible. I listened attentively to the interviewees' responses and asked follow-up questions when necessary (Mack et al., 2005). To produce a 'cleaner' transcript, I consciously avoided interrupting the interviewees with phrases such as "mm-hmm" or "okay". However, I did use these phrases to encourage less confident participants to continue speaking. Nevertheless, even in these cases, I remained neutral to reduce the possibility that my responses would be interpreted as assessments of the interviewees' answers.

The interviews were conducted online due to two main reasons. Firstly, as described in Section 3.4, the participants were geographically dispersed. Secondly, at the time of my application for ethical approval to the College Research Ethics Committee in October 2022, the Coronavirus pandemic was still ongoing, and its trajectory remained uncertain. According to the University of Glasgow's (2021) guidance on Coronavirus, specific lockdowns and travel restrictions could be imposed or reinstated at any time, potentially prohibiting in-person research and travel. To avoid the risk of delays in data collection and re-submission of the application for ethical approval, I opted to conduct all interviews via Zoom or Teams. Additionally, this approach aligned with the University of Glasgow's (2018) 'Lone Study Procedure,' which helps mitigate risks associated with remote data collection. Conducting online interviews also provided the participants with greater flexibility in choosing a convenient time and place to attend the interview, thus increasing the likelihood of participation. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of the

online format. Firstly, it could have brought about technical issues, such as unstable internet connections, which could have disrupted the flow of the interviews and compromised the quality of data. Fortunately, this research did not encounter any such technical failures. Furthermore, the absence of physical presence may have posed challenges in establishing a strong rapport with my participants, potentially affecting the depth of responses and the ability to discern non-verbal cues. Despite these limitations, the decision to conduct online interviews was deemed the most pragmatic and secure approach given the circumstances.

3.3. Professional Perspective

According to Hall (1990, p.222), 'we all write and speak from a particular place and time...What we say is always 'in context', positioned'. Positionality, as defined by Merriam et al. (2001), refers to a researcher's position in relation to the 'other', which encompasses whether the researcher is an insider and/or outsider. Bukamal (2022) claims that a researcher's positionality is inherently multidimensional and includes the researcher's own perceived positionality, the researcher's perceived positionality by the research participants, and the researcher's actual positionality. Being an insider rather than an outsider provides easier access and may allow for more relevant questions and a more authentic understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam et al., 2001). However, insiders may be unconsciously biased and unable to ask curious questions from a distance. On the other hand, being an outsider can enhance a researcher's ability to ask thought-provoking questions and gain more information. Nonetheless, as Merriam et al. (2001) noted, the boundaries between insider and outsider positions are not clear-cut. Researchers must be aware of their own positionality and overlapping identities, which affect their meaning-making in the research process. Additionally, researchers should clearly articulate and communicate their positionality, including their power identities, in their research.

In this section, I provide an explanation of my positionality in relation to the ten line managers who participated in the research. As a Human Resources professional with extensive experience in designing, developing, and delivering LDPs for line managers of all organisational levels in different industries, including iGaming, Banking, and Manufacturing, I began my data collection with certain assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation and the participants to be interviewed. Moreover, my position as a line manager with a track record of leading employees and teams in large international companies across these industries also influenced my assumptions. As a line manager, I hold my own

beliefs, perceptions, and values about what constitutes effective leadership, how it can be developed, and how it may be enabled or impeded. Additionally, my perceptions about leadership and leadership development are likely influenced by my gender (female), age (millennial), cultural background (Greek expatriate), occupation (Human Resources), education (doctoral student), professional history (former teacher), and even childhood experiences. These factors may have influenced the interplay between my insider and outsider positionalities and ultimately, the construction and representation of knowledge in the research process (Merriam et al., 2001).

In terms of my insider position, as an active Human Resources professional during the time of this research, I had interacted in the past with two of the participants either due to my role as a leadership facilitator or as part of my role as the Head of Talent Development, formerly Head of Learning and Development. My insider position offered certain advantages, including access to some participants, familiarity with the participants' context, and a level of trust and rapport. These advantages, in turn, likely contributed to enhanced engagement with the research by some participants. However, it is important to acknowledge the associated drawbacks of my insider position, such as the potential for bias and subjectivity in the collection and analysis of data, as well as ethical considerations concerning power imbalances. Nonetheless, it should be noted that I did not hold any formal power or authority over the participants, nor was there any indication that they perceived any power imbalance. During the time of the research I did not have a power relationship with the research participants, such as that between a manager and a direct report or a trainer and a trainee. My relationship with the research participants was one of equality, with a shared interest in deepening the understanding of the wants and needs of line managers participating in LDPs.

Simultaneously, I was an outsider since I had never interacted with some of the participants in the past and had never worked with them in the same company. Moreover, I was an outsider because I had never led employees and/or teams in the participants' respective contexts and areas of professional practice. Finally, the participants may have perceived me as an outsider due to this doctoral research, which may have made them believe that I had superior knowledge on the subject. Regarding the influence of my position on my research approach and methodology, my insider position allowed me to better understand the participants' role and responsibilities as line managers. Because I was known to some of the participants, either personally or through my LinkedIn network, this likely had a positive influence in their decision to express their interest to participate in my research. However,

the fact that the participants volunteered instead of being personally invited to participate confirms that their participation was entirely voluntary, I also made it clear that they could leave the research project at any time. Nevertheless, I exercised reflexivity in the sense that I critically reflected on my choices, decisions, and actions as a researcher throughout the research process to examine my own assumptions about access, power relationships, and commonality of experience (Merriam et al., 2001). Reflexivity is a useful tool that can help researchers explore their biases and enhance their awareness of their own position in the research process as well as their interactions with the participants (Bukamal, 2022).

3.4. Participant Selection and Recruitment

Qualitative research often employs purposive sampling, which allows the researcher to intentionally recruit participants who can provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Klenke et al., 2016). In this study, I utilised purposive sampling and recruited participants who met the following eligibility criteria: 1) had direct managerial responsibility for other employees in a large international company with over 2,000 employees, 2) possessed at least two years of managerial experience, and 3) had participated in in-house LDPs offered by their current or previous companies. Each of these criteria was carefully chosen to ensure that the participants could contribute valuable insights and perspectives related to the research topic.

The first criterion consisted of three prerequisites: 1) direct managerial experience for other employees, 2) be employed by a large company (over 2,000 employees), and 3) be employed by an international company. Firstly, participants were required to have direct managerial experience with other employees. This prerequisite was necessary as the research aimed to understand the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs based on their own experiences and contexts. Secondly, participants needed to be employed by large companies with over 2,000 employees. This was based on the assumption that larger organisations were more likely to have a dedicated Human Resources, Learning and Development, or Talent Development department responsible for designing, developing, and delivering in-house LDPs for their employees. Finally, participants needed to be employed by international companies. This criterion was decided upon based on two considerations.

First, based on my professional experience as a Human Resources practitioner who has implemented LDPs for large international companies across various industries, including

Manufacturing, Banking, and iGaming, I knew that LDPs designed for international companies are often implemented across the company's global locations. This is because international companies, whose operational and business activities expand beyond national borders, experience the effects of globalisation. Consequently, organisational norms and values tend to converge, leading to the adoption of a 'universal' corporate culture (Webber, 1969). Additionally, international companies across the globe use similar technologies to overcome similar challenges, which makes the leadership challenges companies face also likely to be similar. Institutional isomorphism, which involves the widespread adoption of organisational norms and practices in a mimetic manner, further supports this standardisation of the way companies recognise and react to leadership challenges. This standardisation extends to human resource management practices, including the design, delivery, and evaluation of LDPs (Gentry et al., 2014). Gentry et al.'s (2014) study found that company-wide leadership development strategies are often implemented by international organisations to ensure standardisation across locations and provide a common leadership framework. Despite the political, economic, cultural, and social differences between the seven participating countries in Gentry et al.'s (2014) study (China/Hong Kong, Egypt, India, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States), there was overall consistency in terms of the leadership challenges that the 763 participating managers stated they faced across countries. The leadership competencies (leading employees, resourcefulness, and change management) that leaders perceived as important in overcoming the aforementioned challenges were also similar across countries. That said, Gentry et al. (2014) argued that, due to this cultural convergence, the learning objectives of LDPs deployed within international organisations could be effectively determined independently of the country in which individual leaders work from. However, previous research has raised concerns regarding this 'one-size-fits-all' approach arguing that there are cultural differences in terms of people's perceptions of what constitutes effective leadership, and that these are likely to be reflected in what employees perceive as leadership challenges and competences required to overcome them (House et al., 2004).

The second reason for my decision to require participants to work for international companies was that such companies are widely considered to face unprecedented challenges in the ever-evolving digital age (Bawany, 2019). These challenges include growing demands related to interconnectivity, digitalisation, increased sustainability concerns, regulatory complexities, and changes in employee demographics (Hieker & Pringe, 2021). As a result, managers are expected to lead in an increasingly fast-paced, ambiguous, and volatile global

market, and manage teams across multiple countries, time zones, languages, and cultures (Collins & Holton, 2004). The business landscape of today demands that managers possess a unique skill set that enables them to operate effectively in a complex and constantly changing environment. They are expected to navigate the intricacies of cross-cultural communication, leverage technology to drive innovation, and lead employees who have different cultural backgrounds and expectations (Bawany, 2019). By requiring participants to work for international companies, I aimed to explore the wants and needs of line managers who are likely to face these complex demands and challenges.

To capture the diversity of the wants and needs of line managers in their unique contexts, I recruited participants who worked for large international companies across different locations. Specifically, I recruited six participants from Malta, two from Sweden, one from the United Kingdom, and one from the United States. Although most participants lived in Malta at the time of this study, likely due to my extensive LinkedIn network in Malta, where I am based, this aspect is not considered relevant to the study. The reason is that all participants were employed by international companies, many oversaw global teams, and all except one were not citizens of Malta. To ensure a diverse group, I recruited participants from different industries, including iGaming, Banking, Advertising Services, Manufacturing, and the Technology sector. I also recruited participants from different departments, such as Tech and Product Development, Operations, Marketing, Legal, and Strategy.

Although gender was not the focus of this study, I wanted to ensure a gender balance in the participant group. Initially, purposive sampling led to the recruitment of six male participants who met the study's criteria, providing valuable insights into the researched phenomenon. I subsequently sought to include female participants. This led to modifying my recruitment approach on LinkedIn to explicitly invite female participants. The snowball sampling method (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) was then employed to address the challenge of recruiting additional female participants. Specifically, the first two female recruits recommended two additional female managers for the study. In summary, by recruiting a diverse group of line managers from different industries, departments, countries, and genders I hoped to gain an understanding of their diverse wants and needs from LDPs. This also allowed me to shed light upon variations in the phenomenon to develop rich and encompassing results (Levitt et al., 2017).

The second requirement for participants was to have at least two years of managerial experience. This was because without adequate managerial experience, participants would be unable to reflect on their needs and wants, and the factors that might enable or hinder them from applying the acquired KSBs from LDPs to their jobs. The length of managerial experience among participants ranged from two to twenty years, with one having 2-4 years of experience, four having 5-10 years, three having 11-15 years, and two having 16-20 years. This allowed for an exploration of the wants and needs of line managers with different levels of experience and positions in their respective organisations. Specifically, the study interviewed two first-line managers, one mid-level managers (managers of managers), and seven senior managers (directors and heads of department).

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Group	Managerial Experience	Department	Managerial Level
I1	Male	45-54	5-10 years	Strategy	Senior
I2	Male	25-34	5-10 years	Tech	Senior
I3	Male	35-44	11-15 years	Operations	Senior
I4	Male	45-54	16-20 years	Tech	First-line
I5	Male	45-54	11-15 years	Marketing	Senior
I6	Male	35-44	5-10 years	Operations	Senior
I7	Female	35-44	11-15 years	Operations	Senior
I8	Female	35-44	5-10 years	Marketing	Senior
I9	Female	35-44	2-4 years	Legal	First-line
I10	Female	45-54	16-20 years	Administration	Mid-level

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

To effectively explore the factors related to LDPs that enable or hinder the transfer of KSBs to job performance, the third requirement was for research participants to have experience participating in LDPs offered by their current or previous companies. This requirement was directly linked to the purpose of this research, which sought to explore the factors related to the programme design and work environment that may enable or hinder line managers from transferring the acquired KSBs from LDPs to their job.

After defining the participation requirements and obtaining ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Social Sciences of the University of Glasgow, I initiated the recruitment process for the research participants using LinkedIn. I created a post on my LinkedIn profile (Appendix E), inviting line managers who met the participation criteria to contact me if they were interested. The post provided a clear explanation of the research's purpose and directed eligible line managers to complete a Microsoft Form (Appendix F) with their contact details to schedule the online interviews. The post included a link to the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), Privacy Notice (Appendix C), and Consent Form (Appendix D) for transparency and consent purposes. I submitted a copy of the LinkedIn post and the Microsoft Form as supporting documentation for ethical approval. The recruitment phase was concluded once ten suitable participants had been interviewed and I was confident that I had collected sufficient data to identify patterned meaning across cases and produce a rich findings report (Braun et al., 2016).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

As Sikes (2006) notes, research is not a neutral or innocent practice, and all research endeavours have the potential to affect anyone touched by them. To minimise the potential negative impact of this study, I obtained ethical approval from the College Research Ethics Committee. I provided the Committee with several supporting documents, including a Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, Consent Form, Indicative Interview Questions, LinkedIn Post, and Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) form. The DPIA form is now a required component of all applications for research projects that involve the collection, processing, and/or storage of data derived from human participants. By obtaining ethical approval and providing these supporting documents, I ensured that my research was conducted in a responsible and ethical manner, with due consideration for the participants and their rights.

To protect the privacy of the participants, the only personal information collected through the Microsoft Form to schedule interviews was basic information such as names and contact details (email address and, optionally, phone number). Once extracted, this data was immediately deleted from the Form and stored securely on the University's OneDrive for the duration of the project. To ensure the interviews did not cause inconvenience, I asked participants to suggest the best date and time for their interview based on their availability. As my work schedule was flexible, I was able to accommodate their preferences.

Additionally, I informed participants that if they had unexpected deadlines, pressing commitments, or a change in circumstances, they could reschedule the interview at their convenience. Fortunately, no interviews had to be re-scheduled.

At the start of each interview, I obtained the participants' informed consent to ensure that they fully understood the purpose and potential implications of the study. This involved reading out the consent form and asking them to confirm their agreement to participate, whether they preferred the interview to be recorded via video or audio, and asking if I could use direct quotes if anonymised. All participants provided verbal consent for their participation and the use of video recording, and for me to use direct quotes if anonymised. Despite the consent stage, I reminded the participants that they were free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason. In regard to the online format, I had advised the participants that they could turn off their cameras or use the blur or digital background functionality of Zoom if they did not feel comfortable sharing their surroundings. Nonetheless, all participants agreed to have their cameras on and did not use the blur or digital background.

Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonymisation, as recommended by Bishop (2017). All personal information provided during the interview was de-identified from the research data through pseudonymisation. This included the masking of the participants' names, age, or any other information that could potentially identify them in the transcripts. Additionally, information that could potentially identify specific individuals, institutions, organisations, or situations related to the participants' professional practice was also removed. The interview recordings were encrypted immediately, and I transcribed them verbatim without the involvement of any other individuals or third-party entities. Any additional personal information, such as job titles, company names, or length of service, was also masked in the transcripts to protect the participants' privacy.

In the Participant Information Sheet, it was made clear that the scheduled interviews would not exceed 75 minutes, unless the participants requested additional time. As it happened, the longest interview lasted 58 minutes. I took great care to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and supported throughout the interview. To that end, I explained at the outset that if they experienced any distress, we could pause the interview, change the subject, or stop the interview altogether. I also made it clear that participants could withdraw their consent to participate at any time, without prejudice and without having to give any reason.

If a participant had decided to withdraw their consent, I would have asked them for permission to use the data they had already provided. If they refused, I would not have used their data. While I did not encounter any instances of distress among the participants, I was prepared to offer advice and support in such a case. As a Coaching Supervisor and Coach, I am trained and experienced in providing this kind of support. However, as anticipated, the research topic and interview questions did not directly lead to discussions of safeguarding or risk of harm. Nevertheless, as with any research interview, it is impossible to guarantee that such topics will not arise.

3.6. Data Management

To ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), I collected only the necessary personal data required for this study. All research data, including interview recordings and original transcripts, were stored in my OneDrive account, provided by the University of Glasgow. This account requires multi-factor authentication and can only be accessed through personal password-protected devices. Since the interviews were conducted via Zoom, I used the PC version and signed in using my University of Glasgow email address, as I knew that the application stores data in the Cloud. I did not collect, record, or store data classified as high risk or sensitive by the GDPR. All recordings were saved locally to comply with GDPR requirements, and no confidential data was recorded to a cloud server outside the European Union. Participants were informed of their right to access, copy, rectify, or erase personal data, as well as their right to object to data processing.

While this study mainly dealt with digital materials, any paper documents containing personal or research data were temporarily stored in secured cabinets in my residence, where I live alone. Once the data analysis was completed, these documents were destroyed. Participants were informed that research data would be retained for 10 years after the completion of the project, in line with University of Glasgow research guidelines. In the Participant Information Sheet, participants were also informed that if this study leads to the production of conference papers, journals, or any future publications (print and/or online), their data will remain de-identified through the use of pseudonyms, and any direct quotes will be anonymised.

3.7. Transcription

To ensure the accuracy and quality of the research data, Tilley (2003) emphasised the importance of the transcription process for interviews. In line with this, I manually transcribed all ten interviews verbatim. I made it a point to transcribe each interview the same day or the next day after it was conducted to ensure maximum recall and accuracy. Although manual transcription is a time-consuming process, I deemed it necessary to ensure the fidelity of the data and avoid any errors or discrepancies that could arise from automated transcription tools such as Nvivo. During my trial study as part of the Open Studies II course, I had tested Nvivo's auto-transcription tool, but the results were not satisfactory, and the discrepancies could have negatively impacted the quality of my analysis and interpretation of the data. As a result, I decided to transcribe the recordings from scratch to ensure accuracy. When I commenced the data collection phase of my dissertation, I continued with manual transcription, given my prior experience and the fact that both I and several of my interviewees were non-native English speakers with pronounced accents.

In the transcripts, I reproduced all spoken words and sounds, including hesitations and false starts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I paid particular attention to punctuation (commas, full stops, and question marks). I indicated laughter with 'haha', hesitation with 'hmm', and reported the direct speech of others in inverted commas (''). False starts and cut-offs in speech were signalled with three full-stops in a row (…). Although, there are many ways of transcribing audio data, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2012), this level of detail is sufficient for thematic analysis. Finally, I used codenames to refer to the participants consisting of alphanumerical forms (Heaton, 2022). Specifically, I used the codenames 'I1' through 'I10' based on the chronological order in which these participants were interviewed.

3.8. Data Analysis

In this section, I will outline the data analysis method used in this project, namely Braun and Clarke's (2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). As my research is rooted in an interpretivist paradigm, I chose to analyse the collected qualitative data using Braun and Clarke's method, which is well-suited for exploring participants' perceptions and experiences as well as the factors or processes that influence the studied phenomenon (Braun et al., 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2022). According to Braun et al. (2016), thematic analysis is a method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset. It is

essentially a systematic process of coding data to develop themes through careful analysis of the dataset. The type of thematic analysis chosen for this research was reflexive, which distinguishes it from codebook approaches, such as frameworks or templates, that promote the notion that coding can be accurate (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2022b). In this context, reflexivity refers to the researcher's critical self-awareness. It involves examining one's own understanding of oneself and others, and analysing how these understandings influence the research (Finlay, 2021). Accordingly, RTA makes explicit the researcher's role in the production of knowledge as well as their philosophical and theoretical assumptions (Finlay, 2021). Because of this, RTA differs from coding reliability approaches that rely on early theme development, use structured or fixed codebooks, and employ multiple independent coders to measure between-coder agreement (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Coding reliability and the avoidance of bias are inconsistent with RTA, because meaning and knowledge are perceived as situated and contextual and are influenced by the researcher's subjectivity as a resource of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In order to uphold methodological integrity, the researcher should clearly state their epistemological beliefs, as I have done at the beginning of this chapter, and choose research designs and procedures that align with their chosen approach to inquiry and effectively support their research goals (Levitt et al., 2017; Finlay, 2021).

Themes are defined as central organising concepts in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Themes do not emerge from the data, instead, they are produced from the researcher's theoretical assumptions, analytical resources and skills, and the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In this study, themes were not conceptualised as domain summaries of what the participants shared about a concept at the semantic level of meaning - what is directly observable at the surface of the data, serving as a data reduction exercise (Braun et al., 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2022). Instead, adopting an experiential orientation to thematic analysis, patterns of partial, multiple, and/or contextually situated meaning were sought and constructed at both the explicit (semantic) and implicit (conceptual/latent) levels (Clarke et al., 2015). To produce themes that were meaning-based interpretive stories, instead of topic summaries, I ensured that they had a central idea that united their diversity (Braun & Clarke, 2022b). Furthermore, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2012, p.2), the thematic analysis was not solely focused on 'identifying unique and idiosyncratic meanings and experiences found only within a single data item'. Rather, the analysis aimed to make sense of the commonalities (patterns) across the dataset that were relevant to answering the research questions.

The themes were generated following a six-phase process, which is outlined step-by-step in this section (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In the first phase, I familiarised myself with the data by reading and re-reading it in its entirety. I read the data actively, analytically, and critically, making notes and asking myself, "What does this data mean?". The notes were made in the form of dated memos on NVivo. However, having manually transcribed the interviews myself allowed me to deeply immerse myself in the data even before re-reading it completely (Byrne, 2022). This immersion in the data facilitated my understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, and views, which subsequently helped me identify potential themes that were relevant to answering the research questions.

In the second phase, I generated concise descriptive (semantic) and interpretive (latent) codes to identify significant patterns across the dataset (Braun et al., 2019). These codes were essentially organising ideas that sought to capture conceptual patterns across the data. Rather than prioritising latent or semantic codes, I produced codes of the data extracts depending on the type that was more meaningful for answering the research questions (Byrne, 2022). Drawing on Braun et al.'s (2019) approach, I adopted a predominantly inductive orientation to the coding phase, starting with the data rather than trying to fit it into pre-existing coding frames derived from the selected theoretical framework. In other words, the data was open-coded at this stage, and I sought to generate data-based meanings (Byrne, 2022). Nonetheless, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2012, p.3):

> Analysis is impossible to be purely inductive, as we always bring something to the data when we analyse it, and we rarely completely ignore the data themselves when we code for a particular theoretical construct.

Although the analysis was primarily anchored in the data, some aspects of deductive analysis were employed to ensure that the produced themes were meaningful to the research questions (Byrne, 2022). For instance, I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer, Knowles' (1984) adult learning theory of andragogy, and Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory, and Vella's (2002) principles of effective adult learning. More importantly, my analysis was guided by my broader epistemological and ontological standpoints as these are presented in section 3.2.2. of this chapter.

The aforementioned theoretical constructs that informed my analysis (Knowles, 1984; Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Kolb, 2015; Vella, 2002) allowed me to explore implicit meanings

that participants may not have explicitly articulated. This approach was experiential in nature and essentialist in its theoretical orientation, with the aim of giving voice to participants' subjective perspectives on leadership development, their desires and expectations from LDPs, and their perceptions of how these programmes could meet their wants and needs (Braun & Clarke, 2012). However, my analysis did not attempt to make claims about the social construction of leadership development, which would have required a critical orientation (Byrne, 2022). With regards to the practical process of data coding, I tagged with a code each data item that appeared to have some relevance to my research questions. These codes were continuously tweaked as I worked through the data to better fit my developing analysis (Braun et al., 2016). This task was manually performed using the NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software. However, as highlighted by Clarke and Braun (2016), I used the software with the acknowledgement that it does not change the essence of the coding process, but simply the mechanics of it.

A second round of coding was performed to facilitate the development of more latent codes (Braun et al., 2016). For instance, the code 'barriers to leadership development' was renamed to 'excessive workload hinders leadership development', and the code 'leader identity' was split into two, namely 'develop a leader identity through self-awareness' and 'understand different leadership styles'. During this second review, the number of generated codes was reduced from 78 to 58. For instance, the codes 'being challenged in a psychologically safe environment' and 'challenge participants to get out of their comfort zone' were merged into 'challenge leaders to get out of their comfort zone'. Furthermore, some codes were deleted because the associated data extracts were found to be too thin, such as 'deep dive into leadership topics', 'learn how to manage conflict', and 'clear career path as a motivation for development'. I also deleted some codes that did not appear to have direct relevance to my research questions, such as 'moderate effect of personality on leadership capacity' and 'interview process for line managers'.

In the third phase of the analysis, I developed prototype or candidate themes from the coded and collated data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I conducted a thorough review of the coded data using an Excel spreadsheet to identify areas of similarity and potential overlaps between codes. As a result, I collapsed some codes and renamed or deleted others to create candidate themes and sub-themes. Any codes that did not fit into a candidate theme or sub-theme were temporarily placed under a 'miscellaneous' category, which was reviewed later to decide if they could be made part of a new theme or should be discarded. During this process, the

number of codes was further reduced from 58 to 48. This phase ended with a set of candidate themes, all the associated coded data collated for each theme, and an initial representation of the relationship between themes.

In the fourth phase, I conducted a comprehensive review of the candidate themes against the collated data extracts as well as the entire dataset to ensure the coherence and consistency of the coding process. This involved a critical examination of the relationship between candidate themes and sub-themes, as well as their association with data extracts, to ascertain the suitability of the codes in informing the themes (internal homogeneity) and the ability of the themes to support the interpretation of the dataset (external heterogeneity) (Byrne, 2022). To refine the themes that were either analytically weak or conceptually overlapping, I redrew the boundaries of each theme and ensured that they meaningfully captured the relevant data. This process involved discarding some codes, relocating others under different themes, grouping some candidate themes, and splitting broader themes into more specific and coherent ones. During this process, the number of codes was further reduced from 48 to 44. Throughout this phase, I continually reflected on the guiding questions, such as: Is this a theme or a code? If it is a theme, what is the quality? Does the theme say something meaningful about the dataset and my research question? What are the boundaries of each theme? What does each theme include and exclude? Are there enough meaningful data extracts to support each theme? Is each theme coherent or is the data too diverse and wide-ranging? (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The output of this review led to further reconstruction of the themes and sub-themes by collapsing, promoting, or removing them. Finally, I created a thematic map using Microsoft PowerPoint to illustrate the relationship between the generated themes and sub-themes.

In the fifth phase, I defined the themes by creating clear and concise names that accurately captured the scope and content of each theme and sub-theme. It was important to establish the central organising ideas and boundaries of each theme to ensure that they were distinct and not overlapping, while also being closely related to other themes and directly addressing the research question. I made several iterations of naming the themes and sub-themes to ensure that they were representative of the associated codes and conveyed meaningful information about the research questions (Byrne, 2022). For instance, I renamed the theme 'engaging programme delivery and contextualised learning' to 'experiential and interactive programme delivery', and moved the sub-theme 'contextual content' from the latter theme to the theme named 'relevant and personalised programmes'. The ultimate aim was for each

theme and sub-theme to have a singular focus and a clear purpose and scope. To this end, I created concise definitions for each theme, which I included in my Excel spreadsheet. I then proceeded to revise the thematic map, which can be found in the 'Findings' chapter.

In the sixth phase, I produced a report of the findings of the analysis aiming to communicate clearly, concisely, and coherently the overall story of the data, including data variations and potential contradictions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2019). I paid particular attention to ordering the themes in a logical and meaningful way to create a coherent narrative of the data (Byrne, 2022). Finally, I weaved together the analytic narrative and data extracts, and contextualised the analysis in relation to previous research on the topic (Braun et al., 2019).

In conclusion to this section, it is important to note that while these six phases are explained in this section sequentially, the analysis was a recursive process that involved moving back and forth between the different phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, throughout this process I reminded myself that the process itself was not the end goal, but rather a means to produce high-quality, meaningful insights. Therefore, I continuously asked myself why I was performing each step and how it related to my research questions. In the forthcoming chapter, I present the findings of the data analysis.

Chapter 4 – Findings

4.1. Introduction

The present study sought to explore the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs as well as their perceptions of how these wants and needs could be met. The thematic analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews with ten line managers provided rich and meaningful findings in relation to the research questions. Specifically, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis, I generated the following three main themes: relevant and personalised content, experiential and interactive programme delivery, and practical application on-the-job in an enabling environment. These three themes address the first research question 'What do line managers want and need from LDPs?'. The nine sub-themes address the second research question 'How do line managers believe that their wants and needs could be met?'. A visual representation of these themes and sub-themes is provided in Figure 1, with themes depicted in blue and sub-themes in yellow. The themes are interconnected as they encompass the participants' wants and needs throughout the entire process of LDPs, including pre-programme delivery (design phase), during the taught modules (delivery phase), and extending beyond the completion of the taught modules (post-delivery phase).
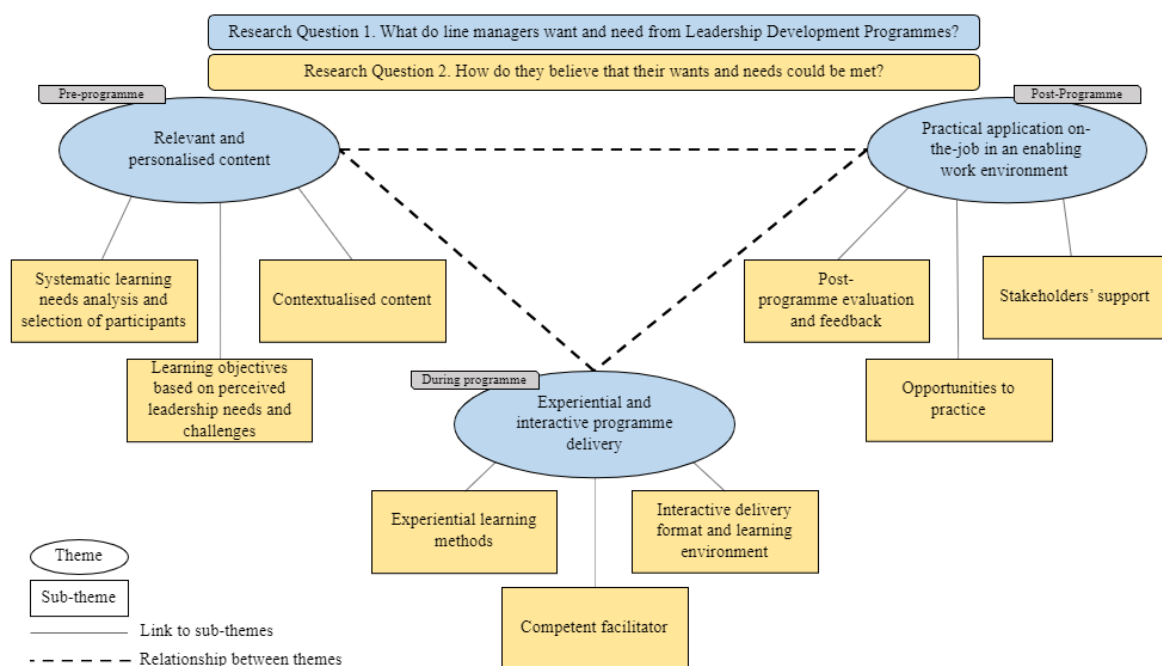

Figure 1. Thematic Map

In the following sections of this chapter, I will systematically introduce and discuss these three themes and their respective sub-themes. Adhering to my chosen interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research design, the themes were not generated based on the number of participants represented within each theme. Rather, the themes were generated as central organising concepts in relation to my research questions, following Braun & Clarke's (2019) approach. By employing this data analysis method, I captured the richness and depth of the participants' perspectives and gained a deeper understanding of LDPs. The themes served as analytical tools that enabled me to explore and interpret the data in a coherent and systematic manner, highlighting key insights and providing a framework for analysis. In the subsequent sections, I will present each theme in sequential order, providing a detailed exploration of their sub-themes along with relevant data examples to support and illustrate the findings.

4.2. Relevant and Personalised Programmes

This theme consists of three sub-themes that capture the participants' wants and needs in terms of the design of LDPs. In particular, the participants stated that they want and need LDPs to address their individual needs as line managers, in addition to meeting their company's organisational needs. To achieve this, some participants expressed the importance of conducting a systematic LNA prior to implementing the LDP. They also highlighted the need for careful participant selection, ensuring that those chosen for the programme are the most suitable and would benefit the most. Furthermore, participants elaborated on their specific learning needs as line managers in large international companies. These needs reflected their currently perceived leadership needs and challenges. Specifically, the participants emphasised the importance of developing a solid leader identity through self-awareness, mastering effective communication as leaders, striking a balance between serving the organisation and their direct reports, empowering team members, fostering psychological safety and trust, leading diverse individuals, and understanding various leadership styles. Lastly, the participants expressed their desire and need for the programme's content to be tailored to their specific work context and be responsive to their leadership experiences. They emphasised the importance of customisation, recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach may not effectively address their unique circumstances and challenges. By expressing these wants and needs, participants underscored their expectations for LDPs to be highly relevant, personalised, and responsive to their professional roles, challenges, and contexts. These insights highlight the importance of considering individual

learner needs and contextual factors when designing LDPs to enhance training transfer to the job.

4.2.1 Systematic Learning Needs Analysis

Overall, the majority of participants affirmed that LDPs should reflect their specific needs as line managers. Notably, during the interviews, several participants stated that the content of LDPs should be tailored based on their managerial level. For instance, an interviewee (I2), who held a senior management position, highlighted the challenges he faced in 'managing up' and 'managing peers' compared to 'managing down', referring to his direct reports. This insight underscores the need for customising LDPs to address the unique developmental requirements of participants at different managerial levels. Additionally, some participants emphasised the necessity of providing comprehensive training for managers who possess limited or no prior experience in leadership roles. According to them, LDPs aimed at first-line managers should commence with foundational aspects of leading individuals and teams. A participant further emphasised the significance of segregating participants based on their managerial level to enable senior managers to glean valuable insights not only from facilitators but also from their peers and their experiences.

> I3: But if you're very fresh to leading teams, or management, it's very different than somebody who's maybe managed a team for 20 years...I think, definitely, if you've had no management experience, you need to be taught from the beginning.
>
> I7: So you have one team leader who started five days ago, you have one 'head of' that has worked for 15 years...I mean, what is the 'head of' going to learn from the other person?
>
> I6: I'm managing, not the team managers, but the managers of them again. So I'm quite far away from the actual work...Now you're talking about influencing others, you're talking about communicating, you're talking about making yourself understood, putting a structure in place, a culture, all these things, and that's very different from team management. So anyway, I do think, in terms of learning objectives, there needs to be a recognition of that, that you're probably going to need very different learning objectives for very different levels.
>
> I2: To getting better at the different areas of the specific role, progressing to management, progressing to senior management, and just like follow the journey of an individual's career, and link it to that.

Moreover, some participants conveyed that their learning needs as line managers also vary based on the function they oversee. For instance, two participants who held managerial

positions in the Operations function, one in the Banking sector and the other in the iGaming industry, shed light on the distinct leadership challenges they face compared to other functional areas. The participants emphasised that managing the Operations function poses unique challenges, primarily due to the high employee turnover and the critical necessity for cross-functional alignment. In this context, participant I2 emphasised that as a manager being able to train his team members is important. Further, participant I6, described the complex and central role of the Operations function within his organisation. The participant explained that Operations is at the centre of various business areas, including regulatory compliance, legal, market developments, and commercial. He stated that his main challenge lies in ensuring that the Operations teams have proper representation and influence in decision-making processes across the organisation. Additionally, I6 emphasised the importance of navigating the dynamics of organisational politics, understanding different perspectives, and effectively communicating the mutual benefits of their team's involvement in decision-making processes. I6's narrative provides valuable insights into the learning needs of a line manager in Operations, such as developing strong influencing skills, the ability to navigate complex organisational dynamics, and to advocate for the team's interests. Moreover, I6 pointed out the significance of understanding the diverse incentives and motivations of various stakeholders within the organisation. Hence, Operations managers are likely to need to develop political acumen and diplomatic skills to foster collaboration and drive mutually beneficial outcomes.

> I2: So for example, in operations, there's high turnover. So you're going to have a big amount of newbies, the people in your team are going to be diverse…And maybe the things that are relevant to you are more about…training them.

> I6: I'm currently managing 15 different teams. And we're sort of right in the middle of everything, Operations, sort of whatever happens, regulatory, legal, commercially, market developments, everything affects us. And we affect it to some degree...my challenges are really about making sure that we are represented when things are decided…it's about, I think, how to navigate…influencing others and I guess getting them to understand your perspective and how it can be mutually beneficial.

In addition to their individual needs as leaders, the majority of interviewees also asserted that the content of LDPs should reflect their company's needs and unique circumstances. The participants spoke of the importance of linking the programme's learning objectives to the company's vision, mission and values. The primary objective of LDPs, according to I3, should be to enable leaders to effectively translate the company vision into actionable plans. This includes empowering teams to achieve desired outcomes aligned with the organisation's goals. Similarly, I10 provided insights into the significance of aligning LDPs with the vision,

values, mission, and purpose of the organisation. This participant suggested that a well-designed programme should integrate and reflect the company's core values. That said, I10's perspective emphasises the importance of a cohesive approach to leadership development, where LDPs are not developed in isolation but rather in alignment with the organisation's culture and core values. Both interview extracts highlight the significance of contextual relevance in designing and implementing effective LDPs. Additionally, other interviewees shared that LDPs should respond to current organisational challenges, such as dysfunctional organisational cultures, barriers to internal mobility, and high employee turnover.

> I3: And then the objectives could be very different for different companies, depending on the size or their objectives or what's happening on the floor…So essentially, how can I lead a team to reflect the company's goals?
>
> I10: Okay, so I think, in terms of identifying the objectives, an organisation, if it's big enough, and set up, in my opinion, properly, would have its vision, values, mission and purpose. And I think any development, training as a whole really should always link into the company, purpose and values.

However, amidst the discussion of aligning LDPs with company objectives and values, one participant raised a concern about the potential danger of confining managers within a rigid leadership model. I6 vocalised that while organisations naturally have distinct cultures, structures, and specific requirements, it is important not to restrict managers in predefined leadership frameworks. This perspective communicates the need for a balance between honouring the company objectives and values, while also providing managers with the autonomy and flexibility to bring their unique strengths, experiences, and perspectives to their leadership roles. By striking this equilibrium, LDPs were conveyed to have the potential to empower managers to advocate for the company vision and values whilst also cultivating their unique leadership capabilities.

> I6: There's going to be a culture, is going to be a structure, is going to be specifications that a company will set. But that's probably as far as you can go in terms of putting managers in a box, or you can go further, but I'm not sure if you should.

To ensure that LPDs fulfil their wants and needs, half of the participants suggested that a systematic LNA should be carried out with the involvement of various stakeholders prior to the programme implementation. This inclusive approach, according to the participants, should involve the company's executive committee as well as managers from various levels. The participants conveyed that such a holistic approach would increase the likelihood of the programme being relevant to meet the diverse needs and preferences of participants,

recognising that what works for one person may not work for another. Participants further highlighted the need for designers of LDPs to proactively seek feedback and remain flexible during the design process. The inputs from different stakeholders were argued to provide valuable insights into various cases, questions, and challenges faced by managers. This feedback would also allow for continuous optimisation and ensure that the programme aligns with individual needs, team dynamics, and overall company objectives. To strike a balance between subjectivity and structure, participants suggested incorporating a standardised approach to gathering feedback. This approach would provide a framework for different focus groups to share their perspectives and answer key questions regarding the design of the desired LDPs. The aim would be to capture diverse viewpoints while maintaining a structured and purposeful approach to programme development.

> I1:[LDPs] are created based on what is the feedback, let's say, from a C-level [executive committee] perspective...the lower level of the management because they are larger number…with the larger number, it comes also a higher number of used cases and higher number of questions, so most likely higher level of feedback.
>
> I10: [LDP] should be set by the top people of the organisation, an executive committee…And it should be purposeful, as in it should be designed in a way that matches not only individual needs, but team needs and company needs.

In summary, the interview extracts highlighted the significance of conducting a thorough LNA, involving multiple stakeholders, including executives, and seeking feedback from various sources.

4.2.2 Selection of Participants

In addition to conducting a comprehensive LNA, the interviewees highlighted the importance of carefully selecting participants for LDPs. The vast majority of participants voiced the concern that not every employee is suited to be a leader. They opined that individuals who demonstrate certain behaviours, such as selfishness, lack of vulnerability, narrow-mindedness, and a lack of willingness to learn, may not benefit from LDPs. Participants conveyed that effective leadership development requires specific qualities and characteristics. They highlighted the importance of skills such as active listening, asking questions, and being patient, which not everyone possesses. The interview extracts also shed light on the challenges of developing leaders who exhibit negative behaviours or have dysfunctional relationships with others. The notion of vulnerability was discussed, with participants noting that it may be difficult to develop individuals who do not want to

recognise and work on their shortcomings. Furthermore, participants raised concerns about changing deeply ingrained aspects of a manager's leadership style or character. They questioned whether it is possible to transform someone into a better leader if they do not have the desire or motivation to improve. This suggests that self-reflection and a genuine willingness to change are critical factors for successful leadership development. Open-mindedness and a growth mindset were also identified as essential attributes for participants in LDPs. Individuals who are not open to learning, lack a broader perspective, and are solely focused on their own success were noted to struggle to effectively lead and collaborate with others. Selfishness and a reluctance to empower and support others were also mentioned as detrimental behaviours for leaders. Conclusively, the interview extracts highlight the importance of carefully selecting participants for LDPs, considering their behaviours, mindset, and commitment to self-improvement.

> I3: I don't think everyone's made up for leadership. I think some people work better, essentially, in isolation...I think it goes back to having the skills of listening and having the skills of asking questions, and the skills of being patient. And not everyone has those.

> I4: If you talk about vulnerability, if there is someone that I really don't like, and I know that other people around me don't like him or her either, if someone were to train him or her, coach him or her, then he or she would need to be as vulnerable as it needs to be for them to recognise that they're not doing a great job. And that's usually the problem. So, catch 22. Maybe not impossible, of course, but I think it's going to be hard.

> I7: If they don't think that they need to learn anything, they're not open-minded, they don't like to reflect, they're going in there [participating in LDPs] and just thinking it's a waste of time, they don't see the bigger picture...These are the employees that are very hard to work with. And they are the ones who will probably not listen either during these leadership programmes...how are you going to empower the rest when you're a selfish individual?

Regarding the selection of participants for LDPs, the interviewees shared the idea that LDPs should be implemented in a 'top-down' way, with the company's top management being trained first. However, it is important to clarify that this 'top-down' approach deviates from the conventional interpretation, which often involves decisions being made by the highest management level and imposed downward. In this context, the 'top-down' approach refers to a process where leadership development is delivered to the senior management level first and then cascaded down through the organisational hierarchy. This approach was asserted to ensure alignment between the leadership lessons conveyed through a LDP and the actions and support provided by the higher-level managers to their subordinates. Participants

affirmed the importance of the higher management level in supporting and reinforcing the taught leadership KSBs. They expressed a desire for the company's top management to undergo training to demonstrate their commitment to personal growth and leadership development. By leading by example, top management can set the tone and expectations for leadership within the organisation.

> I1: the higher-management level has to be almost perfect to be able to support the lower and the people that you are teaching...All my life, in every company, besides one, I found always that the C-level or the high leadership, I always felt like 'why do we do this training, if they don't do it?'...It is a cycle, of course, you start from the top because it's also where the company culture is born and driven.
>
> I10: if you've not done sort of a pyramid style training and done it from the top, then you will experience people that won't think the same or haven't been trained the same.
>
> I3: From the top down, communication on expectations and goals is clear...that kind of feedback loop needs to be driven from the top down in the business.

Finally, the participants emphasised the need for consistency in communication, expectations, and goals throughout the organisation. They noted that if information provided by top-level managers is inconsistent or contradictory, it can hinder the ability of lower-level managers to be effective leaders within their teams. Therefore, creating a feedback loop and ensuring clear and consistent communication from the top down was argued to be crucial.

4.2.3. Learning Objectives based on Perceived Leadership Needs and Challenges

In terms of the learning objectives of LDPs, some interviewees affirmed that these should be clear and communicated from the onset to ensure that participants' expectations align with the programme's intended outcomes. Participants also voiced the need for LDPs to be linked to structured career development paths. They expressed the expectation that participating in LDPs should contribute to their career growth. By providing clarity on how the programme can support their career progression, participants conveyed that they would be more likely to engage and invest in the learning process. Moreover, the interviewees stressed the importance of setting expectations right from the beginning. They highlighted the need for clear communication about the purpose, agenda, and the expected outcomes. By transparently conveying the reasons behind the participants' enrolment in the programme and what the organisation expects them to learn and implement, they argued that there would be a higher likelihood of engagement and commitment from their end.

I10: Everybody understands the expectations, and therefore objectives can be met. And nobody comes out at the end of that training with mismatch of what they're expecting…I think a lot of managers expect career development as part of a leadership programme.

I7: So you set those expectations from the beginning…the company needs to be clear, 'why are we sending you on this course? What do we expect you to learn? And what do you implement after this? And how much can you use from it?'.

The participants of this study affirmed that the content of LDPs should be aligned to their specific leadership needs and challenges. They specifically spoke of their need to: 1. develop a leader identity through self-awareness, 2. communicate effectively as leaders, 3. strike a balance between serving the organisation and their direct reports, 4. empower their team members, 5. foster psychological safety and trust, 6. lead diverse individuals, and 7. understand different leadership styles. These learning objectives are presented below with illustrative examples.

First, half of the participants voiced the desire for LDPs to help them develop a leader identity through self-awareness. They conveyed the need to self-reflect in order to identify their strengths, weaknesses, needs, and boundaries as leaders. Additionally, some participants communicated the need to understand their own leadership styles and align their leader identity with their personal values. A few participants vocalised the challenge of staying true to their values when these are in tension with the leadership style and values of their supervisors. They acknowledged the significance of individuality and viewed having a clear manager identity as a powerful tool for influencing others and setting a direction within the organisation. Finally, they expressed the desire to break free from the confines of their own managers' expectations and have the autonomy to define their own leadership values and establish their own identity as leaders, guided by their personal convictions and principles.

I10: So that they [participants] become empowered and self-aware of their own leadership styles and what they're capable of.

I5: Have an opportunity to become conscious of who you are in regard to others...being able to understand your true self, and spot the weaknesses of your true self...But with no specific requirements, you don't need to be that type of leader. It was more about self-identification of what type of leader you are...What are your boundaries? What are your needs?…What are your absolutely nos.

I6: As much as we can talk about the culture, the company wants, and what they want from their managers...I think it's a good thing, that every manager is going to bring something unique, is going to bring their own personality, their own flair to the role...very powerful thing for a manager to have a very clear identity, about what kind of manager they want to be and then influence others and set the direction.

I1: The values that define a leader is not a recipe...And you don't have to be enslaved by your own manager.

The insights provided by the participants highlight the significance of mindset change in developing a leader identity. One participant noted that managers are often hired or promoted based on their expertise in their previous roles. However, to transition effectively into a leadership role, they need to shift their mindset away from being an individual expert and instead focus on developing their team members. This change involves recognising the importance of empowering others and creating opportunities for their growth and development. Furthermore, a senior manager responsible for managing managers articulated the need to move from an individual conceptualisation of leadership to a relational, and, eventually, a collective one. According to this manager, this shift in mindset becomes more crucial as leaders progress to higher managerial levels. Moving beyond individual performance and taking on a broader perspective that entails delegating responsibilities and creating a culture of empowerment was communicated to be important.

I7: When you get hired, you're usually hired because you are an expert. And then you go into to more of the leader [role] when you're teaching your team.

I6: That's a mindset change I think that quite a few people struggle with. Because they tend to continue doing what they were doing before, which is doing the stuff themselves. But obviously, if you do that, you're preventing others from getting exposure and learning. So, but then the more you move up, the more your mindset has to change.

Second, participants expressed the desire to develop their communication skills as leaders through LDPs. They described effective communication as active listening, asking questions, and providing clear direction. One participant highlighted the significance of effective communication in the modern workplace, where each individual is unique and requires leaders to be adaptable and flexible. He emphasised the need for leaders to prioritise listening and asking questions over dictating or simply informing their team members. This approach was argued to foster a collaborative environment and allow leaders to understand the diverse perspectives and needs of their team members. With regards to designing LDPs,

it was conveyed that managers wish to learn practical techniques for active listening, effective questioning, and clarity in communication.

> I3: The lightbulb moments have always been around effective communication and the approach, which is really 'listen first and ask questions', rather than 'dictate and direct', and essentially inform people of the vision or the expectations, because I think in the modern workplace everyone is very unique and you need that skill set to adjust and be flexible and be adaptable as a strong leader today. All around communication.

Third, some participants expressed the need to learn how to empower their team members. They recognised that an important part of their leadership role is to leverage the potential of each individual and support their development. One participant stressed that when team members are equipped with the necessary skills and feel heard and valued, they are more likely to deliver optimal results. This participant attributed the success of teams to their leader's ability to empower and enable them. Another participant emphasised the act of giving credit and recognition to team members for their contributions. By doing so, she opined that leaders can empower and acknowledge their team members, fostering a sense of ownership and encouraging further participation and collaboration. In the context of LDPs, these findings suggest the incorporation of modules or activities that focus on empowering others. In particular, LDPs should develop the capability of managers to delegate effectively, create a supportive and inclusive work environment, and recognise and celebrate the contributions of their team members.

> I1: It is our job as a manager to leverage that potential of the person to grow.
>
> I3: And then sometimes you don't need to speak to the leader, you speak to their team...And if they've been given the skill sets and been listened to, then usually they'll deliver an exceptional value…A lot of that can be attributed to the leader.
>
> I7: Even if I come up with an idea in a meeting, I will still say that X person came up with the idea...because then you are empowering that individual. And then you get more and more out of their brain.

Fourth, some participants mentioned the need as leaders to foster psychological safety and trust within their teams to enable open communication, honestly, and productivity. One of the participants emphasised that this need is even more pronounced when the team is going through change regardless of its scale. By addressing the emotional and psychological needs of their teams, leaders were argued to be able to alleviate concerns and create an environment where individuals feel supported and ready to adapt to new circumstances. Further, a first-line manager shared the perspective that leaders can build trust by demonstrating empathy

and offering support to team members, even beyond their job-related challenges. By recognising personal commitments and extending support, leaders were opined to enhance trust, loyalty, and, ultimately, employee performance.

> I4: They [direct reports] dare to be honest and open and don't feel threatened or anything like that.

> I5: It needs to be a safe environment, based on trust. So basically, I think that our focus should consist in ensuring a safe environment in which the teams can then excel in productivity…Give them an opportunity to express themselves, to feel secure, to feel appreciated, and not necessarily judged.

> I8: Any change scares. So, you know, how to manage that, to make sure that the employees feel safe.

> I9: You have to develop trust between your colleagues, and you know, yourself. So I can trust with my eyes closed, like, if she tells me that she has to go home because she has a sick child and she will continue from home…I know that she will go home and she will continue and work even more, because they will appreciate that you are nice to them, you know, and you go down to their level and understand their commitments.

Fifth, over half of the interviewees stressed the need to develop their ability to lead diverse individuals, which they perceived as a considerable challenge in their role as managers. The interviewees acknowledged that each person is unique, and effective leadership requires adapting and adjusting one's approach accordingly. They further noted that leading teams in international companies often involves managing individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, which they conveyed to often struggle with and would benefit from receiving guidance on. One of the participants described encountering situations where she had to figure out how to navigate cultural differences within her team without having previously received training. Additionally, participants expressed the importance of understanding and managing diverse personalities within their teams. Conclusively, it was suggested that by equipping leaders with the knowledge and skills to embrace diversity and leverage the strengths of their team members, LDPs could enhance their ability to navigate complex multicultural settings and maximise team performance.

> I10: To be able to recognise that people will be different, you know, everybody is not a mirror copy of yourself, and therefore, you are given the tools in that leadership training to be able to manage those situations.

> I8: How to manage the team in a way that is according to the company policy and decisions, but still considering and being respectful towards different cultural backgrounds…It's a very international and multicultural company. And that should be also taken into consideration while conducting a development training.

I9: Sometimes it is difficult to adjust to different characters and to different people…I would like to learn how to do this better.

Sixth, the participants expressed the need to develop their ability to strike a balance between serving the organisation's objectives and meeting the individual needs of their team members. They recognised the challenge of ensuring that their teams achieve company goals while also understanding and addressing personal challenges faced by team members, even if they are not directly work-related. For instance, two participants mentioned the difficulty of managing employee underperformance when it is linked to personal or family health issues. They highlighted the pressure to deliver on agreed outcomes, regardless of individual circumstances, which can create concerns around fairness among other team members. For instance, leaders voiced the challenge of asking team members to cover for their peers, leading to overtime work or disruption of their days off. The responsibility of leaders was described as a delicate 'dance' between the needs of the business and the well-being of employees. Finding the middle ground and aligning these two aspects was considered crucial but challenging. However, participants acknowledged that business objectives and employee happiness do not always complement each other. They recognised the importance of setting boundaries and stated that there are limits to how much they can prioritise individual happiness over organisational goals. Participants expressed the desire to better understand how to handle situations where individual needs may conflict with work demands. They expressed the desire to learn how to navigate such scenarios, set boundaries, manage expectations, and find ways to support employees without compromising business goals.

I2: The responsibility is like a dance, the dance is between the business and the employee, and trying to align these two things as much as possible...And it's a bit of a see-saw.

I5: Because I cannot be happy if they're not happy. So but I need to put boundaries there too, and say 'okay, there is a limit to which I can make them happy'. Because after this, I mean, work is work…There are specific objectives that the organisation wants to reach.

I9: Sometimes you need to learn how to say no, if it would be detrimental to work and to the business...I would like to learn more how to be able to better handle it...How can you support a person better, how can you adjust to the situation, but at the same time, you know, I have to always think like 'how can I also support the business?', because whatever I do, it has impact on the business.

I8: What happens if someone is underperforming, but is experiencing temporary mental issues and is under ongoing treatment?…Because obviously, we want employees to succeed, but also we need the team and the company to perform, so how can we tackle this type of situations?

Seventh, some participants conveyed the desire and/or need to understand different leadership styles and identify their own leadership style among them. A participant mentioned the need for leaders to understand the difference between a 'boss' and a 'leader', stating that a boss primarily gives orders, whereas a leader listens to their team members and makes participative decisions. Another participant shared a previous experience from a LDP that allowed him to gain insight into his own leadership style and evaluate its impact on team dynamics. He indicated that his enhanced self-awareness enabled him to reshape his leadership style based on the specific needs of his team. Questions such as being too laissez-faire or needing to incorporate more democratic decision-making arose, prompting him to consider whether he should involve everyone in decision-making or assert his own ideas.

> I4: The classic difference between a boss and a leader and listening to other people, or to be like to give orders more than to solve problems.
>
> I5: We had the opportunity to deep dive into different management styles, that being directive, democratic, laissez-faire, coaching, and also the last, the fifth one was dictatorship. And so the exercise really gave us an opportunity to identify the sort of leadership style we had and see whether this had an impact on the dynamic of the team, and whether there are some areas within these five pillars that you can pretty much adjust to or adopt, in order to become a better leader.

Overall, the participants viewed the learning objectives of LDPs as crucial to their leadership development, emphasising the need for these objectives to be clear, communicated upfront, and aligned with structured career development paths. Interviewees highlighted the significance of understanding and addressing their specific leadership needs and challenges through LDPs, including developing a leader identity through self-awareness, enhancing communication skills, empowering team members, fostering psychological safety and trust, leading diverse individuals, balancing organisational objectives with team members' needs, and understanding different leadership styles. These insights suggest that LDPs tailored to address these areas could contribute to the participants' ability to effectively navigate the complexities of their leadership roles.

4.2.4. Contextualised Content

Apart from the identification of the learning objectives of LDPs based on the participants' leadership needs and their company's objectives, interviewees further voiced the desire for the content of LDPs to be contextualised. In particular, they spoke of the need for the content

to be designed based on their unique experiences as leaders. Specifically, two interviewees raised the concern that the content of LDPs that are aimed at or are inclusive of novice leaders should be carefully designed to avoid the risk of overwhelming them. Further, a senior manager shared that he himself had undergone a LDP as a novice leader and found much of the content bewildering due to his lack of hands-on experience at that point of his career. This lack of real-life experience made it difficult for him to connect the new knowledge to practical situations, hindering comprehension and the transfer of training. The interviewee explicitly stated that he found this training ineffective because the content had no real-life relevance for him at that point since he had not even met his team or engaged in his managerial responsibilities. He stated that he perceived the content as a collection of abstract words without any meaningful connection. Therefore, the interviewee strongly suggested that newly appointed managers should be given time to experience the challenges, frustrations, and benefits of being a manager before engaging in LDPs. This way, they can better understand their role, and start developing their leader identity. Similarly, another interviewee mentioned that individuals who have prior leadership experience may be more ready to memorise and retain leadership theories due to their direct engagement with the content. Finally, another interviewee emphasised the importance of designing LDP activities around the participants in order to make the programme more engaging and effective.

> I5: If you're starting out as a leader, I think that it [leadership theory] might be overwhelming.
>
> I6: I do quite firmly believe that new managers should have a bit of time in the role before they begin any kind of leadership training...When I first became a manager, I was sent to a one-week, let's say, manager workshop before I had even met my new team or done anything in the role. And a lot of it went over my head. And it wasn't because it was poorly presented, but it was just because I didn't know the team, I didn't know what it was to be a manager and I had nothing to connect it to, it didn't mean anything to me. In real life, it's just a bunch of words...I do really strongly feel that people need a bit of time in the role, feel it, feel the challenges, feel the frustrations, and joys, all of it. And start to figure out who they are and want to be as managers before any leadership development.

The majority of participants also affirmed the importance of contextualising leadership theories and models included in LDPs. Specifically, some participants asserted that the content should reflect the realities of contemporary organisations and the leadership challenges arising from changing employee demographics as well as cultural diversity in international companies. Interviewees further emphasised that leadership theories and models should be contextualised to address the real-life experiences and situations faced by

the actual participants. This contextualisation was indicated to enable participants to relate to the programme's content and effectively apply their acquired KSBs in practice.

> I1: This kind of programme is not something that you can attend today and it will work for 15 years, but how people's generation change and cultural change, this programme has to change as well.

> I10: And how can we manage those teams in, you know, the environment that we are working now, which is very different to what it was sort of been five years ago.

In addition, two participants expressed their strong disapproval of LDPs that present leadership theories and models as rigid success formulas that can be universally applied in any context. According to one participant, this approach contradicts the essence of a manager's role, which involves making decisions and determining the appropriate course of action based on specific circumstances. He further expressed his dislike for facilitators who rigidly adhere to a particular model and strictly follow it without considering the complexities and nuances of real-world situations. Similarly, another participant illustrated this point by highlighting the challenges of managing employee underperformance. He argued that one-size-fits-all theories and models are likely to fail because each manager and team member is unique. Consequently, this senior manager suggested that while they appreciate the incorporation of leadership theories and models in LDPs, they would prefer these concepts to be introduced through open dialogue among the programme's participants.

> I2: But I really dislike when there are individuals who are just completely convinced about a certain model. And they just want to follow this model black and white. Not everything is black and white…It's your role as a manager to break them [rules] in my opinion.

> I6: Because then you run into, well, not only there is no consensus in academia, but this, let's say, typically high-level concept or formula that you manage to present, and, hopefully, get people to understand in the last two hours on managing underperformance, that manager has to go back to their team and manage the underperformance. Well, one person might find it helpful, and the other one might not. Because that's another thing. First of all, every manager is different, but sure as hell, every team is also different…It's probably good to give, let's say, some theories, some high-level guidance, but I think really try to leave it open for discussion and input.

In summary, participants highlighted the need for the content of LDPs to be tailored to real-life leadership experiences and cautioned against one-size-fits-all leadership theories, advocating for contextualised and experience-informed approaches in leadership development.

4.3. Experiential and Interactive Programme Design

This theme consists of three sub-themes that capture the participants' perspectives in terms of the delivery of LDPs. The participants described effective learning methods as being experiential and primarily based on real-world cases, and focused on practical application and reflective dialogue. The participants also identified characteristics of competent programme facilitators, such as being skilled and confident communicators, knowledgeable, open-minded, empathetic, and critical thinkers. Most participants also discussed the effect of the facilitator's own managerial experience as a potential enhancer of their effectiveness as facilitators. In terms of the delivery format of LDPs, most participants expressed a preference for segmented learning, face-to-face sessions and off-site venues. The following sub-sections of this chapter provide an analytical account of the three sub-themes within this theme: experiential learning methods, competent facilitators, and an interactive delivery format and learning environment.

4.3.1. Experiential Learning Methods

The participants expressed a clear preference for experiential learning and reflective practices as their preferred methods of learning. They conveyed that the most effective way for them to learn was by reflecting on their own experiences and adjusting their thinking and ideas accordingly. One manager highlighted the importance of leadership facilitators actively engaging participants in experimentation, reflection, and the development of their own abstract conceptualisations of leadership theories, rather than passively teaching these theories.

> I2: You should pull someone into developing their own [leadership theories]. So, let's say, for example, certain rules, such as the 80-20 rule in a one-to-one meeting, or the open-ended questions. For example, these are all very useful, but...I think it's the role of the presenter to make the leaders actually in the workshop come to these conclusions by themselves.

Conversely, the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with LDPs and facilitators that rely primarily or exclusively on lectures as learning method. Participant I10 shared that the most effective LDPs they experienced did not involve passive listening. This sentiment was echoed by participant I2, who mentioned that ineffective LDPs he had participated in were those where participants simply listened to a presentation of information that they already knew, leading to disengagement. Participant I6 also emphasised the importance of

interactive discussions on leadership rather than being lectured. They expressed a dislike for facilitators who monopolise the conversation and show little interest in hearing the perspectives of others.

> I10: I think that the best way I've experienced those programmes is not a case of sit and listen, this is what you should do, and then go away and figure it out on your own.

> I2: Yes, and these [ineffective LDPs] were mostly the ones where you received an invite, you had a presenter, they talked for an hour telling you information you knew already. You just end up dropping off.

> I6: I find it more interesting to have discussions about subjects on leadership than having a teacher talk about it...[I do not like] someone who is very in love with their own voice and not very interested in what other people have to say.

The majority of participants emphasised their preference for learning through real-world examples that are directly relevant to their work context. They found case studies to be effective when they were presented as plausible leadership examples that managers could strive to emulate. On this note, a participant (I5) vocalised the potential benefits of analysing specific cases of well-known leaders, such as Steven Jobs and Richard Branson, and identifying and analysing their leadership values and styles. Such analysis was opined to help participants of LDPs reflect on their own values and styles as leaders and adjust their behaviours accordingly. This participant highlighted the importance of considering different leadership approaches and their outcomes, questioning what defines a successful leader. Participants recognised the value of examining poor leadership as well. They noted that reflective dialogue focused on examples of what not to do or how not to behave as leaders could also enhance learning acquisition and maintenance, and, ultimately, training transfer. This is because such experiences were articulated by the interviewees to allow leaders to identify the characteristics of the types of leaders they want to become and those types of leaders they would wish to deviate from.

> I2: Case studies because I can get a tangible example which I can aspire to achieve. And role plays that I action myself.

> I5: Maybe look into some of the key influencers...Who is Steve Jobs? Is he a good leader or not?…Well, he was able through his way of managing people, which people say is really harsh, to transform the way people consume media today. But he was not a nice person…Richard Branson is another leader that has different values...He is someone who is perceived as a positive person…What made him so successful? What is a successful leader?...I'm taking the two opposites, right? Steve Jobs, who, excuse my word, is a little bit of a dick when it comes to leadership or is it someone more like

Richard Branson who started from scratch from nothing, but really through empathy and compassion, but also authenticity, lead others to become better in their lives.

I3: You want to see the other side of that as well to understand and realise or be aware of what is poor leadership, and then put those practices into real-life learnings...Then essentially discuss the 'whys' and 'how' to improve.

Although, the majority of interviewees highlighted the need for LDPs to be grounded in real-world cases and examples, there were differing opinions regarding the source of these examples. A senior leader expressed a desire to learn from successful companies and understand the strategies they use to overcome leadership challenges. On the other hand, participant I6 expressed reservations about discussing hypothetical problems faced by other companies during LDPs. He questioned the decision to dedicate significant time to such discussions instead of focusing on solving real problems within their own organisation. This manager saw this as a missed opportunity to leverage the collective expertise of senior leaders from different functions of their own company, who were gathered together with undivided attention. He believed that focusing on real and immediate problems would increase the likelihood of implementing learned strategies and achieving desired outcomes. These viewpoints highlight the need to consider the specific context and goals of LDPs when determining the source of case examples to ensure maximum relevance and practical application for the participants.

I7: Yes, I want to see how monster companies have been successful. And I also want to know what the issues or problems they have and how they solve them.

I6: One of the things we spent quite a lot of time on was some kind of challenge that X company was having, right?…And I was asking myself, 'why are we in this unique situation where we have senior leaders from every aspect of the company gathered, no laptops, focused, everyone is here, no distractions, why aren't we focused on a problem in our own company? An actual problem that we can actually try to solve? Instead, we're focusing on a hypothetical problem for X company'. That just felt like an opportunity missed for me.

In addition to external and company real-world cases, some interviewees highlighted the value of deriving examples from their own leadership experiences. This approach was seen as particularly beneficial when participants shared the same work context, giving the opportunity to establish a community of practice.

I4: I think you probably learn more with real-world examples, when you talk about things that have happened or are currently happening...And having worked in the industry as some sort of leader for quite some time, I can bring up examples from

present and past. And if there is anyone 'oh, yeah, I'm having that problem right now'…Maybe that's something other people would benefit from hearing as well.

Several participants highlighted the effectiveness of role-plays as a valuable learning method fostering a safe and experimental environment. Participants expressed their desire to actively engage in role-play activities, receive feedback on their performance, and engage in reflective dialogue with their peers. These approaches were identified as crucial for participants to internalise and apply their learned KSBs in real-world situations. Participant I8 explained that role-plays allow individuals to immerse themselves in simulated situations, making it easier to apply the learned KSBs in real-life scenarios. I2 shared their positive experience of testing leadership theories through role-play, being observed and receiving feedback, and then implementing those practices on the job. Participant I5 emphasised the importance of putting individuals in problem-solving situations to observe and assess their approach. Participant I10 stressed the significance of practical activities seeking to ensure that participants can readily apply what they learn within their own leadership roles. Participant I6 advocated for actively addressing current leadership challenges during LDPs, encouraging participants to immediately implement what they have learned. I8 emphasised the value of combining theory with practical exercises and examples. She emphasised the need to understand the consequences of ineffective versus effective leadership behaviours and the cause-and-effect relationship between one's actions and their impact on others. The practical application of learned principles was deemed essential for effective leadership.

> I8: Because it [role-play] helps you put yourself in the situation.
>
> I2: I found like some methods or theories to be extremely good. I tested them, I was being observed, I received coaching, and then I stayed stuck to them.
>
> I5: Put people in some sort of situation and see how they would solve the problem.
>
> I6: Actively try to get people to, you know, grab on to and try to solve the problems that they actually have today…You want to immediately start implementing what you've learned.
>
> I8: I always appreciate if there is the piece of the theory…But it needs to be combined with the practical exercises, the examples, and providing examples of 'this is how it shouldn't be done', and 'this is how it should be done'...once you know how to apply it in practice, what is the cause and effect?

Some participants noted that on-the-job experience is, in their view, more beneficial than theoretical learning and application in a controlled learning environment. They viewed practical application in real-work settings as more valuable, particularly for those who are

not accustomed to formal education and have primarily learned through practical experience.

> I6: In my experience, having actually done a master's in management, but also have worked seven or eight years as a manager at different levels, I can tell you that work experience is where I learned the most, that's for sure.

> I7: Because a lot of us, especially in our industry, we don't have university degrees…We learn by doing and we might be more of a practical kind of person.

In conclusion, participants strongly favoured experiential learning and reflective practices in LDPs, emphasising the importance of deriving lessons from real-life leadership experiences and critical reflection rather than passive absorption of theories. They expressed dissatisfaction with lecture-based learning, highlighting the effectiveness of interactive discussions, real-world case studies, role-plays, and practical application in enhancing leadership development.

4.3.2. Competent Facilitator

When discussing their wants and needs regarding the delivery of LDPs, participants also recognised the importance of the facilitator's role. They identified specific qualities that contribute to the effectiveness of facilitators of LDPs, characterising them as skilled and confident communicators, knowledgeable, open-minded, empathetic, and critical thinkers. These characteristics are presented analytically below supported by illustrative interview extracts. Most participants also discussed the effect of the facilitator's own managerial experience as a potential enhancer of their effectiveness.

Some participants identified the facilitator's communication skills as a factor that can impact the effectiveness of LDPs. They stressed the need for facilitators to communicate clearly and openly to keep their audience engaged. To do so, the participants suggested that facilitators should adjust the tone of their voice and speech pace. Additionally, one interviewee highlighted the importance of using simple language and terminology that can be understood by both native and non-native English speakers since LDPs in large international companies are often targeted at managers across the company's global locations, whose command of English may vary. This manager expressed frustration with facilitators who use complex language and concepts without considering the comprehension ability of their audience. The interviewee further noted that even if facilitators appear intelligent, they may be perceived

as incompetent if they fail to effectively convey their ideas and engage the audience. Confidence was also identified as a critical attribute for facilitators. Participants emphasised that facilitators should demonstrate confidence when speaking in public and serve as role models for the participants.

> I10: [Facilitators should] be able to talk clearly, openly, be able to engage those individuals, have confidence.
>
> I7: You have to use simple words. Some people might be working in their native language more than English...And it's very important to be a good public speaker and be looked at as a role model.
>
> I9: I like people who are confident, when they talk, they look in people's eyes.

Half of the participants also emphasised the importance of facilitators being perceived as knowledgeable. Participants described the facilitator's knowledge as encompassing familiarity with the latest studies in leadership and psychology, understanding of human behaviour, and expertise in coaching and mentoring. Participants believed that a knowledgeable facilitator should possess up-to-date information and be well-versed in current research and trends. An interviewee noted that the facilitator's knowledge could be demonstrated through their way of answering questions and their confidence in the truth of their responses. The source of the facilitator's knowledge was also seen as influential in their credibility. A participant affirmed that facilitators who obtained their knowledge from reputable institutions and programmes were perceived as more credible and trustworthy.

> I1: Reliable, has knowledge, is trustworthy.
>
> I10: And that's backed by their authority or their background…Have that sort of gravitas, therefore, can be respected in that position. I've seen some of the greatest leadership trainers have been excellent coaches, and have had an interest in psychology. So human behaviour.
>
> I3: I just want them to be, let's say, aware of the latest research studies…I don't want someone who says 'we did this 20 years ago'. I want someone modern and dynamic because I am not young anymore. I want to know what twenty something plus expect from their leaders today. So yeah, someone relevant. Someone who's essentially main topic is the study of leadership...For my kind of assessment of their quality, it would be more, 'how did they become a trainer? Where did they learn the skills?'. Really, that they've been to good schools, universities. Have they taken the right programmes to get where they are today?.
>
> I8: So, what is the newest research or the newest conclusion by scholars?…They do the research from the psychological part, from the organisational management part, and so on.

I9: If you ask them questions, they know what to answer, they don't stay, you know, staring or don't know what to say.

While many interviewees emphasised the importance of the facilitator's knowledge and expertise, they also stressed that facilitators should remain open-minded and receptive to participants' views and experiences. Some participants expressed a strong aversion to facilitators who present leadership theories as rigid, one-size-fits-all formulas for success, disregarding the distinctiveness of each participant's background, experiences, and contexts. Further, some participants expressed their dissatisfaction with facilitators who rigidly adhered to particular models or frameworks without acknowledging the nuances and complexities of real-world leadership situations. Participant I2 emphasised that not everything in leadership is 'black and white', and facilitators should be mindful of the diverse and dynamic nature of leadership practices. On this note, participants advocated for facilitators who acknowledge and communicate the inherent complexity of leadership duties and challenges during the delivery of LDPs. Participants further expressed a desire for interactive discussions rather than a one-way delivery approach. They expressed a preference for facilitators who are open to dialogue, willing to consider alternative perspectives, and engage in meaningful exchanges with participants. Participants saw value in sharing their feedback and engaging in discussions to better understand each other's contexts and broaden their perspectives. Finally, participant I6 emphasised the importance of humility on the part of facilitators, acknowledging that leadership is a complex field with ongoing debates even within academia. They urged facilitators to embrace this ambiguity and refrain from presenting definitive answers or formulas for success. In summary, participants valued facilitators who combined their knowledge and expertise with an open-minded and inclusive approach. They preferred facilitators who encouraged dialogue, acknowledged the complexity of leadership challenges, and fostered a learning environment where participants' unique perspectives and experiences were respected and integrated.

I1: Open to discuss the topic rather than 'here is the lesson, and if you have any other question, let me know'.

I2: I really dislike when there are individuals [facilitators] who are just completely convinced about a certain model. And they just want to follow this model, black and white. Not everything is black and white.

I6: I suspect there is a, obviously, a natural tendency in the role of a teacher or, you know, a leadership development specialist, or whatever role you have, to want to have the answers and to present some kind of formula for success 'this is how you manage

their performance', 'this is how you hire people'. And that's understandable, of course, because you are in a sort of a position of authority, at least on the subject, and, hopefully, prepared. But I think…there are no clear answers. I don't even think you can agree on what the definition of leadership even is…So there needs to probably be a bit of humility there.

In addition to being knowledgeable and open-minded, participants also highlighted the need for facilitators to be critical thinkers who go beyond merely regurgitating leadership theories and repeating information from books and other resources. They valued facilitators who have 'their own voice' and provide personal insights and reasoning behind their beliefs. Specifically, some interviewees expressed a desire to understand why facilitators personally believe that a certain leadership theory or concept works. Such an approach was implicitly conveyed to enhance facilitators' authenticity and ability to connect with the audience. An interviewee also voiced his appreciation for facilitators who are willing to engage in discussions on controversial topics and do not shy away from initiating conversations that might elicit opposing views from participants. He valued facilitators who foster an environment where diverse perspectives could be expressed and explored. However, a senior leader asserted that facilitators should also be critical of the views expressed by participants. Specifically, this leader expressed disdain for facilitators who accept every participant's opinion as equally valid and plausible, even when these are contradictory. Such an approach was implicitly conveyed to negatively influence the interviewee's perceptions of the facilitator's credibility. Conclusively, the interviewee believed that facilitators should challenge and question ideas to promote deeper understanding and critical thinking among participants.

> I1: a critical thinker... that can identify what is the issue behind and provide a logical process on how to deal with that specific situation...And it was like reading from a book, you know, there was not personality, 'this is what the author says, and I agree with this'.

> I2: And it's good when they don't shy away from, let's say, the tricky topics.

> I6: I don't mind a critical voice...you'll have trainers who are very open-minded to everyone's input and ideas. And it's like 'oh, yeah, that's a good idea!'...Everything people say isn't necessarily good.

In addition to the previously presented qualities of competent facilitators, the participants also highlighted the need for facilitators to demonstrate empathy and compassion. Empathy was described as the ability to recognise and understand people's emotions, as well as the capacity to resonate with others' experiences. A participant further spoke of the need for

facilitators to be compassionate and, apart from showing a genuine desire to understand people's situations and distress, also take action to alleviate it by creating a safe learning environment. On this note, a first-line manager (I9) shared a negative past experience with a facilitator who exhibited disrespect towards the participants during a LDP. This experience highlighted the importance of facilitators treating participants with dignity and maintaining a respectful atmosphere throughout the programme.

> I1: People don't feel that they asked a stupid question...and is a very empathetic person who can read people.

> I5: I think the trainer should be compassionate, should show empathy and help the students feel safe.

The vast majority of participants spoke about the influence of the facilitator's own managerial experience on their perceptions of their effectiveness. Many participants expressed a preference for facilitators who possess substantial experience in managing people before delivering LDPs. This is because according to some participants having direct managerial experience holds more weight than merely theorising about leading individuals, teams, and organisations since leadership is primarily learned by doing. Participants emphasised that facilitators with managerial experience are better equipped to deeply understand the challenges faced by their audience. They are seen as having a wealth of leadership cases, experiences, and challenges that they can draw upon as real-world examples during the programme. The facilitator's managerial experience was closely linked to their perceived credibility, as participants valued their ability to empathise and, as noted by I10, put themselves in the shoes of the leaders they are guiding. While some participants acknowledged that managerial experience may not be a strict requirement for all facilitators, senior managers expressed a strong desire for facilitators who have firsthand experience in the role. Participants also emphasised the importance of facilitators who are open about their own challenges and obstacles as managers. Sharing personal experiences was conveyed to create an atmosphere of authenticity and encourage participants to be open about their own experiences. This, in turn, was indicated to facilitate deeper connections and enhance the learning experience.

> I7: I've been to one of the most inspiring speeches ever. And again, she was using all these different examples from her own experience.

I2: Especially senior leadership members, they had this comment…that they [facilitators with no managerial experience] are trying to give guidelines, but they will never actually be in the shoes themselves. And it helps to have that bit of credibility.

I4: If you're bringing the science part into the discussion, you can probably do very well. But when you're starting with the group discussions, and you're talking about real-life experiences, and you haven't had any, basically, it's going to be a bit more difficult. And maybe you even lose credibility.

I6: I really want them [facilitators] to have actually been a manager themselves. I think the study of management is a very different thing from the act of being a manager. And I think if you only have an academic background, then you're going to really struggle to connect. So there is some degree of legitimacy or authenticity that comes with actually having done it. Also, I think someone who is able to share themselves, you know, like, their own challenges, and their own obstacles as a manager, because that opens the door for others to be open as well…I don't want some kid from university to come and tell me what it's like to or how I should manage. Because, yeah, it just won't connect.

While the majority of participants emphasised the importance of managerial experience in leadership facilitators, a few participants brought up nuanced views. They pointed out that having managerial experience does not automatically qualify someone to effectively teach leadership to others. These participants highlighted additional skills and qualities that facilitators need, such as critical thinking, empathy, and what one participant referred to as a 'healthy mind' (I1). In a similar vein, another participant (I3) noted that although leadership experience can be beneficial, it is not the sole determinant of a facilitator's quality. Instead, this participant believed that a facilitator's legitimacy should be assessed based on their qualifications and expertise in the field of leadership. In summary, these participants emphasised that while managerial experience can be valuable, it should not overshadow the importance of additional qualities and skills that facilitators need.

4.3.3. Interactive Delivery Format and Learning Environment

This sub-theme explores the perspectives of line managers regarding the delivery format and learning environment of LDPs. Specifically, it focuses on the inclusion of group discussions, segmented learning, face-to-face sessions, and off-site venues. Most participants communicated the value of group activities and discussions as part of LDPs. The majority of interviewees asserted that group discussions enhance knowledge-sharing. Some participants mentioned that they like to brainstorm with their peers on how to handle certain leadership issues. Others noted that group discussions help them remain undistracted and engaged during the programme because they get to hear their peers' diverse perspectives on

the discussed topics as well as their questions and doubts. A participant acknowledged that group discussions could facilitate the formation of communities of practice within the workplace, offering lasting connections for ongoing learning and collaboration. These smaller groups were seen as providing a safer environment where individuals feel comfortable to challenge each other's views without the fear of any negative consequences.

> I8: You learn not only from the person that delivers the training but also from the participants, especially when there are role plays or people are asked to give examples from real life.
>
> I4: When you talk about things that have happened, or are currently happening, and you have a group discussion around a specific scenario... I learn more from real-world examples and brainstorming with other leaders.
>
> I6: I can read the PowerPoint. But how engaged or undistracted am I really?...I'm certainly not getting the benefit of the different perspectives.
>
> I5: You can debate, you can meet them [peers] at work again…It also opens up connections within the work environment with people you don't necessarily work [closely] with.
>
> I7: You can have this open dialogue with real kind of conversations, you can really challenge each other.

Despite the benefits of group discussions mentioned by the research participants, some also noted that such discussions should be facilitated with caution. One concern raised by a participant was the issue of confidentiality. Since participants in these groups often come from different departments and teams within the organisation, speaking openly and transparently about certain leadership challenges could have negative implications. Consequently, the participants of LDPs might hold back on sharing their challenges and honest views with their peer group, potentially limiting the depth of discussions and information-sharing. Confidentiality concerns were further amplified by an interviewee who expressed discomfort when participating in group discussions and her own manager was present in the same group. The presence of a manager in such discussions could create a perceived power dynamic that could inhibit participants from speaking openly and freely about their thoughts and feelings. Another important consideration highlighted by an interviewee was the need to ensure equal opportunities for all managers in the group to take the lead in group activities. This equal distribution of leadership roles was asserted to allow participants to have a sense of ownership and engagement within the group, fostering a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment. In conclusion, while group discussions in LDPs offer numerous benefits, such as knowledge-sharing and diverse perspectives,

precautions should be taken to address concerns regarding confidentiality, the presence of direct supervisors, and the equitable distribution of leadership roles.

> I1: I don't know if it is possible from a privacy level...Some people feel shy to participate.

> I5: So everyone was pretty much at the same level, so that they can, you know, each have a chance to be the leader.

> I7: You don't want to be with your manager in the breakout rooms where you want to speak completely openly about how you feel about things.

The positive impact of incorporating fun elements into LPDs was emphasised by several participants. They emphasised that playful activities, along with humour and jokes, can significantly enhance participants' attention and engagement with the programme. The use of humour was compared to getting children's attention, highlighting its potential to create an energetic and dynamic learning atmosphere. Fun activities and role-plays were viewed as a means to create an environment where participants feel comfortable letting their guard down, opening up, expressing their true selves, acknowledging the limits of their knowledge, and showing vulnerability, ultimately leading to increased readiness for learning. Additionally, participants mentioned that fun activities facilitate better connections and familiarity among participants.

> I7: It's just like keeping a kid's attention, you constantly have to say all these funny things.

> I3: They [role-plays] can be kind of fun and engaging as part of a training exercise, acting them out...Especially in that environment where people need to drop their guard and appreciate that they don't know all the answers.

> I5: The fun aspect was also something that the emphasis was put on to. Firstly, it didn't feel like work, it felt like a safe fun environment where we could just be self-expressed and learn.

With regards to the delivery format, the participants unanimously expressed a clear preference for face-to-face over online LPDs. They provided various reasons for favouring in-person sessions, which are presented analytically below. Firstly, participants noted that the likelihood of dropouts is lower in face-to-face sessions. The absence of exposure and discomfort associated with unmuting microphones and addressing a virtual room, as well as the potential discomfort of physically leaving a room and being noticed, were cited as contributing factors. Second, participants emphasised that face-to-face sessions allow

facilitators to better understand participants' emotions through observation of non-verbal cues. Facilitators can also detect and address disengagement using physical movement to regain participants' attention. Third, participants expressed concerns that online sessions may limit leaders' ability to express themselves through non-verbal communication, such as gestures and posture, which they deemed an essential form of expression for leaders. Fourth, two participants highlighted the benefits of live sessions in terms of classroom interaction and informal chats during breaks, which foster knowledge-sharing and the establishment of communities of practice. Additionally, participants mentioned that facilitators can seamlessly move between groups during face-to-face group discussions without interrupting the conversation flow or making participants feel uncomfortable, which may be challenging in online group discussions facilitated through breakout rooms. Conclusively, the interviewees expressed a strong preference for face-to-face LPDs, citing benefits such as reduced dropout rates, enhanced understanding of participants' emotions, the importance of non-verbal communication for leadership, and opportunities for classroom interaction and networking.

> I1: When it is online, people, for whatever reason, they might get scared and just leave. If it's live, that maybe will not happen because they feel like a physical need to be there and maybe they will be more likely to participate.
>
> I7: If you are in front of people, it's very easy to see that someone is kind of almost falling asleep, then you can move around.
>
> I10: I think any group activity has to be live, part of leadership is around being able to read a room, take non-verbal signals, understand people and human behaviour. And I think you can really only do that when you have somebody 3D in front of you.
>
> I5: I think physical presence that allows for both verbal and nonverbal communication is key. Sometimes you don't have to open your mouth to be the leader, you just need to be, the way you act, the way you carry yourself...If you are virtually speaking, there are some elements that are missing...If you want to get to know who I am, you need to see me, you need to feel me.

Despite the general preference for face-to-face LPDs, a participant (I2) acknowledged a potential drawback, which is the logistical challenge for managers with packed schedules to attend in a physical location. While acknowledging this drawback, the participant also recognised that attending an online session often means that participants continue to work on their daily tasks whilst attending the programme, which can lead to reduced attention and engagement. The same observation was also made by another interviewee (I4) who confessed that he often finds himself being distracted by his mobile during online sessions,

noting that physical presence in a classroom setting can help mitigate such distractions due to the presence of others, which acts as a social accountability factor. These interview extracts shed light on the trade-offs between face-to-face and online LPDs.

The participants' preference for off-site venues in face-to-face sessions was evident, and the underlying reasons for this preference are summarised as follows. Firstly, an off-site venue was perceived to provide a psychologically safer learning environment, enabling participants to openly discuss their personal leadership styles and challenges, particularly when receiving constructive feedback. The neutral space offered by off-site venues was seen as conducive to fostering psychological safety, allowing participants to feel more comfortable and open in their interactions. Secondly, some interviewees emphasised that full-day or extended training sessions should be conducted outside the workplace to minimise interruptions from other employees within the organisation. Lastly, attending programmes in off-site venues was seen as an opportunity for participants to interact with each other outside the formal learning environment. The communal aspects of off-site venues, such as travelling together, staying in the same accommodations, and sharing meals, were mentioned as enablers of relationship-building, breaking barriers, and fostering a sense of connection.

> I10: It's better to be off-site rather than on-site. I think a neutral space is sometimes better for that psychological safety.
>
> I4: If it's a full day or close to, off-site for sure. Less distractions. I know you ask people to turn off their phones, et cetera. But if you're in the office, you can't turn off people coming in and tapping your shoulder.
>
> I5: It was a retreat. So we lived in a community, went there to the train together, to the hotel, woke up the following day, had breakfast. So you already had an opportunity to break the barriers, to just be all together.

While the majority of participants expressed a preference for off-site venues for LDPs, a few participants shared their preference for on-site venues. Their reasons for this preference are summarised as follows. Firstly, one participant (I1) believed that conducting LDPs in the workplace allows leaders to maintain a higher level of focus and relevance to their actual job. The workplace familiarity was seen as a facilitator for practical application and better alignment between the programme and their day-to-day responsibilities. Secondly, another participant (I9) highlighted the advantage of not having to travel or spend time commuting when the programme is delivered in the workplace. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of leaders committing to attending the programme. It is important to note that while these

participants expressed their preference for on-site LDPs, the majority of interviewees still leaned towards off-site venues for various reasons outlined earlier. However, understanding the viewpoints of those who favour on-site venues provides valuable insights into the diverse preferences and needs of leaders when it comes to the delivery of LDPs. These viewpoints could be taken into account when deciding on the most appropriate delivery format and venue for LDPs with particular audiences.

Finally, when it comes to the spacing of training sessions, the majority of participants expressed a clear preference for segmented learning. This preference was driven by two main factors: the typically busy schedules of managers and their self-acknowledged short attention span. Participants believed that breaking the programme into smaller segments better accommodates their demanding agendas and helps maintain their focus and engagement throughout the programme. However, it was noted by one participant (I10) that the sessions should not be spaced too far apart, as this could lead to disengagement and hinder participants' ability to recall the taught KSBs. To address this concern, the participant suggested incorporating various activities between sessions to maintain momentum. These activities could include on-the-job assignments, group discussions, and networking opportunities with peers. Through these activities, participants could stay connected to the programme, reinforce their learnings, and benefit from the shared experiences of their fellow leaders. This iterative process was argued to allow leaders to absorb information, apply it in their work environment, and return for open conversations that promote continuous improvement.

> I10: I think if you are designing a well-rounded leadership programme, you need to segment it…You can't normally take people away from business activities for too long...I think, segmented, bite-size chunks. And the ability, though, to network and keep looping into your contacts in between those segments.
>
> I5: I think that it needs to stretch a bit longer, it doesn't need to be intense in one shot...So not too much information anchoring in your head, enough time for you to absorb and implement and apply what it is you've learned. But also opportunities to share with others your experiences based on what you've learned in preceding sessions.

In summary, participants favoured interactive delivery formats, valuing group discussions, experiential learning, and off-site venues for fostering engagement, community, and practical application. They preferred face-to-face sessions over online for enhanced connection and communication, and advocated for segmented learning to accommodate their schedules and attention spans.

4.4. Practical Application On-The-Job in an Enabling Work Environment

The third and final theme captures the participants' wants and needs following the implementation of LDPs as well as their perceptions of how these wants and needs could be met. Specifically, participants emphasised that in order to put the KSBs acquired from LDPs into practice, they need to be offered opportunities to practice what they have learned on the job. They also stressed the need for evaluation and feedback after the training. Participants identified the role of their direct manager as a crucial factor in either enabling or inhibiting their leadership development and the transfer of KSBs from LDPs to their job. While half of the participants perceived their peers as having a moderate impact on their development as leaders, the other half did not identify their peer group as either enabling or inhibiting their leadership development. This section delves into the three sub-themes within this overarching theme: post-programme evaluation and feedback, opportunities to practice, and the support of various stakeholders.

4.4.1. Post-Programme Evaluation and Feedback

Some participants communicated the need to have follow-up sessions after the completion of the taught modules in order to enhance their learning and maximise training transfer. One participant (I1) expressed dissatisfaction with previous LDPs that lacked post-programme support beyond the initial training. Despite finding the taught part of the programme useful, he faced challenges in accessing support when needed, as the facilitators were unreachable. He emphasised that LDPs should not be treated as one-time events but rather as a continuous journey of growth and development. The availability of facilitators or coaches to address questions and provide guidance after the programme was deemed essential to maximise the training transfer and ensure the practical application of learned concepts in the participants' daily work. Another participant (I7) suggested that after completing the taught modules, managers should be offered the opportunity to participate in group or individual coaching sessions focused on key leadership topics. She emphasised the need for open dialogue and a psychologically safe environment where participants can be challenged and engage in meaningful discussions. Additionally, she proposed that coachees should be assigned preparatory work before these sessions, such as submitting questions or topics to be discussed during the next session, allowing them to take ownership of their own development and maintain focus and engagement. By incorporating these suggestions, LDPs

could enhance the learning experience of participants beyond the initial training and empower them to continuously grow as leaders.

> I1: Sometimes I miss 'the after'...I had experience in, for example, other companies. We had this very good training and everything. And maybe after that first session when you have a follow-up question, they [facilitators] are completely unreachable...For me, the leadership programme should not be a one-off thing.

> I7: And then [after the taught modules] you can have this open dialogue with real kind of conversations, you can really challenge each other. And also you can prepare by sending three questions that you have to fill in and send to you [the facilitator] at least two days in advance.

The majority of participants expressed a strong desire and need for evaluation and feedback on their leadership performance following their participation in the taught modules of LDPs or between the delivered sessions. They emphasised the importance of receiving feedback to assess whether they have effectively applied the KSBs from the programme in their job and to identify areas for improvement. The participants mentioned various forms of feedback, including one-on-one feedback from either the facilitator or their direct manager, group feedback during follow-up training sessions, and feedback provided during one-on-one coaching sessions. They highlighted that the evaluation should be based on the content of the LDP and focused on verifying the transfer of acquired KSBs. One participant (I1) suggested the use of a 360-degree leadership assessment as a means of evaluating the participants' development. This assessment would align with the content of the LDP and help identify areas where further improvement is needed. Another participant (I2) shared his positive experience with observation sessions organised by the facilitators. These sessions involved observing managers' leadership behaviours on-the-job, such as during one-on-one meetings with direct reports, and providing immediate feedback based on their performance. The interviewee found this form of direct, on-the-job feedback to be the most effective he had received in his career. The feedback was given according to pre-defined criteria derived from the LDP's taught modules. Additionally, participants mentioned the inclusion of company and team performance indicators, such as staff retention and employee engagement, as the basis for feedback. They suggested measuring these indicators on a quarterly basis and providing feedback to team managers who were asserted to play a significant role in influencing these outcomes. This approach were recommended to allow participants to understand the impact of their leadership on overall team performance. In a similar vein, another senior manager (I7) asserted the importance of setting expectations for individual development immediately after completing the taught modules. This would

involve reflecting on what was learned from the programme and establishing specific goals to be achieved within a defined timeframe. The interviewee believed that this approach could instil a sense of purpose and commitment to continuous development. However, participants declared that for this form of evaluation and accountability to be effective, trust between the manager being assessed and the evaluator providing feedback is crucial. Participants associated this form of trust with the participant's perceived psychological safety of sharing their struggles and seeking support during the evaluation period between the calibration or follow-up meetings. To summarise, participants expressed their need for evaluation and feedback post-LDP. They advocated for various forms of feedback, including one-on-one, group, and on-the-job feedback. They suggested using 360-degree assessments, observation sessions, and performance indicators to evaluate leadership development. Participants emphasised the importance of trust and psychological safety in facilitating open discussions and requesting support during the evaluation process.

I1: This programme should have a follow-up on how these [KSBs] are integrated on their daily life. Maybe send a survey, a 360o, to see which of these learnings they have digested, or they still see lacks in that aspect and then develop more specific programmes to correct.

I10: Some of the best programmes I've been on have been the ones that you can actually put that into practice. And then, the group comes back, feedback, and there's that loop effect.

I2: The ones [LDPs] that I found extremely useful were the ones where I was, let's say, being observed…So L&D [the Learning and Development function] would set up a benchmark. And then they would observe during a one-to-one session…And then give, let's say, feedback...I think that has always been the most useful feedback that I've taken on in my career...So they would set up, let's say, for example, your checkpoints. Did he build rapport during the meeting? Did he ask open-ended questions? Did he address this?.

I3: So you can get feedback from your trainer or your coach. And then keep that loop on. And then how I would kind of do that as well is to look at feedback in terms of performance and staff retention, or staff turnover, or employee engagement, and try and really have a look at the metrics to see which we've done well there, or we haven't really moved the needle there. What else can we do?...And then they set up quarterly feedback loops with regards to how to better develop you as a manager.

I7: So you have a meeting as soon as you have had the leadership training. What did you learn? What are we going to work on? And then you set some expectations…Always have these calibration sessions or this kind of reminders, follow-ups. So people are kind of getting reminded why we're doing these things.

In a nutshell, participants emphasised the importance of post-programme support, including follow-up sessions, individual and group coaching, and continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms, to reinforce learning and ensure the effective application of KSBs developed in LDPs, underlining the need for a continuous journey of growth and practical application of leadership concepts.

4.4.2. Opportunities to Practice

This sub-theme captures the participants' desire and need for real opportunities to practice on-the-job after the completion of the programme's taught modules. The majority of participants spoke of the impact of the organisational environment on their capacity to put the KSBs acquired from LDPs into practice. They discussed the importance of a supportive organisational culture that encourages managers to implement what they have learned in their own unique ways, promoting experimentation and accepting mistakes as part of the learning process. Conversely, they expressed concerns about unsupportive work environments that not only discourage experimentation and change but also foster a culture of disdain and punishment. Such environments were found to hinder the leadership development of managers, despite their enthusiasm and readiness to transfer the developed KSBs to their jobs. Furthermore, a participant (I7) shared her experience of being asked to participate in LDPs merely as a checkbox exercise by her manager and her company's HR department. This highlighted a lack of genuine commitment and understanding of the value of leadership development within the organisation. One senior manager (I8) emphasised the critical role of clear communication from the organisation and executive team. Specifically, it was noted that when there is a failure to effectively communicate the company's vision, objectives, and upcoming changes to lower-level managers and their direct reports, it hampers the managers' ability to lead their teams. The interviewee also recounted a personal experience of being micromanaged by her own manager, which undermined her ability to be a leader within that environment. Despite her desire and capability, she was excluded from decision-making processes and direct interactions with her team members. In summary, participants stressed the significance of the organisational environment in enabling or inhibiting the application of KSBs acquired through LDPs. They called for supportive cultures that value experimentation and allow managers to implement their learnings in their individual ways. Participants expressed concerns about tick-box approaches to LDPs and emphasised the importance of clear communication from higher levels of the organisation.

I1: The organisational environment is fundamental to be able to put these [learnings] in a positive way, but also in a negative way...If you learn a very valuable lesson...and then you are excited about 'how can I implement, how can I experiment, even fail, do my mistakes and learn, and hoping that my manager or my employees will help me figure out my own way'. But then if you exit from that excitement bubble and you are in an environment that is completely cutting you from that, it doesn't allow you to even try…you feel suffocated.

I8: As a team leader, if I don't know what are the goals, the vision, if there is a change, and I don't know the details, and it's not communicated to me in the way that I get the insight, the reasoning, and so on, how can I guide the team to do that?...Then I cannot put any learning in practice taken from the training because the organisation doesn't give me the right information...I have the example from the past where, you know, being a team leader, heading the department, not knowing what are the actual company's goals, what we are trying to achieve, where we are heading, what is really expected from that team or from myself, and then someone higher in the company hierarchy would jump in and communicate certain things to the team completely dismissing the presence of the Head [of the department]. So the Head is not informed, but someone else is taking decisions and communicating to the team. You cannot be a leader in that environment.

An interviewee (I10) highlighted the importance of providing participants of LDPs with opportunities to apply their leadership learnings within their own teams. However, it was acknowledged that the effect of this practice depends on the size of the team and the availability of diverse leadership situations. The interviewee emphasised that if participants do not have the chance to immediately practice what they have learned, it can have a negative impact on their ability to transfer and maintain the training over time. Furthermore, the interviewee suggested that managers should be given opportunities to apply their leadership KSBs outside of their immediate teams. One potential avenue for this could be through cross-functional assignments, where managers can lead teams in different departments or functions. This broader exposure was asserted to allow them to face new challenges and apply their learnings in different contexts. The interviewee noted that these opportunities should be discussed and agreed upon between the potential LDP participants and the organisation before their enrolment in the programme.

I10: If you've been selected for a leadership development programme, and you don't necessarily have a big enough team to manage...The way your work environment is designed can be limiting...Do you have an opportunity to do that outside of your team? So are there some common opportunities to sort of cross over to different departments or areas?..And I think those are quite essential to at least discuss or have answers to before setting off in a leadership development programme.

Apart from being given the opportunity to lead big enough teams or lead cross-functional teams, a participant spoke about another obstacle that he views as detrimental to training transfer. Specifically, this first-line manager (I4) argued that if the leadership challenges studied during LDPs do not naturally arise within the participants' work environment, they will be unable to demonstrate their ability to apply the leadership KSBs in practice. Deliberately creating such situations solely for the purpose of implementing the taught practices was deemed unethical, as it could have negative consequences for the team and would go against the principles of authentic and ethical leadership often taught in these programmes. Similarly, a senior manager (I8) emphasised that if team members are compliant and unquestioningly follow the manager's guidance, the latter will not be adequately challenged to step out of their comfort zone, hindering their development. The interviewees suggest that real-world scenarios and examples, drawn from personal experiences as well as those of others, can help bridge the gap between theory and practice in LDPs.

> I4: The leadership sessions are usually about challenges. And if they don't arise, you don't work with it. So then you come to the real-life scenarios, examples that you can talk about, your own experience, other people's experience. That's one way of turning the theory into something that actually happened...Because, you know, you can't create scenarios within the group, that would be immoral.

> I8: Unless the team is just no issue whatsoever, and everybody's following, then, you know, you can't really address it, it's not challenging.

In contrast to the previous perspectives, a first-line manager (I9) highlighted the challenges that arise when dealing with people-related issues within a team. Specifically, when one or more team members refuse to comply or exhibit rebellious behaviour, it can significantly hinder the manager's capacity to lead effectively. Instead of focusing on leading the team as a whole, the manager may become preoccupied with managing and correcting the behaviour of these individuals. The presence of disruptive team members was conveyed to potentially create a dilemma for the manager, as their time and energy are diverted away from implementing the KSBs acquired from LDPs. In such situations, the manager may find themselves overwhelmed with corrective actions or even stepping in to do the work themselves, neglecting their primary role of leading their team. This insight highlights the importance of addressing people issues within a team to ensure a conducive environment for effective leadership. Managers need to find a balance between managing individual behaviours and providing guidance and support to the entire team. By effectively resolving conflicts and addressing non-compliant behaviours, managers can create an atmosphere that

allows them to put their leadership skills into practice and focus on leading the team towards its goals.

> I9: If you find someone who is a bit of a rebel, it can be a problem how much you can put into practice what you learn from the programme, because you might be busy correcting the person or doing the work instead of leading the team.

Finally, a manager (I6) shed light on the impact of excessive workload as a barrier to leadership development. The interviewee mentioned that when managers are constantly caught up in firefighting to keep the business running or face extreme pressure from their own manager to deliver results, it becomes unrealistic for them to dedicated time and effort to develop their leadership skills. Instead, they are likely to deprioritise and limit their interactions with their team members, which, in turn, does not allow them to exercise and develop their leadership capacity. That said, the constant demand for firefighting takes precedence, causing leadership development to be pushed aside and undervalued. However, the interviewee argued that this perspective is flawed because dedicating some time to self-development can have a profound impact on one's managerial capacity, decision-making skills, and overall effectiveness as a leader for years to come.

> I6: People aren't going to do it [self-development] or take it seriously, unless they have time to spare or find it particularly interesting or needed, which a lot of people just don't because they're firefighting…If you have, let's say, quote unquote, a 'bad manager' above you or you're under extreme pressure all the time, there's very little time for whatever other challenges you want to deal with…In an environment like that, it's very easy to forget about the training and just go back to the old firefighting.

This insight underscores the detrimental effects of excessive workload on leadership development. To overcome this obstacle, organisations would need to recognise the importance of allocating dedicated time for managers to focus on their own growth and development.

4.4.3. Stakeholders' Support

The participants of this study identified the role of their direct manager as a crucial factor in either enabling or inhibiting their leadership development and the transfer of KSBs from LDPs to their job. Nine out of ten participants emphasised the influence of their direct manager on their leadership development and, ultimately, performance as leaders. While some participants highlighted the importance of their direct manager aligning with and

embracing the leadership principles and values taught in the company's LDPs, others acknowledged that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all formula, and it is more essential for their manager to share the same values and vision for the team's future rather than have the same leadership style. A senior manager (I6) pointed out that the level of support provided by their direct manager significantly impacts his motivation to continue developing his leadership capacity. This support can manifest in the form of developmental discussions about the lessons taught during LDPs or open conversations about current leadership challenges. This manager indicated that their direct supervisor's encouragement for him to try out new practices and do things differently, whilst also communicating trust in his ability to succeed impacts his motivation, and, consequently, his performance. Additionally, discussing specific cases of team members with his manager was affirmed to allow for different perspectives to be considered. On this note, another senior manager (I7) expressed the need for her own manager to set expectations in order to give her direction and help her remain accountable and committed to making the necessary adjustments to improve her leadership.

Conversely, participants also identified behaviours exhibited by their direct manager that hinder their leadership development. The lack of psychological safety was highlighted by a senior manager, who observed that when her direct manager only communicates with her to criticise her, it significantly reduces her likelihood of initiating discussions about leadership challenges within her team. Furthermore, two participants mentioned the detrimental effects of micromanagement by their manager. One of these participants stated that she had experienced the negative effects of micromanaging when her own manager made all the decisions without consulting or involving her as well as when they communicated objectives, plans, and changes directly to the team in her absence. Apart from the inability to exercise their leadership capacity in these instances, both participants affirmed that this is negatively impacting their motivation. This was noted to be due to a strong feeling of failure and hopelessness rooted in their inability to enact leadership independently and make decisions. These insights highlight the significance of the direct manager's role in leadership development. Hence, it was conveyed by the participants that organisations should prioritise training and support for direct managers to ensure they are aligned with the taught leadership principles and equipped with the necessary skills to foster the growth and development of their team members.

I1: It is crucial in the meaning that the person [participants' direct manager] has gone through the same, understands and is aligned with the culture and the leadership programme.

I6: If you have managers actively engaged in your development, they might actually talk to you about what you have learned, or talk to you about, you know, the challenges that you will want to overcome and help you either directly with the subject matter of the programme or in their own way with their experience…Sort of planting the seeds that 'you can learn, you can do things differently, you can handle these challenges. There are answers out there'. And if you have that feeling, I think you're also more likely to be more engaged in the leadership development programme.

I7: 'I've done the course and I want you to focus on these areas in particular, because that will be really helpful'. And also, it's very important that you have follow-up meetings as a manager.

I8: If my manager doesn't like me to be the leader of the team, but jumps in straight into it, then I cannot put the learnings into practice…You can try, but then you feel like you failed, and then it affects your motivation because you don't feel like you have full control over the situation.

I9: [A manager] who doesn't listen, someone who micromanages, who doesn't trust because it can really make you lose motivation, you will not want to perform.

I5: The leader that leads you can be a trigger for you to deepen your knowledge…Leaders that are very much available, open to communication, pushing for things, you know, thinking critically, spending time together, brainstorming. Those are leaders that I keep in my mind, close to my heart.

The participants in the study acknowledged the significant influence of their direct manager on their leadership development. However, when it came to the effect of their peers, meaning other managers of the same level reporting to the same or other higher-level managers within the organisation, on their development following a LDP, it was indicated to be moderate rather than strong. Specifically, a participant (I1) stated that if a manager is an effective leader, their peers would be unlikely to hinder their ability to enact leadership within their teams. Participants described their peers' influence in terms of motivation to lead by example and embrace shared leadership values and best practices. They recognised the value of peer support in fostering a growth environment. However, one participant (I2) raised a concern about peers acting as gatekeepers that hold each other accountable, which could negatively impact their relationships and hinder each other's development. A senior manager (I6) shared his own experience with peers when he first became a manager. Initially, he looked to his peers for guidance and examples of effective management practices. He mentioned that due to his lack of managerial experience, he instinctively observed his peers in search of good examples of what to do as a manager. However, he quickly realised that their leadership

styles did not align with the leader identity he sought to develop. He emphasised the importance of being sceptical of peers' leadership and suggested not to blindly follow their advice. In conclusion, participants emphasised that while peers can provide valuable insights and support, it is crucial for managers to maintain their own identity and critically evaluate the advice and behaviours of their peers. They emphasised the need to align their actions with their personal vision of effective leadership rather than conforming to norms established by others.

> I1: Peers do not have the same strength, they do have value, but not the same.
>
> I8: I struggle to give the example of how they [peers] would affect positively or negatively.
>
> I2: They [peers] play a role in terms of, let's say, leading by example. When everyone's doing it, I'm going to be the odd one out. As for having peers spying on each other, I don't think that's good. You can easily fall in that trap.
>
> I6: I remember when I first started as a manager. I think whenever you jump up a level, you instinctively look to those around you who have been doing it for a while. They know the answers, right? And I listened, I tried to learn, I tried to observe, but I did, I think, already have a very strong idea of the manager I wanted to be, and I noticed that a lot of the things that they were saying, they were expressing, they were doing as managers, they did not align with what I thought. So I think it's, especially at the peer level, it's really important to be critical...It's important that you have your own identity. Because otherwise, well, if you just do what everyone else says, then you're not really leading anything, they are.

Overall, the participants recognised that their direct manager had a more significant impact on their leadership development compared to their peers.

4.5. Conclusion

The research findings contribute to understanding the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs, and shed light on their perceptions of how these wants and needs could be fulfilled. Participants expressed a strong desire and need for LDPs to address their individual leadership needs while aligning with their company's expectations and organisational requirements. They suggested that this can be achieved by conducting a systematic LNA and carefully selecting the participants of LDPs. Specific learning needs identified by participants include developing a strong leader identity, mastering effective communication as leaders, striking a balance between serving the organisation and their direct reports, empowering team members, fostering psychological safety and trust, leading diverse

individuals, and understanding different leadership styles. They also emphasised the need for personalised programme content that is tailored to their work context and leadership experiences, recognising the limitations of a one-size-fits-all approach. In terms of the programme delivery, participants highlighted the value of experiential learning based on real-world cases, practical application, and reflective dialogue. They identified competent programme facilitators as effective and confident communicators, knowledgeable, open-minded, empathetic, and critical thinkers. Most participants also discussed the effect of the facilitator's own managerial experience as a potential enhancer of their effectiveness. Moreover, they expressed a preference for segmented learning, face-to-face sessions, and off-site venues for the delivery of the taught modules. Regarding their wants and needs following the completion of the taught modules, participants emphasised the importance of having opportunities to practice what they have learned on the job, being evaluated, and receiving feedback. They recognised the significant role of their direct manager in either enabling or hindering their leadership development and the transfer of knowledge from LDPs. These findings underscore the participants' preference and need for LDPs that are relevant, personalised, and delivered through experiential and interactive methods. They also highlight the importance of practical application in a supportive environment.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The chapter serves as a bridge weaving together the findings from my research with the current literature, specifically focusing on the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs and their views on how these wants and needs could be met. The ultimate purpose of the chapter is to explain the insights generated from my research to address the crucial issue of training transfer within LDPs, as previously discussed in the 'Literature Review' chapter. Adhering to the interpretivist paradigm that guided my research, the clear distinction between this chapter and the 'Findings' ensures that the participants' perspectives are clearly articulated and stand distinct from my theoretical interpretations based on the literature. Through the comparative analysis with existing corpus of literature, this chapter offers a deeper understanding of line managers' wants, needs, and perceptions to ultimately inform the design of tailored LDPs sought to enhance training transfer. To fulfil this purpose, the chapter is structured around the three themes that I generated through the thematic analysis of the collected data. These themes are as follows: relevant and personalised content, experiential and interactive programme delivery, and practical application on-the-job in an enabling work environment. The three themes and their associated nine sub-themes are sought to directly answer the research questions of this study (see Figure 1. Thematic Map).

5.2. Relevant and Personalised Content

This section delves into the insights shared by the research participants regarding their preferences and needs concerning the content of LDPs, while concurrently establishing connections with prior research. Additionally, it explores their perspectives on how the content could be designed to meet their wants and needs, simultaneously integrating pertinent insights from current literature.

5.2.1. Systematic Learning Needs Analysis and Selection of Participants

The research participants stated that they want and need LDPs to address their individual needs as line managers. They emphasised the importance of tailoring the content based on two factors: their managerial level (first-level, middle, or senior management) and their business function. This finding aligns with Mumford et al.'s (2007) study, which advocated

for a layered and segmented approach in implementing LDPs. This approach is grounded on the understanding that leadership skills differ depending on the managerial level. Mumford et al. (2007) noted that while managers across all levels require a combination of cognitive, interpersonal, business, and strategic skills, the importance of strategic skills is heightened for senior managers. Moreover, Holt et al. (2018) stressed that companies should investigate the specific KSBs required for each managerial level within the organisation and design personalised LDPs accordingly. In addition, the participants of my study asserted that the content should also reflect their company's needs, including its vision, mission, and values, as well as its unique challenges, such as dysfunctional corporate cultures, barriers to internal mobility, and high employee turnover. These insights resonate with Gentry et al.'s (2014) study, which highlighted the significance of aligning participants' needs with the company's desired outcomes to determine the most relevant learning needs. Similarly, Leskiw and Singh (2007) found that a comprehensive LNA that incorporates the company strategy, and addresses any identified leadership gaps in the organisation as well as business challenges and market trends, is crucial to design relevant LDPs. More recently, Tafvelin et al. (2019b) argued that the content of LDPs should be congruent with the organisation's objectives and senior management's perceptions of desired leadership behaviours. However, my research also highlighted the potential risks of confining managers within a rigid leadership model. Therefore, it is suggested that LDPs should consider both the company's needs and the participants' unique strengths, experiences, and perspectives to cultivate effective leaders.

This finding aligns with Knowles' (1984) adult learning theory, which underscores the importance of involving adult learners in their own development process and treating them as responsible decision-makers. This approach is thought to be more effective in alleviating feelings of resentment or resistance, consequently decreasing the likelihood of participant attrition, a phenomenon frequently observed in voluntary programmes. This is why McCauley et al. (2017) and Scholtz (2023) advocated for incorporating learners' context into their development journeys. Vella's (2008) twelve principles for effective adult learning further support this approach, highlighting the need to involve learners as decision-makers in a continuous needs assessment process to understand their expectations and preferences for the programme and make it meaningful to them. Throughout the programme, it is recommended that learners are encouraged to critically evaluate the taught theories and practices, reflecting on their relevance and applicability within their own context (Vella, 2002). This dialogical approach essentially involves group discussions around the taught content, which promotes the learners' autonomy (Vella, 2002). Additionally, Tafvelin et al.

(2021) emphasised the importance of ongoing feedback from participants in order for designers and facilitators to continue revising the content as needed to respond to the participants' learning needs. That said, the authors argued that participants of LDPs should be treated as co-creators rather than mere recipients of the programme.

However, Knowles et al. (2005) warned that this approach presupposes that learners are fully aware of their learning needs, can make decisions on the content, and are motivated to engage in the design process. While some learners may demonstrate a higher level of autonomy and readiness to participate in this process, others may prefer an instructor-led approach due to their limited knowledge on the subject, lack of confidence, or because of their lack of motivation to engage in the design phase. Owning to this, the sixth principle of Knowles' (1984) andragogy emphasises the importance of 'the need to know'. This means that adults are more inclined to learn when the programme's content is personally relevant to their current circumstances (McCauley et al., 2017). Therefore, they need to know what they will be learning, why and how. They also need to have a clear understanding of the benefits of learning something as well as the potential consequences of not learning it (Knowles et al., 2005). To address this, Knowles et al. (2005) argued that learners should be engaged in a collaborative planning process that appeals to learners' need to know, and their self-concept as independent learners. By engaging learners in such processes, higher self-efficacy, commitment, and motivation to apply the learned skills and behaviours can be fostered. However, it is worth noting that, while the andragogical model aligns with the principles of Human Resources Development (HRD) in viewing individuals as responsible for their own development, there are often differences in the emphasis placed on the learner's control. That said, HRD often prioritises performance metrics and business results, overlooking the individual's learning needs (Knowles et al., 2005). Moreover, Brookfield (1986) criticised the andragogical approach for implying that the facilitator is a technician within a consumer model that is exclusively focused on providing whatever satisfies learners. Hence, the author suggested that it would be misguided to completely disregard the facilitator's perspectives about the learners' needs and appropriate learning and teaching methods.

To mitigate this potential risk, insights drawn from my research participants highlighted the importance of conducting a systematic LNA that involves key stakeholders, including C-level executives and managers from various organisational levels, prior to implementing a LDP. The participants emphasised the value of soliciting input, collecting feedback, and

maintaining a flexible approach during the programme's design phase as strategies to augment its potential effect and bolster training transfer. Concomitantly, participants communicated their need to have a clear understanding of the programme's learning objectives and agenda right from the onset, with a strong desire for these objectives to be directly linked to structured career development paths. In this context, Burke and Hutchins (2007) argued that explicitly stated learning objectives and programme outlines are more likely to enable participants to comprehend performance expectations and regulate their behaviour to meet them, resulting in increased training transfer. This sentiment resonates with Taylor et al. (2009), Gentry et al. (2014), and Tafvelin et al. (2021), who concurred that participants' perceptions of a programme's utility are a strong predictor of training transfer, recommending that conducting a LNA prior to the programme implementation can increase the programme's responsiveness to participants' learning requirements. This finding aligns with Knowles' (1984) third principle of adult learning, accentuating the critical role of participants' readiness to learn. This principle posits that adults are more inclined to engage in learning when they perceive the content as immediately applicable to their everyday work and personally beneficial. Furthermore, as individuals progress through different stages of life, they become increasingly primed for learning that they find relevant (McCauley et al., 2017). Therefore, it is argued that the programme content should clearly demonstrate its benefits to foster learners' appreciation and readiness for learning (McCauley et al., 2017). Vella's (2008) principles of effective adult learning also highlighted the importance of immediacy, suggesting that the programme's content should be tailored to fit the learners' lives and contexts. Moreover, Knowles (1984) explained that readiness to learn can be nurtured through purposeful career planning and exposure to role models. By curating a programme immediately relevant and applicable to learners' lives and contexts, programme designers can heighten the motivation and preparedness of adults to learn. In summation, the successful design and implementation of a LDP necessitates a thorough LNA, involving various stakeholders, and ensuring that the programme's objectives are aligned with participants' career advancement aspirations. By promoting the programme's relevance and immediacy, programme designers can cultivate participants' readiness to learn, ultimately leading to a more impactful learning experience.

The findings underscored the critical importance of carefully selecting the participants for LDPs, ensuring that those chosen are the most suitable and would stand to benefit the most. The results indicated that successful participation in LDPs require a combination of individual attributes, including self-awareness, openness to learning, vulnerability, a growth-

oriented mindset, and genuine motivation for self-development. This observation aligns with the conclusion drawn by Wallace et al. (2021), who accentuated that leadership development primarily emanates from internal impetus rather than external imposition. This standpoint finds further support in the insights of Stiehl et al. (2015), who argue that the complexity of leadership responsibilities requires managers to invest significant time and energy to develop their capacity to fulfil them. Consequently, a higher degree of motivation to learn is likely to translate into greater persistence and endurance, enhancing the likelihood of substantial behavioural change. Furthermore, Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) comprehensive meta-analysis revealed that the motivation to learn is a significant precondition for effective learning to occur. Likewise, Day et al. (2014) suggested that self-motivation, metacognitive ability, and self-regulation processes synergistically amplify the information processing structures integral to individuals' leadership capacity. Recent work by Kwok et al. (2021) underscored that participants of LDPs do not develop uniformly, indicating that there are distinct between-person characteristics that prognosticate their developmental readiness. In a subsequent meta-analysis, Vogel et al. (2021) concluded that the individual characteristics commonly discussed by research in terms of their effect on leadership development include leader identity, self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-regulation, learning orientation, motivation to learn and motivation to lead. Hence, the influence of traits such as receptiveness to learning, a growth-oriented mindset, and the willingness to exhibit vulnerability, as identified by the participants in the present study, corroborates previous research. However, it is noteworthy that participants did not perceive cognitive ability as a significant predictor of leadership development or performance. This finding diverges from prior research conducted by Burke and Hutchins (2007), Avolio et al. (2010), O'Loughlin (2013), Day and Dragoni (2015), and Crossan et al. (2021), who concluded that, all things being equal, individuals with more developed cognitive ability are more likely to transfer the learned leadership skills and behaviours to their job. However, while certain individual characteristics are found to influence the extent of training transfer, it is important to note that situational factors beyond the participants' direct control, may mediate the relationship between training transfer and leadership performance, such as organisational support, group cohesion, appropriate role models, organisational structure and culture (Stiehl et al., 2015).

Finally, the findings strongly advocate for a top-down implementation approach for LDPs, wherein the company's top management receives training first. This approach was argued to enhance goal alignment, consistency, and better support for lower-level managers in their development journey. My research aligns with Gilpin-Jackson and Bush's (2007)

recommendation that LDPs should be sequentially delivered to different hierarchical levels within the organisation, commencing with top management. This approach is based on the finding that support from higher-level management significantly predicts training transfer success.

5.2.2. Learning Objectives based on Perceived Leadership Needs and Challenges

Building upon the preceding insights, the study participants elaborated on their specific learning needs as line managers in large international companies. These novel insights shed light on the potential learning objectives of LDPs, an area where current research holds ambiguities. Primarily, the participants' learning needs were closely intertwined with their perceived leadership needs and challenges. Firstly, the participants emphasised the importance of developing a solid leader identity through self-awareness. Self-reflection was deemed crucial in identifying individual strengths, weaknesses, needs, and personal boundaries as leaders. They also communicated the need to understand different leadership styles, recognise their own style, and harmonise their leader identity with their fundamental values. This finding resonates with previous research, which identified the pivotal role of leader identity in leadership development, as it influences the willingness and ability of individuals to engage in leadership processes (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Kragt & Guenter, 2018). Wallace et al. (2021) further noted that individuals with a well-developed leader identity are expected to articulate what it means to be a leader and be self-aware of their own leadership values. Furthermore, some participants accentuated the transition from an individual-centric conception of leadership, often observed in lower managerial positions, to a more relational, and ultimately collective approach as they ascend to senior management roles. This shift entails moving beyond individual performance metrics and adopting a broader perspective, involving effective delegation of responsibilities and creating a culture of empowerment within their teams. This parallels Kragt and Guenter's (2018) observation that an individual's identity is social constructed based on negotiated expectations of appropriate leadership behaviours. Hence, when a leader's perception of the self aligns with their perceived role expectations, it is likely to ignite behavioural change.

Secondly, effective communication was identified as a vital skill for leaders, particularly in contemporary workplaces where individuals exhibit diverse characteristics, necessitating leaders to be flexible and adaptable. Thirdly, participants expressed the need to learn how to

empower their team members, recognising that an important part of their leadership role is to leverage the potential of each individual and support their development. Achieving this objective involves learning how to delegate responsibilities effectively, creating a supportive and inclusive environment, and recognising and celebrating the contributions of their team members. Fourthly, the significance of fostering psychological safety and trust within teams to facilitate open communication, honesty, and productivity were brought into focus. This need for psychological safety was understood as more vital during times of organisational change. Fifthly, the participants spoke of the need to develop their ability to lead diverse individuals, a skill particularly critical for leaders in large international companies who often manage teams with diverse cultural backgrounds. They also recognised diversity in terms of personality as a leadership challenge and expressed a desire to learn how to leverage it. Sixthly, the participants highlighted the need to strike a balance between serving organisational objectives and meeting the individual needs of their direct reports. They expressed the desire to gain a better understanding of managing situations where individual needs may conflict with work demands, requiring leaders to set boundaries, manage expectations, and find ways to support employees without compromising business goals. In summary, these research insights provide valuable guidance for designing LDPs that address the unique and multifaceted learning needs of line managers in large international companies. By incorporating these learning objectives, LDPs can be tailored to better equip participants to flourish in their leadership roles and navigate the complexities of modern organisational settings.

5.2.3. Contextualised Content

Expanding upon the previously discussed insights, the participants notably expressed a strong desire and/or need for the programme's content to be tailored to their distinct work contexts, thereby reflecting their unique leadership experiences. They recognised the importance of customisation, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to adequately address their unique circumstances and intricacies of their challenges. This perspective aligns with the principles of adult learning put forth by Knowles (1984). The first principle, focused on the learner's self-concept, underscores the fact that each manager possesses a unique biography characterised by diverse experiences, needs, motivations, goals, teams and organisational context. The second principle, which emphasises the pivotal role of experience in adult learning (Knowles et al., 2005), underscores that leaders learn most effectively when encouraged to draw upon their experiences and share these during

class discussions (McCauley et al., 2017; Scholtz, 2023). Even for those learners lacking prior leadership experience in an organisational setting, they have likely encountered leadership in action in other settings, such as family and school. Knowles (1984) argued that adults themselves constitute an invaluable resource for their own and others' learning. Neglecting or undervaluing their experiences could lead to feelings of exclusion and decreased engagement in the learning process (Knowles, 1984). This phenomenon tends to be particularly pronounced among adults with limited formal education, as their professional identity often revolves around their accrued experiences (Knowles, 1984).

However, it is also stressed that the longer individuals have occupied leadership roles, the more susceptible they are to forming entrenched mental schemas and biases that could hinder learning (Knowles et al., 2005). Additionally, experienced leaders who have taken on formal leadership positions without undergoing appropriate training, might have inadvertently developed suboptimal and self-limiting behavioural patterns (Griffith et al., 2019). It has also been found that participants with extensive experience are more inclined to believe that they have reached a pinnacle of development due to their perceived accomplishments in prior leadership roles (Lacerenza et al., 2017). To counter these potential issues, personalised teaching and learning methods are argued to be indispensable for adult learners (Knowles et al., 2005). Additionally, activities incorporating self-reflection, such as after-action reviews, are recommended to help individuals systematically and critically analyse their behaviours and their implications on performance outcomes, thereby facilitating experience-based leadership development (Day & Dragoni, 2015). By acknowledging and leveraging participants' experiences, it is advocated that LDPs could become more relevant, meaningful, and impactful, encouraging active participation, and ultimately, training transfer.

5.3. Experiential and Interactive Programme Delivery

This section delves into the insights shared by the research participants regarding their preferences and needs concerning the delivery of LDPs, while concurrently integrating pertinent insights from current literature.

5.3.1. Experiential Learning Methods

The participants expressed a clear inclination towards experiential learning and reflective methods as their preferred modes of learning. The research showed their desire to actively engage in experimentation, deliberate self-reflection, and the formulation of their own abstract conceptualisations of leadership theories, rather than being passively taught these theories through traditional lectures, which was found to result in disinterest and disengagement. This noteworthy finding is consistent with Baron and Parent's (2015) study, where participants who applied the learned KSBs as part of the delivered LDP reported a feeling of validation in their comprehension, leading to new insights and a deeper clarity of previously held understandings. Prominently, employing a variety of learning methods for LDPs, including role-plays, peer-feedback exercises, and action-learning activities, has been found by both Tafvelin et al. (2021), and Wisshak and Barth's (2022) qualitative analysis of interviews with leadership facilitators to enhance the transfer of training.

My research findings underscored the value of learning through real-world examples that are directly relevant to the participants' work contexts. Distinct cases of well-known leaders and their leadership styles were identified as valuable examples for analysis, enabling participants to reflect on their own leadership styles and values. Additionally, examples of ineffective leadership styles were identified as equally useful learning tools, empowering leaders to identify the behaviours they would like to circumvent. Such practical examples were argued to enhance learning acquisition, maintenance, and, ultimately, application. The participants further highlighted the value of solving actual and immediate organisational issues to leverage the collective leadership capacity of their companies. This hands-on approach was argued to increase the likelihood of implementing the learned KSBs, leading to tangible outcomes. This finding aligns with Leskiw and Singh's (2007) perspective that action learning involving problem-solving of real-time organisational issues and engagement in challenging work assignments is particularly beneficial for leadership development. Such activities are believed to facilitate learning through action, exposing participants to authentic leadership issues and enabling them to navigate through real-world challenges. However, it is worth noting that Baron and Parent's (2015) study highlighted the value of incorporating activities that encourage participants to gradually experiment and take action within a protected learning environment. This approach is designed to minimise perceived risks and potential discomfort, as participants may be concerned about the potential consequences of making mistakes. Thus, striking a balance between real-world

challenges and a safe learning environment is argued to help participants take risks and embrace challenges while feeling supported and guided throughout their development journey.

Moreover, this research recommends the incorporation of examples derived from the participants' own leadership experiences, which were found to be particularly insightful when participants shared the same work context, fostering the formation of communities of practice. Additionally, role-play activities were identified as valuable learning tools, providing opportunities for feedback and reflective dialogue, thus creating a safe and experimental learning environment. These findings underscored the need to combine theoretical knowledge with practical exercises, and to consider the specific context and objectives of LDPs when selecting case examples to ensure maximum relevance and practical application for the participants. Lastly, the study emphasised that participants attributed higher value to experiential, on-the-job learning compared to theoretical learning or application in a controlled learning environment. Particularly for leaders who are not accustomed to formal education and have primarily learned through hands-on experience, on-the-job learning was considered particularly valuable.

Building on the research findings, the effectiveness of experiential learning methods was emphasised. This finding echoes Knowles et al.'s (2005) argument that experiential learning methods – such as group discussions, simulations, field experiences, problem-solving exercises, case studies, and assignments – are highly effective for adult learners. These methods allow participants to connect new concepts and theories to their own experiences, enhancing their engagement and understanding during the learning process. In line with Knowles' (1984) fourth principle of andragogy, namely orientation to learning, adults thrive in learning environments where they are confronted with problems that require practical solutions and real-life applications. This active involvement in 'doing' and problem-solving becomes a crucial source of learning (Scholtz, 2023). The reasoning behind this lies in the task-oriented nature of adult learners, whose focus revolves around resolving problems rather than the subject-matter itself (Knowles, 1984; Knowles et al., 2005). As a result, learning experiences are more effective when they are situated within real-world situations and scenarios, perceived by learners as immediately applicable to their roles (McCauley et al., 2017). To optimise adult learning, the design of curricula is recommended to be organised around life situations, rather than solely focusing on subject-matter units (Knowles, 1984). This aligns with Kolb et al.'s (1986) conceptualisation of experiential

learning, advocating for the use of exercises, games, and simulations that actively engage learners in situations where they need to act and observe the consequences of their actions. When such experiential exercises are utilised, Kolb et al. (1986) highlighted that participants sharing the same experiences, learn through dialogue and shared observations, feelings, and thoughts. In the context of LDPs, Allen et al. (2022) emphasised the importance of contextualised learning, active experimentation and hands-on application to create dynamic and engaging developmental experiences for line managers. The amalgamation of real-world scenarios and problem-solving exercises is argued to foster a deeper understanding of leadership concepts and encourage active participation and collaboration among learners. Hence, this learner-centred approach is not only likely to enhance the effectiveness of the programme but also facilitates the exchange of knowledge and insights among participants, building communities of practice.

5.3.2. Competent Facilitators

Regarding the delivery of LDPs, this research underscored the profound influence that leadership facilitators wield in enhancing participants' learning journeys. Although the role of leadership facilitators has been noted to be important by previous research, its effect on the training transfer process has been scarcely researched (Wisshak & Barth, 2022). The characteristics of competent facilitators were identified by the participants of the present study as being effective and confident communicators, knowledgeable, open-minded, empathetic, and critical thinkers. Effective communicators were described as communicating clearly and openly, controlling their voice tone and speed, and using simple language and terminology to maintain audience engagement. Moreover, skilled communicators were also found to exhibit confidence while speaking in public and serve as role model. In addition to communication prowess, facilitators were expected to demonstrate a wealth of knowledge and a deep understanding of the latest studies in leadership, psychology, and human behaviour, and have expertise in coaching and mentoring. Their expertise was stated to be observed through their adeptness in addressing questions and their confidence in the accuracy of their responses.

Open-mindedness was another trait that was identified as a key characteristic of effective facilitators. Open-mindedness was stated to be observed through the facilitator's engagement in open dialogue, willingness to consider alternatives perspectives, and involvement in meaningful exchanges with the participants. Conversely, the research findings showed the

participants' strong aversion to facilitators who present leadership theories as panaceas for success, neglecting the intricacies of real-world leadership challenges. Instead, leaders expressed a preference for facilitators who encourage dialogue, acknowledge the complexity of leadership, and cultivate a learning environment where participants' unique perspectives and experiences are respected and incorporated into the programme. This finding echoes Knowle's (1984) theory of adult learning, which emphasises the dual role of facilitators: as designers and managers of the programme content, and as content resources themselves (Knowles, 1984). This approach acknowledges that sources of learning extend beyond the facilitator, including peers, material resources, and the learners' own experiences. In the context of LDPs, facilitators should act as partners in the learning process rather than as sole experts who determine the content, sequence, and learning methods (Scholtz, 2023). This learner-centred approach also aligns with Kolb et al.'s (1986) experiential learning theory, stressing that facilitators should not merely dispense knowledge, but instead manage and facilitate the learning process, allowing adult learners to draw from their personal experiences to integrate abstract concepts and leadership theories. Similarly, Vella's (2002) theory of quantum learning argues that teaching in adult training programmes should be minimal. Instead, the facilitator's role should involve preparing learning tasks, responding competently to questions, and mentoring participants who actively share their insights. According to Vella (2002, p.80), the facilitator's role is to 'a resource person, a designer, an intense researcher, a listener, a clarifier, a celebrator, and a summariser'. Further, the author argued that adult learning should not involve mindless repetition of the facilitator's perspectives. Instead, learners should be encouraged to experiment with new KSBs. In conclusion, by embodying open-mindedness and adopting learner-centred approaches, it is suggested that facilitators can empower learners to engage actively, apply knowledge meaningfully, and develop their leadership capacities effectively.

Critical thinking was also identified as a crucial characteristic of effective leadership facilitators. Critical thinking was defined as going beyond merely regurgitating leadership theories and conveying information from publications and other sources. Participants valued facilitators who provided personal insights and explained the reasoning behind their beliefs. Engaging in discussions on controversial topics that might elicit opposing views on leadership was particularly appreciated, as it was perceived to foster a learning environment where diverse perspectives could be expressed and explored. This suggested that facilitators should challenge and question ideas to promote deeper understanding and critical thinking among participants. Such practices were stated to enhance the facilitator's perceived

authenticity, credibility, and ability to connect with their audience. In essence, effective leadership facilitators were perceived to embrace critical thinking as a means of facilitating thought-provoking discussions, encouraging participants to delve into the complexities of leadership, and promoting a dynamic and intellectually stimulating learning environment. By offering personal insights, engaging in open dialogues, and challenging participants' perspectives, facilitators could play a pivotal role in enhancing participants' overall learning experience and fostering a deeper and more meaningful understanding of leadership concepts and principles.

The research findings also underscored the importance of the facilitators' capacity to demonstrate empathy and compassion. Empathy was described as the ability to recognise and understand people's emotions, resonating with their experiences on a deeper level. Compassion was defined as the genuine desire to not only understand individuals' unique circumstances and potential distress but also to take action in alleviating it by creating a safe and supportive learning environment. Facilitators who embody empathy and compassion were perceived to play a vital role in shaping a positive and enriching learning environment. Their ability to connect with participants on an emotional level was noted to enhance engagement, empower learners to share their perspectives openly, and foster an atmosphere of respect and understanding.

Lastly, most participants also emphasised the effect of the facilitator's own managerial experience as a potential enhancer of their effectiveness. They showed a strong preference for facilitators who possess substantial experience in managing people before delivering LDPs. This hands-on leadership experience was deemed essential to allow facilitators to deeply understand the participants' challenges and provides them with a wealth of leadership cases and real-world examples to draw upon during the programme. Hence, previous or current managerial experience was found to be closely linked to facilitators' perceived credibility and relatability. Moreover, managerial experience coupled with the facilitator's openness in sharing their own leadership challenges and obstacles was conveyed to increase their authenticity and encourage participants to be more open and honest about their own challenges. In summary, facilitators' managerial experience was found to facilitate deeper connections and enrich participants' learning experience. These findings echo Burke and Day (1986) meta-analysis, which found that the facilitator's experience may impact the effectiveness of LDPs. This is because, according to Ismail et al. (2017), facilitators serve as role models for participants, influencing their motivation to learn and their level of self-

efficacy. Similarly, Luria et al. (2019) argued that leadership facilitators who successfully model leadership behaviours and provide relevant examples are more likely to help participants replicate these behaviours. Nevertheless, the participants of this study recognised that having managerial experience alone is not sufficient to effectively teach leadership to others. Hence, leadership facilitators were asserted to require additional skills and characteristics as previously identified and analysed.

The characteristics of effective leadership facilitators recognised by my research participants align with the skills identified by Knowles' et al. (2005). In particular, the authors argued that facilitators motivate adult learners by leveraging their expertise to convey relevant and valuable information. Additionally, exhibiting empathy, understanding learners' needs and expectations, showing enthusiasm through an appropriate level of emotion and energy, and ensuring clarity in their communication were considered to be vital. Facilitators were argued by Knowles et al. (2005) to be able to demonstrate their expertise by sharing personal experiences, providing examples of experiences from others, and using analogies to facilitate understanding and engagement among learners. My research findings also parallel Patrick et al.'s (2009) study conducted in the context of a military LDP, which identified several characteristics of effective facilitators, namely: leading by example, segmenting the taught content, leveraging their knowledge and experiences, communicating effectively, incorporating participants' feedback, demonstrating flexibility by tailoring the content to the participants' needs, exhibiting enthusiasm, and coaching and mentoring participants. In essence, the alignment between the participants' perceptions of effective facilitators and the characteristics outlined by previous research underscores the importance of these skills for the creation of a conducive and effective learning environment that encourages active participation and fosters meaningful growth and development among participants of LDPs. However, it is worth noting that, as highlighted by Wisshak and Barth (2022), while leadership facilitators are likely to influence the training transfer process, the ultimate outcome of LDPs depends on various contextual factors, including the participants themselves, their supervisors, and the work environment. Therefore, although effective facilitators play a crucial role, the success of LDPs hinges on a combination of these factors working together harmoniously.

5.3.3. Interactive Delivery Format and Learning Environment

The research findings illuminated the preferences, needs, and perspectives of line managers concerning the delivery format and learning environment of LDPs. Notably, the participants clearly favoured group discussions, segmented learning, face-to-face sessions, and off-site venues. Below, I delve into these preferences and discuss them in relation to existing research.

Firstly, the research findings strongly underlined a strong preference and need for group discussions as an integral element of LDPs. Group discussions were argued to enhance knowledge-sharing, increase learners' engagement, provide a safe learning environment, and facilitate the formation of communities of practice among participants. Engaging in brainstorming sessions with peers was viewed to allow participants to tackle various leadership challenges collaboratively, exchange diverse perspectives on leadership topics, and seek answers to their questions and uncertainties. Moreover, they valued the ongoing support and networking opportunities that continued beyond the programme. However, the participants also raised some concerns that necessitate facilitators' attention to optimise the benefits of group discussions. Confidentiality surfaced as a crucial consideration as participants from different departments and teams within the same organisation might hesitate to openly share their challenges and opinions, potentially limiting the depth of discussions and knowledge-sharing. Additionally, the presence of direct manager-direct report pairs within the same group could create power dynamics that hinder open communication. To ensure an inclusive and productive learning environment, participants stressed the need for equal opportunities for all group members to lead the discussions. The research findings align with earlier studies, such as the work of Black and Eearnest's (2009), which proposed that group learning activities not only enhance self-awareness and cultural sensitivity but can also yield improved business outcomes. Similarly, Vella (2008) advocated for the integration of group learning tasks to engage learners with different skills and preferences. The author underlined the importance of effective group dynamics in promoting the application of learned KSBs. However, Vella (2008) also highlighted the facilitator's role in managing group tensions and ensuring clear communication about roles, responsibilities, processes, and timelines to foster a constructive learning environment. The author further suggested that facilitators should intervene, when necessary, but not prematurely. To conclude, the incorporation of group discussions into LDPs is

recommended, coupled with facilitators' proactive efforts to optimise group dynamics for maximal impact.

Expanding on the research insights, it is suggested that integrating fun and playful activities into LDPs can establish a positive and conductive learning environment, ultimately enhancing participants' attention, engagement, and receptiveness to learning. The inclusion of fun activities was viewed by my research participants as a valuable means of fostering authenticity, vulnerability, and meaningful connections among participants. This recommendation not only aligns with the principles of adult learning advocated by Knowles et al. (2005) but also mirrors the very essence of their assertion that adults yearn for learning experiences that are both gratifying and enriching.

The research findings demonstrated a unanimous preference among participants for face-to-face LDPs when compared to online alternatives, including live online. Several benefits were identified, including reduced dropout rates, the facilitators' enhanced understanding of participants' emotions, the importance of non-verbal communication in leadership, and the provision of opportunities for classroom interaction and networking. Despite potential logistical challenges and the inconvenience of commuting for participants, these insights underscore the significant value that line managers place on physical presence, non-verbal communication, and the overall interactive and engaging atmosphere of face-to-face LDPs. It is worth noting, however, that this preference appears to be at odds with recent research, exemplified by Krampitz et al.'s (2022) study. This research reported substantial enhancements in self-leadership skills and improvements in leader-direct reports relationships as a result of participation in online programmes. Both these outcomes were evidenced through self-reported data as well as assessments from team members. These findings acquire deeper significance when considered alongside the insights from Silbergh and Lennon's (2006) study. This study illuminated that line managers' perceptions of the effectiveness of different delivery modes (face-to-face versus online) directly influenced the overall effectiveness of the delivered LDPs. Nonetheless, the researchers also uncovered that prior experience with online LDPs had a discernible impact on participants' perceptions. Specifically, those managers who had previously engaged in online LDPs were more inclined to acknowledge the effectiveness of online programmes in developing specific leadership skills. Consequently, when determining the most suitable delivery mode for LDPs, line managers' prior exposure to different modes should be given careful consideration.

The research also revealed a strong preference for off-site venues for face-to-face sessions. This preference was supported by the belief that off-site venues offer a neutral and psychologically safe learning environment, allowing participants to fully immerse themselves in the learning experience without the distractions and demands of their daily responsibilities, as well as potential interruptions from other employees within the company. Additionally, off-site venues were seen as fostering relationship-building among participants, as they could interact outside the formal learning environment through activities such as traveling together and sharing meals. These informal interactions were stated to contribute to breaking communication barriers and fostering a sense of community among participants, further enhancing the overall learning experience.

Lastly, the research findings revealed a clear preference among participants for segmented learning when it comes to the spacing of training sessions. This preference stemmed from two primary factors: the busy schedules of managers and their self-acknowledged short attention spans. Participants believed that breaking the programme into smaller segments better accommodates their demanding agendas and helps maintain their focus and engagement throughout the programme. However, they highlighted the importance of not spacing the sessions too far apart, as this could lead to disengagement and hinder their ability to recall the acquired learnings. To address this concern, they suggested incorporating various activities between sessions to maintain momentum. These activities could include on-the-job assignments, group discussions, and networking opportunities with peers. This iterative process was argued to allow leaders to absorb information, apply it in their work environment, and return for knowledge-sharing with their peers.

Regarding the scheduling of LDPs, Taylor et al.'s (2009) meta-analysis of 107 studies of the effect of LDPs on training transfer revealed that the length of these programmes for all but four studies ranged from one day to two weeks, with a median duration of 22.5 hours. Interestingly, Taylor's (2009) study did not find a statistically significant linear relationship between the length of training and the effect size of training transfer. However, Blume et al. (2010) asserted that training interventions lasting only two hours are unlikely to facilitate a process as complex as training transfer. Similarly, Lacerenza et al. (2017) found that developing leadership capacity requires permanent cognitive changes, which necessitates adequate time. Thus, longer training programmes are more likely to result in training transfer, and, consequently, improved performance, despite the potential risk of cognitive

overload. However, drawing on cognitive load theory, Lacerenza et al. (2017) pointed out that trainees have a finite working memory, and excessive information overload can compromise their learning capacity, hindering the processing of information into their long-term memory. To address this, Lacerenza et al. (2017) suggested that weekly spaced training sessions, compared to daily sessions, are more likely to help participants reduce cognitive load while enhancing their ability to process important and relevant information, leading to higher levels of training transfer and positive outcomes.

The appropriate sequencing and timing of content delivery are also argued to be critical for effective adult learning. According to Vella (2008), ensuring appropriate sequencing is essential to avoid leaving learners feeling confused. Sufficient time is recommended to be provided for both reflection and practical application of new content in various occasions. However, facilitators were warned to avoid deviating from the planned sequence, or omitting parts, as this could disrupt learners' understanding and hinder their progress (Vella, 2008). Furthermore, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer suggests that training maintenance can be enhanced through the periodic delivery of 'booster sessions', deployed as an extension of the original training programme. These booster sessions, which are conceptualised by Baldwin and Ford (1988) as distributed training, are argued to help reinforce key concepts, refresh knowledge, and maintain the relevance of the training content over time, ensuring sustained learning and application in the workplace. Concluding, it is recommended for LDPs to be extended over a substantial period to ensure training transfer. However, to evade cognitive overload, it is recommended for these programmes to be thoughtfully segmented, allowing participants to apply their acquired KSBs on their job. Finally, the integration of refresher sessions can serve as a valuable tool in reinforcing and maintaining the programme's impact over time.

5.4. Practical Application On-The-Job in an Enabling Work Environment

This section delves into the insights shared by the research participants regarding their preferences and needs concerning the implementation of LDPs, while concurrently establishing connections with prior research.

5.4.1. Post-Programme Evaluation and Feedback

Participants expressed a strong need for evaluation and feedback after the completion of or between the taught modules of LDPs to enhance their learning and maximise training transfer. They advocated for various forms of feedback, including one-on-one, group, and on-the-job feedback. They suggested using 360-degree assessments, observation sessions, and performance indicators to evaluate whether they have applied the KSBs acquired from the programme and identify areas for further improvement. Such assessments were suggested to be conducted by the programme's facilitator or the participants' direct managers. They also expressed a desire to be invited to individual or group coaching sessions focused on key leadership topics. Such sessions were recommended to require some preparatory work to be done by the participants in order for them to take ownership of their own development as leaders and maintain focus and engagement with the programme. Nevertheless, the research participants emphasised the importance of trust and psychological safety in facilitating open discussions and requesting support during the evaluation process. By incorporating these feedback mechanisms, LDPs could create a supportive environment that promotes continuous learning and development for managers.

However, it is important to acknowledge and address certain concerns raised by previous research in relation to the findings of my study. Specifically, I will discuss some recommendations and precautions put forth by previous studies regarding the methods and timing of evaluation, the provision of feedback, and the value of self-reflection in conjunction with feedback. Firstly, Cheng and Ho (2011) questioned the validity of self-reported data on training transfer as well as data collected from other sources, such as participants' direct managers. To overcome this limitation, the authors recommended incorporating direct observation of behavioural changes and examination of samples of work performance as more effective measures. Interestingly, this recommendation aligns with the desire expressed by the participants in my research to engage in observation sessions, where they can demonstrate learned KSBs, such as conducting effective one-to-one meetings with their direct reports and receive personalised feedback from either the programme's facilitator or their direct manager. Additionally, Cheng and Ho (2011) suggested conducting evaluations before the programme, three months after its completion, and implementing regular follow-ups to assess the maintenance of acquired or developed KSBs over time. This recommendation resonates with the desires and needs expressed by the participants in my research, and I will explore this aspect further in the next section of this chapter. In a similar

vein, Wallace et al. (2021) emphasised the significance of time in assessing the outcomes of LDPs. They recommended incorporating repeated and multi-level quantitative and qualitative measurements over an extended time span, both at the individual and collective levels, to accurately capture the participants' progress. This approach was argued to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of LDPs.

Furthermore, Boyatsis' (2008, p.301) earlier study highlighted the potential of experiencing an immediate effect after training, termed the 'honeymoon effect.' This effect refers to the initial acquisition of new KSBs through a LDP, which may decline after a few months and overshadow the 'sleeper effect.' The 'sleeper effect' implies that changes in skills and behaviours might manifest almost a year after completing the training, leading to a potential misattribution of the effect to the development intervention. To account for this phenomenon, Hirst et al.'s (2004) mixed-method longitudinal study, which unveiled a twelve-month time lag between learning and application of acquired KSBs, suggested that this delay might reflect the time required by learners to consolidate conceptual insights into procedural skills and behaviours. In conclusion, it is recommended that post-programme evaluation and feedback should be provided to participants over an extended period after completing the programme and/or between taught modules. This approach will facilitate participants in applying the newly acquired KSBs while enabling organisations to assess the effectiveness of implemented LDPs before considering re-launching or re-designing them.

The concerns surrounding the evaluation of participants' leadership capacity after completing LDPs are commonly discussed in conjunction with the need for feedback. Notably, Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis showed that feedback significantly enhances the levels of training transfer in LDPs. Similarly, Blume et al. (2019) emphasised that the extent of transfer post-training is significantly influenced by participants' intentions and initial attempts to apply their learning in the workplace, along with the provision of feedback. According to Blume et al. (2019), feedback loops play a critical role in the transfer process by helping trainees bridge the gap between their desired performance goals and their current performance. This, in turn, affects their self-efficacy, subsequent goals, motivation to continue transferring their learning, and their future transfer efforts. Furthermore, An et al. (2022) found that LDPs incorporating extensive feedback from multiple sources were more likely to improve participants' leadership capacity due to heightened self-awareness. Participants receiving comprehensive feedback were found to develop the ability to critically reflect on their strengths and areas for further development. They were also more likely to

articulate their leadership identity and vision for the future, leading to optimal results at both personal and interpersonal levels. Steele and Day (2018) further argued that feedback, coupled with sense-making activities post-feedback, facilitates a reflective self-attention process, enabling participants to derive enhanced learning from leadership experiences. This, in turn, fosters greater self-understanding of strengths and weaknesses, accelerating their leadership development. Similarly, Baron and Parent (2015) asserted that feedback sessions increase participants' awareness of the consequences of their behaviour on others, allowing for a more accurate interpretation of their actions and behaviours. By recognising the significance of feedback and incorporating it effectively into LDPs, organisations are recommended to maximise the impact of their leadership development initiatives, empowering participants to evolve in their leadership roles.

However, researchers have emphasised the need for caution when providing feedback, as it may not always lead to leadership development. Day (2000) pointed out that feedback is not a guaranteed method for improvement and, in some cases, it may even result in decreased performance. This can occur when individuals employ defence mechanisms to block feedback they perceive as threatening or when they acknowledge the accuracy of the feedback but choose not to change their behaviour. Moreover, if the feedback is too complex or inconsistent, or if the recipient struggles to interpret it, it is unlikely to be sufficient for enabling behavioural change (Day, 2000). Day et al. (2014) echoed this sentiment in a subsequent study, cautioning against the overly simplistic assumption that giving feedback will automatically lead to behavioural change and subsequently improve performance. They highlighted the crucial role of self-reflection in the process of behavioural change. Without self-reflection, even competent managers may fail to recognise the need for personal change and regulate their own learning to bring about behavioural improvements (Billhuber Galli & Muller-Stewens, 2012). Consequently, reflective self-attention is considered to be particularly important for leadership development (Steele & Day, 2018). Facilitating self-reflection could be achieved through activities such as journaling or other introspective exercises within the context of LDPs (Allen & Hartman, 2008). However, it's worth noting that Allen and Hartman (2008) mentioned the lack of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of such activities. In the present study, the participants did not express a preference or need for journaling. Furthermore, Avolio and Hannah (2008) cautioned against maladaptive self-reflection, which involves excessive dwelling on mistakes and failures, leading to negative emotions such as anxiety and self-doubt. This kind of self-reflection was noted to hinder leaders from engaging in future development experiences.

In conclusion, while feedback and self-reflection play a crucial role in the effectiveness of LDPs, designers and/or facilitators should be mindful of the complexities and potential challenges associated with providing feedback and facilitating self-reflection. A balanced and thoughtful approach to incorporating these elements can lead to meaningful and sustainable behavioural change, supporting the growth and development of line managers. Supporting this recommendation, Sparr et al.'s (2017) mixed-method field investigation found that the simultaneous demonstration of feedback-seeking and reflection facilitated training transfer in the context of global LDPs. Feedback provided participants with the opportunity to assess their performance in a transfer experience, identify areas for improvement, and address blind spots in their behaviour based on insights from others (Sparr et al., 2017). Concurrently, reflection enabled sense-making from past experiences, guiding future behaviour, and promoting the regulation of affective responses while carefully examining transfer decisions (Sparr et al., 2017). Additionally, the study by Sparr et al. (2017) revealed that systematic feedback-seeking led to increased self-confidence and a higher willingness to continue transfer attempts. Notably, feedback-seeking was reported to be a stronger enabler of training transfer compared to reflection when time constraints or conflicting expectations were present (Sparr et al., 2017). However, the study also showed that feedback had no significant effect on transfer when reflection was low, as the provided information was not sufficiently used to understand and learn from past experiences. On the other hand, self-reflection without feedback was found to result in biased interpretations (Sparr et al., 2017). In conclusion, a strategic integration of feedback and self-reflection is recommended to foster a culture of continuous leadership development.

5.4.2. Opportunities to Practice

Concerning the study participants' desire and need for practical application, they emphasised the importance of on-the-job opportunities after completion of or between the programme's taught modules. The impact of the organisational environment on their ability to apply the KSBs acquired from LDPs was a key topic of discussion. Participants highlighted the significance of a supportive organisational culture that encourages managers to implement what they have learned in their unique ways, fostering experimentation and embracing mistakes as part of the learning process. Conversely, concerns were expressed about unsupportive work environments that discourage change and experimentation, leading to a culture of criticism and fear of punishment.

The experiences shared by participants from organisations that followed a tick-box approach to LDPs underscored the need for genuine organisational dedication to leadership development as well as clear communication from higher levels of the organisation about the company's vision, objectives, and upcoming changes. Additionally, participants emphasised that being micromanaged hindered their ability to demonstrate their leadership capacity since they were often excluded from decision-making processes. Moreover, excessive workload acted as a barrier to leadership development, as managers dealing with constant business urgencies or extreme pressure to deliver results lacked the time and energy to focus on developing their leadership skills. Such environments were noted to impede the growth of managers, despite their enthusiasm and readiness to apply the acquired KSBs in their roles.

These findings resonate with Day's (2000, p.605) recommendation, suggesting that instead of urging managers to ask themselves 'How can I be an effective leader?', a more impactful question as part of LDPs should be 'How can I participate productively in the leadership process [in my organisation]?'. That said, while individual leadership capacity is vital, presenting it in isolation from the context of competing power and uncertainty in which it is often exercised may promote an overly simplistic and individualistic perception of 'heroic' leadership (Ryan et al., 2021). Similarly, Schweiger et al. (2020) argued that focusing exclusively on individual leaders is problematic, as it overemphasises their influence and portrays them as 'heroes' capable of overcoming all challenges and tensions inherent in leadership, especially in today's complex and ambiguous business environment. Such approaches are criticised for disregarding the central role of various stakeholders and the relational and multi-level nature of leadership within an organisation (Mabey, 2013; Cullen-Lester et al., 2017). For instance, a leader's ability to influence others often depends on their organisational network and how their actions are perceived within that network (Avolio, 2007). Leaders in large organisations rarely operate in isolation; their leadership capacity is greatly influenced by the interplay of the social context in which they are embedded (Bilhuber Galli and Muller-Stewens, 2012). Thus, LDPs should not solely focus on developing individual leaders' attributes, but also on nurturing organisational relationships with shared vision, values, and trust. Without strong social capital, competent leaders may not be able to effectively utilise their KSBs. Furthermore, leadership is not merely defined by individual attributes and the relationships of managers with others; it is also shaped by organisational elements, structures, and processes. The current trend of flattening

organisational structures and the formation of cross-functional teams further challenges individualistic concepts of leadership. Thus, according to Dalakoura (2009), leadership development practices should be integrated into organisations' day-to-day operations and become an integral part of their culture. That said, effective LDPs should not exclusively focus on developing individual leaders, but also consider the context in which leadership is enacted (Turner et al., 2018).

This perspective aligns closely with Fuller and Unwin's (2004) definition of an expansive work environment, which is characterised by a wealth of development opportunities, active involvement in various communities of practice, and supportive job designs that nurture in-depth learning experiences, ultimately offering benefits to both individuals and organisations. Likewise, Billett (2001) emphasised the critical role of the workplace's readiness to extend developmental opportunities, termed as affordances, coupled with adequate support, in significantly influencing the quality and outcomes of workplace learning.

With reference to the work environment, Vardiman et al. (2006) explored the influence of the organisational culture on leadership development. The authors noted that cultures that do not support leadership development by promoting a learning mindset, being open to change, facilitating collaboration and information-sharing are likely to hinder the development of individual leaders. For instance, individuals who possess the leadership ability of influencing others and have a drive for change might be perceived as disruptive if the organisation's senior management team prioritises short-term business continuity over innovation.

With particular reference to managers' workload, a number of studies have identified it as a barrier to the training transfer process. Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007) noted that, in fast-paced work contexts, time constraints often prevent participants from effectively applying the learned behaviours and breaking old behavioural patterns and habits. Anon's (2015) study also found that workload constraints hindered participants from fully capitalising on development opportunities offered during or after the programme. Furthermore, Botke et al. (2018) noted that a heavy workload might impede trainees from actively practicing the newly acquired KSBs, especially when lacking support from their manager. To address this issue, Tafvelin et al. (2019) proposed the integration of LDPs with job redesign interventions. These interventions entail redefining participants' work duties to create ample opportunities for applying the learned KSBs on the job. For instance, reducing administrative tasks could

afford more time for managers to exercise their leadership capacity, such as supporting and developing their direct reports. Interestingly, the participants in the present research also highlighted the importance of this recommendation. By acknowledging and addressing the workload barriers, organisations were noted to be more likely to foster a conducive environment for successful training transfer.

In summary, previous research has commonly acknowledged the significance of the work environment in the training transfer process of LPDs. Despite this recognition, Beer et al. (2016) identified a critical flaw in current LDPs that are designed under the unexamined assumption that organisations function merely as aggregations of talented and well-trained employees, whose actions alone can improve overall organisational effectiveness. Contrarily, the authors viewed organisations as intricate systems of interaction influenced by multiple factors, including strategy, structure, leadership, culture, processes and policies. According to Beer et al. (2016), one of the main reasons behind the ineffectiveness of many LDPs is the failure to address issues concerning top management's leadership, strategic execution, and organisational design. Without addressing these fundamental aspects, the designed LDPs are noted to stand little chance of resulting in tangible improvements. Simultaneously, the authors emphasised that top management is often resistant to hearing the unvarnished truth about their leadership and the organisation's current circumstances. In a similar vein, Grunberg et al. (2017) asserted that self-concentrated or siloed LPDs, disconnected from the organisation's reality and practices, are destined to fail. That said, my research findings coupled with previous research underscored that success of LPDs hinges on their alignment with the organisation's overall mission, strategy, objectives, values, and current challenges.

My research participants called for supportive cultures that value experimentation and empower managers to implement their KSBs in their own unique ways. Previous research has also supported the developmental value of challenging on-the-job experiences (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). These experiences encouraged leaders to manage resources, make decisions in risky and uncertain situations, and identify critical drivers and barriers to change. Such experiences were found to serve as a platform for participants to test learned KSBs, challenge established thought patterns and habits, and tackle complex issues in dynamic environments. Furthermore, challenging experiences were argued to play a crucial role in helping participants identify the gap between their current and desired levels of leadership capacity. This realisation was noted to enhance their motivation to engage in

critical self-reflection, identify potential underlying causes, and understand the consequences of their actions. In conclusion, drawing on DeRue and Wellman (2009), challenging experiences that involve novel, uncertain, and meaningful circumstances create a heightened sense of cognitive stimulation that facilitate learning and behavioural changes.

The participants of my research specifically recognised the value of immediate (after the completion of LDPs) opportunities to apply learnings acquired from LDPs within their own teams. However, they acknowledged that the effectiveness of this practice depended on the team's size and the occurrence of diverse leadership challenges. To address these limitations, participants suggested providing managers with opportunities to practice their leadership skills through cross-functional assignments, leading teams in different departments or business functions. Another concern raised by line managers was the potential lack of leadership challenges within their teams, making it difficult to demonstrate their ability to apply leadership learnings in practice. Similarly, teams composed solely of complacent members who unquestioningly followed the manager's guidance was noted to hinder the manager from stepping out of their comfort zone and trying out new leadership practices, leading to development stagnation. On the other hand, managers constantly dealing with people issues within their teams also faced hindrances to their development, as their time and energy were diverted away from implementing the acquired KSBs and focusing on their primary role of leading. Instead, their time and energy were found to be dedicated in implementing corrective actions or even stepping in to do the work on behalf of their team members. Overall, the findings stressed the need for an integrated and holistic approach to leadership development aligned with organisational strategies and a culture of experimentation and continuous support. This is consistent with Eraut's (2004) conceptualisation of the work environment as an implicit curriculum, in which employees acquire skills and knowledge not only through formal instruction but also through the subtleties of daily experiences and interactions. This framework posits learning as a continuous and essential aspect of work, primarily occurring through observation, practice, problem-solving, and the exchange of knowledge embedded within everyday work activities.

5.4.3. Stakeholders' Support

The study's participants underscored the pivotal role of their direct manager in either facilitating or impeding their leadership development, the application of KSBs acquired from LDPs to their role, and ultimately, leadership performance. They placed significant emphasis

on how their direct manager's level of support influences their motivation to pursue ongoing growth in their leadership capacity. They highlighted the positive effect of being encouraged by their direct manager to experiment with novel practices, alongside clear demonstration of trust in their ability to succeed. It is noteworthy that the pivotal role of the direct manager aligns with the work environment category outlined in Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer. The authors asserted that direct managers play a crucial role as a key training input. This entails not only creating avenues for participants to implement the learned KSBs but also offering praise, curating pertinent assignments, and providing other forms of recognition to encourage consistent display of the acquired leadership KSBs. Such actions, as posited by the Baldwin and Ford (1988), profoundly impact the extent to which the programme's learnings translate into tangible outcomes. This dynamic is rooted in the psychological propensity of employees to emulate their managers, primarily driven by the desire for acceptance and the anticipation of potential rewards (Sackmann et al., 2021). This finding underscores the intricate interplay between the direct manager's actions and the training transfer process, ultimately shaping the trajectory of leadership development for participants. This finding is in line with the recent study of Sackmann et al. (2021), who elucidate the influence of direct managers since they are typically responsible for determining the participants' roles, responsibilities, priorities, autonomy levels, access to resources, rewards, and career progression.

The insights gathered from my research participants suggested that managerial support should be exhibited through developmental discussions centred on the insights garnered from the programme. Engaging in open dialogues concerning prevailing leadership challenges faced by participants were deemed valuable. In addition, participants found value in examining real-life scenarios involving team members, as such discussions had the potential to provide diverse perspectives anew insights. Some participants also expressed a desire for their direct manager to collaboratively set developmental goals and performance expectations. They viewed this as instrumental in providing a sense of direction and fostering accountability, thereby bolstering their commitment to enhancing their leadership skills. On this note, Amagoh (2009) argued that LDPs integrating mentoring opportunities, wherein participants establish formal relationships with more seasoned or adept leaders who serve as mentors, can yield several benefits. Such mentorship initiatives can encompass career support, psychological safety, and the embodiment of effective leadership through role modelling. Notably, the mentor can also reap rewards by augmenting their leadership capacity and bolstering self-efficacy through this relationship (Amagoh, 2009; Dalakoura,

2009). Echoing this sentiment, O'Loughlin (2013) contended that mentors have the potential to offer invaluable insight and feedback, with anticipated outcomes encompassing heightened career progression and elevated job satisfaction. However, O'Loughlin (2013) also underscored that a research void still exists regarding the specific ways in which mentors actively contribute to the leadership development process. On this account, although my participants highlighted the importance of their direct manager aligning with and embracing the leadership principles and values taught within the company's LDPs, some acknowledged a more nuanced perspective, recognising that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all formula. For them, what held greater importance was their manager sharing congruent values and a collective vision for the team's future, rather than adhering strictly to the same leadership style.

Conversely, participants also pinpointed certain behaviours exhibited by their direct manager that could hinder their leadership development. A glaring issue was the absence of psychological safety, which significantly discouraged participants from initiating discussions with their manager about leadership challenges present within their teams. Additionally, the adverse effects of micromanagement by managers were brought to the forefront. This was observed to occur when direct managers monopolised decision-making processes without involving or considering the input of their lower-level managers. It was also noted to occur when objectives, plans, changes were directly communicated to the team without involvement of the latter's direct manager. Beyond the constraint on participant's ability to exercise their leadership capacity in such instances, they affirmed that this approach adversely affects their motivation. This was attributed to a profound sense of failure and despair stemming from their inability to exercise leadership independently and make effective decisions due to the lack of necessary information. These observations underscored the pivotal role played by direct managers in their team members' leadership development. Hence, participants emphasised the urgent need for organisations to prioritise the top-down implementation of LDPs, whereby their top management receives training first. Such approach was argued to ensure alignment with the endorsed leadership principles and equip higher-level managers with the necessary skills to foster the growth and development of their team members. This recommendation echoes the findings of Vandergoot et al. (2020), who asserted that training transfer is heightened when the participants' managers undergo the same LDP. This shared experience was found to provide a common language and a mutual understanding of acquired concepts and theories. This perspective also finds congruence with the earlier study by Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe

(2007), further validating the viewpoint that the completion of the programme by participants' managers can significantly impact the successful transfer of training.

The participants in my study acknowledged the significant influence of their direct manager on their leadership development. However, when it came to the effect of their peers – indicating other managers of the same level reporting to the same or other higher-level manager within the organisation – on their development post-LDP, participants perceived their peers' influence to be moderate rather than strong. Some participants expressed their peers' influence in terms of motivating each other to lead by example and adopt shared leadership values and practices. This sentiment aligns with the findings of Botke et al. (2018), whose study also identified peers as a positive influence, offering feedback and embodying learned behaviours through role modelling. However, while my participants valued the support their peers could offer, they also emphasised that they needed to retain their distinct identities and exercise critical judgment when evaluating their peers' behaviours and practices. Maintaining alignment with their personal vision of effective leadership, rather than conforming to prevailing norms, was underscored as crucial. Hence, participants emphasised that leadership authenticity should guide their actions, countering any impulse to mirror others' conduct. Concluding, participants acknowledged the more pronounced influence wielded by their direct managers in propelling their leadership development, eclipsing that of their peers. This observation, albeit not widely explored in current research, echoes the sentiment expressed by Taylor et al. (2009). This stance argues that peers exert a lesser influence on leadership development compared to the participants' direct managers, largely due to the limited opportunities they have to directly witness one another exhibiting acquired leadership KSBs in interactions with their respective teams. In conclusion, the insights shared by my research participants hold significant value, especially considering that, as highlighted by Botke et al. (2018) and Tafvelin et al. (2021), the scrutiny of supervisory and peer support behaviours in the majority of studies on leadership development either remains elusive or lacks clarity.

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, a direct connection has been established between my research findings and the existing body of literature. I have made connections between my research findings, existing research and chosen theoretical frameworks. By uncovering the preferences and needs of line managers participating in LDPs, along with their views on potential strategies

to address those wants and needs, this section has contributed insights into the issue of training transfer within LDPs. Moreover, my analysis brought together adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Kolb, 1986; Vella, 2002) and leadership development, viewing the participants of LPDs as adult learners. This connection between adult learning theory and leadership development is a relatively unexplored area in previous studies (Kolb et al., 1986; Knowles et al., 2005; Allen et al., 2022; Scholtz, 2023). The forthcoming chapter builds upon these findings by delving into the implications for my own professional learning and practice, while also shedding light on their broader contributions for the professional practice of designers and/or facilitators of LDPs. Additionally, the next chapter acknowledges the study's inherent limitations and offers recommendations for guiding future research endeavours in this field.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

6.1. Introduction

This study sought to investigate the wants and needs of line managers who participate in LDPs, as well as their perceptions of how these wants and needs could be fulfilled. As discussed in the 'Introduction' chapter of this dissertation, despite the substantial investment in LDPs (Latshaw & Shannon, 2020), they have faced consistent criticism for their failure to develop the leadership capacity of line managers and, ultimately, the leadership performance of their respective organisations (Anon, 2015; Beer et al., 2016; Botke et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2018; Lantu et al., 2021). This recurring issue is often attributed to the challenge of 'training transfer', which involves the successful application of newly acquired KSBs from training to the participants' job roles (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). To shed light on the intricacies surrounding training transfer within LDPs, I chose to conduct interviews with line managers, who had previous experience of participating in these programmes, to better understand their wants and needs. This concluding chapter will commence by addressing the research questions, followed by an exploration of the implications of my research findings for my professional learning and practice. I will also present the tangible changes I have initiated in my professional practice as a direct consequence of this research. Furthermore, I will delve into the potential broader contributions to the professional practice of designers and/or facilitators of LDPs, along with the large international companies that offer such programmes. The chapter concludes with a reflective assessment of the research and an acknowledgement of its limitations, followed by the presentation of recommendations for future research.

6.2. Summary of Research Findings

In this section, I summarise the research findings to directly answer the research questions before delving into their implications for my professional practice.

Research Questions:
1. What do line managers want and need from LDPs?
2. How do line managers believe that their wants and needs could be met?

Research Findings:

Line managers want and/or need:

1. Relevant and personalised content.

The research findings highlighted the importance of tailoring the content of LPDs to participants' managerial levels and business functions, aligning with Mumford et al.'s (2007) layered approach, which recognises that distinct leadership skills are required at different managerial tiers. Moreover, participants stressed the need to integrate company-specific leadership needs, challenges, and values into LDPs, echoing Gentry et al. (2014) and Tafvelin et al.'s (2019b) recommendation to align participant needs with desired organisational outcomes. However, my research, also brought into light the potential risk of confining managers within rigid leadership frameworks. Drawing on adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Vella, 2002), my research underscored the importance of involving programme participants as co-creators in the design process of LPDs to boost learner engagement and commitment. Specifically, this study highlighted the need for a comprehensive Learning Needs Analysis, involving various stakeholders, and ensuring alignment of the programme's objectives with the target audience's career aspirations. This approach, which is supported by previous research (Taylor et al., 2009; Gentry et al., 2014; Tafvelin et al. 2021), was noted by my participants to enhance the programme's perceived relevance and immediacy, ultimately improving training transfer.

Regarding the participant selection for LPDs, my research indicated that self-awareness, openness to learning, vulnerability, a growth-oriented mindset, and a genuine motivation for self-development, contribute to training transfer. This aligns with previous research, emphasising the impact of individual characteristics on leadership development and performance (Stiehl et al., 2015; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Kwok et al., 2021; Vogel et al., 2021; Wallace et al., 2021). However, cognitive ability was not identified by my research participants as a significant predictor of leadership development and performance, diverging from prior research (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Avolio et al., 2010; O'Loughlin, 2013; Day & Dragoni, 2015; Crossan et al., 2021). The implementation of a 'top-down' approach, whereby top management receives training first, is also advocated to enhance programme alignment, consistency and support, aligning with Gulpin-Jackson and Bush's (2007) findings.

My research participants also identified their specific learning needs as line managers in large international companies, including: increasing self-awareness, understanding different leadership styles, developing effective communication skills, empowering team members, fostering psychological safety and trust, leading diverse teams, striking a balance between individual needs and organisational objectives. These novel insights shed light on the potential learning objectives of LPDs, addressing a gap in prior research.

Lastly, the research underscored the importance of personalised content within LDPs that recognises the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of line managers as adult learners. Drawing on adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984; Vella, 2002), a learner-centric approach is supported, leveraging participants' existing knowledge and accumulated experiences to foster active engagement and create a meaningful learning experience within LDPs. The research also acknowledged the potential challenges experienced leaders may face due to established mental schemas, highlighting the critical role of personalised approaches in facilitating a process of unlearning and relearning.

2. Experiential and interactive programme delivery.

The research findings underscored the benefits of an experiential and interactive approach to the delivery of LDPs. Participants exhibited a strong preference for experiential learning and reflective methods, favouring active engagement and self-discovery over passive lectures. This is consistent with previous research (Baron & Parent, 2015; Tafvelin et al., 2021; Wisshak & Barth; 2022). Moreover, my study emphasised the value of real-world examples, participatory exercises, and problem-solving activities, in line with adult learning principles (Kolb et al., 1986; Knowles et al., 2005). This finding further echoes previous research that emphasised the significance of contextualised learning and active experimentation within LDPs (Allen et al., 2022).

The role of leadership facilitators in shaping participants' learning experiences was highlighted, with participants valuing qualities such as effective communication, expertise, open-mindedness, critical thinking, empathy, compassion, and hands-on managerial experience. While the importance of leadership facilitators has been acknowledged in previous research, their impact on the training transfer process was scarcely explored (Wisshak & Barth, 2022).

Lastly, participants expressed a preference for group discussions, face-to-face sessions, off-site venues, and segmented learning. The study underscored the value of group discussions for knowledge-sharing, engagement, and networking among participants, whilst also acknowledging the potential limitations and risks. Additionally, the preference for face-to-face LDPs over online alternatives stressed the importance of physical presence, non-verbal communication, and immersive learning environments. As noted in the 'Discussion' chapter, this finding appears to be at odds with recent research conducted by Krampitz et al. (2022). Off-site venues were favoured for their neutral atmosphere, fostering deeper connections and communities of practice among participants. The study also emphasised segmented learning to accommodate busy schedules and short attention spans, with activities between sessions maintaining momentum and reinforcing learnings. This finding resonates with Baldwin and Fords (1988) model of training transfer, and Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis, which found that information overload could compromise learning capacity and training transfer.

3. Practical application on-the-job in an enabling environment.

The present study emphasised the significance of post-programme evaluation and constructive feedback to facilitate training transfer within LDPs. This finding is consistent with previous research (Baron & Parent, 2015; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Steele & Day, 2018; Blume et al., 2019; An et al., 2022). However, existing research has also noted that feedback alone does not necessarily result in behavioural change and leadership development, highlighting the essential role of self-reflection (Day, 2000; Day et al., 2014; Sparr et al., 2017).

The participants also stressed the need for on-the-job opportunities to apply the KSBs acquired from LDPs, and highlighted the importance of a supportive organisational culture that encourages experimentation. This aligns with previous research, which has recognised the influence of the work environment on leadership development and performance (Day, 2000; Dalakoura, 2009; Turner et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2021; Schweiger et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the participants identified the direct manager's role as critical in influencing the effectiveness of LDPs and the transfer of learning to the workplace. This finding is consistent with Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model of training transfer and recent research conducted in the context of LDPs (Sackmann et al., 2021). Lastly, the study showed that participants perceived their peers' influence on their leadership development to be moderate.

As explained in the 'Discussion' chapter, this finding is at odds with Botke et al.'s (2018) study, which identified peer support as a strong predictor of training transfer, but aligns with Taylor et al. (2009), who argued that peers tend to have a lesser impact on leadership development compared to the participants' direct manager.

6.3. Contributions to my Professional Practice

This research has generated several key insights with direct relevance to my role as a designer and facilitator of LDPs within a large international company. Some of these learnings have already been integrated into my practice, while others are currently under consideration for future implementation. These insights are delineated below and organised into three phases, namely: before delivering an LDP, while delivering a LDP, and after the LDP has been delivered.

6.3.1. Before delivering a LDP

The research highlighted the importance of conducting a thorough LNA, a point that was strongly emphasised by the participating line managers. While this finding was not surprising, it did prompt several valuable adjustments in my professional practice. Firstly, I now make a deliberate effort to ensure that the content of the LDPs I design aligns closely with the company's overarching needs, encompassing its vision, mission, and core values. For instance, in a module titled 'Leading the Organisation' that I deliver as part of a mandatory leadership training series in my company, I initiate sessions with a group discussion centred around the company's culture and values, underscoring their impact on the daily practices of line managers. Secondly, I have begun involving line managers in the process of identifying the specific learning objectives for the modules I design. This participatory approach allows for the content to respond to their leadership needs and challenges, rendering it more relevant and applicable. Consequently, it contributes to increased participant attendance, engagement, and overall satisfaction. To facilitate this process, I have introduced tools such as surveys and focus groups to gather input from a representative group or the entire target audience whenever possible.

Another noteworthy insight from the research highlights the need to customise the content of LDPs based on the participants' managerial levels and respective business functions. Although I have not yet implemented this customisation in the leadership series I currently

deliver, primarily due to constraints related to designing multiple module versions and conducting smaller group training sessions, I consider this tailored approach to have the potential to be beneficial. However, this approach may only be feasible in larger organisations with a substantial number of line managers in each managerial level and business function, supported by a dedicated team of leadership designers and facilitators. Furthermore, the research participants underscored the effectiveness of a top-down approach in ensuring organisational alignment and support. Although my current leadership curriculum did not initially employ this top-down approach at its launch, which took place before the collection and analysis of my research data, I intend to incorporate this approach in upcoming modules. To elaborate, after conducting a thorough learning needs analysis to ensure the programme aligns with the leadership needs and challenges of the participants, my intention is to initially deliver the designed modules to the senior management teams in the targeted departments, which includes directors and department heads. Following this, I will solicit feedback from these senior leaders and their immediate superiors (C-level executives) before extending the modules to include lower-level managers, encompassing both managers and team leaders. As explained in the 'Findings' chapter, this approach was argued by my research participants to enhance goal alignment, consistency, and better support for lower-level managers in their development journey.

6.3.2. While delivering a LDP

Concerning the delivery of LDPs, I have implemented considerable changes to my professional practice as a facilitator. Firstly, I have shifted these programmes from their previous live online format, which was launched during the Coronavirus pandemic and conducted through Microsoft Teams, to in-person face-to-face sessions. However, this change applies primarily to line managers based at the company's headquarters, where the majority of the workforce is located. Line managers situated across the company's global sites continue to receive live online training due to practical constraints related to travel and associated costs. Moreover, I have taken into consideration the research participants' preference for off-site training venues. However, I have refrained from implementing this recommendation due to cost implications, logistical complexities, and the availability of a suitable in-house training room that allows us to minimise external disruptions, which was a primary concern expressed by the participants. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that the use of external venues may become necessary for future full-day or extended training sessions.

Concurrently with the shift in delivery format, I have undertaken a content revision to incorporate a richer array of experiential and reflective activities, such as real-world cases, role-play scenarios, case studies, problem-solving exercises, and group discussions. This experiential approach has allowed me to treat my programmes' participants as adult learners, incorporating insights from adult learning theory to enhance training transfer (Knowles, 1984; Kolb et al., 1986; Vella, 2002). Of particular importance is the deliberate alignment of these activities with the actual leadership challenges encountered within the organisation. Consequently, the proportion of time previously allocated to facilitator-led presentations has seen a substantial reduction. This shift has led to a noticeable increase in participant engagement and overall satisfaction.

In terms of group discussions, my future objective is to structure them in a way that fosters the establishment of communities of practice among participants, extending beyond the programme's designated duration. Additionally, an insight gleaned from the research has led to my intention to better segment the training sessions within the leadership curriculum I facilitate. I believe that this approach will more effectively accommodate the participants' busy schedules, mitigate the risk of information overload, and facilitate the practical application of concepts between sessions.

Concerning my facilitation skills, I remain committed to prioritising empathy and the cultivation of an open and psychologically safe learning environment that encourages participants to openly share their perspectives and experiences. However, my approach has evolved to include actively challenging and promoting critical reflection on viewpoints that may deviate from the programme's core leadership principles. This is often facilitated through open and candid group discussions. Additionally, I have enriched my facilitation by incorporating personal anecdotes drawn from my personal experience as a line manager, and openly discussing my own leadership challenges. This approach has appeared to bolster participants' perception of my relatability and credibility as a leadership facilitator, ultimately enhancing the programme's perceived relevance and practical utility.

6.3.3. After delivering a LDP

My research has also yielded insights directly relevant to my professional practice beyond the completion of the taught modules of LDPs. One significant takeaway from my research underscores the importance of integrating post-programme evaluation and feedback

activities. In this regard, participants expressed a preference for a range of evaluation methods, including observation sessions, one-to-one or group coaching sessions, and 360-degree assessments. Currently, I am exploring the incorporation of observation and coaching sessions in my company's LDPs. Concerning the participants' inclination towards 360-degree assessments, while my current organisation offers a 360-leadership analysis, this is optional for people leaders who opt to receive feedback on their leadership skills from their manager, direct reports, peers and other stakeholders. The decision for this assessment to be optional was informed by previous research findings that raised concerns about the validity of 360-degree assessments. Specifically, Day et al. (2014) emphasised the need to move beyond the assumption that providing feedback to a leader automatically translates into behavioural change and improved leadership performance, as this premise lacks empirical support. Similarly, Tafvelin et al. (2019b) argued that 360-degree feedback alone may not suffice to motivate leaders to adapt their leadership styles and behaviours. Consequently, the value of 360-degree assessments remains a subject of debate.

In response to these considerations, I am considering the inclusion of individual and/or group observation and coaching sessions. I believe that this approach could foster a psychologically safe and productive learning environment, facilitating self-reflection. Furthermore, these activities would provide opportunities for hands-on, on-the-job practice. To ensure the effectiveness of these sessions, I am also considering the implementation of preparatory work as a prerequisite for participation, a suggestion that emerged from my research participants. This might involve participants submitting questions or topics for discussion in advance. This approach was suggested by some research participants who thought it could enhance participant ownership of the learning process, increasing their focus and engagement. However, it is important to acknowledge that implementing such a comprehensive approach for all line managers participating in LDPs within large international companies may present resource challenges. Additionally, its success heavily relies on securing support from key stakeholders, including the participants' managers, who play a pivotal role in allocating time for these sessions, creating opportunities for practice on the job, and providing feedback.

6.4. Broader Implications for Practice

In the preceding section, I outlined several insights from my research that have the potential to enhance the professional practice of not only myself but also other designers and/or

facilitators of LDPs. However, it is essential to recognise that, while these recommendations offer valuable insights, they may not universally align with the preferences and needs of each and every line manager within a large international company. My data highlights the need for their application to be thoughtfully contextualised before is implemented in diverse organisational settings. In the following sub-sections, I will explain the potentially broader contributions of my research. However, before delving into that discussion, I will address some concerns.

There are certain findings from my research that remain challenging to fully grasp in terms of their practical implementation and potential consequences. For instance, my research participants emphasised the importance of selecting participants for LDPs based on specific individual attributes such as self-awareness, openness to learning, vulnerability, a growth-oriented mindset, and a genuine motivation for self-development. While this approach is underpinned by the rationale of ensuring the suitability and maximum benefit of those selected, and is further substantiated by prior research (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Johnsson et al., 2018; Vandergoot et al., 2020; Kwok et al., 2021), as presented in the 'Discussion' chapter, I remain concerned about the possible adverse consequences of such a selection process. Firstly, the challenge lies in how these attributes would be identified and assessed, and by whom. Secondly, there is the question of whether this might lead to the exclusion of line managers who do not currently appear to exhibit these attributes, and if so, this raises the question of how they would be expected to continue developing their leadership capacity to meet the demands of their leadership roles. Similarly, my research participants emphasised the influence of the facilitator's managerial experience on their perceptions of the relevance and utility of a LDP. Accepting this finding at face value raises concerns and could have potential adverse implications for practitioners who currently facilitate LDPs without substantial or any prior managerial experience. Consequently, these findings necessitate further exploration and thoughtful consideration before any practical implementation can be undertaken.

6.4.1. Before delivering a LDP

A pivotal finding generated from this research underscores the importance of conducting a systematic LNA during the design phase of a LDP. Such an analysis serves to ensure that LDPs respond to the participants' needs, thereby enhancing their perceptions of the programme's utility. This, in turn, might increase the likelihood of training transfer into

participants' job roles. While previous research has acknowledged this imperative, Lacerenza et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis revealed that the practice of conducting a needs analysis remains infrequent as part of LDPs. Notably, although a meticulous LNA, involving participants and other stakeholders within the organisation, can indeed present complexities and require more time to be dedicated to the design phase, my research emphatically underscores its indispensable role in the design of LDPs in order for them to be perceived as relevant and applicable by the prospective participants. Hence, designers of LDPs should be clear about the programme's learning objectives as well as the organisation's anticipated outcomes of the programme. That said, the adoption of one-size-fits-all or off-the-shelf programmes becomes an untenable approach. Such standardised learning solutions are ill-suited to address the diverse array of leadership needs, challenges, and unique experiences and contexts that line managers of varying managerial levels, business functions, experience levels, and team dynamics bring to the table. Furthermore, my data suggests that LDP designers should consider adopting a top-down implementation strategy. This approach involves initially providing training to the organisation's top management before cascading it down through various managerial levels. This deliberate sequence might increase the likelihood of consistency, alignment, and enhanced support for lower-level managers. In essence, it has the potential to cultivate a culture of synergy across all organisational levels.

6.4.2. While delivering a LDP

Several research insights pertaining to the delivery of LDPs have the potential to benefit the professional practice of designers and/or facilitators of LDPs. While some of these insights have been outlined in the preceding section, where I elaborated on their impact on my own professional practice, I hereby highlight three key points that I believe have broader implications. Firstly, the research strongly advocates for prioritising experiential and reflective learning methods, as elucidated in the 'Findings' and 'Discussion' chapters, while also limiting reliance on traditional instructor-led or lecture-based approaches. This shift is aimed at enhancing active engagement with the programme's content, promoting self-discovery over passive learning, aligning with well-established adult learning principles as articulated by Knowles (1984) and Vella (2002), fostering the creation of communities of practice, and providing a secure and engaging learning environment for experimentation and practical application. Secondly, concerning the delivery format, it is recommended that LDPs integrate group discussions to encourage knowledge-sharing and facilitate the formation of supportive networks among participants. Lastly, my data suggests that it may

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be advisable to carefully segment the modules of LDPs to maintain momentum, create opportunities for on-the-job application and reflection, and reinforce the acquired KSBs. Ideally, scheduling these sessions should involve collaboration with participants to boost engagement and reduce dropout rates.

6.4.3. After delivering a LDP

My research has shed light on the critical significance of translating the acquired KSBs from LDPs into practical application within the participants' leadership roles, as well as creating an enabling work environment for this purpose. While these recommendations emerged as pivotal for the effectiveness of LDPs, I acknowledge that their implementation within large international companies can be intricate, time-consuming, and contingent on securing buy-in from top management and other stakeholders. Nevertheless, I believe that it remains imperative to ensure that, following the completion of LDPs, participants are provided with structured opportunities for hands-on practice. This could encompass specific tasks or cross-functional assignments tailored to their developmental needs. Additionally, post-programme one-on-one or group coaching sessions, organised in collaboration with the facilitator and centred on specific developmental objectives, could significantly enhance the transfer of training into participants' leadership roles. Furthermore, it is important to formally secure the support of the participants' direct manager by allocating dedicated time for development discussions and constructive feedback sessions. This collaborative effort involving facilitators, participants, and their direct managers could ensure a holistic and sustainable approach to leadership development.

6.5. Reflection on the Process and Research Limitations

My research has provided insights into the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs, offering guidance for enhancing my professional practice while also potentially benefiting other designers and/or facilitators of LDPs. Nevertheless, it is important to critically reflect on the research process and acknowledge its inherent limitations. Firstly, as explained in the 'Methodology' chapter, it is crucial to emphasise that this study does not make claims regarding the generalisability of its findings through inductive inferences or their transferability to other research contexts. The study involved a relatively small group of line managers, all employed by large international companies, and all with prior managerial

experience as well as experience of participating in LDPs. Hence, this participant group may not fully capture the diverse spectrum of line managers across various organisations.

In terms of demographic representation, while there was a relatively balanced distribution of participants in terms of gender, years of managerial experience, and department or function, there was a relatively uneven representation in age groups. The majority of participants belonged to the 35-44 and 45-54 age brackets, although these brackets are wide. Additionally, most participants occupied senior managerial positions, while two held first-line managerial positions and one operated at a mid-level capacity. Furthermore, the study did not delve into the participants' demographics, such as age, gender, managerial experience, and industry background, which could have an effect on their preferences, needs and perceptions. This approach was intentional, mirroring the typical practice of LDPs in large international companies, including those I design and deliver myself. Such programmes often include managers irrespective of their diverse profiles and backgrounds, like managerial experience and department or function.

Another consideration is that the research data consisted exclusively of self-reported data by the participants. These line managers volunteered to participate in the research, suggesting a pre-existing interest in or value placed on LDPs. Consequently, this research may not fully capture the wants and needs of line managers who either do not see value in LDPs or lack an interest in participating voluntarily. Furthermore, the findings are intrinsically tied to the context in which the research was conducted, primarily within large international companies. The specific needs and challenges faced by line managers in such organisations, notably the management of diverse teams in culturally varied contexts, may not necessarily align with those in smaller enterprises operating within more homogeneous environments. Consequently, recommendations stemming from this research might not be directly applicable in such settings. In addition, the research findings reflect the perspectives and needs of line managers at a specific point in time. As emphasised in the 'Literature Review' chapter, the field of leadership development is dynamic and evolves over time. Consequently, the recommendations put forth may require periodic review and adaptation to remain relevant in the ever-changing landscape of leadership development.

In terms of methodology, the interpretivist paradigm guided this research, and the data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase reflective thematic analysis, which is not congruent with the notions of coding reliability and the avoidance of bias. Instead, this

approach recognises that meaning and knowledge are situated, context-bound, and shaped by the researcher's subjectivity. Nevertheless, to uphold methodological integrity, I have transparently stated my epistemological premises in the 'Methodology' chapter, which are reflected in the research design and process.

Finally, this research did not explore the perspectives of designers and/or facilitators of LDPs. Although I discussed potential challenges and constraints in relation to my own professional practice, involving other practitioners in this research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practical implications of implementing changes suggested by line managers.

6.6. Recommendations for Future Research

Building upon the insights gained from this research, along with its inherent limitations, there are several avenues for future explorations that could contribute to further understanding and improvement of LDPs. Firstly, conducting research across different industries and managerial levels that focuses on identifying commonalities and variations in the wants and needs of line managers from LDPs could help in better understanding the potential personalisation requirements for LDPs. Another promising avenue for further research could be the investigation of the influence of cultural and regional differences on the wants and needs of line managers participating in LDPs. Such research could pave the way for culturally sensitive practices for the customisation of LPDs targeting diverse global employees. Longitudinal studies could be another valuable prospect, in which data collection would span the phases before, during, and after the participation of line managers in LDPs. These studies could provide valuable insights into the enduring impact of such programmes, uncovering sustained benefits and potential limitations that might emerge over time.

Moreover, there is significant potential in further exploring various delivery formats for LDPs, including in-person, online, and blended approaches, with the aim of optimising the transfer of training. Additionally, an in-depth investigation of the advantages and limitations associated with different experiential learning methods, such as simulations, role-playing, case studies, and group discussions, as well as evaluation techniques like observation sessions, coaching, self-reflection, and feedback exercises, could also provide valuable guidance for designers and facilitators. Research could also explore the integration of communities of practice within LDPs and investigate how they could facilitate peer learning,

mentorship, and knowledge sharing among line managers. Expanding on this notion, future research could delve deeper into the impact of treating participants of LDPs as adult learners, drawing from different adult learning theories and their practical applicability within the context of LDPs.

Understanding the practices employed and the challenges faced by designers and facilitators of LDPs in aligning with the preferences and needs of line managers as these were identified in the present research could also prove to be a worthy endeavour. This exploration could uncover strategies for the development of more holistic LDPs, shedding light on the practical implications of implementing the research recommendations. Additionally, delving into the ramifications of implementing the recommendations presented in this research, including potential financial considerations, could be beneficial. As highlighted in the 'Introduction' and 'Literature Review' chapters, the effectiveness of LDPs in enhancing leadership performance and organisational outcomes is often questioned due to concerns about their ROI (Hieker & Pringle, 2021). Thus, a deeper understanding of the associated financial costs and benefits of the customisation of LDPs could assist organisations in making informed decisions about their intended programmes. Lastly, future research could focus on how a company's culture influences the effect of LDPs. Investigating how organisational values, norms, and practices impact the acceptance and implementation of leadership principles acquired through LDPs could provide valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

In summary, this research, while acknowledging its inherent limitations, provides invaluable insights into the wants and needs of line managers participating in LPDs. It goes beyond mere identification of these wants and needs to delve into their perceptions of how these could be met. As elucidated in sections 6.3 and 6.4 of this chapter, these insights hold the potential to significantly enhance the relevance, applicability, transferability, and overall effectiveness of LDPs. The ongoing inconclusiveness in the field of LDP research (Tafvelin et al., 2021), which has traditionally adopted quantitative research methods (Maybe, 2013), underscores the pressing need for qualitative studies like the present one. This empirical study, while primarily contributing to my own professional learning, it also extends its potential impact to benefit other designers and facilitators of LDPs in aligning their programmes with the preferences and needs of their target audiences. Furthermore, organisations that offer LDPs to their line managers can derive substantial value from this research. It could equip them with a deeper understanding of how to customise these

programmes to be responsive to the preferences and needs of their participants, ultimately enhancing their managers' leadership capacity and, potentially, organisational performance.

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Appendix A: Indicative Interview Themes

Research Project: Developing Leaders in the Workplace: An Empirical Study of Line Managers' Wants and Needs from Leadership Development Programmes.

Researcher: Maria Loumpourdi

Indicative Interview Themes/Questions:

Learning Objectives
- What, in your opinion, are optimal objectives for leadership development programmes?
- How, in your opinion, should the objectives of leadership development programmes be determined?

Programme Design
- How, in your opinion, should the content of leadership development programmes be designed?
- In your opinion, what topics should be included in leadership development programmes?
- How, in your opinion, should the content of leadership development programmes be delivered?
- In your opinion, what activities should leadership development programmes incorporate?
- How, in your opinion, should the trainer(s)/facilitator(s) deliver the programme?
- From your experience as a participant, could you give examples of leadership development programmes that met your wants and needs?
- From your experience as a participant, could you give examples of leadership development programmes that did not meet your wants and needs?

Organisational Environment
- How could the organisational environment enable you to put the learnings acquired through a leadership development programme into practice?
- How could the organisational environment hinder you from putting the learnings acquired through a leadership development programme into practice?

Follow-up questions related to the organisational culture, direct manager support, and peer support might be asked depending on the interviewees' answers to the previous questions. For instance, 'How could your direct manager enable you to put the learnings acquired through a leadership development programme into practice?' and 'How could your direct manager hinder you from putting the learnings acquired through a leadership development programme into practice?'.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Research Title: Developing Leaders in the Workplace: An Empirical Study of Line Managers' Wants and Needs from Leadership Development Programmes.

Researcher: Maria Loumpourdi, Doctoral Researcher at the University of Glasgow, xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the research?
The purpose of the proposed study is to explore line managers' wants and needs from leadership development programmes and their perceptions of how these wants and needs could be met. More specifically, this study will seek to explore the following research question: 'What do line managers want and need from leadership development programmes and how could their wants and needs be met?'.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a line manager who has: a) direct managerial responsibility for other employees in large (over 2,000 employees) international companies, b) at least two years of managerial experience, and c) experience of participating in in-house (offered by your current or previous companies) leadership development programmes.

What does participation in this research entail?
Participation in this study will entail a one-to-one online interview for approximately one hour to explore your wants and needs from leadership development programmes and your perceptions of how these wants and needs could be met. The interview will be organised based on your availability. The interview duration will only be extended if you give your permission. However, the maximum duration of this interview will not exceed 75 minutes in total. The interview will be conducted using Teams or Zoom based on your preference. The interview will be audio/video-recorded if you give your permission for me to do so. A limited number of generic questions will form the skeleton of this semi-structured interview. This set of questions will be shared with you at least one week prior to the scheduled interview to give you time to reflect. Additional probing and follow-up questions might be asked to ensure accuracy in the unpacking of meaning as well as in the interpretation of data.

Do I have to take part?
It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you choose to withdraw, your data will not be included in the research project unless you give permission for this to happen.

Will my participation in this study be kept confidential?
Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case, the researcher would inform you of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality. However, confidentiality may be impossible to be guaranteed due to the small sample size. To preserve your confidentiality, any personal information shared during the interview will be de-identified from the research data through pseudonymisation. Your name, age, gender, or any other information that could direct or indirectly identify you will not be disclosed. Direct quotes that include personal details that could be linked back to you will not be used. Information that could identify specific individuals, institutions, organisations, or situations related to your professional practice will either not be used or will be de-identified. Moreover, the interview recordings (audio/video) will be encrypted as soon as it is reasonably possible and be transcribed by the researcher without the involvement of any other individual or third-party entity. Any additional personal information revealed during the interviews, including, but not limited to, job titles, company names, length of service, geographical location will be masked in the transcripts.
Only basic personal data, such as name and contact details (email address and potentially phone number) will be collected to schedule interviews and follow up on the provided data. The collected personal data will not be kept for longer than it is needed for the purposes of this project. Data classified by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as high risk or sensitive will not be collected, recorded, and/or stored. No confidential data will be recorded to a cloud server outside the European Union and all recordings will be saved locally to be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You will also have the right to request access to, copies of, and rectification or erasure of your personal data as well as to object to the processing of such data.
The research data, including the interview recordings and original transcripts, will be stored separately in the researcher's OneDrive account provided by the University of Glasgow, which requires multi-factor authentication, and which will only be accessed through personal password-protected devices. If you prefer the interview to be conducted via Zoom, the researcher will not use the application as this stores data in the Cloud. Instead, the researcher will use the PC/Mac version.

How will the research data be used?
The data will be used to explore emerging themes concerning the research question. The results of this study will be included in the researcher's doctoral dissertation for the fulfilment of the assessment requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at the University of Glasgow. A summary of the results of the project could be made available to you on request following its conclusion.
The collected personal data will be deleted/destroyed once the de-identification process has been completed. Audio/video recordings will be retained on the University of Glasgow Zoom Client until downloaded and encrypted. The data will then be deleted. Paper documents that will be used through the transcription and analysis stages will be shredded and placed in confidential waste by September 2024. All other data will be stored on the University of Glasgow One Drive and transferred to the Enlighten: Research Data storage. The research data will be retained for 10 years after the completion of the research project in line with the University of Glasgow Research guidelines.

If this study leads to the production of conference papers, journals and/or any future publications (print and/or online), your data will remain de-identified through the use of pseudonyms. Direct quotes will only be used with your permission, and these quotes will be anonymised.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This research is being organised by the researcher. There is no funding for this research.

Who has reviewed the study?
This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee. To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research, contact the College of Social Sciences Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Benjamin Franks: socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk.

Doctoral Researcher: Maria Loumpourdi (xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk)
Supervisors: Professor Bonnie Slade (bonnie.slade@glasgow.ac.uk) and Professor Nicki Hedge (nicki.hedge@glasgow.ac.uk)

_____End of Participant Information Sheet_____

University *of* Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project: Developing Leaders in the Workplace: An Empirical Study of Line Managers' Wants and Needs from Leadership Development Programmes.

Researcher: Maria Loumpourdi, Doctoral Researcher at University of

Glasgow, xxxxxxxx@student.gla.ac.uk

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be what's known as the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in the research project 'Developing Leaders in the Workplace: An Empirical Study of Line Managers' Wants and Needs from Leadership Development Programmes'. This privacy notice will explain how The University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why we need it
We are collecting basic personal data such as your name and contact details in order to conduct our research. We need your name and contact details to arrange interviews and potentially follow up on the data that you have provided.
We only collect data that we need for the research project, and we will de-identify your personal data from the research data (your answers to the interview questions) through pseudonymisation.
Confidentiality will be respected unless there are compelling and legitimate reasons for this to be breached. If this was the case, we would inform you of any decisions that might limit your confidentiality. Please see the accompanying **Participant Information Sheet.**

Legal basis for processing your data
We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research we will be relying upon **Task in the Public Interest** in order to process the basic personal data that you provide. For any special categories data collected we will be processing this on the basis that it is **necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes.**
Alongside this, in order to fulfil our ethical obligations, we will ask for your **Consent** to take part in the study. Please see the accompanying **Consent Form**.

What we do with it and who we share it with
All the personal data you submit is processed by a doctoral researcher at the University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe, including de-identification through pseudonymisation, secure storage, and, encryption of files and devices. Please consult the **Consent form** and **Participant Information Sheet** which accompany this notice.

If requested, we will provide you with a copy of the study findings and details of any subsequent publications or outputs on request.

What are your rights?
GDPR provides that individuals have certain rights including: to request access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and to object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the processing of the personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.
If at any point you believe that the information we process relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.
Please note that as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see UofG Research with personal and special categories of data. If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the webform or contact dp@gla.ac.uk

Complaints
If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk
If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) https://ico.org.uk/

Who has ethically reviewed the project?
This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or relevant School Ethics Forum in the College.

How long do we keep it for?
Your **personal** data will be retained by the University only for as long as is necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval, which is September of 2024. After this time, personal data will be securely deleted. Your **research** data will be retained for a period of ten years in line with the University of Glasgow Guidelines. Specific details in relation to research data storage are provided on the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form which accompany this notice.
_____ End of Privacy Notice _____

Appendix D: Consent Form

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: Developing Leaders in the Workplace: An Empirical Study of Line Managers' Wants and Needs from Leadership Development Programmes.

Name of Researcher: Maria Loumpourdi

The followings statements will be read out aloud to the participants, who will be asked to provide consent:

Yes ☐ No ☐ I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that participants will be anonymised in any publications arising from the research.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that the material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that the material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that the material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that the material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I understand that researcher's supervisors may have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I understand that other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

Do you agree to take part in this study? Yes ☐ No ☐
Do you consent to the interview being audio recorded? Yes ☐ No ☐
Do you consent to the interview being video recorded? Yes ☐ No ☐
Do you consent to direct quotes being used if anonymised? Yes ☐ No ☐

……………… End of consent form ……………

Appendix E: LinkedIn Post

I am looking for participants for my doctoral research, which is being conducted with the University of Glasgow. The purpose of this empirical research is to explore line managers' wants and needs from leadership development programmes and their perceptions of how their wants and needs could be met.

Eligible participants must have:
1. Direct managerial responsibility for other employees in a large (over 2,000 employees) international company,
2. At least two years of managerial experience, and
3. Experience of participating in leadership development programmes.

Participation in this study entails a one-to-one online interview for approximately one hour. If you are interested, kindly fill out this short form: https://forms.office.com/r/R3VK499wGV

More information about this research can be found here:
Participant Information Sheet: https://tinyurl.com/3czya6tt
Privacy Notice: https://tinyurl.com/2s3ytred
Consent Form: https://tinyurl.com/3eve7nfm

Your participation would be highly appreciated.

Participation Form

What is the purpose of the research?

This empirical research seeks to explore the following question: What do line managers want and need from Leadership Development Programmes and how do they believe that their wants and needs could be met?.

Am I eligible to participate?

You are eligible if you are a line manager who has:
a) direct managerial responsibility for other employees in a large (over 2,000 employees) international company,
b) at least two years of managerial experience, and
c) experience of participating in leadership development programmes.

What does participation in this research entail?

Participation in this study entails a one-to-one online interview for approximately one hour to explore your wants and needs from leadership development programmes and your perceptions of how these wants and needs could be met. The interview will be organised based on your availability. The interview duration will only be extended if you give your permission. However, the maximum duration of this interview will not exceed 75 minutes in total. The interview will be conducted using Teams or Zoom based on your preference. The interview will be audio/video-recorded if you give your permission. A limited number of generic questions will form the skeleton of this semi-structured interview. This set of questions will be shared with you at least one week prior to the scheduled interview to give you time to reflect. Additional probing and follow-up questions might be asked to ensure accuracy in the unpacking of meaning as well as in the interpretation of data.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you choose to withdraw, your data will not be included in the research project unless you give permission for this to happen.

Where can I find more information about this research?

More information about this research can be found here:

Participant Information Sheet: https://tinyurl.com/3czya6tt
Privacy Notice: https://tinyurl.com/2s3ytred
Consent Form: https://tinyurl.com/3eve7nfm

1. Full Name: *

Enter your answer

2. Email Address: *

Enter your answer

3. Mobile Number:
This field is optional.

The value must be a number

4. How many years of managerial experience of other employees do you have? *

Select your answer ▾

5. Have you worked as a line manager for a large (2,000 employees or above) international company? *

Select your answer ▾

6. Have you ever participated in a leadership development programme? *

Select your answer ▾

Submit