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# Leader's Reflections on Knowledge, Knowing and Not Knowing: An Analysis of Change Over Time

**Volume 1 of 2**

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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Patrice Cooper

**Abstract**

One commonality across the leadership and knowledge related literature is the apparent neglect of the leaders *own* knowledge. This thesis sought to address this issue through undertaking exploratory research into the content of leader's personal knowledge and the associated process of knowing it. As an emergent longitudinal study, the research purpose was later expanded to examine the altered nature of these factors over an extended time period. The nature of the empirical inquiry involved semi-structured interviews with twelve leaders from a variety of backgrounds at two separate time periods with an approximate interval of ten years between each.

The overall findings from this research contrast with images of leadership that promote the idea that leaders are in control of what they know, that they own their own knowledge. The picture that emerges is much less one of omnipotence and omniscience, than of individuals struggling to keep abreast of the knowledge required to deal with the dynamics and uncertainties of organisational life. Much knowledge is tacit, provisional and perishable; with the related process of knowing it more organic, evolutionary and informal than any structured or orchestrated approach. The collective nature of knowing is a central feature of this process, with these leaders embedded in networks of relationships that they cannot entirely control.

In view of the indeterminate, messy and fragile nature of knowing, the boundary between what these leaders know and what they need to know is both amorphous and ephemeral, and the likelihood that they will not know is escalated. Indeed, for the most part, these leaders are threading a fine line between knowing and not knowing. A significant findings in this regard is the identification of two critical pressure points where knowledge-absences are most likely to occur: the initial stages of take-up or entry into a leadership role and the final stages of role-exit. On becoming a leader, while not-knowing 'in action' is acceptable, (given the transition from specialist to generalist), as a consequence of the heightened knowledge expectations that accompany the elevation to a leadership position, not-knowing in a social situation becomes stigmatized with these leaders masking their perceived knowledge deficiencies. On exiting the leadership role, an absence of knowledge on how to exit is uncovered as these leaders struggle to practice and rehearse for this eventuality.

Over time there is an absence of the security and surety that was in evidence in the

first phase, as these leaders replace the dogmas that were previously held in high esteem with the lessons from their own experience. This experience brings increased self-knowledge, an awareness of their own weaknesses, a questioning and evaluating of their pre-conceptions and a deeper appreciation of who they are and what it really is to 'know'. In this respect, there is a lament for much that has been lost through an over-reliance on hard data, systems and procedures, a deeper appreciation of the need to operate with integrity, honesty and humanity and a return to the values and morals instilled in their early lives.

In view of the above findings, this study makes theoretical contribution to the literature on authentic leadership, role transition and knowledge-absences. Opportunities exist to conduct further research into the relationship between role transition and not-knowing, the social stigmatisation of not-knowing and exit wisdom. This research has several implications for the design and delivery of executive education, where much scope exists to tailor these programmes to ensure that aspiring and existing executives are aware of the challenges they will encounter at the pivotal stages of the leadership role.

**Acknowledgements**

***This Thesis is Dedicated to my Beautiful Daughter Dara,***
***'She is the Sunday in Every Week'***
***(From Austin Clarke's, 'The Planter's Daughter')***

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# CHAPTER ONE
# THE INTRODUCTION

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Background to the Research

Since the early 1990's knowledge management has attracted much attention both in academic and practitioner circles alike. At a broad level the discussion has concentrated on organisational level matters, such as corporate knowledge management systems, largely, (though not entirely), based on advancements in information technology. Such approaches are primarily concerned with knowledge that can be captured, codified, shared and stored (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995); this ignores the fact that much knowledge is subjective, ambiguous and intuitive. Some argue that this knowledge cannot be 'managed', and for this reason, 'knowledge management' has often been considered a contradiction in terms (McDermott, 1999; Skyrme, 1997).

Critical advances in the field have addressed this issue, acknowledging that while knowledge is not amenable to management as a conceived bureaucratic phenomenon associated with hierarchy, formalisation, direction and control; there is much an organisation's management can do to create a context that enables knowledge to flourish (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). The associated behaviours of enabling, nurturing, caring, influencing and shaping are more representative of leadership, where the distinction between management and leadership is upheld (Bass, 1990; Bennis, 1989; Kotter, 1990; Yukl, 1989; Zalenik, 1992).

It is surprising therefore, that while the critical role of leaders in knowledge management has been recognised (Armstrong and Sambamurthy, 1999) the field of knowledge management has remained virtually silent on the topic of leadership (Dirkx, 1999). The exception is Skryme (2000) who introduced the term 'knowledge leadership' into the knowledge management lexicon. Subsequent developments in 'knowledge leadership' (Politis, 2001) have been confined to the leadership domain and tend to address only one aspect of this phenomenon, the leader's role in developing others' knowledge. A corresponding focus on how leaders develop their own knowledge is clearly lacking. This is the subject matter of this thesis.

Exploring leader's personal knowledge shifts the central focus of knowledge-related research from the organisation to the individual. In doing so it addresses a dearth of

conceptual development and empirical research within this area and adds to a nascent development within the knowledge management field (Pauleen and Gorman, 2011).

## 1.2 The Research Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to conduct exploratory research into the lived experience of individual leaders[1] with respect to the content of their personal knowledge and the associated process of knowing it. Truch (2001) defines personal knoweldge as:

> What you know/don't know, how and where you know, whom you know and what they know (Truch, 2001:11).

Drawing on this definition, and in view of Yin's recommendation to refine one's overall research objective in terms of 'who, what, where, when, how and why', (Yin, 1994), the author has sought to address this purpose through the following research questions:

Q1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?

Q1a How do they perceive knowledge?

Q1b What knowledge do they prioritise?

Q2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

Q3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'?

As explained in greater detail in Chapter 3, a lengthy, unintentional break in the PhD process provided an interesting opportunity to convert this research into a longitudinal study. As a consequence, two additional research questions (questions four and five) were introduced.

Q4 How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of leader's knowing/not knowing evolve?

Q5 What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?

[1] Drawing on the HBR 10 must-read articles on leadership (HBR 2011) the author defined a leader as someone who: occupies a position of authority, has an ability to influence followers and the capability and capacity to instigate change.

## 1.3 The Contribution to Knowledge

The findings from this research will make a contribution to knowledge on a number of fronts. This contribution is summarised in the following paragraphs and elaborated upon in Section 7.3 of the concluding chapter.

In researching an unexplored aspect of the literature, the nature, content and process of leader's personal knowledge, this thesis will make a core contribution to knowledge with respect to two primary literatures, the knowledge-related literature and the leadership literature. The exact nature of this contribution will be identified below.

A secondary contribution arises from the positioning of this research at the intersection of three literatures: knowledge, learning and leadership. In its efforts to upack the issues at their intersecting core, this research creates stronger linkages between each of them. In addition, a review of the knowledge-related literature alongside aspects of the learning literature contributes to a reduction in the theoretical confusion that exists between them.

This study provides a methodological contribution to knowledge. As a qualitative study with an extended time-frame that spans almost two decades and a unit of analysis at the level of the individual leader, the nature of the empirical inquiry is unique amongst studies of leadership and leadership development. Section 7.3.2 elaborates on these claims.

As a longitudinal study, this research captures the temporal, non-deterministic nature of the content of leader's personal knowledge and the criticality of context in understanding the process of change as it unfolds over time. In the second research phase, in relating stories of their lives 'as leaders', the knowledge that is prioritised is altered from its heretofore concentration on all that is explicit, towards a form of knowledge that corresponds to the components and characteristics of 'authentic leadership'. In this respect, this study provides empirical support for the 'intrapersonal (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) and 'developmental perspectives (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) on authentic leadership.

While a triad of contextual influences on leader's knowledge/knowing were identified (the environment, professonal and personal contexts); in identifying the overriding impact

of role transition, this study substantiates Gosling and Cases' notion of a 'role as a repository of knowledge' (Gosling and Case, 2011).

An additional contribution that stems from this relationship relates to the state of 'not-knowing', recently highlighted as an aspect of the knowledge-related literature that is need of greater attention (Spender, 2008a; 2008b). This study identifies two critical pressure points where knowledge absences are most likely to occur: role take-up and role exit. At the take-up stage, the research findings highlight the stigma that is associated with not-knowing in a social context. Not appearing elsewhere in the role transition or knowledge-related literature, this represents a novel concept that is worthy of further exploration. At the exit stage, the findings provide rich insight into the unique nature of 'exit wisdom' (Byrnes, 2010), again an aspect of the literature that is ripe for exploration.

Finally, a clear applied contribution stems from this research. A more in-depth understanding of what knowledge is actually considered important to leaders, and the factors that shape their knowledge, the process of knowing it and the existence of knoweldge absences should significantly inform the design and delivery of leadership development programmes. Section 7.3.3 provides a more detailed examination of these issues through the lens of the leader's transition from 'novice leader', to 'seasoned leader', to 'potential ex.' or 'ex. leader'; recommending that leadership development programmes are tailored to meet the needs of leaders and aspiring leaders at each stage.

## 1.4 The Thesis Structure and Chapter Outline

This thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1, this chapter, delineates the broad direction of the research providing background information on the research topic. This chapter also outlines the research purpose, the research questions and the contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature. It is divided into two parts: Part one examines how knowledge is characterised within the traditional and contemporary knowledge management literatures. Beginning with the rather elusive question, 'what is knowledge?' it seeks to answer this question from two differing perspectives, an objectivist perspective, viewing knowledge as content, and a practice-based perspective that moves the conversation to the realm of action, or knowing. Recognising the contradiction between

knowledge and management, when management is understood in the traditional command-and-control sense, in its concluding commentary, part one underscores the important, yet unexplored role of leadership in the 'knowledge management' arena. In part two of this chapter, the concept of knowledge leadership (Politis, 2001; Skyrme, 2000; Viitalia, 2004), is explored. It is here that the core contribution of this research lies, for while the literature adequately addresses the role of the leader in terms of developing others' knowledge, a corresponding focus on the leader's own knowledge is clearly absent. Taking an individualised view of leaders' knowledge/knowing requires an appreciation of the 'personal' at the intersecting core of three parent literatures; knowledge, learning and leadership. This is the subject matter of the final section of this chapter.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and research design. It begins with a description of the philosophical stance of the study and justifies the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices of the researcher in the light of the research purpose. Based on its positioning within the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative approach is adopted with the primary research instrument being semi-structured interviewing. As indicated in Section 1.2, a break in the PhD process provided an opportunity to conduct a longitudinal study. This involved re-interviewing all of the original interviewees to explore changes which occured over the time interval and the factors associated with those changes (Holland, 2007). The author's efforts to ensure the approach to data analysis engaged with and captured the three foundational principles of qualitative longitudinal research: time, change and process (Saldana, 2003), are documented in detail in section 3.55 of the research methodology chapter.

The analysis of research findings is presented across two chapters. Chapter 4 presents part one of the analysis. This comprises a case-by-case analysis of each of the individual research participants that is presented in the form of a 'case story' (Richmond, 2002). Each case story is presented in three parts: part one provides a narrative account of the first interview, part two provides a narrative account of the second interview and part three emphasises the key changes over the time period under review.

Chapter 5 presents part two of the analysis. This comprises a cross-case analysis providing a systemic view of the re-occurring themes and patterns across each of the

twelve cases. This analysis is presented in two parts. Part one concerns phase one of the research while part two identifies the changes that have occurred in the intervening time period and the contextual factors that may account for these changes.

This approach to data analysis is line with the recommendations of Einsehardt (1989) and Dey (1993), who have suggested that being intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity allows the unique patterns of each case to emerge before researchers push to generalise patterns across cases. In addition, it provides a rich familiarity with each case, which, in turn, accelerates cross-cases comparison.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the research findings (across both phases), in relation to the main positions identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and other literature that was not previously considered. The decision to incorporate additional literature is based on its ability to shed light on the issues raised by the research findings. In exploratory research this is an acceptable practice. Chapter 6 is divided into two parts: Part one discusses the research findings for phase one of the research in relation to the relevant literatures, while part two follows the same process for the research findings from phase two of this study. In doing so, it identifies the key changes in the content/process of these leader's knowledge/knowing overtime. The issues arising are subsequently explored in terms of the contextual changes that have occurred during the same time period. These include the external environment, professional circumstances at an organisational and individual level and personal circumstances. While this research points to the overriding influence of changing professional circumstances (at an individual level) in terms of what and how these leaders know, the researcher is mindful of the difficulty in isolating moderating influences in any longitudinal study (Saldana, 2003). All of these issues are expanded upon in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 revisits the research questions as outlined in section 1.2 above, and then presents the conclusions of the study and the theoretical and practical implications. The limitations of the study are addressed and recommendations for future research are outlined.

## 1.5 The Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundation for this thesis. It has provided the background to the research and has outlined its purpose and the related research questions. The research was then justified in terms of its contribution to the conceptual and methodological literature and to management practice. The overall structure of the thesis was then introduced. On these foundations the thesis now proceeds to Chapter 2, which provides a review of the extant literature.

# CHAPTER TWO
# A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## 2 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### 2.1 Background/Introduction

Given the critical role of leaders in the knowledge management process (Armstrong

and Sambamurthy, 1999), it is rather surprising that the field of knowledge management has, until relatively recently, remained silent on the topic of leadership (Dirkx, 1999). The term 'knowledge leadership' initiated within the knowledge management domain (Skyrme, 2000), remained nascent prior to its advancement by the field of leadership (Byrant 2003; Lakshman, 2005, 2007, 2009; Politis, 2001; Viitalia, 2004). The primary focus here was the leader's role in developing and managing organisational knowledge (primarily through others' knowledge), while the subject of the leader's *own* knowledge was ignored. This thesis sought to address this issue through conducting exploratory research into the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge and their associated process of knowing it. Consequently, an initial review of the literature gravitated towards the field of organisational knowledge and its sub-set of knowledge management. As the inherent overlap with the organisational learning literature and the potential synergies from an integration of both literatures became increasingly apparent (Vera and Crossan, 2003), elements of the organisational learning literature became a secondary literature source. Given that the unit of analysis in this study is the individual leader, aspects of the leadership domain became a tertiary literature. A territory map of the literature base is provided in Figure 2.1. The intersecting point of the three literatures: knowledge, learning and leadership (point 4), is the focal point of this research as it is here that the core research issues are situated. To gain some perspective on these issues it was necessary to unpack the points of intersection between these three, numbered 1, 2, and 3 in Figure 2.1 below. The process leading to point 4, and the manner in which it is presented in this literature review, is outlined in the discussion that follows.




Figure 2.1 A Territory Map of The Literature
Source Author

This chapter is organised as follows: Part one examines how knowledge is conceptualised within the traditional and contemporary knowledge related literatures. Beginning with the rather elusive question 'What is knowledge?' it seeks to answer this question from two different perspectives. In section one, those who ascribe to an objectivist perspective, viewing knowledge as content, are reviewed and critiqued. Section two, a practice-based perspective, moves the conversation to the realm of action, or knowing. It is at this juncture that the overlap between the organisational knowledge literature and the organisational learning literature is most visible, as while the content perspective fits neatly with the notion of knowledge as something that can be possessed (Cook and Brown, 1999), the idea of knowing as practice fits more closely with the process of learning from experience (Easterby-Smith and Lyle, 2011). In section three the implications of the different perspectives are reflected upon. Part one of this chapter highlights the contradiction between knowledge and management. It indicates the manner in which the practice-based perspective downplays the role of management as traditionally understood through its description of senior management's role as creating a climate that facilitates knowledge development, in contrast with any attempt to control knowledge from above (Alvesson and Kärreman**,** 2001). This, the author argues, is much more akin to a leadership role and, more particularly, to that which has recently been described as 'post-heroic' leadership

(Etcher, 1997; Fletcher, 2002, 2003; Huey, 1994). Despite this compatibility, as previously indicated, the knowledge management literature has remained virtually silent on the topic of leadership other than a rudimentary reference to the idea of 'knowledge leadership' (Skyrme, 2000). Part two of this chapter explores the concept of 'knowledge leadership' as portrayed by the leadership literature (Byrant, 2003; Lakshman, 2005, 2006; Politis, 2001; Viitalia, 2004). It is here that the core contribution of this research lies, as, while the literature on knowledge leadership adequately addresses the role of the leader in developing others' knowledge, a corresponding focus on the leader's own knowledge is clearly absent. Taking an individual view of leader's knowledge/knowing necessitates an appreciation of the 'personal' at the intersecting core of the three parent literatures: knowledge, learning and leadership, as presented in Figure 2.1 above. This is the subject matter of the final section of this chapter.

## Part One

### 2.2 What is Knowledge?

*What is knowledge* represents one of the most fundamental questions that humanity has grappled with, occupying the minds of philosophers for centuries. Answering this question therefore is by no means simple or straightforward. However, a useful starting point in attempting to define what knowledge is can be achieved by differentiating knowledge from what it is not. In this regard, the earliest distinction is found in T.S. Elliot's poem 'The Rock'.

> Where is the life we have lost in living?
> Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
> T.S. Elliot, The Rock (1934: 7).

Nearly half a century later, American composer Frank Zappa articulated an extended

version of the information-knowledge-wisdom hierarchy in:

> Information is not knowledge,
> Knowledge is not wisdom,
> Wisdom is not truth,
> Truth is not beauty,
> Beauty is not love,
> Love is not music,
> Music is the Best.
> Frank Zappa, Packard Goose (1979)

Notwithstanding these and other distinctions (Bell, 1973), the most commonly cited typology is that of Ackoff (1989). He differentiated between a progression from 'data' or raw facts, to 'information,' which is data that are presented in some ordered sequence, through to 'knowledge', which involves personal judgement concerning the significance of the information, within a given context, to 'wisdom', which is knowledge used to improve the human condition. The DIKW framework implies that knowledge is best evaluated in terms of its usefulness. In other words, knowledge is seen as data or information with another layer of intellectual analysis added. It thus provides a means to analyse and understand data/information, beliefs about the causality of events/actions, and the basis to guide meaningful thought and action.

While this discussion is of initial value in establishing a broad and general definition of knowledge, the 'nested nature' of the categories (Spender, 2008a); that is, the manner in which one progresses from and understands one in terms of the other; does little to explain the characteristic properties of knowledge or the types of knowledge that exist. To do this, it is necessary to examine different perspectives on knowledge. In a manner similar to Burrell and Morgan's epistemologies of the social sciences (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), the contemporary knowledge management literature is engaged in an ongoing debate between two epistemological perspectives. While labeled in a variety of different ways, by a variety of different authors, see Table 2.1 below, the distinction within each dichotomy is broadly similar. In each of the former perspectives knowledge is seen as content, an asset or resource, something that can be possessed, while within the latter, knowledge is viewed in terms of the process or practice of knowing.

| **Author** | **Objectivist Perspective** | **Practice-Based Perspective** |
|---|---|---|
| Scarbrough (1998) | A 'content' theory of | A 'relational' view of |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | knowledge | knowledge |
| Cook and Brown (1999) | Epistemology of possession | Epistemology of practice |
| McAdam & McCreedy (2000) | Knowledge as truth | Knowledge as socially constructed |
| Empson (2001) | Knowledge as an asset | Knowing as a process |
| Werr and Stjernberg (2003) | Knowledge as theory | Knowledge as practice |
| Schultze and Stabell (2004) | Epistemology of duality | Epistemology of dualism |

Table 2.1 Competing Epistemologies
Source: Hislop (2009)

The remainder of this section is devoted to a more in-depth examination of both perspectives. Section one adopts an objectivist perspective, viewing knowledge as content, while section two, in assuming a practice-based perspective, takes the conversation to the realm of action or knowing. In an effort to reflect the somewhat fragmented, contradictory and competing nature of the knowledge related literature, each perspective is presented separately. In Section 2.3, where the implications of the different perspectives are reflected upon, the continued existence and utility of both perspectives is acknowledged (Comas and Sieber, 2001; Cook and Seely-Brown, 1999; Orlikowski, 2002).

### 2.2.1 An Objectivist Perspective on Knowledge-Knowledge as Content

The literature has progressed through identifying fundamentally different types of knowledge resulting in a variety of overlapping and often confusing categories (Badaracco, 1991). One of the earliest typologies, by Ryle (1949), differentiated between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'; while the former is abstract, the latter adds the capacity for action to the abstract understanding of the situation. James (1950) made a similar distinction between 'knowledge about' and 'knowledge of acquaintance.' Once again the former is abstract, while the latter is intimate and the immediate result of experience. The contrast between 'know-what' and 'know-how' continues to pervade the literature. For instance, Blackler (1995) speaks of 'embrained knowledge', or knowledge that is dependent on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities (know-what), and 'embodied knowledge' which is action- oriented, i.e. practical, and is likely to be only partly explicit (know-how). However, the categorisation or typology that has had the greatest impact on the study of knowledge is Polanyi's (1962, 1966, 1976), distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge. For

this reason, greater attention has been devoted to understanding this particular dichotomy, with the author using it as a lens through which to examine other knowledge types.

Although Polanyi's 'tacit-explicit' distinction reflects the earlier one of James (1950), in that explicit knowledge is similar to 'knowledge about', and tacit knowledge is similar to 'knowledge of acquaintance', it is richer. According to Polanyi, all tacit knowledge is contextualised, reflecting the active participation of the knower in a particular domain of activity, hence his use of the term 'knowing' in place of the term 'knowledge' (Polanyi, 1962). Polanyi (1966) distinguished between two forms of tacit knowing. The first term, 'proximal knowing', indicates knowledge that is centrally attached to the knower. For example, the particulars of a particular action such as riding a bike or swimming, the bicycle rider knows about steering, peddling and balancing and the swimmer knows about breathing and buoyancy. The second term, 'distal knowing', is knowledge that is subsidiary to the knower, (the overall knowledge of how to ride the bike or how to swim is knowledge that is greater than the sum of one's knowledge of the individual actions). According to Polanyi, there is a functional relationship between the two terms, "we know the first only by relying on our awareness of it for attending to the second" (Polanyi, 1966: 10). In other words, our knowledge of the proximal is tacit, we know about it only through the distal term and we cannot express it in words. In terms of the earlier examples, Polanyi has argued, swimmers generally do not know how they keep themselves afloat by regulating their breathing and buoyancy and the bicycle rider does not know how he/she balances the bicycle (Polanyi, 1962). It follows that they can neither articulate this knowledge nor teach it to others. In 1962 Polanyi wrote, "the aim of a skillful performance is achieved by the observance of a set of rules which are not known as such to the person following them" (Polanyi, 1962: 49), and in 1976, that "the grounds of from-to or from-at knowledge are often unspecifiable" (Polanyi, 1976: 335). Hence the often-quoted phrase, "We know more than we can tell" or "we have the power to know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966: 4). Indeed a switch of attention from the subsidiary to the proximal will almost certainly interrupt the performance, as attention to the mechanics of the activity causes the cyclist to loose her balance and the swimmer to flounder or sink.

Tacit knowledge has several other synonyms such as: 'subjective knowledge' (Popper, 1972), 'intuitive', 'non-verbalised' or 'non-verbalisable knowledge' (Hedlund, 1994) 'procedural knowledge' (Kogut and Zander, 1992), 'know-how' (Corsini, 1987), 'a recipe' (Kogut and Zander, 1987), or 'a script' (Sternberg, 1994). As a result, tacit knowledge is often viewed more as a capability (Ambrosini, 1995), or a form of competence (Badaraco, 1991), which requires the active participation of the knower in the process of knowing (Spender, 1992, 1995).

From an objectivist perspective, tacit knowledge is said to possess at least three distinguishing characteristics. First, tacit knowledge is intimately attached to the knower; it is personal knowledge (Ravetz, 1971). Second, it is practical knowledge of a particular process (Sternberg, 1994), that is, it is knowledge about *how* to do things (Eysenck and Keane, 1993) such as skills or know-how (Kogut and Zander 1992). A subset of this feature is the idea that tacit knowledge is context specific. It is knowledge typically acquired on the job or in the situation where it is used (Sternberg, 1994). As Nonaka (1991) suggests "tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in action and in an individual's commitment to a specific context - a craft, a profession, a particular technology, product, market, or the activities of a work group or team" (Nonaka, 1991: 98). Finally, tacit knowledge is hard to formalise or inexpressible in a codifiable form. Thus it is difficult to share (Nonaka, 1991), or as Badaracco (1991: 82) put it: "it cannot be clearly communicated to someone else through words or other symbols" In line with these characteristics, the notion of 'tacitness' is said to arise in three ways: first, it occurs as high-speed action, secondly, the action is deeply embedded in the context and, thirdly, the details are lost in language. In conclusion, tacit knowledge is personal, uncodified knowledge which can only be communicated through activity. Nonaka and Takeuchi's bread-maker (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and Lave and Wenger's case-studies of apprentice midwives, tailors, meat-cutters and alcoholics (Lave and Wenger, 1991) bear testament to these characteristics.

Customary explanations of tacit knowledge have inevitably turned to comparisons with explicit knowledge. Once again there are several terms synonymous with explicit knowledge. Among the most frequently employed are: 'objective knowledge' (Popper, 1972), 'articulated knowledge' (Hedlund, 1992) 'articulable knowledge' (Winter, 1987) 'verbal knowledge' (Corsini, 1987) and (borrowed from the artificial

intelligence domain), 'declarative knowledge' (Kogut and Zander, 1992). Despite an abundant variety of terms there is widespread agreement on the meaning of explicit knowledge. One of the most detailed definitions is given by Winter (1987): "articulate knowledge can be communicated from its possessor to another person in symbolic form and the recipient of the communication becomes as much in the know as the originator" (Winter 1987: 7). This description highlights the two main distinguishing characteristics of explicit knowledge: The first concerns communicability: explicit knowledge can be written down, encoded, explained, or understood quickly. The second characteristic concerns ownership: explicit knowledge is "not specific or idiosyncratic to the firm or person possessing it" (Sobol and Lei 1994: 170). As a consequence, explicit knowledge can be shared and is said to loose little in the process of transmission.

Drawing on these notions of tacit and explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1962; 1975), the combined contributions of Nonaka (1994), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Nonaka et al (2000) provide the best-known exemplar of this perspective. Their fundamental premise is that the two types of knowledge, tacit and explicit, interact with one another through the creative and social activities of people. This interaction takes the form of 'knowledge conversion', in which tacit knowledge is converted to explicit knowledge and vice versa. Four modes of knowledge conversion are identified, with each one characterised by a particular knowledge content as summarized in Figure 2.2 below.

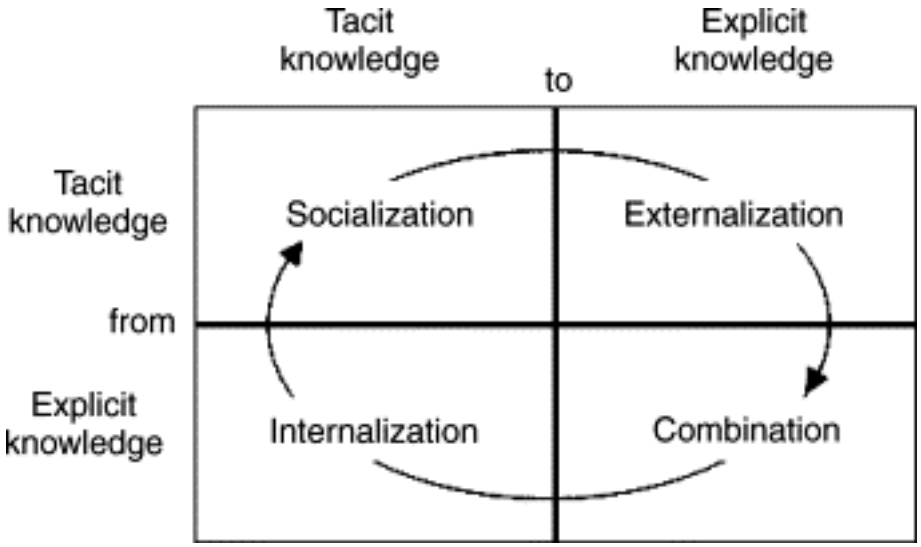
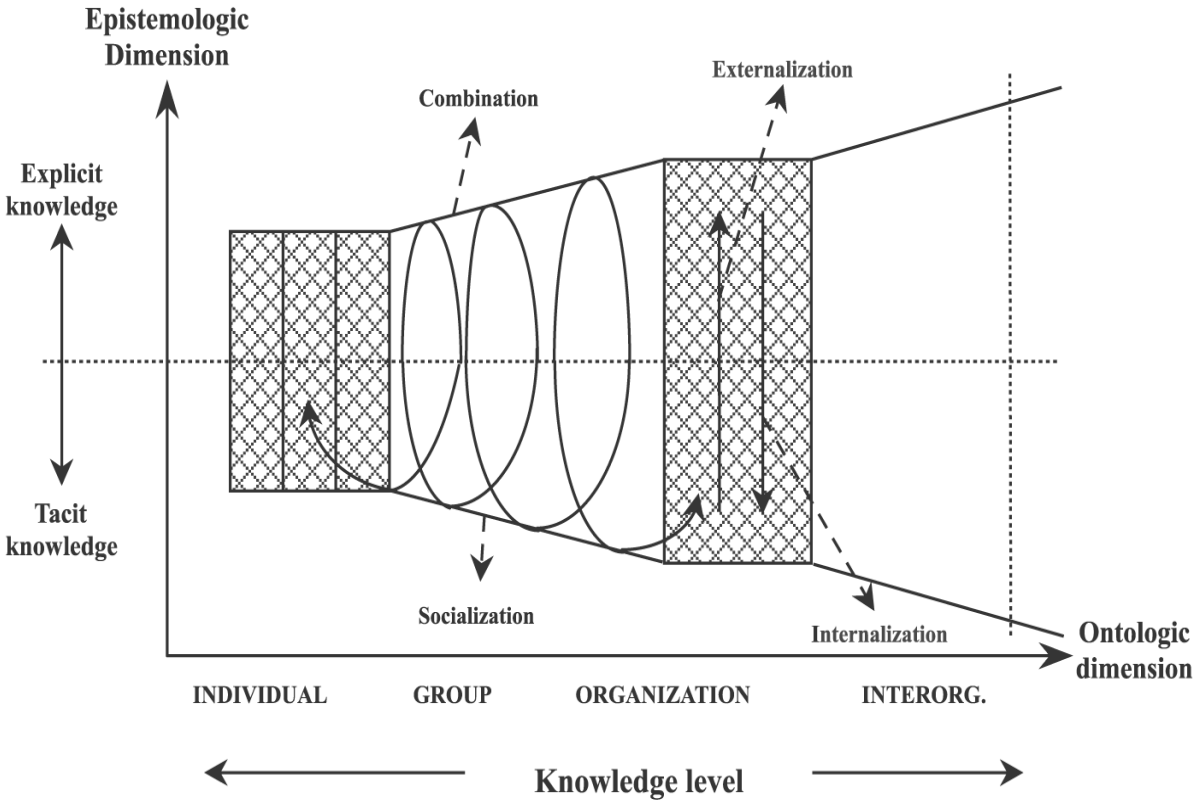



Figure 2.2 Four Modes of Knowledge Conversion

Source Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)

The first stage, ‘socialisation’, involves sharing tacit knowledge between individuals without the use of language through observation, imitation and practice. Apprenticeships or on-the-job training are based on this principle. Socialisation yields *‘sympathised knowledge’* such as technical skills. In the next stage, ‘externalisation’, triggered by dialogue or collective reflection, articulates tacit knowledge explicitly through developing *‘conceptual knowledge’* in the form of concepts, metaphors, analogies, hypothesis or models. This is followed by ‘combination’, which involves formally passing codified or explicit knowledge from one person to another. For example, individuals exchange knowledge through documents, meetings, telephone conversations or electronic media. Combination generates *'systemic knowledge'* in the form of a prototype or new component technology. Finally, ‘internalisation’ is rooted in learning by doing. The explicit knowledge becomes part of the individual’s knowledge base in the form of *'operational knowledge'* or technical knowledge concerning policies, processes and procedures.

Organisational knowledge creation occurs when these four modes of knowledge conversion interact in a continuous and dynamic spiral represented by the acronym SECI (Socialisation – Externalisation – Combination - Internalisation), as illustrated in Figure 2.3 below. The spiral consists of five-phases: sharing tacit knowledge, concept creation, concept justification, archetype building and cross-leveling knowledge and amplifying it throughout the organisation (Giroux and Taylor, 2002). When newly created knowledge is ‘cross-leveled’ at an organisation level, it becomes organisational knowledge and a new cycle of knowledge creation can begin (Tsoukas, 2003). Knowledge creation equates to knowledge *accumulation* in the model, as each cycle of knowledge conversion builds on a previous cycle to form a spiral (Gourlay, 2006).




**Source:** Adapted from Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Nonaka and Konno (1998)

One of the key purposes of the knowledge creation model was 'to identify conditions enabling knowledge creation in order to improve innovation and learning (Nonaka et al, 2006: 1185). Consequently, extensions to the SECI model involved identifying specific organisational practices, contexts or triggers that were said to favour shifts between knowledge conversion modes and the emergence of knowledge creation cycles. In this respect Nonaka and Konno (1998) introduced the concept of *ba* from the Japanese philosophy of existentialism, wherein *Ba* is defined as a space for emerging relationships, which provides a context for advancing individual/collective

knowledge. Based on two distinct variables: the type of interaction (individual or collective), and the media used for interaction (face to face or virtual), four types of *ba* were identified (Nonaka et al, 2000). These four types corresponded to the four phases of knowledge conversion. Socialisation occurs in the context of *originating ba* (individual, face-to-face interaction), whereby individuals share their experiences and emotions; the move from socialisation to externalisation occurs in the context of *dialoguing ba* (collective, face-to-face interaction); combination occurs in the context of *systemising ba* (collective, virtual interaction), whereby explicit knowledge is transmitted to a large number of people in virtual form, and finally, the move to internalisation occurs in the context of *exercising ba* (individual, virtual interaction), where individuals internalise the knowledge that has been transmitted to them. The contribution of the extended model is that *bas* can be generated by organisational effort, where teams represent *bas* for individuals, organisations for teams, and markets for organisations.

While Nonaka et al view knowledge as dynamic rather than static, (with new knowledge continually being created through the dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge), ultimately, their conceptualisation of knowledge as an entity that individuals possess, fosters their continued allegiance with the objectivist perspective. This notion that knowledge can only ever exist at the level of the individual, has been disputed by a number of theorists. Foremost amongst these was Spender (1994, 1996a), who argued that while much knowledge resides within individuals, knowledge also resides in social groups. While acknowledging the tacit/explicit dimensions, Spender made an additional distinction between individual and social knowledge, which were extended in the form of a two-by-two matrix of knowledge types as illustrated in Table 2.2 below, and elaborated upon in the following paragraphs. The terms in parenthesis are those used in the earlier 1994 version of the typology.

| | **Individual** | **Social** |
|---|---|---|
| **Explicit** | Conscious | Objectified (Scientific) |
| **Tacit (Implicit)** | Automatic (Nonconcious) | Collective |

Table 2.2 The Different Types of Organisational Knowledge
Source Spender, J. C. (1996b)

According to Spender, four types of knowledge exist: *Conscious* knowledge (explicit knowledge held by an individual); *objectified or scientific knowledge* (explicit knowledge held by a group/organisation); *automatic knowledge* (tacit knowledge held by an individual); and *collective knowledge* (tacit knowledge held by a group/organisation). The critical difference between the different types of knowledge is the extent to which each type is more or less separated from practice. For instance, *objectified knowledge*, knowledge contained in a documented system of rules, operating procedures, or formalised organisational routines, can be compared with *collective knowledge:* the knowledge contained in informal routines, rituals and stories. Collective knowledge goes far beyond the idea of knowledge being shared throughout the organisation. It is knowledge that is highly context-dependent, that is affected by, and contingent upon, the relationships of individuals with other members of the 'collective'. Broadly speaking, it is similar to the concept of a 'group mind' (Weick and Roberts, 1993). Collective knowledge is a dynamic concept that is not only held collectively, but also generated and applied collectively within a pattern of social relationships. In this way it is knowledge that is manifest in the practice or activities of an organisation. While the emphasis on tacit and explicit knowledge as separate knowledge types situates Spender's work within the objectivist perspective, his recognition of the existence of collective knowledge, as knowledge manifest in human activity or practice, is more closely aligned with the practice-based perspective. In view of this, his contribution is more aptly considered here as providing a bridge between both perspectives.

#### 2.2.1.1 The Characteristics of the Objectivist Perspective

The primary characteristic of the objectivist perspective is its entitative nature, wherein knowledge is regarded as an entity or commodity that people possess, but which can exist independently of them in a codifiable form. Hence Cook and Brown's description of this perspective as 'an epistemology of possession' (Cook and Brown, 1999). A second assumption regarding the nature of knowledge from this perspective is that it is possible to develop a type of knowledge that is free from individual subjectivity. This represents what McAdam and McCreedy (2000) described as the 'knowledge as truth' perspective, where explicit knowledge is seen as equivalent to a

canonical body of scientific facts and laws. These ideas are deeply rooted in the philosophy of positivism, the belief that social phenomena can be studied scientifically and that objective knowledge is produced as a result. The third key characteristic of the objectivist perspective is that it privileges explicit knowledge over tacit knowledge. While the sharing of tacit knowledge is acknowledged as difficult, complex and time-consuming, due to its highly subjective nature, the sharing of explicit knowledge is regarded as fairly straightforward. As a consequence, the overall emphasis of the objectivist perspective is on converting all tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (externalisation) rather than attempting to share tacit knowledge directly. The final major assumption of the objectivist perspective reflects Simon's insistence (Simon, 1991) that "all learning takes place inside the heads of individuals," (Cook and Brown, 1999: 385), in other words knowing is a cognitive process and knowledge is a cognitive, intellectual entity (something that is held in the head) that is ultimately codifiable. Figure 2.4 below provides an overview of the objectivist perspective that summarises the fundamental questions raised and the associated assumptions.

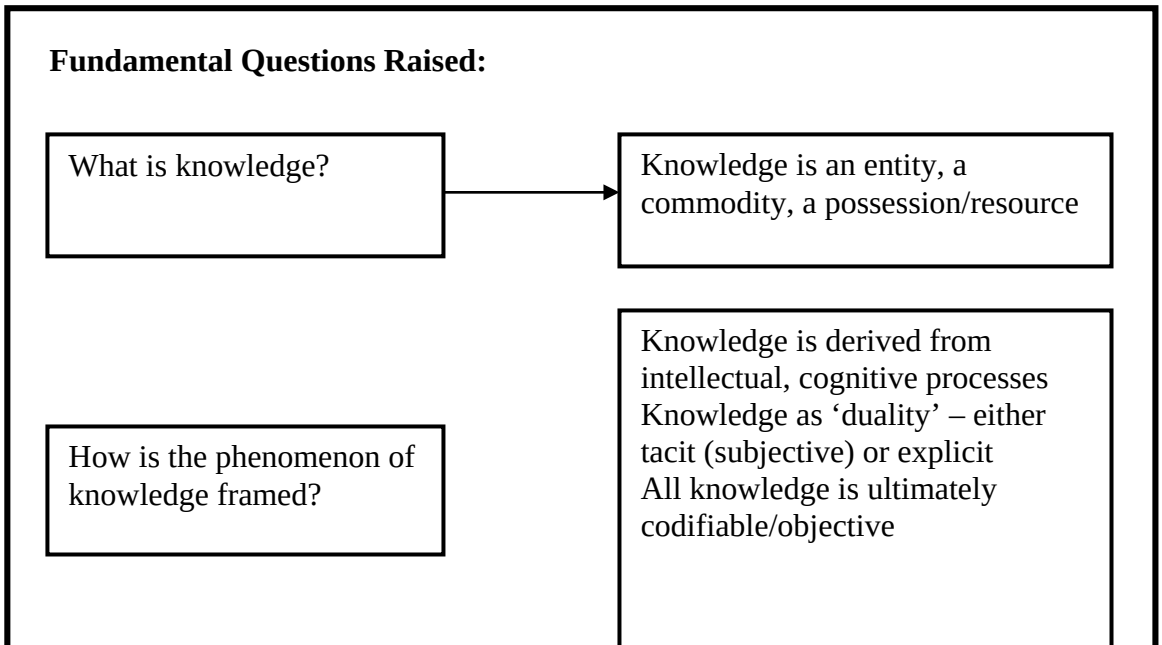


**Figure 2.4 An Overview of the Objectivist Perspective**

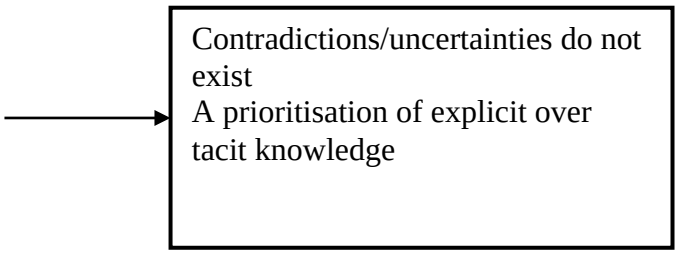



Figure 2.4 An Overview of the Objectivist Perspective
Source Author

The fundamental questions raised by the objectivist perspective have been adapted to formulate the first research question.

Research Question One:

What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?
How do they perceive knowledge? What knowledge do they prioritise?

### 2.2.1.2 A Critique of the Objectivist Perspective

The characteristic tendency of the objectivist perspective to reify knowledge, treating it as a stock or set of discrete elements, has been the subject of much criticism (Scarborough and Swan 1999; Scarborough and Swan, 2001). A number of authors have argued that while such approaches may have analytical benefits, they also misrepresent the extent to which these elements are inseparable and mutually defined (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001; McAdam and McCreedy, 2000; Soo et al, 2002, von Krogh et al, 2000). While Polanyi's assertion, 'we know more than we can tell', is often used to justify the tact-explicit distinction, this, it has been suggested, (Brown

and Duiguid, 1991; Pritchard, 2000) misunderstands the true meaning of Polanyi's thesis (Polanyi, 1969). A return to Polanyi supports this viewpoint, "The idea of strictly explicit knowledge is indeed self-contradictory; deprived of their tacit coefficient all spoken words, all formulae, all maps and graphs are strictly meaningless" (Polanyi, 1969: 195). This assertion implies that rather than tacit and explicit knowledge representing separate and distinctive types of knowledge, they actually represent two aspects of knowledge that are, in fact, inseparable (Tsoukas, 1996; Werr and Sternberg 2003). As Tsoukas (1996) suggested, "tacit knowledge can indeed be linguistically expressed if we focus our attention to it and vice versa: explicit knowledge is *always* grounded in a tacit component" (Tsoukas, 1996: 14).

Blackler (1995) was foremost amongst those who argued in support of the inseparability of the tacit-explicit dimension; recognising not only was knowledge multidimensional, as suggested by Spender (1994), but simultaneously so. Adapting the conceptual study of Collins (1993), he initially described five 'images' of knowledge in organisations: 'embrained knowledge', 'embodied knowledge', 'encultured knowledge', 'embedded knowledge' and 'encoded knowledge'. Lam (2000) built on this schema in terms of whether the knowledge was tacit, explicit, individual or collective, see Table 2.3 below and the descriptions in the paragraphs that follow. In Lam's version, Blackler's original five types are collapsed into four with encultured knowledge (shared understandings in the form of ideologies or recipes), subsumed into the embedded knowledge.

| | **Individual** | **Collective** |
|---|---|---|
| **Explicit** | Embrained Knowledge | Encoded Knowledge |
| **Tacit** | Embodied Knowledge | Embedded Knowledge |

Table 2.3 Images of Knowledge in Organisations
Source Blackler (1994, 1995)

Embrained knowledge (individual/explicit) is knowledge that is dependent on

conceptual skills and cognitive abilities. It is formal abstract or theoretical knowledge. Scientific knowledge, which focuses on the rational understanding and knowing of universal principles or laws of nature, belongs to this category.

Embodied knowledge (individual-tacit) is action oriented. It is the practical individual type knowledge (or know-how) on which Polanyi (1962, 1966) focused. In contrast with embrained knowledge, which depends on abstract theoretical, reasoning (or knowing), embodied knowledge builds on bodily or practical experience (or doing). It has a strong automatic and voluntaristic component: its generation and application does not need to be fitted into or processed through a conscious decision-making schema (Spender 1996b: 67). Embodied knowledge is also context specific: it is particular knowledge that becomes relevant in practice only in light of the problem at hand (Barley, 1996). Its generation cannot be separated from its application.

Encoded knowledge, sometimes referred to as information, is knowledge that is collective and explicit. It is knowledge that has been codified and stored in blueprints, written rules, procedures or expert systems and is usually conveyed by signs, symbols, printed materials such as manuals or codes of practice. It tends to generate a unified and predictable pattern of behaviour and output in organisations and, in turn, to facilitate centralisation and control. In this sense, encoded knowledge is inevitably knowledge that is simplified and selective, failing to capture and preserve the tacit skills and judgement of individuals.

Embedded knowledge is the collective form of tacit knowledge residing in organisational routines and shared norms that aims to achieve shared beliefs and shared understandings. Embedded knowledge is relation-specific, contextual and dispersed. It is organic and dynamic: an emergent form of knowledge capable of supporting complex patterns of interaction in the absence of written rules.

Although many of these types of knowledge are similar to those identified previously, for example, ‘embrained knowledge’ is what Ryles (1949) called ‘knowledge that’ (or ‘know-what’) and James (1950) called ‘knowledge about,’ and ‘embodied knowledge’ is what James (1950) termed ‘knowledge of acquaintance’ (or ‘know-how’), Blackler extended his typology to reflect organisational differences. Two sets of differentials

were identified: firstly, organisations that focus on problems of a routine kind versus those that focus on unfamiliar problems and, secondly, organisations that depend on the contribution of key individuals versus those who are more dependent on collective effort. Blackler suggested that different types of organisations depend on different types of knowledge. Organisations that depend on key individuals and need solutions to routine problems rely most on embodied knowledge. If organisations depend on key individuals, but need solutions to unfamiliar issues, then they are mostly reliant on embrained knowledge. On the other hand, if a collective effort is required for the solution of routine problems, then organisations depend on embedded knowledge. Finally, when collective effort is used for the solution of unfamiliar issues, the encultured knowledge becomes critical. Blackler suggested that in today's economy, with the focus on novel or unfamiliar problems, organisations are becoming less reliant on embodied and embedded knowledge and more reliant on embrained and encultured knowledge.

Having presented this typology, Blacker identified the weaknesses inherent in such distinctions. In acknowledging the 'disruptive role' of new forms of encoded knowledge, (such as information technology), on other knowledge types, he suggested that "embodied, embedded, embrained, encultured and encoded knowledge cannot be sensibly conceived as separate from one another" (Blackler, 1995: 1033). Referencing the work of Star (1992) and Lave (1993), Blacker contends that traditional conceptions of knowledge as abstract, disembodied, individual and formal are unrealistic. Knowledge, he argues, is multifaceted and complex, being situated and abstract, implicit and explicit, distributed and individual, physical and mental, developing and static, verbal and encoded. Recast in this way, the heretofore-common understanding of knowledge is fundamentally altered; no longer a discrete entitative object, knowledge is considered inseparable from human activity. Thus, according to Blacker, all activity is to some extent knowledgeable: involving the use and/or development of knowledge; and conversely, all knowledge work, whether using it, sharing it, developing it or creating it; will involve an element of activity. Blackler suggested that "rather than talking of knowledge as something that people have, knowledge is better regarded as something they do" (Blackler, 1995: 1023). As a consequence, knowing (rather than knowledge) is a phenomenon which is: "manifest in systems of language, technology, collaboration and control (mediated), located in

time and space and specific to particular contexts (situated), constructed and constantly developing (provisional) and purposive and objective-oriented (pragmatic)" (Blackler, 1995: 1039).

Tsoukas (1996) similarly emphasised the distributed, decentered and provisional nature of organisational knowledge that he justified in the following observations. A firm's knowledge is distributed in that 'no single person can have the knowledge that the firm needs'. Added to which a firm's knowledge is inherently indeterminate, 'firms do not know, they cannot know what they need to know' (Tsoukas, 1996: 22). Lacking an overseeing mind, and dealing with 'radical uncertainty' (Piore, 1995: 120) or 'second order ignorance', (not knowing what one needs to know), knowledge is continuously reconstituted through the firm's activities or social practices. Such practices are three-dimensional: First, there are the standard expectations associated with carrying out any particular organisational role, secondly, are the habits, dispositions, or tendencies that have been formed in the course of past socialisations outside the context of the organisation, (religion, education, life-experience), thirdly, there is the interactive-situational dimension; the social and dynamic context of any particular activity. A firm has some control over normative expectations that seek to establish consistency across behaviours in different contexts, but very limited control over externally shaped dispositions and activities shaped by local circumstances. As a consequence, there will be inevitable tensions and gaps between 'canonical practice', or normative expectations, and 'non-canonical practice', or dispositions and interactive situations (Brown and Duiguid, 1991). At any point in time, a firm's knowledge is the indeterminate outcome of individuals attempting to manage these tensions. In other words no matter how explicit and well defined the rules are that may guide action, the essential distinctiveness of each and every situation means there will always be some element of ambiguity or uncertainty that creates a need for the 'actors' to make inferences and personal judgments in an effort to fill these gaps. Tsoukas (1996) referred to this state of affairs as 'the indeterminacy of social practices' (Tsoukas, 1996: 19), which, as illustrated in the preceding discussion, is always a contingent, emergent and indeterminate event.

The fundamental beliefs of Blackler (1995) and Tsoukas (1996) are compatible. Both emphasise the active and processual nature of knowledge, knowledge is embodied in

people and embedded in practice; in other words, knowledge cannot be separated from the process of knowing, or from the people involved in that process. As Maturana and Varella (1987) suggested: "All doing is knowing, all knowing is doing", (Maturana and Varella, (1987: 27). The combined contributions of Blackler (1995) and Tsoukas (1996) in rethinking the nature of organisational knowledge in this way constituted a significant turning point in advancing the knowledge-related discourse towards a 'practice-based perspective' on knowing. An overview of this practice-based perspective is provided in Section 2.2.2 below.

### 2.2.2 A Practice-Based Perspective on Knowledge: Knowledge as Process

Interest in the theory of practice is not new (Ortner, 1984), yet it was not until relatively recently that notions of activity and practice entered the knowledge management domain. In this regard, the work of Cook and Brown (1999) was particularly instrumental in differentiating between 'an epistemology of possession', that treats knowledge as something people possess, and an 'epistemology of practice', where knowing is part of action. Orlikowski (2002) made a similar distinction between knowledge as a separate entity, static property or stable disposition embedded in practice, and a view of knowledge "at any given time, as what the practice has made it" (Olikowski, 2002: 250). The latter view sees knowledge as enacted – every day and over time in people's practices. It leads to an understanding of knowledge and practice as reciprocally constitutive, so that it does not make sense to talk about either knowledge or practice without the other.

The emerging nature of practice-based theorising (Gherardi, 2000) has encouraged a literature that is, once again, rife with a multiplicity of research approaches that have as many differences as they have commonalities. While there is no such thing as a unified theory of practice, in recent years a convergence of sorts has emerged from amongst a variety of theoretical approaches (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003). These include: situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991), a cultural-interpretive approach to learning (Cook and Yanow, 1993; Yanow, 2000), activity theory (Blackler, Crump and McDonald, 2000) and actor-network theory (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2002; Suchman, 2000). It is beyond the scope of this literature review to examine each theoretical approach in detail, or to provide coverage of the entire

body of work. Rather, the aim is to provide a brief account of each tradition accompanied by a selected sample of studies that are representative of the salient aspects of each. In doing so, the author has primarily relied on two key publications that have attempted to bring together the four strands of this conversation. These are: The special issue on 'Knowing in Practice', Organisation (2000) and 'Knowing in Organisations a Practice-based Approach' (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003).

#### 2.2.2.1 Situated Learning Theory

Social or situated learning theory emerged during the past decade as an alternative to dominant cognitive perspectives on learning (Kolb, 1984; Revans; 1982). Lave and Wenger (1991) were foremost amongst those who argued that learning should not be viewed as the simple transmission of abstract and decontextualised knowledge from one individual to another; but as a *social process* whereby knowledge is co-constructed (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and learning is located or *situated* within everyday practices; in other words learning takes place in the same context in which it is applied (Lave and Wenger, 2000).

The basic building blocks of situated learning systems are 'communities of practice,' 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger et al., 2002: 4). Thus, according to Wenger, communities of practice became containers of competencies with respect to specific tasks or activities. He defined competence by combining three elements: joint enterprise, mutual engagement and a shared repertoire. In other words, members of the community are bound together and held accountable by their collectively developed understanding of what their community is about; members engage and interact with one another, establishing norms and relationships that reflect these interactions; and members share a repertoire of communal resources, language, routines, sensibilities, artifacts, tools and stories. Knowing, in this context, is a matter of displaying these socially defined competencies: to understand the enterprise well enough to contribute to it, to engage with the community and be trusted as a partner in these interactions and to have access to and be able to use the shared repertoire appropriately.

In their study of midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers and recovering alcoholics,

Lave and Wenger (1991) used the term 'legitimate peripheral participation' to reflect the progressive involvement of newcomers or apprentices in a practice as they acquire growing competence. The adjective 'peripheral' denotes the existence of a route that a new member must follow in order to gain the esteem of the community's established members. At the same time, the idea of 'legitimate participation' emphasises that as the newcomer passes through the various stages of learning he/she must connect with others performing actual practices. Since knowledge is integrated and distributed in the life of the community and learning is an act of belonging, (or becoming an insider), learning necessitates participation. The professional development of the members and the development of the practice sustained by the community go hand in hand; the members' identity and the knowledge of the community evolve in parallel. In this way, communities of practice are highly dynamic entities: evolving as newcomers become absorbed into a community, as old-timers leave and as the knowledge and practices of the community evolves with changing circumstances.

The contribution that social/situated learning makes towards understanding knowing and learning in organisations is best explained through its use of the adjectives 'social' and 'situated'. The term 'social' points to the localisation of learning and knowing, not in the mind of the individual but in a collective subject, a subject that simultaneously thinks, learns, works and innovates, (Brown and Duguid, 1991); knowing is no longer considered as a separate activity but one that is attached to, or enacted in, a communal practice (Gherardi, 2000). In contrast with traditional cognitive learning theory, which regards context as the container of decontextualised knowledge (knowledge that is impersonal, detached, asocial, apolitical, immaterial and ahistorical), the term 'situated' emphasises the contextual nature of knowledge. In other words, what is learned is specific to the situation in which it is learned. Thus all knowledge is contextual and reciprocally so, context shapes individuals' knowledge and individual thinking and actions in turn shape the context.

The reconceptualisation of knowing and learning as social and situated has been further explored by other intellectual traditions that now form part of the practice-based perspective. In terms of its *social* character, detaching the concept of knowing from the mental and the individual and attaching it to practice, according to Gherardi (2000), opened up a whole new world; one where the influence of *pathos* and not just

*logos* was recognised (Gagliardi, 1990). To address these heretofore unexplored issues, an interpretive approach to the study of organisational culture emerged (Cook and Yanow, 1993; Yanow, 2000). This approach is explored in the next section.

#### 2.2.2.2 A Cultural-Interpretive Approach to Learning

A cultural-interpretive approach to learning considers an organisation as a culture, with culture perceived as a practice comprising a set of acts and interactions that involve language and objects repeated overtime with patterns and variations (Yanow, 2000). Cook and Yanow (1993) provide an example of a flute making company, 'Powell Flute makers', to illustrate the contribution of this perspective to understanding knowing as practice. Their study highlighted the *collective* nature of knowing and learning; developing individual mastery (knowing how to make a flute) depended on social processes, both for its existence and its communication. Cook and Yanow noted that 'no single individual was responsible for making an entire flute', people were, they suggested, working on parts of flutes, rather than making entire flutes, 'collectively they mastered the practice or know-how of flute making' (Cook and Yanow, 1993). The practice of flute making was also the medium through which mastery was expressed; knowledge was communicated through the vehicle of the flute, in acting on it, in interaction with it and concerning it. Members of the collective learned how to make their work-practices (what they knew) visible to each other in the context of objects and embodied acts (handling flute sections, working on them, handing them to the next flute maker or back to the preceding one), and by way of talk, wherein they spoke to each other of 'the feel of the flute'. Vague, abstract and cryptic remarks such as, 'it doesn't feel right, it's cranky' or 'this bit doesn't look quite right' were readily understood and prompted very specific corrective action without any other intervention being necessary (Cook and Yanow, 1993). That the language in such exchanges remained inexact was in no small part due to the fact that many of the actual physical dimensions and tolerances of the flutes had never been made explicit; and those that had were rarely referred to in those terms. The precise standards and high quality upon which 'a Powell flute' relied had been maintained purely on the basis of 'individual and mutual hand-to-hand judgements of feel and eye' (Cook and Yanow, 1993: 380). Flute makers talked in terms of the 'right look' and the 'right feel' that are unique to the Powell workshop. Such insights highlight the context-specific, site-specific or local knowledge that are embedded in, sustained

by, and reproduced through practice. In this context, organisational learning requires socialising or acculturating new members into the organisation. This necessitates active maintenance, preservation and confirmation of existing know-how as opposed to any form of overt change.

The kinesthetic, tacit and aesthetic dimensions of knowing unearthed by Yanow (2000) were further developed by Strati (2003, 2007) who illustrated the centrality of 'sensible knowing', (what is perceived through the senses, judged through the senses and reproduced through the senses) within practice-based knowing. Sensible knowledge resides in the visual, the auditory, the olfactory, gustatory and in sensitive and aesthetic-judgement. Reporting on field research amongst a team of workers whose job it was to strip a roof in preparation for re-roofing, (work that literally and metaphorically removed the ground from beneath their feet), Strati questioned them on how it was done, how they did not slip or put a foot wrong and how could he learn to perform this work with a similar level of competence? Stamping his feet the designated team leader answered, "the secret is in feeling the roof beneath your feet, you need to feel the roof attached to or nailed to your feet; you need your hands to work, your feet are what keep you on the roof." (Strati, 2003: 64). 'Looking with your ears', 'listening to noises and paying attention to suspicious ones', 'being able to almost lean on air between one's body and the roof' and 'appreciating the beauty of working up there' were also considered critical dimensions of the 'roofing capability'.

An aesthetic take on practice emphasises knowing as a form of experience that is *both* personal and social. On the one hand, aesthetic knowledge is conceptualised as a form of competence that persons acquire by activating their perceptive-sensorial faculties, aesthetic judgements and kinesthetic skills. In this sense Strati's take on practical knowledge has more in common with Polyani's tacit knowledge 'a knowledge that cannot be spoken about because it is not itself verbal (Polanyi, 1966) than with Nonaka's version, 'a knowledge that has not yet been rendered explicit (Nonaka, 1994). On the other hand, while Strati highlights the importance of the personal dimension of knowing, he does so within the context of the social. As Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003) remark, the socialised, trained, habituated and conditioned sentient human body described by Strati (2003) becomes a critical locus of connection and social order (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003: 11) upon which

the conduct of roofing relies. As Strati himself notes, these disciplined bodies are aesthetically and emotionally doing and re-doing organisation.

As is evident from the preceding discussion, taking a cultural-interpretive and aesthetic perspective on knowing and learning means focusing on: collectives, their acts and interactions, the objects that are the focus of these acts, the language used in these acts, and the personal and site-specific meanings of these various artifacts to the actors in the situation. This latter attribute, the context-specific, or local nature of knowledge embedded in practice (also highlighted by the situated perspective on learning), became the central focus of two other intellectual traditions, activity theory (Engeström 1987, 1999; Leont'ev, 1978, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) and actor-network theory (Callon, 1986; Latour 1987; Law 1987). The following section introduces the first of these through its presentation of knowing as the outcome of a cultural and historical activity system. While the emphasis is once again on knowing in action, there is divergence of focus: while the situated/cultural-interpretive theorists focus on learning as enculturation and the transmission of a legacy and shared repertoire, for the activity theorists collaboration is always a transformative endeavour. In other words, while in the former approaches change is a variation arising from unexpected events, in the context of activity theory, change is a component part of the practice; while former approaches emphasise the power of tradition, this next approach stresses expansion, creativity, tension and unease.

#### 2.2.2.3 Understanding Knowing As Situated and Mediated Activity

From an activity-based perspective, the overall emphasis is on active achievement and the minimum meaningful context for understanding action is the activity system. At its most basic an activity system entails a triadic relationship between: *a subject* (an individual, dyad or group), an *object* (an outward goal, a concrete purpose, or objectified motive towards which the activity is directed), and cultural-historically constructed mediating tools or instruments that may be material or psychological in nature, for example, artifacts, signs, symbols and language. Engeström (1987, 1999) built on Vygotsky's original concept of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987) and Leont'ev's concept of activity (Leont'ev, 1978, 1981), identifying additional contextual components of the activity system that mediate action. These included: the *community* (the wider organisation and its culture), the *outcome* (the intended or

unintended implication of the activity), the manner in which the subject relates to the community using *rules*, norms, and behavioural conventions and the manner in which the community relates to the subject through *division of labour*. This relationship is depicted in Figure 2.5 below.

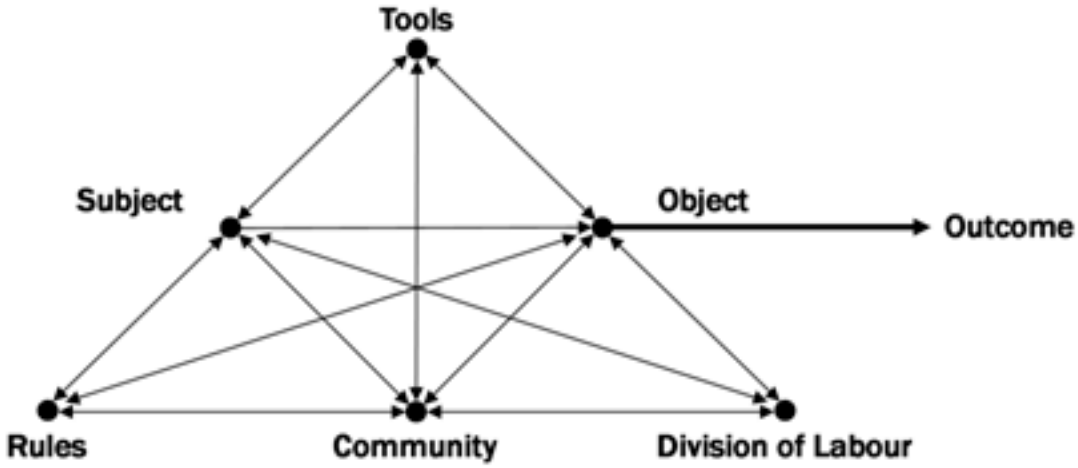



Figure 2.5 General Model of An Activity System
Source Engeström (1987)

A critical dimension of the activity system that is not immediately obvious from the above illustration is the concept of *contradictions*, which includes tensions, paradoxes, conflicts, inconsistencies and incoherencies. Engeström (1987) identified four levels of contradiction that may occur. These are: primary contradictions; which arise within each node of the central activity system; secondary contradictions; which arise between the constituent nodes (for example, between the subject and the tools); tertiary contradictions; which arise between different objects and motives; and quaternary contradictions; which arise between the central activity and adjacent activities that comprise the network of activities that make-up the organisation. While contradictions may often manifest as problems, breakdowns or clashes within a system, from the perspective of activity theory, they are perceived as sources and opportunities for development and learning, with activities always directed at working through them.

Activity theory has found application in several domains, such as: organisational theory (Blackler, 1995), organisational learning (Engeström, 1999), organisational

memory (Kuutti and Virkkunen, 1995), and organisational sensemaking (Hassan, 2000). Blackler (1995) is primarily associated with introducing the concept to the knowledge management domain. His recognition of the inseparability of knowledge from human activity/practice and the mediated situated, provisional and purposive nature of knowledge (as previously outlined in Section, 2.2.1.2) were foremost in advancing theories of knowledge beyond the objectivist perspective. Blackler continues his association with this tradition, being one of the core contributors to Nicolini et al's illustration of how activity theory can be used to interpret knowing in practice (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003). In their comparative study of three multi-disciplinary teams charged with developing a new strategic direction for their organisation, Blackler et al (2000) illustrate the emergent and often competing nature of multiple objectives. Realisation of these priorities was explained through the processes of 'perspective shaping,' the group's interpretation of their priorities and their 'steer' on problem solving; 'perspective making', the evolving dynamics of the team (group identity, integration, resources, division of knowledge and leadership); and 'perspective taking,' the way in which members of each community of activity understood and adapted to significant others (Boland and Tenkasi, 1995). For Blackler et al, explicit recognition of the existence of these processes, as distinct from management's habitual tendency towards centralised control, was considered essential in achieving integration and co-operation both within and between the different communities of activity. They describe activity systems as 'disturbance producing mechanisms' (Blackler et al., 2003: 281), as the tensions, paradoxes, inconsistencies and incoherencies within the system fuel on-going change, both in terms of how the system understands its objectives and the activities that accompany those objectives. The term 'expansion' is used to describe this process. The expansive nature of activity systems is seen to engender a cycle of continuous learning and change.

This latter aspect of the activity system has been further explored by Engeström et al (2003,) who examined three cases of emerging practice: white-collar crime investigation, crop rotation in organic farming, and caring for patients with multiple chronic illnesses. The recursive relationship between practice and its object becomes particularly apparent when there is an expansion of either one. For example, in the case of patients with multiple chronic illnesses who increasingly drift between multiple caregiver locations, 'the care episode' (the patient visit inside the walls of the

doctor's office) was no longer considered the appropriate object. 'Expansion' of the original object designed to facilitate the collaborative representation and negotiation of the patient's trajectory of care triggered the emergence of new instruments. These new instruments consisted of 'a care map', which outlined the most important caregiver connections (for example the primary hospital, health station, rheumatic association), and 'a care calendar', that listed all past and current events in the patients care trajectory. Reconstituting the original object (the care episode) into the new object (the patient's care trajectory) facilitated joint examination, remembering, interpretation and revision by all parties involved.

The preceding examples encapsulate the essence of activity theory and the core elements of Engeström's (1987, 1989, 2001) 'expansive learning cycle'. The act of knowing is viewed as compromising: a *'multi-voiced collective'* made up of multiple points of view, traditions and interests and *'a historic accomplishment'* that forms and takes shape over lengthy periods of time. The relationship between knowing and change is an integral aspect of the activity system with the emergence of *'contradictions'* (tensions and inconsistencies), leading to *'expansive transformation.* The latter entails an ongoing process of examination, reflection, evaluation, learning and change wherein the object, or motive, of the activity is reconceptualised to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities.

The situated and mediated nature of knowing/learning emphasised in activity theory was similarly represented in another intellectual tradition known as actor-network theory (Callon, 1986, Latour 1987, Law 1987). While there is shared recognition of uncertainties, conflicts and inconsistencies in both approaches, once again there is a difference in emphasis, with power, inequalities, silencing, and hegemony-related terms featuring much more prominently in this next and final approach of the practice-based perspective.

#### 2.2.2.4 Understanding Knowing as an Actor-Network Relationship

From an actor-network point of view knowing is a process of 'heterogeneous engineering' (Law 1987) wherein human elements and non-human elements form a network of heterogeneous activities that are constantly being engineered, transformed or re-aligned (Callon, 1986, Latour 1987, Law 1987). In guiding the

analysis of practice, actor-network theory (ANT) advances three principles: The first is *agnosticism*, which advocates abandoning any a priori assumptions on the nature of networks, causal conditions or actors accounts. In other words, ANT imposes total impartiality; all interpretations must be unprivileged. The second, *generalised symmetry*, suggests employing a single explanatory frame when interpreting *actants*, (human and non-human elements) and affording equal agency to each. The third principle, *free association*, advocates abandoning any distinction between natural and social phenomenon. For ANT theorists the goal of heterogeneous engineering is '*translation'*, or the stable alignment of all elements in the form of an actor-network. This is a precarious process of '*ordering'* that, according to Callon (1986), entails four 'moments': During the first moment of *'problematisation'*, one actor, 'the initiator', attempts to make other actors subscribe to its own conceptions by demonstrating that it has the right definitions of, or solutions to, the problem. Initiators attempt to demonstrate their indispensability to the solution of the problem, establishing themselves as 'obligatory passage points' through which other actors must pass through. Passage requires acceptance of roles, rules, conventions and operating procedures laid down by the first actor. In the second moment, *'interessement'*, an attempt is made to impose and stabilise the identities and role defined in the problematisation stage on the other actors, thereby locking other actors into the roles proposed for them. The third moment is *'enrolment'*; this occurs when a stable network of alliances is formed, and the actors yield to their defined roles and definitions. The final moment, *'mobilisation'* is a set of methods that initiators employ to ensure that allies do not betray the initiator's interests. During mobilisation the proposed solution gains wider acceptance and achieves stability.

Suchman (2000) illustrates how the practice of building a bridge, in a large state agency, is a canonical example of 'heterogeneous engineering' (Law, 1987) involving the alignment of human and nonhuman elements into a stable artifact. The account details the often hidden and unprioritised aspects of this work that consists of knowing, aligning or ordering the multiple, conflicting and inequitable demands, of a range of human (engineers, residents, citizens) and non-human constituents (properties, technologies, endangered species) embedded in the extended network. By way of illustration, Suchman, highlights the differences in what he terms 'orders of stabilisation' between the engineers; who view the bridge as a project to be

completed on time and within budget; and the residents, for whom the timeframe represents a period of disruption to be limited with the bridge being an outcome they will have to live with long after it is built. Through other examples, he relates the impact of that which Callon (1991) called 'punctuated organisational actors': irate citizens, vocal politicians and privileged non-humans with examples of the latter being 'the harvest mouse' and 'the delta smelt' (a small fish) whose endangered habitats represent further issues to be reconciled.

In this situation, selecting a preferred alternative from amongst the bridge-design options is much less a rational choice process than an act of 'persuasive performance' and 'constitutive storytelling'. As the engineers engage in the 'ordering processes' of approval, design and construction, they are also engaged in ongoing reconciliation, negotiation and management of the persistent contradictions and uncertainties endemic in the project. At different moments they occupy different roles, varying from technical experts, to politicians, to advocates for a particular point of view (Suchman, 2000: 323). As Nicolini et al suggest, the collective knowing involved in bridge-building cannot be understood as a self-standing body of knowledge; it is, instead, a contingent process of performing competence, and making oneself accountable, artfully balancing compliance and the endless need for practical subversions in order to get the work done (Nicolini, Gheardi and Yanow, 2003: 19)

Actor-network theory presents yet another way to understand knowing in practice. In contrast with heroic accounts of scientific knowledge creation, or essentialism, it advances 'a relational view of performance', in the words of Law (1992): "an actor is always in a network and never alone" (Law, 1992:4). In view of this, practice is always and irremediably a contingent, or humbling process that is subject to the interests of a range of disparate and heterogeneous elements of both a human and nonhuman nature. In this context, knowing is equated with being able to skillfully participate in and influence the ordering of the world while pursuing one's own interests; 'the capacity to proceed unhampered in whatever one does' (Nicolini, Gherardi, and Yanow, 2003:19). Achieving this, as Suchman's case indicates, is much less a process of rational choice, than an ongoing struggle to overcome resistance. As Gherardi et al suggest, ordering and knowing efforts do not coexist in an orderly

fashion. Instead they permanently both interfere with and annul each other (Gherardi, Nicolin and Yanow, 2003). In awakening our sensitivities to the messy, chaotic and unpredictable nature of knowing in practice, the words of John Law are particularly poignant here: "perhaps there is ordering (or knowing or acting), but there is certainly no order" (Law, 1992: 4).

Having introduced this section with the statement, "there is no such thing as a unified theory of practice" (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003), the preceding discussion attempted to highlight the differences as well as the commonalities between the four voices of the practice-related conversation. The following section draws these four strands together in presenting their shared portrayal of knowledge in comparison with its earlier characterisation by the objectivist perspective (see section 2.2.1.1).

#### 2.2.2.5 The Characteristics of the Practice-Based Perspective

As previously stated, the primary characteristic of the objectivist perspective is its entitative nature wherein knowledge is conceptualised as a discrete entity or object that can be codified and separated from people. In contrast, the practice-based perspective views knowledge and the development of knowing as occurring on an ongoing basis through the routine activities that people undertake. In other words, knowledge develops through practice and is inseparable from practice. The idea that knowledge is *embedded* in practice brings forth a host of related assumptions that challenge the central beliefs of the objectivist perspective. Firstly, in addition to questioning 'the knowing-doing dichotomy', the practice-based perspective also disputes 'the mind-body dichotomy' that is a fundamental aspect of the objectivist perspective. The objectivist perspective, drawing on a positivist epistemology, conceptualises knowledge as being primarily derived from intellectual processes, something that involves the head/brain but not the body. In contrast, the practice-based perspective speaks of the holistic nature of knowing (Gherardi, 2000), wherein thinking and doing are fused in knowledgeable activity. In this sense knowledge is considered *embodied* in or inseparable from people. The embodied nature of knowledge challenges the communicability of tacit knowledge, the idea that tacit

knowledge can be converted into explicit knowledge and communicated in its entirety, as suggested by Nonaka (1994) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). It stresses the inseparability of tacit and explicit knowledge (Tsoukas, 1996; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003), as outlined in the earlier critique of the objectivist perspective, and emphasises the idea that all knowledge has tacit elements. The holistic, embodied nature of knowing is particularly evident in those studies that refer to knowledgeable people whose mastery is sensorial and emotional in character; Strati's bricklayers who feel and fear the roof, (Strati, 2007) and Yanow's flute makers who share knowledge of the flute by passing it to and fro (Yanow, 2000). Such studies are indicative of the personal nature of knowing, wherein knowing is always indeterminate (Tsoukas, 1996); there is always some element of personal judgment involved.

Secondly, in stark contrast to the 'knowledge as truth' assumption of the objectivist perspective, which suggests that codified knowledge can exist in an objective form, independent of social and cultural values, the practice-based perspective argues that all knowledge is *socially constructed* and *culturally embedded*. Knowing is a social subject that is always perceived as participation in, and belonging to, social patterns such as activity systems, networks, communities of practice and local cultures. Thus knowledge is never totally neutral or unbiased, inseparable from the values of those who produced it; is always somewhat subjective and open to interpretation. As a consequence, knowledge is contestable: conceptions and interpretations of what constitutes legitimate knowledge are open to dispute and related issues of power, politics and conflict have become much more important. Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003) speak of the manner in which 'knowing' grants citizenship to a host of terms marginalised by the objectivist perspective. Drawing on Blackler's description of activity systems as 'disturbance-producing arrangements', they highlight the incoherencies, inconsistencies, paradoxes and tensions that are a fundamental and uneliminable element of practice (Blackler, 1995). A similar range of terms is used in Suchman's study of the conflicting and inequitable demands, the conflicts and uncertainties that are embedded in the network that constitutes engineering practice (Suchman, 2000).

Also worth noting here is the manner in which Suchman's study extends the network's sociality to include relations with non-human elements such as endangered species

and plant life. This is characteristic of the practice-based perspective. Many of the studies described earlier told stories that were both social and material in character. Stories of flutes, roofs and bridges figure prominently. Unlike other approaches these artifacts do not play a background role. On the contrary, they participate as active characters that embody social relationships, which provide sources of uncertainty and points of resistance requiring acts of negotiation, reconciliation and ongoing persuasion.

Thirdly, in addition to considering knowing as a social process, the practice-based perspective also emphasises the situated nature of knowing. The term 'situated' indicates that knowing occurs within a temporally, geographically or relationally situated context. Thus all practice approaches emphasise the provisional, ephemeral and emergent nature of knowing; knowing is a performance, an occurrence or an event. Gherardi (2000) stresses this feature in drawing attention to the distinctive presence of performative verbs (such as learning, knowing, belonging and understanding), and performative nouns (activity, alignment, construction and enactment), amongst practice-based approaches. These, she suggests, "conjure up a world that is always in the making, where *doing* more than *being* is always at the centre of attention and where the object of enquiry becomes the capacity of humans to perform actions competently" (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003: 21).

As previously indicated, the embedded, embodied, socially constructed, culturally situated, contested and provisional aspects of knowing are captured in many of the aforementioned studies: in Blacker et al's strategy groups (Blackler et al, 2000), Orr's photocopier repairmen (Orr, 1990), Yanow's flute makers (Yanow, 2000) and Suchman's bridge-builders (Suchman, 2000). In their introduction to the book 'Knowing in Organisations: A Practice Based Approach', Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003) eloquently capture the sociality evoked by a practice-based repertoire. It is, they suggest, very different from the refined, clean, aseptic abstractions predicated by the objectivist perspective:

> In the world depicted by practice-based terms, people act and interact but they also look at, listen to and ignore each other. They have bodies, they touch, smell, taste, they have sentiments and senses, they argue, yell, fear, get nervous and even die. They are not solely ephemeral

> social entities; they are living beings that inhabit a life that, far from constituting a problem, is the object itself of study and representation by this approach (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003: 22)

Figure 2.6 below provides an overview of the practice-based perspective summarising the fundamental questions raised and the associated assumptions.

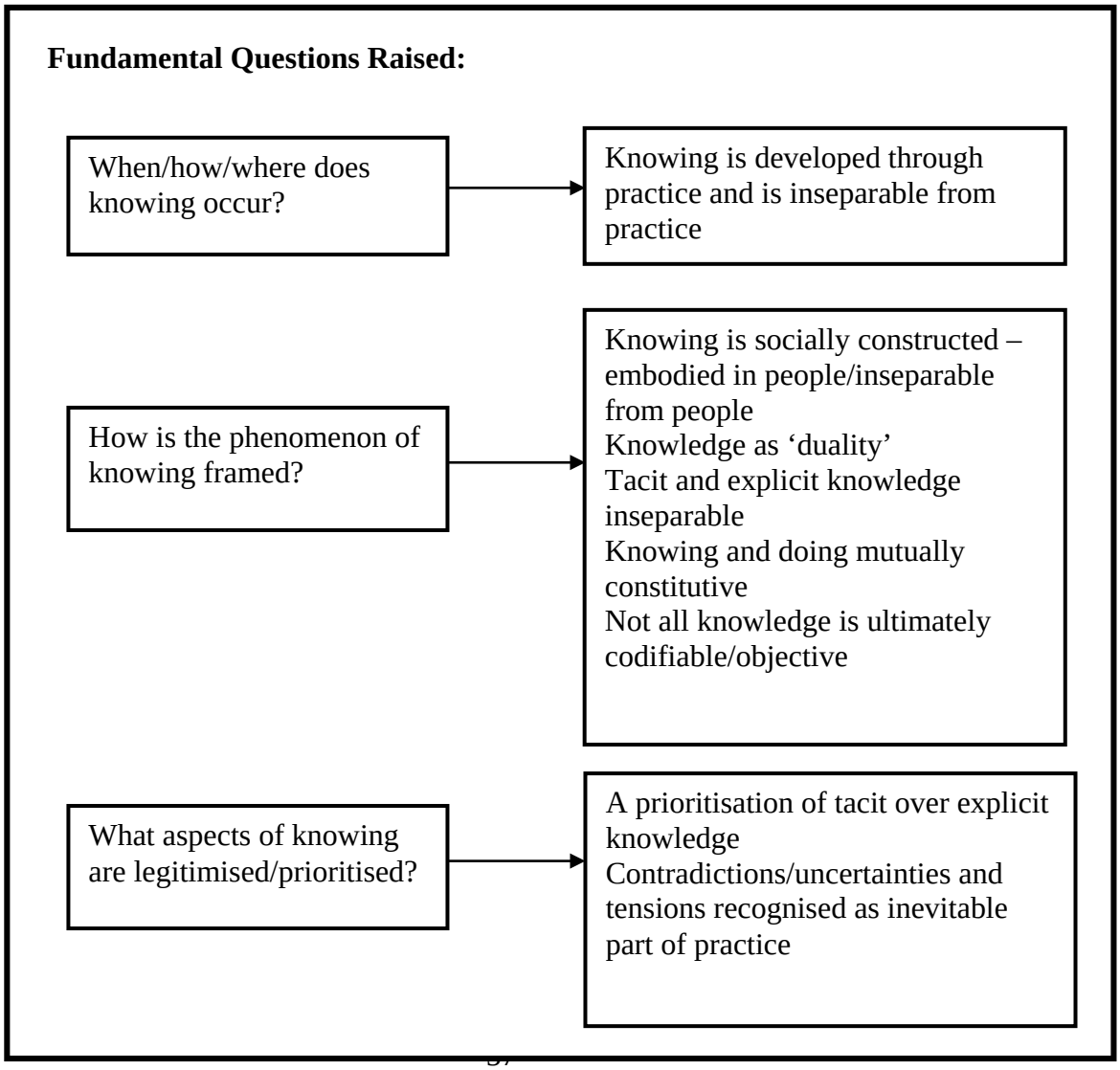


Figure 2.6 An Overview of the Practice-based Perspective
Source Author

The fundamental questions raised by the practice-based perspective have been adapted to formulate the second research question.

> Research Question Two:
>
> How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

## 2.3 The Implications of Shifting Perspectives

So far, this chapter has identified two epistemological perspectives that characterise knowledge in extremely different ways. Although presented separately, and initially identified as competing epistemologies (Hislop, 2005), the literature acknowledges their mutually enabling nature (Comas and Sieber, 2001; Cook and Brown, 1999; Orlikowski, 2002), with each one perceived as 'doing the work that the other cannot' (Cook and Brown, 1999: 381). Notwithstanding their ability to co-exist, they have very different assumptions on how knowledge is acquired and shared, and, as a consequence, equally divergent implications in terms of how knowledge is managed. Indeed, in terms of the latter, a critical issue is whether it is possible to 'manage' knowledge at all (Scarborough, 1999). Based on a view of knowing as a cognitive process, with tacit and explicit knowledge regarded as distinctive and separate types of knowledge, with quite specific characteristics, from an objectivist perspective, the sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge is regarded as being fundamentally different. While the sharing of tacit knowledge is acknowledged as difficult, complex and time-consuming, the sharing of explicit knowledge, by contrast, is regarded as relatively straightforward (Grant, 1996). As a consequence, as previously indicated, one of the distinguishing features of the objectivist perspective is the privileging of explicit over tacit knowledge and the subsequent emphasis on converting all tacit knowledge into

explicit knowledge ('externalisation'), rather than attempting to share tacit knowledge directly. In knowledge management terms this translates into the following stages: identifying what knowledge is important; making it explicit; collecting it; codifying it and placing it in a central repository; and structuring it systematically to ensure ease of access for others (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

While Nonaka's framework was at the epicentre of knowledge management in the early 1990's, informing much of the hope and hype behind new forms of information technology (Cairncross, 1997), in more recent years the mechanistic nature of such approaches have been subjected to much criticism. At the forefront of these criticisms were Scarborough and Swan (1999) and Scarborough and Swan (2001), who lament what they characterise as the uncritical and unreflexive nature of the mainstream literature on knowledge management where many of the metaphors used suggest that knowledge has a comfortingly solid nature, allowing it to be 'captured', 'stockpiled', 'mined', or 'drilled' (Scarborough and Swan, 1999). Such literature, they suggested, failed to discuss the fragile, socially constructed, context-dependent, and political nature of knowledge. Being highly prescriptive and managerial in tone, it was concerned with the question of *how* knowledge should be managed rather than questions of *can* or *should* it be managed?

The concerns of Swan and Scarborough were taken up by a number of critics who believed the intrinsic characteristics of knowledge make it difficult, if not impossible, to control and manage in the conventional sense of the word 'manage'. Such characteristics include its vague, all encompassing, contradictory and dynamic nature (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; McAdam and McCreedy, 2000), its invisibility and immeasurability (Soo et al, 2002), and its inseparability from human beliefs and values (von Krogh et al, 2000). Despite these characteristics, the traditional or first-generation approaches treated the management of knowledge as something that was self-evident and unproblematic (Gore and Gore, 1999; Hanson et al 1999). In part, this may be explained by the rhetorical appeal associated with the notion of 'knowledge management'. In an ironic sense it promises to manage knowledge, while at the same time it uses the term knowledge to indicate something, unspecific and inexplicable (Cook and Brown, 1999; Lam 2000; Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998), that cannot be managed (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). This

promise, to ‘manage the unmanageable’, has caused some critics to consider ‘knowledge management’ as nonsensical, an oxymoron or something of an odd couple (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001; McDermott, 1999; Skyrme, 1997).

While the dominance of the objectivist perspective was evident when these critiques were written, this has become less so over time. As this literature review has shown, a vibrant body of work now exists that has questioned and challenged the assumptions of the mainstream perspective. From a practice-based perspective, knowledge, or ‘knowing’, as it is more appropriately termed, occurs through immersion in practice (Gherardi, 2000); with ‘epistemic work’ (Cook and Brown, 1999) becoming the process of making real the internal constructions defined as personal knowledge by the objectivist perspective (Comas and Sieber, 2001). As a consequence, knowledge sharing does not represent the simple transfer of a fixed entity between people, but rather involves the rich social interaction that entails inference, personal judgment, and an appreciation of the tacit assumptions and values on which the knowledge of others is based (Boland and Tenkasi, 1995).

Conceiving of knowing as an informal discursive, social process, (that is much more provisional, emergent and contestable than previously considered), has significant ramifications in terms of an organisation’s knowledge base. Rather than being unitary and coherent, it is now considered fragmented, distributed, dispersed and decentered, situated and embedded in local practices that are mediated, shaped and influenced by the particular demands of their specific context. Recognition of this altered context eschews the idea that it is possible for organisations to collect knowledge together into a central repository, or for middle or senior managers to fully understand the knowledge of those working for them (Goodall and Roberts, 2003). Tsoukas (1996: 15), quoting Hayek (1945), suggests, that a belief in the ability to achieve such a state represents the ‘synoptic delusion’, a belief that knowledge can be known in its totality by a single mind’ (Tsoukas, 1996: 22). As previously indicated in the critique of the objectivist perspective (Section 2.2.1.2), Tsoukas acknowledges the ‘radical uncertainty and second order ignorance’ that firms face, acknowledging that ‘they do not know, they cannot know what they need to know’ (Tsoukas, 1996: 22). A firm’s knowledge, he suggests, is always the indeterminate outcome of the inferences and personal judgements that arise as individuals attempt to manage the tensions,

ambiguities and uncertainties that are an inevitable and unavoidable aspect of any practice. As a consequence, knowing is always contingent, emergent and indeterminate. In this context, managerial understanding of organisational knowledge will always be fragmented and incomplete and 'attempts to collect knowledge in a central location will always be limited' (Tsoukas, 1996: 15). In view of this Tsoukas suggests:

> The key to achieving coordinated action does not depend on those 'higher up' collecting more and more knowledge, as on those, 'lower down' finding more and more ways to get connected and interrelating the knowledge each one has (Tsoukas 1996: 22).

Tsoukas's contribution is significant on two fronts, both of which can be framed in the context of the broader question alluded to earlier: Is 'knowledge management' feasible or is it, as some authors have suggested, more of a contradiction in terms? (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). Firstly, Tsoukas highlights issues with respect to uncertainty, not knowing and ignorance, that in view of the objectivist perspective's overriding urge for rationality (Spender, 2008a: 164) were (prior to the existence of a practice-based perspective) rejected or ignored. Chia and Holt (2008) elaborate on this matter, detailing the manner in which the objectivist perspective imposed a kind of perfection or certainty upon the ordinary use of the word 'know' and its derivatives. Referencing Hänfling (2000) they argue that a propositional view of knowledge, in definitively claiming something to be the case, sublimates all other claims. Three sublimations are identified: The first, is the presumption that knowledge conforms to a high degree of exactitude and hard-edged visibility; the assumption being the less exact one is, the less one can claim to know something. For instance, where managers were seen to have particular skills in liaising with constituent interests such as investors, or local communities, the articulation of this knowledge drifted into definitive terminology of the kind: 'These managers *know* how to manage external relations' (Chia and Holt, 2008: 142). As being knowledgeable was seen to rule out any possibility of doubt, and with what is known guaranteed as fact, in the words of Wittgenstein (1980: 315):

> One forgets the expression 'I thought I knew'.

The second sublimation declares, to claim that something is 'knowledge', rules out all other possibilities; knowledge has an inbuilt colonising impulse, a dominant logic (Prahalad and Bettis, 1986) that restricts one from thinking in terms of other

probabilities. The third form of sublimation refers to the bind of entailment, whereby if something is stated as a knowledge claim then other future claims are necessarily entailed, wherein the impetus of one state of affairs is entailed in another.

As previously discussed, (see section 2.2.2.5), from a practice-based perspective the aforementioned claims with respect to knowledge are not upheld. To paraphrase the words of Nicolin, Gherardi and Yanow (2003: 22): in granting citizenship to a host of terms, previously marginalised by the objectivist perspective, such as: the tensions, incoherencies, inconsistencies, paradoxes, conflicts and inequitable demands that are very much part of any practice; the practice-based perspective provides a rich palette of emotionally charged situations in which uncertainty, indeterminacy, not knowing and ignorance are unavoidable.

Yet, while the practice-based perspective acknowledges the state of 'not-knowing', across the four strands of this perspective, to some extent at least, incomplete knowledge is perceived as a negative condition or state. For instance, from the situated and cultural-interpretive approaches, the overall emphasis on socialising or enculturating members into communities of practice or cultures, promotes conformity (preservation and confirmation of the existing know-how), as opposed to any type of change. In such situations, those who are not 'in-the-know' remain as 'outsiders' until, through a process of participation, a state of belonging, acceptance or 'insider' status is conferred.

Similarly, from an activity theory (Engeström, 1987; 1989) and actor-network approach (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987; Law, 1987), the language used to portray any state of knowing that is less than complete, intimates situations or conditions that need to be resolved. What is different with respect to these latter approaches is the manner in which this resolution is perceived. While initially perceived as negative states, for example, disturbance producing mechanisms; contradictions; inconsistencies; incoherencies; uncertainties and inequities; the ongoing reconcilation and negotiation that such occurences necessitate are recognised as opportunities for new knowledge, as opposed to problematic circumstances that necessitate obliteration.

This idea, that 'not-knowing' can be an opportunistic source of new knowledge has recently been advanced by a number of critical theorists. Within the knowledge-management domain, J. C. Spender has been particularly vocal in this regard. Rejecting the negativity that surrounds knowledge-absences (Spender, 2008a), he suggests that conditions such as: bounded rationality (Simon, 1997, Spender 2008b), ignorance and uncertainty (Spender, 2008a) should be embraced rather than viewed as a problem to be solved. In Spender's view the knowledge management literature is inclined to excessive rationality. He suggests, as long as the field's theorising stands on perfect rationality alone, the different aspects of knowledge management will end up as mere subsets of existing disciplines, (such as information technology, formal decision-making or micro-economics) and there will be no distinct field which is knowledge management's alone (Spender, 2008b). In view of this he reasons:

> Knowledge management begins precisely and only with the uncertainties and knowledge failures that arrest rational decision-making and force us outside rationality's box. Knowledge management is really about managing knowledge-absences not knowledge assets (Spender, 2008a: 165).

The importance of directing attention to 'not-knowing' as opposed to 'knowing' has received additional support from other areas, amongst which are the fields of organization studies and leadership. Within the field of organization studies, Chia and Holt in their (2008) paper discussed above, acknowledge the contributions of Czarniawska (2003) in recognising the tendency of managerial studies to regard uncertainty negatively, when it is, she suggests, an 'inevitable partner to knowledge'. In a similar way, Cooper (2005) suggests that managerial knowledge is engendered by an enduring sense of latency or incompleteness. It is this incompleteness, he suggests, that can produce genuine outpourings of acheivement that can endure the test of time.

From a leadership perspective, while this chapter has earlier pointed to an absence of references to the leader's own knowledge within the leadership domain (Section 2.1), an issue that will be elaborated upon in Section 2.4 below; it is particularly interesting that the leadership literature should address the relationship between leadership and 'not-knowing'. In this context, in recent years, the concept of 'negative capability', has entered the language of leadership (Bennis 1989; Handy, 1989). Conceived of by the poet John Keats, in an attempt to capture the frame of mind that underpins creative genius, Keats described it as:

> A state in which a person is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries and doubts without any irritable reaching after facts and reason" (Keats, 1970: 43).

Prior to its import into the leadership domain, the term was first adopted by the field of psychoanalysis where it was again variously described as: "the ability to tolerate anxiety and fear, to stay in the place of uncertainty in order to allow the emergence of new thoughts or perceptions" (Eisold, 2000: 65), or "the capability to resist the tendancy to fill with knowing the empty space created by ignorance" (Bion, 1970:125). Simpson et al (2002) have specifically addressed the need for leaders to adopt 'negative capability', in order to 'contain' aspects of situations that are themselves negative, such as incidents of not knowing what to do, or not having adequate information. In such situations, it is suggested, while one can exercise positive capabilties, such as the application of knowledge from previous experience; at times, there is, a necessity to wait for insight, to watch, observe and listen.

The paradoxical nature of this advice in the context of a culture that emphasises performativity (Fournier and Grey, 2000) and creates expectations of the leader to 'give a strong lead' (Needleman, 1990), are not being ignored here; what is advocated is a form of 'reflective inaction' (Simpson et al, 2002: 1209) the ability to tolerate frustration and anxiety and to resist dispersing into defensive routines when leading at the limits of one's knowledge.

In view of the greater recognition and value that is attributed to 'not-knowing' as opposed to 'knowing' in the knowledge management and related fields, the author framed the third research question around this condition. In essence, this question sought to examine the extent to which leaders recognise their own knowledge absences, how they explain or account for these, how they are manifested, how they are perceived and what approaches, if any, they take towards 'managing' them.

| Research Question Three: |
| --- |
| To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'? |

Earlier in this section the author claimed that the contribution of Tsoukas (1996) was

influential on two fronts. The first of these was in bringing to the fore issues with respect to uncertainty, 'not-knowing' and knowledge absences. The second contribution that Tsoukas made was in highlighting the altered role of senior management in the 'knowledge management process'. As previously outlined; from Tsoukas's point of view, the key to effective management lies in sharing knowledge at the lower levels of the hierarchy as opposed to collecting more and more knowledge at the top (Tsoukas 1996: 22). As suggested earlier, this issue can also be framed in terms of the overriding question of the feasibility of knowledge management. For a number of theorists, the argument that knowledge cannot be managed, (McDermott, 1999; Scarborough, 1999; Skyrme, 1997), is more a semantic critique of the term 'management' than a suggestion that all attempts by organisational management to shape knowledge processes are doomed to failure (von Krogh et al, 2000). While knowledge may not be amenable to 'management' in the traditional top-down command and control fashion, (with, as Tsoukas suggests, those at the top collecting more and more knowledge); when the term 'management' is used in a looser sense, there is much an organisation's management can do to enable, influence and shape knowledge processes (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). In a similar line of argument, rather than the term 'knowledge management', von Krogh et al use the term 'knowledge enablement', to describe the way in which an organisation's management can utilise and shape what they call 'people-centered processes and policies' (they use the words 'caring for people'), to persuade workers to manage their knowledge towards the achievement of organisational objectives. They suggest:

> While you may be able to manage related organisational processes like community building and knowledge exchange, you cannot manage knowledge itself (von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka, 2000: 17)

Alvesson and Kärreman (2001) adopt a similar stance, pointing out that 'while the traditional role of senior management as a bureaucratic phenomenon associated with hierarchy, formalisation, direction and control has been downplayed in the practice-based approach, it has not been ignored (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001: 1006). In knowledge management terms, the new challenge represents, not so much controlling or managing knowledge from above, but rather creating a climate that is conducive to supporting and facilitating people in their efforts to share their knowledge. In view of this, they argue for a shift of emphasis from the *knowledge* side of knowledge management; which, heretofore, those interested in the topic of knowledge

management have found more intriguing, towards the *management* side of knowledge management.

The inclination to divide knowledge up into a four-fielder has seldom, they argue, been accompanied by a similar move to sort out versions of management. This is a challenge they embrace. Operating from a distinction between two modes of management intervention: co-ordination and control, and two mediums of interaction: social and techno-structural, a typology of knowledge management approaches is established. The following distinctions are made: Managerial interventions in the 'co-ordination' mode are 'weaker' and denote the minimal activities needed for orchestrating collective action, in contrast with managerial interventions in the 'control' mode which are stronger, broader in scope and include systems for specifying, monitoring and evaluating individual and collective action. In terms of the mediums of interaction, 'a techno-structural' medium represents the exploitation of knowledge through technical means, while 'a social' medium relies heavily on people and interactions. Combining the two modes of intervention with the two mediums of interaction leads to the identification of four analytically distinct knowledge management approaches. Presented in Figure 2.7 below, these are: extended library, community, normative control and enacted blueprints.

**Mode of Managerial Intervention**

| **Medium of Interaction** | Coordination | Control |
|---|---|---|
| Social | Community (sharing of ideas) | Normative control (prescribed interpretation) |

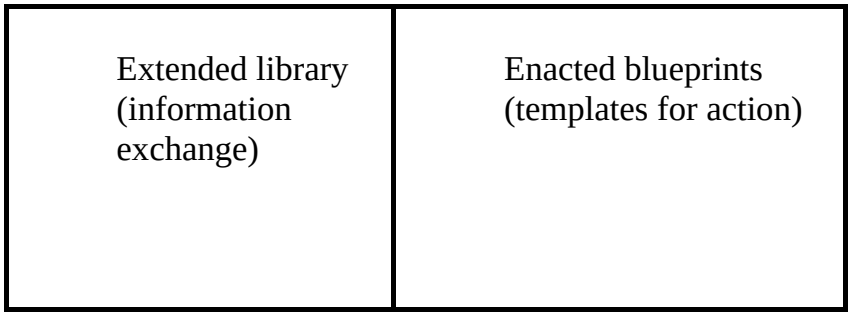



Figure 2.7 A Typology of Knowledge Management Approaches
Source: Alvesson and Kärreman (2001)

The 'extended library' approach involves extensive use of the available technology (for example, databases, advanced search systems and sophisticated communication systems), to turn internal and external information into actionable knowledge. This, it is suggested, is quite similar to what is normally referred to as bureaucracy. The result of this knowledge management system is a database, or library, accessible as a support for those who need this information. Knowledge management as a community is much less technocratic, adhering to a softer notion of hierarchy and control. This position is often grounded in an interest in tacit knowledge. Management is a matter of coping with diversity and encouraging knowledge sharing through influencing workplace climate. Knowledge management as normative control is based on the idea that the 'right' values or interpretations will produce the correct line of action. In this line, knowledge management is compared to an assembly line that provides templates and guidelines (that take the form of a strong cultural ideology), that produces the wanted actions, regardless of what the individual values and thinks. Knowledge management, as enacted blueprints, shares the orchestrated character of knowledge management as normative control, but attempts to engineer and control individuals on a behavioural level, through templates for action, rather than through values and ideas.

Alvesson and Kärreman suggest management in the control mode operates in such a fashion that it is bound to have a tension-riddled relationship with knowledge and, in

particular, knowledge creation. Technocratic and socio-ideological types of management will, they claim, *streamline* knowledge production and trivialise knowledge; in the drive to efficiency, management are predisposed to operate in a way that eliminates and substitutes knowledge, rather than maintaining or creating it. Thus much knowledge is lost not gained. Adopting a clerical approach to knowledge management is, the authors argue, misleading in that administration appears to play a limited role in knowledge creation and knowledge dispersion relative to knowledge maintenance. In this regard the authors quote McDermott (1999) who suggests:

> The great trap in knowledge management is using information management tools and concepts to design knowledge management systems (McDermott, 1999: 104).

Understanding knowledge not as objective facts and causal explanations but as a situated community-based set of meanings, they suggest, may bring the epistemological outlook in knowledge management more up to date. Their preferred 'community' approach to knowledge management (Figure 2.7 above) is broadly similar to von Krogh et al's 'knowledge enablement' (von Krogh et al 2000), where knowledge management is much less about managing and more about persuading and enabling workers to share their knowledge. Indeed, as Alvesson and Kärreman suggest:

> The more management, the less knowledge to 'manage' and the more 'knowledge' matters the less space for management to make a difference (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001: 996)

Continuing Alvesson and Kärreman's line of thinking, Wenger (2004), in an article entitled "knowledge management as a doughnut", also focuses on the 'management' aspect of the knowledge management process. This, he argues, despite being a productive topic to investigate, has received much less attention in the literature. Adopting von Krogh et al's line on semantic differences (von Krogh et al, 2000), he suggests, 'If by manage we mean to care for, grow, steward, make more useful, then the term knowledge management is apt' (Wenger 2004: 1). In terms of the form knowledge management should take and who should be doing it, in Wenger's view, knowledge management is the business of the practitioners, as, being the people who use the knowledge, they are in the best position to manage it. The role of professional management is, he suggests, 'not to manage knowledge directly, but to enable practitioners to do so' (Wenger 2004: 2). Using a doughnut to illustrate his theory,

(see Figure 2.8 below), Wenger notes the empty centre and the surrounding ring that is representative of the performances of a community of practice.




Figure 2.8 The Doughnut Model of Knowledge Management
Source: Wenger (2004)

Wenger views this approach to knowledge management as a substantial transformation of organisations because it turns Taylor's traditional scientific management theory (Taylor, 1911), on its head. Rather than assuming that knowledge is the property of management and that the worker is the implementer of this knowledge, it assumes that knowledge is the property of the practitioners and that the role of management is to make it possible for practitioners to act. Management can achieve this, it suggested, through shifting the focus of their knowledge initiatives towards developing a culture of open communication and collaboration that is supportive of the sharing of innovative work and business practices through communities of practice.

The aforementioned contributions of Tsoukas, (1996), von Krogh et al (2000), Alvesson and Kärreman, (2001) and Wenger (2004) present a concerted view: to paraphrase the words of Henry Mintzberg, 'the role of senior management in the knowledge management process is not dead, it is just different' (Mintzberg, 1994). The favoured vocabulary used to describe this new role (for example, caring, enabling, encouraging, facilitating, persuading, supporting and creating a conducive collaborative climate), is far from the conventional idea of management as a

bureaucratic phenomenon associated with hierarchy, formalisation, direction and control (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001: 1006). Instead, it is much more representative of the types of behaviour that are associated with leadership, where the distinction between management and leadership is upheld (Bass, 1990; Bennis, 1979, 1989; Kotter, 1982, 1990; Yukl, 1989; Zalenik, 1983).[2] Yet, while the importance of leadership in the knowledge management process is acknowledged within the knowledge related literature, until very recently, the field still lacked research on leadership issues (Dirkx, 1999). Skyrme (2000) is credited with being the first to introduce the term 'knowledge leadership' into the knowledge management lexicon. In contrast with knowledge management, which advocates custodianship, even control, and a concentration on managing existing resources, knowledge leadership, he suggests, is about the continuous development of information resources, individual skills, and knowledge and learning networks (Skyrme 2000: 81). In other words, while knowledge management makes better use of the knowledge that already exists within the organisation through sharing best practice (addressing the issue 'If only we knew what we know') knowledge leadership entails sharing ideas that have the potential to generate new knowledge ('if only we knew what we don't know'). A 'knowledge enhanced strategy' Skyrme suggests incorporates both thrusts. While Skyrme introduced the term 'knowledge leadership' (Skyrme, 2000) into the knowledge management discourse, he did so primarily to distinguish between knowledge sharing and knowledge innovation. He did not elaborate on what these strategies meant in terms of leader behaviour. Indeed, the term 'knowledge-leadership' remained dormant in the knowledge related domain with subsequent developments confined to the leadership literature. In view of this, the intersecting point between the knowledge related literature and leadership literature, (point 2 in Figure 2.1 page 11), provides a useful lens through which to explore the 'knowledge leadership' phenomenon. This is the focus of part two of this literature review.

## Part Two

### 2.4 From Knowledge Management to Knowledge Leadership

[2] Basic differences identified include: a tendency for management to concentrate on the day-to-day business issues incorporating a drive towards efficiency; as opposed to leadership's tendency to focus on people issues, effectiveness, vision and change.

Until very recently, there has been a distinct lack of integration between the knowledge management and leadership literatures, with the knowledge management literature remaining virtually silent on the topic of leadership (Dirkx, 1999) and the leadership literature failing to address the role of leaders in 'managing' knowledge (Lakshman, 2005). Viitala (2004) conducted the first study that conceptualised and empirically examined knowledge leadership. In a paper entitled 'Towards knowledge leadership', she sought answers to two specific questions: what are the key elements of the ideal knowledge leadership phenomenon and in what way and in what form does it exist in practice? Using the input of those with top-level expertise in knowledge management,[3] phase one of this study involved producing 'the ideal knowledge leadership model'. The central dimensions of this model are identified in Figure 2.9 below and described in the following paragraphs

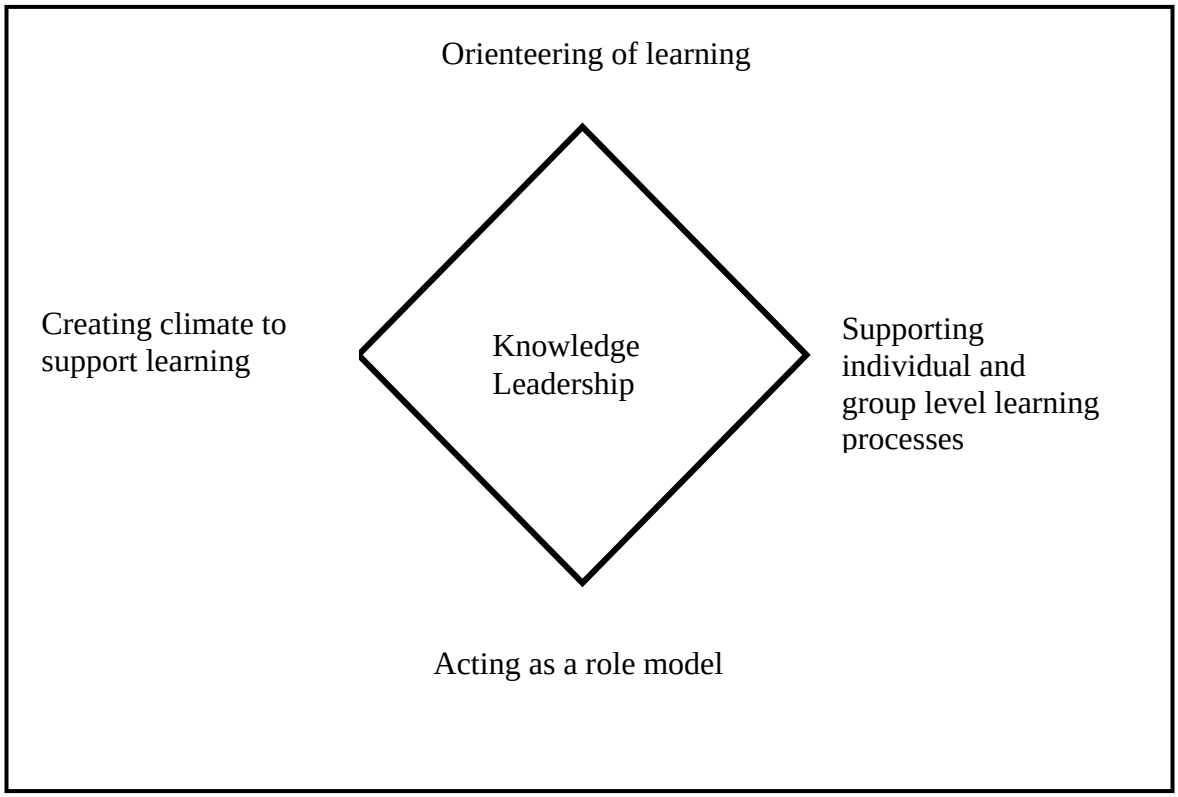



Figure 2.9 The Ideal Knowledge Leadership Model
Source: Viitalia (2004)

Orienteering of learning consists of activities through which leaders show and help

[3] Six of the experts had written a dissertation on the topic and six of them were in charge of knowledge management in their organisation.

others see the direction for learning. An important part of this dimension is the leader's effort to clarify the need for knowledge and capabilities in the future. The description of leaders' activities here closely reflects the kinds of organisational-level matters described in the literature on knowledge management, strategy and management, such as vision, core competencies, tasks, processes, clients' needs and quality. To facilitate these activities, leaders must create forums for discussion and structures and routines that encourage feedback. In other words, it is important that leaders organise the time, place and frames for people to communicate the direction in which knowledge and capabilities should be developed.

Creating a climate that supports learning comprises those activities through which leaders intentionally endeavour to develop the social climate of their unit. This includes reducing anxiousness and fear and developing a culture of trust in the work community. Accordingly, leaders are inclined to deal with mistakes proactively and in a positive way. Issues concerning the leaders themselves are also meaningful in this area, one of which is the leader's own capability and willingness to receive feedback from subordinates.

The third dimension, supporting individual and group level learning processes, comes nearest to the learning process itself. It indicates the active role of leaders as supporters of both group-level and individual-level learning processes. This role of the leader is analogous to that of teacher or coach. Firstly, they analyse, plan and build a portfolio of the competencies needed in their unit. Secondly, they ensure effective individual development. In this dimension leaders support their subordinates by reflecting on their knowledge and capabilities. They also plan together with their subordinates the way in which to develop their proficiencies. Important activities here include instilling the importance of continual learning, monitoring progress and giving positive feedback. All of these tasks are associated with the individual's motivation and perceived ability to learn. In view of this, a key task of the leader is to increase followers' confidence through guidance, support and feedback in evaluating, directing and reflecting upon their learning.

Acting as a role model consists of three expressions of the leader's own attitudes towards their work. Firstly, they lead learning and knowledge development through

their own example. To be credible, leaders themselves have to learn and constantly develop their own capabilities. Additionally leaders' interest and enthusiasm in their work influence subordinates motivation to learn. Finally, it is important that leaders commit themselves and follow through on the changes and developments agreed with subordinates.

In operationalising the ideal model of knowledge leadership, the second phase of Viitalia's research entailed a survey of the subordinates of one hundred and fifty four managers at different levels across thirty-six organisations. In this way each leader was given a profile. Four types of 'knowledge leaders' were identified: 'captains', 'pilots', 'coaches' and 'colleagues'. The boat metaphor was used to describe these leaders, with each leader exhibiting varying levels of the ideal characteristics identified above. The biggest group of leaders was found to demonstrate a good level in orienteering, a tolerable level in climate building, a weak level in supporting learning processes and a good level in their own attitude to work. These were called 'captains' because they ensured the correct direction of the 'boat' and to some degree the working climate of 'the crew'. In addition they provided a good example for their followers. The next largest group demonstrated quite a good level in orienteering and in their own development orientation, but it was weak in terms of climate building and supporting learning processes. They were called 'pilots' as determining the direction of the boat is their main task. The third group was considered closest to real 'coaches' in that they were relatively active in all dimensions. They demonstrated a good level in orienteering learning, a quite good level in climate building and a very good level in their own attitude to work; even in supporting learning processes they were at a tolerable level. The smallest group, who were called 'colleagues', consisted of those who did not respond to the challenges in a leader's role. They demonstrated a weak level in the first three elements and only a tolerable level in their own attitude to work. They were passive in their role as leaders preferring to act in the same way as everyone else.

Overall Viitalia's research revealed that, in reality, the activities of leaders are often far from those represented in the ideal model of knowledge leadership (Viitalia, 2004). In particular, leaders were found to be rather passive in the role of supporters of learning. In assuming the role of supporting learning processes, Viitalia suggested the

nature of leaders' tasks becomes more closely associated with that of a teacher and coach. The principal means for a leader to support learning were considered as fostering communication as well as creating forums and channels through which that communication takes place.

Lakshman (2005, 2007) continued this line of enquiry using a grounded theory approach in investigating the role of the leader in knowledge management. In contrast with Viitalia who focused on micro-level knowledge leadership (leaders at different levels of the organization), he examined the knowledge management activities of chief executives. The research indicated that the leader's role begins with the realisation of the importance of knowledge management to the effective performance of the organisation. This realisation is manifest along two dimensions one internal and the other external. Both internally and externally the leader establishes socio-cognitive and technological routes for managing knowledge within their organisation. The findings in this regard support the two key routes to knowledge management identified by Hansen et al (1999) 'personalisation' (social) and 'codification' (technological). The personalisation approach includes: face-to-face communication through networks, cross-functional teams, committees, task forces, training and development, benchmarking, job rotation and strategic alliances. The codification approach adopts the technological route for knowledge management and includes setting up databases, data warehouses, decision support systems and electronic networks for communicating and sharing knowledge.

The second strand of researchers focused on leadership styles. Politis (2001) studied the relationship between traditional and contemporary styles of leadership and their relationship to effective knowledge management. The results indicated, leadership styles that are characterised by participative behaviour, mutual trust and respect for subordinates' ideas and feelings (such as self-leadership and consideration-behaviour), are positively related to knowledge management by comparison with the leadership style factors that are characterised by task-oriented and autocratic behaviour. Building on the term 'knowledge-enablement' (von Krogh et al, 2000), Politis coined the term 'knowledge-enabled leader' to describe what he called 'a new breed of leadership':

> The knowledge-enabled leader is capable of understanding the strategic

> relationship between knowledge acquisition and the business processes and functions; supporting and facilitating employees to acquire and share knowledge; leading the enterprise's effort to exploit knowledge; and sponsoring and supporting ideas for further use in knowledge strategies for knowledge acquisition (Politis 2001: 8).

In a similar vein, Bryant (2003) examined the role of transformational and transactional leadership styles in converting knowledge into competitive advantage. Knowledge management, he argued, involves three key processes occurring at different organisational levels: 'knowledge creation' (which was considered to occur primarily at the individual level), 'knowledge sharing' (occurring at the group level) and 'knowledge exploitation' (at the organisational level). Their results suggest different leadership roles are more or less effective at different organisational levels. Transformational leadership is more effective at creating and sharing knowledge at the individual and group levels, whereas transactional leadership is more effective at exploiting knowledge at the organisational level. This argument is based on the varying organisational requirements at each level. At the individual level, leaders provide the context in which workers create knowledge and can influence the levels of creativity in the organisation. At the group level, leaders encourage workers to share their ideas by creating a climate that is receptive to new ideas. At the organisational level, leaders assume a transactional role in ensuring the correct structures and systems are in place to convert creative ideas into valuable products or services (Boisot, 1998).

In conclusion, studies on the 'knowledge leadership' phenomenon can be roughly divided into two categories. The first category is concerned with *what* leaders *do* to promote knowledge creation, sharing and exploitation, i.e. leaders' roles and tasks; while the second category is concerned with *how* they approach this role, i.e. leadership styles. While acknowledging the insightful contributions of this work in terms of framing the challenges facing leaders in the 'knowledge economy' (Drucker, 1969); a cursory review of the literature on the role of leaders with respect to organisational learning suggests that the concept of 'knowledge leadership' is neither new nor distinctly different. Indeed many of the traits, behaviours and orientations of the so-called 'knowledge leader' repeat the themes of previous conversations. For instance, Viitalia's 'knowledge leadership roles', *captains, teachers* and *coaches* (Viitalia, 2004) are reminiscent of leaders' roles in learning organisations, for

example: *coaches* (Bartlett and Ghosal 1997; Bowerman and Collins 1999; Conger 1993, Ellinger et al 1999, McGill and Slocum 1998); *facilitators* (Macneill, 2001; Weaver and Farrel 1997), *teachers (*Cohen and Tichy, 1998; Senge 1990); *leaders of learning* (Argyris 1993; Popper and Lipshitz 2000) and *developers* (Boydell and Leary, 1994). The specific tasks associated with so-called knowledge leaders: setting the direction/vision, creating a conducive climate, supporting learning and acting as a role model (Viitalia, 2004); are, again, broadly similar to those activities associated with leading the learning organisation. For instance, in the seminal work of Senge (1990, 2000), the objectives of a leader in a learning organisation were defined as: clarifying mission, vision and values, specifying strategies, structures and politics, creating efficient learning processes and helping subordinates continually develop their mental model and systems thinking. Popper and Lipshitz (2000) provide similar guidelines on the leader's three-fold task: first, putting organisational learning on the agenda as a central issue; second, building the structural foundations needed to turn individual learning into organisational learning; and third, creating cultural and psychological conditions that make the learning effective. The common denominator across both discussions (knowledge leadership and learning-oriented leadership) is the key task of the leader in creating an organisational culture or climate that facilitates and supports continued learning/knowledge creation, sharing and exploitation.

Regarding the leadership styles most appropriate to 'knowledge leadership', (the other half of the knowledge leadership discussion), the 'knowledge-enabled leader' was seen to incorporate aspects of transformational leadership, consideration-behaviour and self-leadership. In supporting and facilitating employees in acquiring and sharing their knowledge, the knowledge-enabled leader's style is largely characterised by participative behaviour and mutual trust and respect for subordinates' ideas and feelings (Politis, 2001). Again the discussion repeats the themes of classical leadership theories that emphasise people-oriented over task-oriented behaviours (Blake and Mouton, 1964; Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1958).

In light of these observations, the assertion of Politis (2001), that the 'the knowledge-enabled leader' is 'a new breed of leadership' (Politis, 2001: 8), may be seen to overstate the case. At most, the concept might be viewed as a natural offshoot of parallel developments in both the knowledge related and leadership literature. From

a leadership perspective, over the past two decades, a significant shift has occurred in the language used to describe leadership activities. The image of the organisation as a machine, or a black box that transforms inputs into outputs, with leaders at the apex directing and controlling the process is no longer relevant. In its stead is an image of the organisation as a living, dynamic system of interconnected relationships and networks of influence (Brown and Duguid, 2000; Senge, 1990). In isolating the pressures that have encouraged this turn-around, Pearce (2004) and Pearce and Manz (2005) speak of a more competitive and global environment in which "it is becoming more and more difficult for any one leader to have all of the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to lead all aspects of knowledge work" (Pearce and Manz, 2005: 132). Acknowledging that organisational effectiveness depends on a network of interdependencies rather than on individual leaders (Heifitz and Laurie, 1999; Senge and Kaeufer, 2001) encouraged the emergence of a new era of leadership that assumed a 'post-heroic', as opposed to an individualistic or heroic label (Eicher, 1997; Fletcher, 2003; Huey, 1994).

In essence, post-heroic leadership rejects what it sees as 'the myth of the heroic leader'; the idea that the source of all wisdom and power is a larger than life, all-knowing, charismatic, transformational leader (Badaracco, 2001); in favour of less top-heavy omniscient approaches. In this sense, leadership is perceived as a set of shared practices that can and should be enacted by people at all levels, rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in someone at the top (Pearce and Sims, 2000). A host of 'new' leadership styles have emerged under the post-heroic umbrella, for example, self-leadership (Pearce, 2004; Pearce and Manz, 2005), shared leadership (Fletcher and Kayer, 2003), servant leadership (Boje and Dennehy, 1999; Greenleaf, 2003) and distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002).

At their core the aforementioned leadership types share some common characteristics: First, they question the very concept of an autonomous self and individual achievement; the leader is but the tip of the iceberg, compromising as he/she does, of a vast network of collaboration and support which enables their individual achievement. Second, they challenge static, command-and-control images of leadership. Leadership is envisioned as a collaborative social process that relies on egalitarian and less hierarchical interactions between leaders and their followers

(Aaltio-Majosoal, 2001; Harrington, 2000). Third and last, post-heroic models challenge the goal of effective leadership and the skills it requires (Fletcher, 2003). It is no longer assumed that leaders will have all the answers or solutions, or the charisma to get others to implement them, instead, leaders are expected to create conditions under which collective learning and continuous improvement can occur (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Marsick and Watkins, 1999; Senge, 1990). According to Pless and Maak (2005), achieving these knowledge-based outcomes depends, not so much on technical expertise but on 'relational intelligence' which is defined as that combination of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 1998) and ethical intelligence (Wickham and O'Donohue, 2012), that involves the ability to be aware of, and understand, one's own and others' emotions, values, interests and demands; to discriminate among them, to critically reflect on them and to use this knowledge to guide one's actions and behaviours with respect to people. Employing relational intelligence is seen as the route to 'responsible leadership' (Maak and Pless, 2006).

While the above discussion indicates how the concept of 'knowledge leadership' (Viitalia, 2004), or 'the knowledge-enabled leader' (Politis, 2001), is a natural outgrowth of recent developments in the leadership literature, the earlier review of the knowledge-related literature indicates that the concept similarly reflects the decentered, distributed and emergent nature of knowledge as recognised by Tsoukas, (1996), wherein no single person has all of the knowledge that a firm requires.

Although the concept of 'knowledge leadership' (Viitalia, 2004), and that of the 'knowledge enabled leader' (Politis, 2001), may not be radically different from prior discussions with respect to the role of the leader in the 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1990); viewed in the context of the aforementioned developments, (the recent emphasis on post-heroic leadership approaches (Eicher, 1997; Fletcher, 2004; Huey, 1994) and the distributed, decentered nature of organisations and their knowledge), the repercussions for individual leaders, on a number of fronts, are quite considerable. Adapting the claims of Fletcher (2002, 2003) with respect to 'post-heroic approaches,' these effects can be identified in terms of three aspects of leadership: the *who*, the *what* and the *how*. In summary, 'knowledge leadership' re-envisions the *who* of leadership by challenging the primacy of individual achievement, the *what* of leadership by focusing on collective knowing and mutual influence, and the *how* of leadership by

noting the more egalitarian skills and relational intelligence needed to practice it. Given the fundamental nature of these changes in terms of what and how leaders' themselves know, it is surprising, that for the most part, references to the leaders own knowledge (with the exception of some cursory references in Viitalia's 2004 framework) are notably absent. As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, viewing knowledge management from the perspective of the individual leader necessitates an appreciation of the 'personal' at the intersecting core of the three parent literatures; knowledge, learning and leadership (see Figure 2.1 the original territory map in the introduction to this chapter). The precise matter of what those issues entail is the subject of this next section.

## 2.5 From Knowledge Leadership to Leader's Personal Knowledge

As previously indicated, the knowledge management literature has remained relatively silent on the topic of leadership, with the exception being the contribution of Skyrme (2000). As discussed in section 2.4 above, although it originated in the field of knowledge management, the term 'knowledge leadership' remained nascent there, with further developments attributable solely to the leadership literature. In addition, until very recently, the knowledge management literature has been particularly reticent to extend its concerns beyond 'the corporate', to engage with the individual or personal (Pauleen and Gorman, 2011). Taking both of these factors into account, it is not surprising that the knowledge management literature lacks empirical research into the content and process of leader's personal knowledge/knowing. Existing contributions are conceptual, typically presenting typologies of 'management knowledge', where 'management' is considered as an activity as opposed to an occupation or hierarchical level that encapsulates three dimensions: the art of meeting objectives through others; systematic or rational planning and control; and a messy, sometimes reactive, political, emotional and frenetic mix of activities (Hales, 1986; Mintzberg, 1973, 1975; Stewart, 1982; Watson, 2001). The literature's conceptualisation of the nature of 'management knowledge' and how this knowledge is acquired is reviewed in section 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 below.

### 2.5.1 'Management Knowledge' and How it is Acquired

In line with the diverse nature of management activity, Spender (1994) emphasised the multi-faceted nature of managerial knowledge. He suggested, that in general, 'competent' managers must have four types of knowledge' (Spender, 1994: 393): scientific or objective knowledge about the physical world in which they operate; social knowledge about the social, economic, and cultural context in which their firms' activities are embedded; local knowledge about the particular people and processes embraced by their managerial activities; and self-knowledge about their own personal history, attitudes and motives. Spender stresses the overlapping nature of these types of knowledge; they are not, he suggests, completely divorced from each other: the differences between them reflects an attempt to categorise knowledge that would otherwise appear to be seamless, 'endlessly interacting and embracing every aspect of human thought' (Spender, 1993: 394).

Avalrez (1998) similarly set out a number of forms of 'management knowledge', which roughly corresponded to Blackler's classification (Blackler, 1995), discussed in section 2.2.1.2 above. First there is technical or instrumental knowledge such as specific marketing techniques (embrained and encoded knowledge). Secondly, there are habits and a sense of intuition, such as that employed in routine decision-making (embodied knowledge). Thirdly, there is an understanding of what is acceptable, both formally in terms of professional behaviour and informally with respect to who is in or out of favour. Alvarez argues that all types of knowledge are embedded in local settings (encultured knowledge). The value attributed to this typology is the manner in which it combines both tacit and explicit forms of knowledge, rather than a specific focus on explicit management knowledge or management ideas.

Expanding on his (1994) typology, Spender suggested that each knowledge type required a different kind of managerial activity. The application of scientific knowledge requires the manager to select an abstract theory judged appropriate to the situation. It also requires the manager to 'bridge back to action'; in other words, to implement the chosen theory. Thus scientific knowledge is inherently static because it is decontextualised from both time and context. On the other hand, the organisation's embeddedness requires the manager to negotiate with social agents and power holders who make up the organisation's environment, whether they are the government, customers or other stakeholders. The knowledge that can be obtained

about this environment is embedded, dynamic and necessarily incomplete. It is descriptive rather than predictive and calls for continuous involvement as the manager protects his/her personal and organisational position against these agents. This knowledge cannot be separated from the process of implementation; it is as much about implementation as about explanation. Local knowledge is similarly embedded and dynamic, but it is also inter-subjective in that it synthesises the different interests of those who have subordinated themselves to the manager as they become involved in this activity, and the different types of knowledge which these actors bring to it. Again this knowledge deals with realities beyond the manager's immediate control. Thus it is embedded in action, requiring continuous negotiation with those involved and a continuing awareness of the interplay of events, practice and others' personalities. Finally, self-knowledge requires the manager to develop insight into the interaction between events, impressions, attitudes and motivations. Far from requiring implementation or attachment to action, the manager's struggle is to achieve some measure of objectivity in understanding his/her impression of events; to discipline emotion enough to allow some degree of detachment as well as the application of cool reasoning.

Fulop et al's (2009) account of the common activities encountered in everyday work situations that can contribute to building a manager's knowledge (Exhibit 2.1 below) reinforces some of Spender's categories; with scientific knowledge loosely corresponding to 'soft' academic theories or mid-range theories and social and local knowledge acquired through workplace talk and local accounts of practice. According to Fulop et al, these sources are not discrete, rather they interact with each other: building, enriching or limiting how managers see and react to the daily challenges of managing.

**Five Activities that Build Management Knowledge**

1. **Workplace talk, practice and local accounts of practice** – much of managing involves talking to people to get tasks done: much informal learning about management occurs during these 'first-order' conversations; other learning can occur through stories about work that has been done.
2. **Reading popular accounts** – published, electronically transmitted or publicly recounted (for example, at management seminars) experience-based accounts of management stories or sagas with 'lessons for other managers to benefit from.
3. **Reading the fads and fashion approaches or theories** – the bestsellers, management magazines and workshops, dominated by recipes or prescriptions for management action derived from a variety of approaches.
4. **Studying 'soft' academic theory or middle-range theories** – textbooks that attempt to link theory and practice, less emphasis on prescription than popular theory and makes more use of concepts.
5. **Deciphering 'hard' academic theory** – emphasis on explanation, understanding and theorising aspects of work, technology, personality, society and so on. Analytically demanding and methodologically rigorous with little focus on directly applying knowledge to the day-to-day practice of the manager. Managers are left to take the initiative to extract what they see as important and relevant to them. Most scholarly journals fit into this category.

Exhibit 2.1 Five Activities that Build Management Knowledge
Source: Fulop, Maréchal and Rifkin in Linstead et al (2009)

Fulop et al's commentary on the above sources emphasises the critical role played by workplace talk, practice and local accounts of practice in organisations. The term 'commonsense knowledge,' is used to encapsulate the knowledge derived from these sources; defined as that which is 'taken-for granted, assumed and unquestioned, accepted as commonly known or left implicit; what remains unconsciously known,

almost as a rule of thumb (Fulop et al, 2009: 38). While Fulop et al do not provide empirical support for these, as sources of managerial know-how; they are broadly supported and expanded upon by a host of studies that concern 'work-related learning' (Doornbos et al, 2004; Raelin, 1997; 2008). The term 'work-related learning' acknowledges the contested nature of the terminology in this area, where various terms are used to describe the field such as: 'workplace learning', 'learning at work', 'learning on-the-job' (versus learning off-the job), 'incidental' and 'informal' or 'non-formal' learning and 'implicit' versus 'explicit' learning (Candy 1991; De Jong, 1991; Eraut, 2000; Marsick, 1988; Marsick and Watkins, 1990). The quest to develop a clearer understanding of this area was addressed by Sambrook (2005) who distinguished between 'learning in work', 'learning at work' and 'learning outside of work'. She suggests that 'learning at work' is concerned with the existence of planned training and education and in this respect may be associated with the concept of workplace learning, while in contrast, 'learning in work' is focused on informal, incidental learning processes, and 'learning outside work' is concerned with learning outside the boundaries of the work setting (Jacobs and Park, 2009). Eraut et al (2005) and Eraut (2007) make a similar distinction based on the intentionality of different processes, whether the principal object of each process was working or learning. Processes in the left column of Table 2.4 below were judged to be working processes, of which learning was a by-product, (similar to the 'learning in work' classification above), while those in the right-hand column are clearly recognisable as learning processes (at or near the workplace) that are similar to Sambrook's 'learning at work' category (Sambrook, 2005). The nine learning activities in the central column are embedded within most of the work processes and learning processes. While these sources are drawn from empirical studies of mid-career workers, they are broadly supported by other studies into executive or managerial learning in the workplace (Richter, 1998; Sherlock and Nathan, 2008).

| **Work Processes** | **Learning Activities** | **Learning Processes** |
|---|---|---|
| Participation in group processes<br>Working alongside others<br>Consultation<br>Tackling challenging tasks and roles<br>Problem solving<br>Trying things out | Asking questions<br>Getting information<br>Locating resource people<br>Listening and observing<br>Reflecting<br>Learning from mistakes<br>Giving and receiving feedback | Being supervised<br>Being coached<br>Being mentored<br>Shadowing<br>Visiting other sites<br>Conferences<br>Short courses<br>Working for a qualification |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Consolidating, extending and refining skills<br>Working with clients | Use of mediating artifacts | Independent study |

Table 2.4 Sources of Work-Related Learning
Source: Eraut and Hirsch, 2007

Fenwick (2008) brought additional clarity to this domain. Dropping the 'learning outside work' category, she distinguished between 'learning at work' (workplace learning), which she saw as learning that is bounded within, or limited to the confines of the workplace and 'learning in work.' The latter, she suggested, is spatially and temporally fluid, involving formal and informal interventions that are practice-based, participative and embedded in action. In this respect, her contribution is closest to the practice-based perspective view on knowing.

### 2.5.2 'Leadership Knowledge' and How it is Acquired

As section 2.5.1 indicates, while the knowledge related literature *per se* displays a dearth of empirical research into 'management knowledge', with existing developments occurring in the mainstream management and 'work-related learning' literature; the leadership literature appears much less reticent on the subject of 'leadership knowledge', the knowledge required to be an 'effective' leader. McCauley (1986) identified three categories of leadership knowledge: personal skills, such as listening and self-insight; technical skills and business or organisational skills. Lindsay, Holmes and McCall (1987) elaborated on what 'leadership knowledge' comprises in detailing the five key demands of leadership in terms of the roles they are expected to perform and the processes they are expected to engage in. These entailed: setting and communicating the organisation's direction, aligning critical constituencies and handling interpersonal relations; developing an executive temperament to cope with the pressures, ambiguity, complexity and frustrations of a leadership role; setting and living values through conveying and re-inforcing what the organisation stands for and what the leader believes in; and developing personal awareness and growth through taking the necessary actions to insure that one's self and one's people continue to learn, grow and change.

Studies into how this knowledge is acquired were first conducted during the growth

of formal leadership development[4] programmes throughout the 1980's and 1990's (Kempster, 2002). The collective findings have been broadly consistent across organisations (for example, Douglas, 2003; McCall and Hollenbeck 2002; McCall Lombardo and Morrision, 1988) and within organisations (for example, Valerio, 1990; Yost and Plunkett, 2005; Yost, et al 2001) with experience, (as opposed to formal training/education) identified as *the* primary source of leadership development; much learning is informal and/or incidental or accidental learning in action (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983; Davis and Easterby-Smith; 1984; Ferry & Ross-Gordon, 1998; Marsick, 1988; Marsick and Watkins, 1990; McCall, 1988, McCauley et al 1988). This assertion is supported by all of the major learning theories, which explicitly or implicitly place experience at the centre of the learning process (Dewey, 1938; Kolb 1984, Kolb et al, 1979; Mezirow, 1991, 1994; Piaget, 1974; Schön, 1983). The role of reflection in the learning process (earlier identified as a learning activity in Table 2.4 above) must be recognised here. Experience alone does not teach; learning only happens when there is reflective thought and internal processing of that experience by the learner in a way that actively makes sense of the experience, links the experience to previous understanding, and transforms the learner's previous experience in some way. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984; Kolb et al 1979), depicted in Figure 2.10 below, illustrates this process. The cycle starts with an experience [1] that is reflected upon [2] This reflection helps form an explanation of what has happened and possible rules for action in similar situations [3] The learner then tests out those experiences to see if they work and, if so, the learning is then consolidated [4] If they do not work then the learning starts again with a new experience [1].

[4] McCauley et al (2010) define leadership development as the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes, with leadership roles and processes being those that facilitate: setting direction, creating alignment and maintaining commitment in groups of people who share common work.

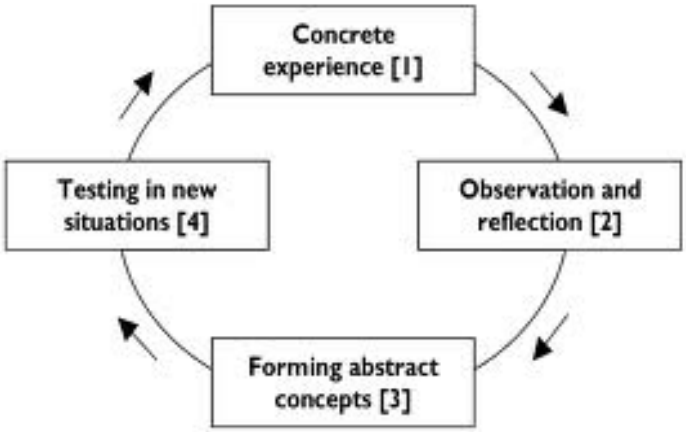



Figure 2.10 Kolb's Learning Cycle
Source Kolb (1984)

Across the aforementioned studies, certain experiences were considered to make a greater contribution to the leader's development than others. The types of experiences that were considered to afford greater learning are listed in Exhibit 2.2 below, and elaborated upon in the sub-sections that follow.

**Experiences that Develop 'Leadership Knowledge'**

1. **Formative life experiences and early work experiences**
2. **New and challenging experiences** – new jobs, new projects or new tasks
3. **Interaction with notable others** – almost always very good or very bad bosses or superiors
4. **Professional hardships –** missed promotions, demotions, job losses or business failure
5. **Training programmes and formal education**

Exhibit 2.2 Experiences that Develop 'Leadership Knowledge'
Source Author: adapted from McCall (2009), Kempster (2006)

#### 2.5.2.1 Learning from Formative Experiences

A number of research studies have examined the formative effects of life experiences on leaders' learning and while judgement on what constitutes a formative life experience is largely subjective (Avolio and Gibbons, 1998), as is the meaning and value attributed to them (Shamir and Eliam, 2005), they are generally categorised

according to the nature and value of the experience. In this vein, many formative experiences are considered traumatic. For example, Bennis and Thomas (2002) labeled the experiences that shape leaders' development as 'leadership crucibles,' describing them as unplanned, intense and transformative experiences through which these individuals came to a new sense of identity. In terms of their transformational nature, such experiences were viewed as tests that involved deep self-reflection, forcing these leaders to question who they were, the values that mattered to them and the rationale underlying their actions. Not all formative experiences were considered negative however, Avolio and Luthans (2006) speak of 'positive trigger events' or 'moments' that could, on occurrence, appear negligible, but when viewed in retrospect bring to the surface important insights. Prominent in this category is the role of a positive role model in one's formative years, such as family members, early educators, or challenging bosses, colleagues or mentors (Gardner et al., 2005). A summary of the types of formative experiences consistently identified across a range of studies is presented in Exhibit 2.3 below.

**Types of Formative Leadership Experiences**

| | |
|---|---|
| A Natural Process | Leadership is thrust upon one, often for reasons one was unsure of (for example, an individual naturally takes charge as a child in situations of uncertainty). |
| Coping and Struggle | Dealing with adversity (for example, a difficult boss). |
| Self-improvement | Striving to challenge one-self (for example, taking time out for mid-life academic study). |
| Alignment with a cause | Leadership is inspired by serving the needs of a particular cause |
| Relationships with Real/ Symbolic Parents | Parents or those perceived as parents create a lasting influence |
| Role models | One or more role models was prominent in the formative experience described (e.g. subject was developed through admired leaders. |

Exhibit 2.3
Source Author: Adapted from Janson (2008)

### 2.5.2.2 Learning from New Situations or New Experiences

According to Mumford (1980), when asked to talk about the events or processes from which they learn, leaders will often highlight new situations or new experiences; sometimes a new job, sometimes a new task added to their existing job. Later studies confirmed this assertion. For example, Nicholson and West (1998) suggested that work transitions or a change in a work role offer a positive opportunity to learn because the manager is exposed to a new situation which may require novel behaviours and different methods of dealing with problems. Several researchers similarly emphasise the importance of 'developmental challenges' or 'stretch assignments' which in moving the leader beyond existing skills and knowledge, require them to learn (Lindsey, Holmes and McCall, 1987). Other studies have sought to identify the particular characteristics of work experiences that provide these challenges. For example, McCauley et al (1994) and McCauley, Ohlott and Ruderman (1999), suggest that the more challenging the project assignment in terms of encompassing the unexpected, the higher the stakes, the greater the complexity, pressure and novelty involved, the more powerful the learning experience provided. In a similar manner, Ohlott (2004) suggested that challenging developmental experiences entailed at least five characteristics: high levels of responsibility, unfamiliar or novel responsibilities, working across boundaries, managing diversity and creating and faciltating change.

#### 2.5.2.3 Learning from Others: Vicarious or Observational Learning

A number of studies recognised the importance of 'others' in contributing to managers' or leaders' learning (Garrat, 1987; Kotter, 1990). McCauley and Douglas (2004) used the term 'agents' to describe a range of individuals that help leaders to learn. These included: peers, mentors, bosses or supervisors, networks, professional groups, clients and customers (McCauley and Douglas, 2004). The term 'notable people', first introduced by McCall et al (1988), was later adopted by Kempster (2007) in identifying the prominance and significance of other people in how leaders learned to lead in different contexts. Of significance here, was the prominent influence of 'notables' from formative contexts such as birth-family and early education as discussed in Section 2.5.2.1 above. In contrast with their male counterparts, whose notable influences were limited to the organisational context Kempster's female leaders reported an extensive sphere of influence that included, formative family, educational influences and friends.

While much learning in the context of others was through active experience or engagement, some individuals preferred to learn vicariously by observing and copying others (Bandura 1977). Manz and Sims (1981) highlighted three learning effects that flow from observation: managers may learn new behaviours, they may be inhibited from engaging in certain behaviours, or certain behaviours may be facilitated through observation. The value of observation was seen to depend upon the credibility of the role model, the success or failure of the model, the vividness and detail of the behaviour that the model displayed and the degree to which the manager percieved the model to be similar to themselves. The observation of notable others was also considered central to the process of identity development (Ibarra, 1999) and self-concept (Janson, 2008).

The role of narration in learning from vicarious experience has also been highlighted in the literature, in the sense that people were found to learn from others' narrative accounts of their experience in the form of stories (Denning, 2005; Ready, 2002; Sparrowe, 2005) that may be factual or fictional (Barry and Elmes, 1997).

#### 2.5.2.4 Learning from Professional Hardships

While the role of traumatic formative experiences has been discussed in Section 2.5.3.1 above, the role of professional hardships such as business failure, loss of one's job, or demotion (Lindsay, Holmes and McCall, 1987) was also considered influential. Indeed, for some researchers, failure was deemed to be of greater value in the developmental process (Smith and Morphey, 1994).

## 2.6 An Overview of the Literature Reviewed

Figure 2.11 below provides an overview of the literature reviewed in this chapter. This overview is best understood in conjunction with a re-iteration of the original and revised research purpose. The original purpose of this research was to conduct exploratory research into the lived experience of individual leaders with respect to the content of their personal knowledge and the associated process of knowing it. With this purpose in mind, the author first examined how knowledge was conceptualised in the literature. This was undertaken from two perspectives: an objectivist perspective

and a practice-based perspective, as indicated on the left-hand side of the framework below. As earlier illustrated through Figures 2.4 and 2.6 respectively, the objectivist perspective, raised fundamental questions with respect to: what is knowledge? how is the phenomenon of knowledge framed? and what knowledge is legitimised or prioritised? These questions were used to frame the first first research question. This, as previously outlined within the body of the literature review, reads as follows:

Q1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?

Q1a How do they perceive knowledge?

Q1b What knowledge do they prioritise?

Through its concern with questions such as: when, how and where does knowing occur?, the manner in which it frames knowing as a social process, and its legitimisation of contradictions, uncertainties and knowledge absences; the practice-based perspective, in turn, brought forth the second and third research questions. Previously stated within the main body of the literature, these are as follows:

Q2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

Q3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'?

As stated in Chapter One, an unintentional break in the PhD process provided an opportunity to convert this research into a longitudinal study. Consequently the research took on a revised purpose: to explore how the content of leader's knowledge and the associated process of knowing/not knowing changes overtime; and to uncover what contextual factors appeared to account for these changes. With this purpose in mind, research questions four and five emerged. As these have not been previously presented in the literature review, they are provided additional emphasis here.

Research Question Four

How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of leader's knowing/not knowing evolve?

Research Question Five

What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?

The rationale for the literature reviewed on the right-hand side of Figure 2.11 stems from the unit of analysis in this study, the individual leader. As illustrated through this literature review, discussion of knowledge leadership is largely confined to the leadership literature; with just one aspect of the phenomenon attended to, the role of the leader with respect to others' knowledge. Taking an individual view of leader's knowing necessitates an appreciation of the 'personal' at the intersecting core of the three parent literatures; knowledge, learning and leadership, as presented in Figure 2.1 above. That is where this literature review concludes, as is indicated by the final two elements on the extreme right of Figure 2.11 below.

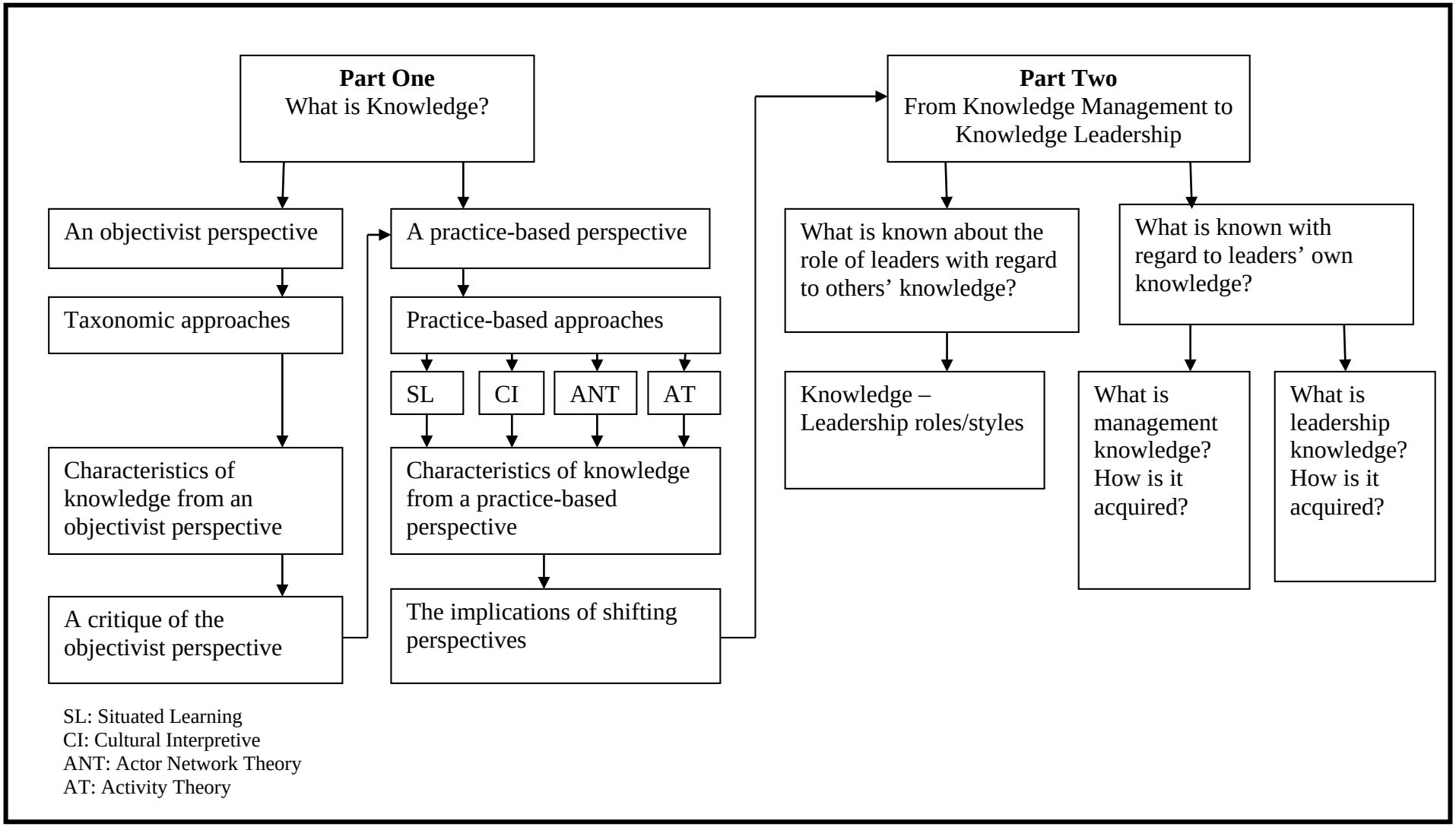



Figure 2.11 An Overview of the Literature Reviewed

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the critical importance of the leader in the knowledge management process has only been partially addressed in the literature, outwardly focusing on the leader's role in developing others' knowledge, yet lacking a corresponding focus on the leader's own knowledge. To some extent, this is symptomatic of the downgrading of the personal in favour of the corporate that is a feature of the knowledge management literature in general. Exploring the nature and content of leaders' personal knowledge requires taking an individualised approach to the questions that have emerged from the way knowledge has been portrayed in the traditional and contemporary literature (See Figures 2.4 and 2.6 above). Such questions are concerned with how leaders perceive knowledge, what types of knowledge they prioritize and when, how and where (in what context) does knowing/not-knowing occur. While the knowledge related literature makes some attempt to conceptualise the types of knowledge that managers need and the sources of such knowledge, in the absence of any empirical work, our perceptions may be rather different than the reality, and the resulting implications in terms of leadership development rather erroneous. While the leadership literature provides empirical evidence of how leaders learn to be effective leaders, it does so in isolation from the knowledge related literature. In operating at the intersection of three literature bases, knowledge, leadership and learning, this thesis seeks to fill this gap. In the next chapter, chapter three, the methodological approaches used to address these questions are documented, while the empirical findings are presented in chapters four (case-by-case analysis) and chapter five (cross-case analysis), respectively.

# CHAPTER THREE
# THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

# 3 METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

## 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe and justify the interrelated choices that have influenced the approach to and design of this research. The chapter is organised as follows. To initiate the discussion, it is first necessary to characterise the nature/purpose of the study in order to determine the philosophical approach most appropriate for the given piece of research. Section 3.2 begins with a statement of the purpose of the research and outlines the specific research questions. Drawing on the framework of Creswell (2003) the remainder of the chapter addresses three central issues:

1. The knowledge claims being made by the researcher.
2. The strategies of inquiry that will inform the procedures.
3. The methods of data collection and analysis that will be used.

Stating a knowledge claim means that the researcher starts a research project with certain assumptions about how they will learn and what they will learn during their research journey (Creswell, 2003). Such claims have been called paradigms (Lincoln and Guba, 1995), or worldviews representing an individual's value judgements, norms, standards, frames of reference, perspectives, ideologies, myths, theories; anything that governs their thinking and action (Gummesson, 2000). Paradigms are a fundamental starting point to guide research inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The philosophical stance guides the conceptualisation, impacts on the perspective and research approach in addition to the means through which data is collected and analysed. As a consequence, in the social sciences there is a long-standing debate about the most appropriate philosophical position from which research methods should be derived. Two major perspectives have dominated this discussion: one positivism, the other phenomenology. These are introduced in section 3.3 Each paradigm makes 'ontological' claims about what knowledge is, 'epistemological' claims about how we know it, and methodological claims about the processes for studying it (Creswell, 1994). Table 3.1 provides an overview of the two paradigms along these dimensions. The distinctions between the two paradigms are debated at a philosophical level in relation to the current research in section 3.3.2

From philosophy stems methodology. Operating at a more applied level, section 3.4 outlines the strategy of inquiry, (Creswell, 1998) or research methodology (Mertens,

1998), that provides specific directions for the research design. Arguments are initailly presented as to why qualitative methods must play a central role in leadership research. The focus then shifts to the role of qualitative research in meeting the purpose and research questions of this study. The design of the research process in terms of data collection and analysis is described in section 3.5 In section 3.6 philsophical and methodological conclusions are drawn

## 3.2 The Research Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose statement is the central, controlling idea in any study (Castetter and Heisler 1977, Wilkinson 1991). As outlined in the introduction, chapter one, the original purpose of this study was to conduct exploratory research into the lived experience of individual leaders[5] with respect to the content of their personal knowledge and the associated process of knowing it. This purpose was been refined into the following research questions:

Q1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?

Q1a How do they perceive knowledge?

Q1b What knowledge do they prioritise?

Q2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

Q3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'?

As will be explained in greater detail in Section 3.5.3 below, an unintentional and extended break in the PhD process presented the opportunity to use the original empirical data as a basis for a longitudinal study. With this in mind, two further research questions were added:

Q4 How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of leader's knowing/not knowing evolve?

Q5 What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?

## 3.3 The Philosophical Considerations/Alternative Knowledge Claims

[5] As indicated in Chapter 1, this study defines a leader as someone who has authority and influence over followers and the ability to introduce change within their organisation.

The epistemological roots of positivism can be traced to the social theorists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1853) was an early and influential proponent of this view. His assertion, that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts, illustrates the two fundamental tenets of a positivisitic approach. These are: firstly, that reality is external and objective and secondly, that knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observations of this external reality. The implications that follow describe a research approach which seeks to "explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 21) "as opposed to subjective inference through sensation, reflection or intuition" (Easterby Smith et al., 1991: 22).

The basic tenets of phenomenology are virtually the reverse of those that characterise positivism. Phenomenolgical research views the world and 'reality' as being socially constructed and given meaning by people (Husserl, 1965). In other words reality is actively created through social interaction. Phenomenology is about understanding and interpreting the meaning of peoples' actions, rather than trying to identify some external cause that explains their behaviour. As Boland and Day (1989) indicate, phenomenological studies mark an extreme destination from positivism

> Traditional method would like to stand apart from the social process and capture it with a clear picture from the outside. A phenomological hermeneutic study, in contrast, is not trying to step outside the social process but is instead trying to step inside of it and reveal meaningful structures at work that are only masked or distorted by a search for an exernal set of social laws (Boland and Day, 1989: 92)

Many different variants are associated more or less closely with phenomenology. These include interpretive sociology (Habermas, 1970), naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), social constructionism (Berger and Luckman, 1966), qualitiative methodology (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) and 'new paradigm enquiry' (Reason and Rowan, 1981). Each of these takes a slightly different stance on the application of phenomenology and in the features of positivism it finds most distasteful. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the two paradigms along three dimensions, ontological (the nature of reality) epistemological (the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known) and

methodological (the practice or process of doing research). These aspects are expanded upon and applied to the current research in section 3.3.2

| Assumption | Question | Positivist | Phenomenological |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ontology | What is the nature of reality? | Stable, external reality | Internal Reality<br>Reality is subjective |
| Epistemology | Grounds of research<br><br>What is the relationship between reality and the research?<br>What is the relationship between the researcher and the research? | Detached Observer<br><br>Possible to obtain hard secure objective knowledge<br><br>Goverened by hypothesis and stated theories | Empathic engagement<br>Understood through 'perceived knowledge'<br><br>Seeking to understand a specific context |
| Methodology | What is the process of research? | Context Free<br><br>Concentrates on description and explanation<br><br>Distinguishes between science and personal experience<br><br>Experimental<br><br>Primarily Quantitative<br>Seeks to maintain a clear distinction between facts and judgements | Context Bound<br><br>Concentrates on understanding and interpretation<br>Accepts influence from both science and personal experience<br><br>Interactional<br><br>Primarily Qualitative<br>Distinction between facts and value-judgements less clear |

Table 3.1 An Overview of the Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms
Source: Author

### 3.3.1 Positioning The Current Research

Easterby-Smith et al (1997) identify three reasons why the philosopical choice between positivism and phenomenology is a signficant issue for all researchers.

1. It assist the researcher in refining and specifiying the research methods to be utilitsed.
2. It enables the researcher to evaluate different methodologies and avoids inappropriate and unecessary work by identifying the limitiations of particular approaches at an early stage.
3. It encourages the researcher to be creative and innovative in either selection or adaptation of methods that were previously outside of his/her experience.

The preference is greatly dependent on the researcher's own philosophy and the proposition or misson in hand. In light of this, the discussion that follows examines the ontological and epistemological assumptions and the methodogical considerations underlying this study.

### 3.3.2 The Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

In terms of ontology, positivists generally assume that reality is objectively given; relying on the ontological assumption that we live in a material, objective world, an ordered universe made up of discrete and observed events. For phenomenologists, reality is subjective and the world is observed through the eyes of individuals: people create and attach their own meaning to the world around them and to the behaviour they manifest in that world (Schutz, 1962). As a consequence, the phenomenologist understands that the world is not composed of a single objective reality, but rather is composed of a series of multiple realities, all of which must be understood and taken into account (Remenyi, 1996).

In terms of epistemology, positivists emphasise the role of the detached observer. Nagel (1985) highlights this point: For positivist epistemology, "the researcher must be indifferent, disinterested, neutral and impartial, eliminating all subjective elements through the suspension of preferences and personal experiences" (Nagel, 1985: 42). Positivist studies usually attempt to test theory, in an attempt to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena. This involves precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover probablistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity (Neuman, 1997: 63). As phenomenlogists assume that reality is subjective and socially constructed, the task of the researcher is not to gather facts and measure how often certain events occur, but to *appreciate* the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience. This involves attempting to understand and interpret why people have different experiences, rather than any search for external causes and fundamental laws to explain their behaviour.

The ontological and epistemological position of this research is situated within the phenomenological paradigm. This claim is reflected in the earlier review and critique of the knowledge related literatures. Here, two perspectives on knowledge were examined. The objectivist perspective assumed a positivistic stance; knowledge was seen as an

objective, transferable commodity or resource. The practice-based perspective assumed a phenomenological stance; knowledge was seen as subjective, tacit and socially constructed, embedded in human activity or practice and embodied in people. In short, knowledge was percieved as inseparable from the actual process of knowing. This research ascribes to the latter position. From an ontological point of view, it is the researcher's belief that, given their unique contexts, each leader's reality is subjective, affected by events and relationships in varying ways and to different degrees. In essence, each leader has a unique understanding of what knowledge is and what they need to know. This necessitates the examination of each research subject on a case by case basis. To dehumanise the leaders in this study through traditional positivist approaches would in the eyes of the researcher generate 'thin' as opposed to 'thick' (Geertz, 1973) results.

From an epistemological point of view this research leans heavily on 'social learning theory', the belief that knowing and learning does not occur in a vacuum but is socially constructed. This necessitates a research approach that minimises the distance between the researcher and the researched. Postivist epistemology with its emphasis on the detached observer is therefore rejected. Understanding knowing as a social process involves the researcher getting inside each leader's world to capture, understand and attempt to vocalise their individual, subjective, tacit insight and experience. To convert the process of knowing into testable 'atoms' would be to reject the advances that have been made in the knowledge related literature in the past decade and to return to a commodified notion of knowledge as an objective, measurable resource. In the next section the arguments in favour of a phenomenlogical approach will be continued and supported through an examination of the strategies of inquiry or methodological choices.

## 3.4 The Methodological Considerations

As previously alluded to, in conducting any piece of research an immense number of choices must be made. Amongst these is the choice between a quantitative orientation, a qualitative orientation, or a combination of these two. This choice is determined by a variety of factors chief amongst which are: The overall purpose of the research, the research question(s) and the suitability of the selected methodology in addressing these. This section discusses these issues in relation to the current study. In doing so it justifies the overall methodological approach and provides specific direction for the research design (see Section 3.5).

A cursory review of the purpose statement and the associated research questions as outlined in section 3.2 indicates the phenomenological, exploratory nature of this research. The aim of the research is not to test out a theory in order to increase the predictive understanding of particular phenomena, nor is it governed by any particular hypothesis which would indicate an emphasis on deduction in methodological considerations. Rather, this research is interpretive: placing greater emphasis on gaining an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences based on the assumption that the views garnered will be context and time specific. Through the power of the interpretive paradigm, this study seeks to provide new perspectives or insights into established management concepts such as knowledge management and leadership and on newer concepts such as 'knowledge leadership'.

Historically, leadership research has been dominated by the discipline of psychology, which relied upon the quantitative analysis of quantitative data. In more recent years however, persuasive arguments have advanced a call for more qualitative approaches (Alvesson, 1996; Avolio, 1995; Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1992; Byrman et al 1988; Hunt, 1991; Strong, 1984; Yukl, 1994), and for a greater in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of leaders (Byrman, 1996; Byrman et al 1988; Day, 2000; Kempster, 2006). There is now an increasing body of research on leadership which uses methods borrowed from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology (Bryman et al., 1988, 1992; Hunt and Ropo, 1995; Irurita, 1996; Lantis, 1987; McCaslin, 1993; Meindl, 1990; Roberts, 1985; Roberts and Bradley, 1988). The desire here is not to downgrade the value of one methodological approach over the other. The author supports the growing appreciation that both quantitative and qualitative methods are necessary for leadership research (Parry, 1988) recognising, that often, a combination of these approaches can produce valuable insights (Chen and Meindl, 1991; Gepahart, 1988; Potter and Wetherell, 1994). In this instance, however, the decision to adopt a 'pure' qualitative approach was chiefly influenced by the consistency across the leadership literature in calling for a profound reorientation from the elaboration and measurement of abstracted constructs to the analysis of leadership as a social influence process[6] (Byrman, 1996; Hosking, 1988;

[6] Parry (1998) argues this assumption provides the justification to conceive of an organisational setting as a society, and the interactions within that society being social interactions

Knights and Willmott, 1992; Smirch and Morgan, 1982). The next section expands on this issue.

### 3.4.1 A Qualitative Approach to the Study of Leadership

The advantages of qualitative approaches to research are well-known and need not be re-hashed at this juncture. Suffice it to say there are voluminous references in the literature to the 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), 'rich insight' (Fineman and Mangham, 1983), 'full, earthy, holistic and real data' (Miles, 1979) that such approaches entail. The interest and subsequent emphasis, here, is on the distinct advantages of a qualitative approach to leadership as a specific area of research. For a large part, these arguments centre around the extreme and enduring complexity of the leadership phenomenon itself. This is powerfully exemplified by the fact that "after literally thousands of studies in the field, a general theory of leadership that explains all aspects of the process adequately has yet to be developed" (Yukl, 1994: 19). As Conger and Kanungo (1998: 2) noted:

> For the foreseeable future, there will be no endpoint, a moment where researchers will be able to say that's it, now we have a complete and shared understanding of leadership.

Such complexity is a byproduct of several important characteristics of leadership. Firstly, a crucial aspect of leadership is the ability to influence others. In an extensive review of the leadership literature Yukl (1994) acknowledges this dynamic: "most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people" (Yukl, 1994: 3). Secondly, leadership is closely associated with the notion of change (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Kotter 1990; Tichy and Devanna 1986). Thirdly, leadership is embedded in multiple levels or 'nests' of phenomena (Avolio and Bass, 1995). Events such as achievements, failures, opportunities and crisis are constantly shaping and reshaping leadership beliefs, actions, motivations and experiences for both the leader and the led. Finally, leadership has a symbolic and subjective component, an ever shifting reality, where human beings shape its creation (Conger, 1989; Pondy, Frost, Morgan and Dandridge, 1983; Hunt, 1991; Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Pondy et al, 1988). The literature contends that mainstream research methodologies have only been partially sucessful in theorising about these aspects of leadership (Parry, 1998). Consequently a number of authors support the case for more qualitative approaches (Alvesson, 1996; Bryman, 1996; Bryman et al., 1988; Day, 2000; Hosking, 1988; Knights and Willmott,

1992; Parry, 1998; Smircich and Morgan, 1982), with such approaches seen to offer the following advantages over quantitative methods:

1. The opportunity to explore phenomena in significant depth and to do so longitudinally.
2. The flexibility to discern and detect unexpected phenomena during the research.
3. The ability to investigate processes more effectively, in other words to examine the rich detail of how events unfold or how they may reshape interpretations of events.
4. The chance to explore and be sensitive to contextual factors.
5. The provision of a more effective means to investigate symbolic dimensions.

### 3.4.2 Towards a Qualitative View of Leader's Knowing

So far, this chapter has argued that this research is best situated within the phenomenological, interpretive paradigm. In this respect it follows the lead of a number of researchers who see leadership as a social influence process (Byrman, 1984; Parry, 1988, 1998; Yukl, 1994), and knowledge, or, more correctly, 'knowing', as a social process embedded in action and embodied in people (Blackler, 1995; Brown, Collins and Duiguid, 1989; Orr, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Researching and understanding social processes necessitates the interpretation of action, events and perspectives through the eyes of those being investigated (Bryman et al., 1988). Gaining such rich, deep, contextual interpretative accounts is the basic thrust of a qualitative approach. As Byrman, (1984: 77) suggests:

> The sine qua non of qualitative methodology is a commitment to seeing the world from the actor's point of view.

In following an inductive, qualitative, methodological approach the author agrees with the sentiment that a qualitative approach to the study of leadership is fruitful, not simply because it takes the actor's viewpoint as its central focus, but because, in doing so, it may bring to the surface issues and topics which are important yet may be omitted if relying on the researcher as the source of what is relevant. In other words, in terms of this research, a qualitative approach to the study of leader's personal knowledge may allow greater attention to what leaders think about knowledge and knowing and how they respond *as* leaders to the variety of situations they confront, rather than what the researcher considers to be important. Such a strategy may bring concepts and data into closer alignment, as well as allowing for greater purchase on the question of the variety

of ways in which leadership and phenomena related to it are experienced. The next section will detail the methods employed for the collection and analysis of empirical data.

## 3.5 The Research Design

In the most elementary sense, the research design is a logical sequence that connects empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions. To some extent, the research design is a blueprint for the research. It deals with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data is relevant, what data to collect, and how to anlayse the results (Yin, 1989). The purpose of this study and the research questions have been detailed in section 3.2. In section 3.3.2 the author justified the appropriateness of a phenonemnological, interpretive, qualitative approach in addressing these issues. The discussion that follows provides more precise details on the data sources, methods of collection and analysis.

### 3.5.1 The Unit of Analysis

The author is cognisant of the argument which suggests that to understand leadership as a process one must go beyond the study of individual ranks in organisations to incorporate leadership processes of people at various levels of the organisation (Parry, 1998). However, the unit of analysis in this particular study is the individual leader. This decision relates to the purpose of the research, and the related research questions, which, as stated in section 3.2, entail examining a process of a different nature: how individuals in leadership positions build and maintain their personal knowledge (and, relatedly, what this knowledge entails). In its focus on individual leaders, this study is not unique. A number of authors have restricted their investigations on leadership or aspects of leadership to senior management only: for example: Kirkland (1990), Martin (1993), Richter (1998), Sherlock and Nathan (2008) and Tierney (1988).

### 3.5.2 The Research Sample

The sampling method followed was purposeful, criterion based and convenient (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). Cases for study were selected because they were considered to be information rich and illuminative of the issues considered central to the research purpose; not for their ability in terms of empirical generalisation, hence the term

'purposeful'. The chief criteria for selection were: that each participant occupied the most senior leadership role within their organisation; that they occupied this role for a period of at least three years; and that they added to the research sample in terms of being representative of a broad spectrum of industries/organisational types. The second criteria, relating to the parameters of leadership experience, was included to ensure that participants had spent sufficient time in their role to be 'settled', while allowing for a recency of experience to facilitate recall in a leadership capacity (Sherlock and Nathan, 2008).

The final research sample consisted of twelve leaders from a variety of industries (profit, not-for profit and creative), and organisational backgrounds (private sector/public sector, indigenous/multinational, family business and religious). With the exception of participants A, D and F and L (contacts provided by the researcher's supervisor), all of the participants had previously engaged in an executive development programme facilitated by the Department of Management and Marketing at the National Univeristy of Ireland, Cork. The relative convenience of this sample made for easier access in providing the researcher with ready-made contacts. The number of participants was arrived at through adopting a theoretical approach to sampling as originally advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In line with this approach, each case was chosen on the expected level of new insight it would provide; the decision to stop integrating new cases was reached once the same issues were repeatedly raised, leading the researcher to believe nothing new would be added by the addition of further participants. The author accepts that this approach is not clear-cut; the decision to stop interviewing can never be made with complete certainty, there is always the possibility that the next participant will bring something new to the conversation. In this respect, the author acknowledges particular absences from the sample, such as leaders from political, sporting and educational backgrounds. This was due to unwillingness to participate on their behalf. Had the researcher been successful in achieving participation from these sectors, there is a possibility that something new may have emerged, but, again, without such participation, this is just speculation. Notwithstanding these factors, the author judged a sample size of twelve participants to have provided sufficiently rich data to address the research purpose and to be meaningful and manageable in terms of its analysis. Furthermore, the decisions taken with respect to sampling were consistent with the epistemological and methodological choices as outlined in Section 3.32 and 3.4 respectively. Table 3.2, below,

provides an overview of the research participants indicating their position, the industry/sector from which they originated, and the number of years in a leadership role at the time of the first interview.

| Participant | Position | Industry/Sector | Years In Role |
|---|---|---|---|
| Participant A | Bishop | Religious | 9 Years |
| Participant B | Managing Director | Engineering Design Software | 7 Years |
| Participant C | Managing Director | Consultant Engineering | 3 Years |
| Participant D | Director | Creative/ Cultural | 7 Years |
| Participant E | Managing Director | Brewing | 9 Years |
| Participant F | Curator | Creative/ Arts | 7 Years |
| Participant G | Senior Manager | Public Sector | 4 Years |
| Participant H | Chief Executive | Not For Profit Charity | 15 Years |
| Participant I | Managing Director | Family Business Home Heating | 20 Years |
| Participant J | Chairman | Publishing | 4 Years |
| Participant K | Regional Director | Public Sector | 10 Years |
| Participant L | CEO | Brewing | 4 Years |

Table 3.2 A Profile of the Research Participants

### 3.5.3 The Research Procedure

The process of gathering data for this study extended over two time periods, with an approximate time interval of ten years between each phase. The original research began in 1997 and set out to address research questions 1, 2 and 3 as outlined in section 3.2 above. For a variety of personal reasons the author was unable to continue with her PhD. Returning to the research in 2007 presented an interesting opportunity to convert the research into a longitudinal study. In doing so, questions 4 and 5 were added to the original research questions. The process of re-interviewing is considered in the discussion on the research instrument in section 3.5.4 below.

### 3.5.4 The Research Instrument - The Research Interview

The sole method of data collection used in this study was the research interview. This choice was considered appropriate for a number of reasons. Primarily, as a research instrument, the interview approach remained true to the interpretive paradigm, and to the inductive, qualitative approach justified earlier. In addition, the major strength of the interview approach is its contextual nature; interviews capture the respondents' meanings and interpretations in a natural setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Furthermore, given the contextual, situational and interactional nature of knowledge itself (as highlighted in the literature review); the author is very much of the opinion that only contextual research is capable of gaining 'real' insight into the nature, content and process of leader's personal knowledge.

Having examined the different types of interview approaches available (Kumar, 2005; Silverman, 2000, 2010), a semi-structured interview style was chosen. This decision was reached on the following basis. The structured interview, which uses standardised questions, was considered overly formal and restrictive for the nature of this study and was judged more suitable for quantitative research. The unstructured, open or informal interview (Robson, 2002), while it is extremely useful for exploratory research, neccesitates a very skilled researcher to guide the respondents. The author did not consider herself to be in the possession of such skills. The semi-structured interview provided a suitable alternative.

As is common practice for semi-structured interviewing, the researcher drew up an interview guide (see Appendix 1), which comprised a list of topics/questions to be covered in each interview. This was used in the following way: In each case the interviewee was given leeway on how to reply to the questions asked; questioning did not always follow in the manner laid out in the schedule but was varied to suit the flow of the conversation and questions not on the schedule were sometimes introduced to follow an interesting comment. However, despite these variations, by and large all of the participants were asked all of the questions and similar wording was used from one interview to the next. The primary advantage of this approach over other interview types was that, through the use of the interview guide, the lines of enquiry were standardised across all interviews, while, at the same time, the researcher was afforded the flexibility to deviate from the prescribed path to explore emergent issues or to conduct further probes. In this way the process remained conversational and

situational (Patton, 2002). In addition, the wider scope of the semi-structured interview offered participants a number opportunities to respond in their own words, to express their personal perspectives (Bryman, 2004) and to describe their own experiences (Alvesson, 1996). Again, given the nature of this research, such freedoms, in particular the collection of experience in the form of critical incidents, were considered integral to the data gathering process (Parry, 1998).

#### 3.5.4.1 Re-Interviewing

Epstein (2002) has identified three types of qualitative longitudinal research: the first involves continuous research in the same community or society over a number of years; the second involves periodic re-studies at regular and irregular intervals; while the third entails returning after a lengthy time interval has lapsed since the original study. As previously explained, (see section 3.5.3 above), a number of personal factors impacted on the author's original attempt to complete this study. Returning to the thesis some ten years later presented an interesting opportunity to conduct longitudinal research. In this respect, this study subscribes to Epstein's third category, in which the researcher returns to the original research sample after a lengthy time-interval.

There are mixed opinions on the optimum time interval that should exist between the different phases of a longitudinal study; some suggest at least one year (Young et al., 1991) while others, who follow the life-course tradition recommend researching across several generations (Heinz and Kruger, 2001), Saldana (2003) is definite that longitudinal means a lonnnnnnnnnnng time. Interviewing is a key feature of qualitative longitudinal research. All longitudinal approaches involve re-interviewing the original interviewees to explore changes which occur over time and the processes associated with those changes (Holland, 2007). In view of this, Saldana (2003) identifies the three foundational principles of qualitative longitudinal research as: time, change and process, and emphasises the criticality of an approach to analysis that engages with and captures each of these elements. The author's attempt to ensure this was achieved are outlined in Section 3.5.5 below.

As previously stated, the original interviews for this study were conducted in 1997. Returning to the research in 2007 the author sought to re-interview all of the participants. This was a time-consuming process. A number of the participants proved

difficult to trace, one had set up a new business, two had changed the location of their business and four had retired, (of which, two had re-located, one within Ireland and one overseas). In terms of locating participants, gaining agreement for re-interview and conducting the actual interviews, the entire process took approximately two years to complete.

Once again an interview guide was prepared in advance. As with all longitudinal studies the researcher was primarily interested in gaining insight into how respondents views had changed over the intervening time period and why this was the case. To this end, while some of the original questions were re-introduced, some new questions were included (Appendix 1). While some authors suggest it is useful to feedback the original data in advance of the second interview, a decision was taken not to do this as it was felt that it could overly influence interviewees' reponses. On more than one occasion participants asked for the original transcript in advance of the second meeting. While this request was declined, as a matter of courtesy the transcript was given to them on completion of the interview.

While certain aspects of each interview followed a standardised format, some aspects were tailor-made to pick-up on issues mentioned in the first interview. Each interview began with the researcher reminding the interviewee of where they were the last time we met and what they were doing. The interview then followed an orderly format, starting with the past (what had occurred since we last met), moving to the present (what was happening currently), and, finally, ending with the future. As previously indicated, while respondents were not afforded the opportunity to review their original comments prior to the second interview, selected excerpts were taken from each interview and fed back to the interviewee in the course of the second interview. This had a dual purpose. It allowed one to get confirmation or disconfirmation of an original statement or opinion; while, at the same time, displaying to the participant that one judged his/her previous commentary to be of sufficient interest to warrant further study and reflection. Once again all interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim.

### 3.5.5 Data Analysis

While the data gathered from the intial empirical work was originally analysed in the late 1990's, this data was re-visited in the context of the second data set. The overall process of data analysis occurred at two levels. At the first level, a case-by-case analysis for each of the individual research participants was conducted. The second level involved a cross-case analysis of the re-occurring themes and patterns across the twelve cases. This approach is in line with researchers such as Einsehardt (1989) and Dey (1993) who suggest, that being intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity allows the unique patterns of each case to emerge before researchers push to generalise patterns across cases. In addition, it provided a rich familiarity with each case, which, in turn, accelerated cross-case comparison. The precise details of how the data was analysed at each level are presented in section 3.5.5.1 and 3.5.5.2, below. The results of the analysis are presented in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

#### 3.5.5.1 Part One: Case-by-Case Analysis - Constructing Case Stories

The first stage in the case-by-case analysis was to construct a summary table of the themes/sub themes within each interview. For each of the research participants, the following process was followed. The first step involved reading and re-reading the first interview transcript to get an initial sense of what was going on in the interview, what the particpant was saying, feeling etc. The author was assisted in this task by the work of Wolcott (1990) who recommends subjecting each of the transcripts to a set of broad open-ended questions. While Wolcott's original probes appeared very apt for the nature of this research, slight adaptations were made where deemed necessary. In the end the process was guided by the following questions:

1. What is going on here?
2. What does the person in this setting have to know to do what he/she is doing?
3. How are knowledge and skills acquired, particularly in the absence of intentional efforts or instruction?
4. What does the author think the participant is feeling?
5. What was the author feeling at the time of interview, what is the author feeling now?

Sitting at her kitchen table, using A4 sheets of blank paper, the author took notes of the key themes and sub-themes from each interview. After about three iterations of this process the final notes were written up. The next stage was to construct a summary

table of each interview identifying themes, sub-themes and presenting sample quotations for each of these. This process was usually conducted over a two-day period, with the second day usually given over to reviewing and editing the previous day's work. On completion of one table, an interval of a few days was allowed before tackling the next. This time interval was considered necessary to avoid the outcomes from the analysis of the previous interview from overly influencing the analysis of the next one. This process was continued until a total of twelve tables were produced for the first phase of the research. On completion, the author replicated this process for the twelve interviews conducted in phase two. These tables are presented in Appendix 2.

The second stage in the case-by-case analysis was to construct an overall narrative or 'case story' (Richmond, 2002) for each of the individual research participants. In constructing each narrative, the author followed the advice of Elliott (2005), who cites Mishler (1995) and Labov and Waletzy (1997), on the different forms of narrative analysis. The case stories are presented in chapter four. Each case- story has four sub-sections. Sub-section one, provides a brief biography of the participant. Sub-section two provides a narrative account of the first meeting. Sub-section three provides a similar account of the second meeting with an emphasis on the key changes over the time span under review. In sub-section four the author makes some concluding comments based on her own analysis and interpretation of the two previous sub-sections.

In writing sub-section three, the author referred to the work of Farrall (2006) on qualitative longitudinal research that suggests a list of questions that researchers might subject their data to. While he is clear that the list is not definitive, it is recommended as a good entry point to the data for those embarking on the initial stages of qualitative longitudinal research. Taking this advice on board, the author was loosely guided by these questions in writing up the account of the second interview for each research participant:

1. What is the difference between time one and time two? The intention here was to build up a picture of the general direction or trajectory of the individual's professional and personal circumstances.

2. Are there any epiphanies or sudden events that have triggered changes? Is there accleration of some factors that build up to a change? Are there any tipping or turning points?
3. What has increased or decreased overtime? For example are there changes in values, self-esteem or self-knowledge?
4. What is missing, what do the respondents avoid talking about? Avoidance of certain topics may reveal things they are uncomfortable about which may go some way to explaining their position, disposition or values.
5. What are the contextual processes that influence change and the timing of changes?
6. Which changes support or oppose the process of human development?
7. How meaningful are the changes to the respondants?
8. Are the changes substantive or symbolic?

#### 3.5.5.2 Part Two: Cross-Case Analysis

The first layer of analysis considered each leader's case independent of the other interviewees. The second level of analysis for this research aggregated the data gleaned from each individual case. Commonalities or disparitites across cases in both phases of the research were then highlighted.

#### 3.5.5.3 Part Three - Discussion

An essential feature of theory building is a comparison of the emerging concepts, theory or hypotheses with the extant literature (Eisenhardt, 1989: 544). Hence the final stage of data analysis was to relate the research findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, with the aim of probing what was similar, what was different, and why? In the introduction to this discussion presented in Chapter 6, the author explains how and why, she incorporated, where it was considered appropriate in terms of assisting the discussion, additional literature, that is both related and unrelated, to that which was originally presented in Chapter 2.

## 3.6 An Evaluation of the Research Process

> Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction and looses its utility (Morse et al 2002: 14).

In recent years a great deal of attention has been directed towards the objectivity and rigor of qualitative approaches and the reliability and validity of their findings. This section details the steps taken by the author to evaluate the 'goodness' of this study (Arminio and Hultgren, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Smith, 1993) and, in doing so, to address the challenges that are ordinarily directed towards the interpretive, qualitative, inductive approach that is at the core of this research. The chief means of conducting this type of evaluation require the establishment of internal validity, external validity and reliablity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 1989). The sections that follow provide a brief description of each of these constructs and the proactive steps taken by the researcher to achieve them.

### 3.6.1 Internal Validity

Internal validity or consistency is the degree to which an account is accurate, truthful or credible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In terms of qualitative research, the most important form of internal validity is descriptive validity, which concerns the factual accuracy of an account (in other words, one is not making up or distorting things one hears). Without this foundation, other forms of validity are not possible (Yin, 2003). As previously stated, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were returned to participants following each interview to ensure they represented an accurate account of what was discussed.

In addition to descriptive validity, interpretive validity; the degree to which a finding has been judged to have been interpreted in a correct way; is also of particular concern in qualitative research. To ensure interpretive validity, the author devoted a considerable amount of time to the data analysis stage. The procedure followed is detailed in section 3.55 above. To re-iterate, data analysis was a three stage process that comprised of: first, constructing summary tables for each interview which highlighted themes/sub-themes and direct examples of each; second, compiling case-narratives for each participant, and, finally conducting cross-case analysis. At each stage of this process, the author obtained second opinions on the interpretations reached through inviting comments from colleagues, friends and family members.

### 3.6.2 External Validity

The idea of external validity, in the sense of producing universal laws, is not a useful standard for qualitative research given its overall aim of gaining rich insight as opposed to mass generalisation. For this reason, for qualitative researchers, 'generalisability' is best thought of as 'transferability,' in other words, obtaining a fit between the situation being studied and others who might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To enhance external validity 'thick description' is considered essential. Such thick descriptions are richly described data that provide the reader with enough information to judge the appropriateness of applying the findings to other settings (Byrne, 2001). The in-depth nature of the interviews conducted and the extended amount of time spent in the field in re-interviewing generated a rich and descriptive data set. The author placed heavy reliance on the use of this in all three stages of data analysis, as described previously. In addition, while social phenomena are too variable and context bound to allow for significant generalisations, in research studies where the researcher does a good job of particularisation (within case analysis), before looking for patterns across cases, a reasonable extrapolation in terms of considering other applications of the findings may be possible. The depth and breadth achieved in this study through compiling individual case narratives and cross-case analysis increases this liklihood.

### 3.6.3 Reliability

Reliability is the ability of different researchers to make the same observations of a given phenomenom if and when the observation is conducted using the same methods and procedures. To ensure reliability, the author followed the following procedures. A robust interview protocol was drawn up and followed for both phases of the research (see Appendix 1). The procedures followed in data analysis were rigorously documented and presented (see Section 3.55 above). In addition, during the data analysis stage, the author kept a diary recording thoughts, reflections, decisions and the basis of those decisions.

### 3.6.4 Objectivity

Objectivity, or 'conformability', relates to the neutrality of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher recognises that, due to the epistemological stance taken, bias cannot be totally eliminated. However, as with the preceeding aspects of the research discussed in this section, the author adopted a number of strategies to ensure,

where at all possible, that bias would be reduced to a minimum. As previously stated, while interviews were semi-structured in nature, to allow for a degree of flexibility; in all cases the interviewer followed a robust interview protocol to ensure systematic coverage of the selected topics and related questions. Furthermore, the process of re-interviewing is seen to increase the overall research objectivity on at least two fronts: firstly, the second interview provides a check on the first, reducing the possibility of major distortions or eliminations; and secondly, meeting respondents for the second time develops a sense of familarity which reduces the possiblity that they would feel overly influenced by the interviewer's expectations in terms their responses (Holland, 2007; Saldana, 2003).

### 3.6.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher followed a strict code of ethical practice in conducting this research. Participants were assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity with respect to the presentation of findings. While tape-recording was used throughout the interviewing process, control of the tape-recorder was given to the interviewee who remained at liberty to discontinue or pause it at any time. Any requests from the interviewees to keep certain comments off record were duly respected.

### 3.6.6 Conclusion

This chapter described and justified the philosophical and methodological choices made and outlined in detail the primary research approach used. In view of the phenomenological, exploratory nature of this research, an interpretive, qualitative design was deemed most appropriate. The longitudinal nature of the study involved re-interviewing all of the original research participants. Data analysis occurred at two levels: each participant was, first considered as an individual case, being the subject of within-case-analysis (Pettigrew, 1990) and a case-story write up (Richmond, 2002). Next, this process was followed by cross-case analysis, whereby systemic themes or patterns were identified across the twelve cases over both phases of the research (Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989). Given the longitudinal nature of the study, at both levels of analysis the researcher concentrated on documenting what had changed over time and what contexual factors might be considered explanatory. Chapter Four presents the first stage of the data analysis.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS
# PART ONE

## 4 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS PART ONE

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3, the methodology and research design detailed the means through which data was collected for this research. This chapter begins the analysis of data accumulated during the research period. This, as previously indicated, extended over two time periods, henceforth referred to as phase one and phase two, with an approximate interval of ten years between each phase. An explanation for this time interval has been provided in Chapter 3. The analysis is presented in two parts. Part one, Chapter 4, presents a case-by-case analysis of each of the individual research participants. Part two, Chapter 5, provides a cross-case analysis presenting a systemic view of the re-occurring themes and patterns across the twelve cases. This approach, as earlier explained in the research methodology, Chapter 3, is in line with researchers such as Einsehardt (1989) and Dey (1993) who have suggested that being intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity allows the unique patterns of each case to emerge before researchers push to generalise patterns across cases. In addition, it provides a rich familiarity with each case, which, in turn, accelerates cross-case comparisons.

This chapter is organised as follows. Each section provides a 'case-story' (Richardson, 2002) of one of the research participants. To respect each individual's right to anonymity, each respondent is identified by a letter of the alphabet and where first names have been used these have been changed. The approach used in constructing these case-stories is detailed in Chapter 3, the research methodology. Each case-story is presented in four parts: part one provides a brief biography of the participant, part two provides a narrative account of the first interview, part three provides a similar account of the second interview emphasising the key changes over the time period under review while part four presents a concluding commentary based on the researcher's analysis and interpretation.

## 4.2 Participant A

### 4.2.1 Biography

Participant A was ordained in 1953. Having spent a number of years in the US he returned to Ireland in the early 1960's. He served in various parishes in the North and South of Ireland. He was consecrated as a bishop in 1988 and retired from episcopal life in ten years later.

### 4.2.2 Participant A's Story: Part One

In broad terms, the time period during which Participant A was bishop was largely confined to the 1990's, a time when much that was traditionally held in high regard, particularly in relation to the institutions and authorities of Irish society came under increasing scrutiny and suspicion. Reflecting on the issues that dominated his epsicopacy four key events were highlighted: Retrenchment in the form of church closures, a declining number of worshippers, severance and schism as a result of the church's views on homosexuality and child sexual abuse. The overriding sense in the first meeting was of a man, catapulted unexpectedly into episcopal life. Participant A recalls setting out for the electoral meeting, having assured his wife he would be home for supper and later telephoning her with the news that they would shortly be taking up residence in an eighteenth-century episcopal palace.

Recalling those early years, there is a sense of unease and inner conflict in terms of the daunting (yet sometimes flattering), expectations and infallibility associated with his new position. The language used is quite emotive as he relates feelings of inadequacy, vulnerability and at times a sense of 'nakedness' or 'being bereft'. Such feelings are somewhat heightened by the transformative and isolated nature of the Episcopal office. In this respect, the excerpt he quoted from John Betjeman's poem, "You knelt a boy and rose a man and so your lonely life began," was poignant.

The overriding impression of being challenged, the idea that because you are 'The Bishop' 'somehow you know', was not limited to the earlier years, but rather an integral part of everyday episcopal life. In this regard, Participant A spoke of the church's continued emphasis on 'doing' and the lack of adequate time and space for learning and reflection. Added to this, he spoke of a culture that does not encourage academic pursuits in that they may nurture a form of self-promotion, or self-indulgence that is deemed unacceptable.

The negative image of the church alluded to earlier, brought even greater pressures to bear on the role of the bishop. Chief amongst these was the need to enhance the church's collective image, provide a much needed boost to followers and remain somewhat relevant in a society that was searching for answers. Once again, certain emotions were in evidence: a degree of sadness and weariness when relating the cloud of suspicion associated with those 'who wear a dog collar' and a degree of frustration in terms of the invidious position one is often placed in, when perceived power and actual power rarely equate.

A natural outgrowth of this topic was a discussion on how one learns to deal with or resolve these challenges. From the outset, the importance of technical or constitutional knowledge, as 'a court of final appeal', was emphasised, as were various types of experiential knowledge. In terms of the latter he spoke at length about the knowledge and relationships accumulated, often unintentionally, in the course of one's duties (one's baggage), and the legacy of second-hand knowledge and relationships one inherits on assuming a new role. From an experiential point of view, he stressed the importance of balancing prior knowledge with new knowledge, being open, where necessary, to disregarding one's 'personal predilections', and recognsing the need to personalise or to 'make one's own' of the knowledge inherited. Coming to own the knowledge one inherits, being oneself rather than trying to emulate one's predecessor, or playing at pretence through 'acting out a part', was of crtical importance to this participant. On this, he displays immense perspicacity. His advice on 'recognising ones limitations', 'coming clean', 'owning up', 'seeking the support of his 'community and not being afraid to do so', are clear indicators that he truly understands the leadership dillema of balancing one's position 'on a pedestal', with the process of growing through humility.

### 4.2.3 Participant A's Story: Part Two

The second meeting with Participant A presented a very different scenario. Retired from eclesiastical life and living in a modest suburban dwelling, the conversation largely centered around the changes resulting from retirement. The 'great expectations' associated with being a bishop as portrayed in the first interview are set in stark contrast with the *void* depicted in the second as the bishop recalled the moment of his actual retirement:

> One could not help contrast the setting on new year's eve with the splendour and dignity of the consecration cermony eleven years before. I was very concious that on that occasion the bell was tolling for me and also for my wife. We would return home later that evening divested of the rights and priviledges of office. True there were much valued liturgical and social farewells, but at the moment of actual departure one felt there was an indefinable void.

Once again reference is made to the lack of preparation in advance of assuming a new role, "as it was in the beginning so it was in the end'. Of interest perhaps is the fact that it was the bishop's wife who experienced the greatest difficulties in this regard. Joining us towards the end of the interview, she spoke of her difficulties in moving from a position where, "you are very much the centre of things where there is a certain amount of deferene paid, to being one of the crowd, a fish out of water and having to start all over again."

While retirement is spoken of in terms of 'a sudden isolation from the sphere in which one has been involved for almost fifty years', there is a residual sense of once a bishop, always a bishop. The pressure to keep up eclesiastically, to make informed comment, to be able to stand over everything you say doesn't disappear when you retire, 'because '*you are,'* to a certain extent '*who you were'*. Despite this, a key change across the time interval was the greater sense of freedom now felt. The *struggle* to be oneself alluded to in the first meeting and the difficulties of being 'The Bishop', (5% of your time you will experience the nearest thing to a living hell), was compared with how refreshing it is to be 'treated just as John' in the second. Here this participant points out, "it is not that you are not yourself when you are a bishop, it's just a change of emphasis." 'Keeping up eclesiastically' now co-exists with the opportunity to read less 'regimental churchy material', while the caveats in terms of maintaining boundaries and keeping one's distance, no longer in place, allow for a wider and closer circle of contacts. In this respect, Participant A remarks, he has he learned 'to do nothing, and to do it very well'.

Family featured strongly in this second meeting. Aspects of the conversation concerned the dynamics and tensions of family life, and the obligations concerning support and confidentiality inherent in a clerical partnership. One aspect of family life which was particulary emphasised was the idea of learning from family. A key event

related was the late vocation of the bishop's son-in-law and the first-hand opportuity this provided to 'observe the intricate process of becoming a cleric'. Reference was also made to learning from grandchildren. In this context, he recalled an earlier incident when his young grandson, on seeing a photograph of a group of bishops (all wearing purple cassocks), remarked, "Oh look at all those Barney's." The Barney in question being a larger than life purple dinosaur that features in a popular childrens' television programme. He later used this story as part of a sermon in which he spoke of the importance of the community's perception of the church.

While both interviews show a strong sense of self-awareness, it is really only in the second meeting that the bishop begins to reflect on his role in a wider sense. As mentioned earlier, family appear for the first time in the second interview. Furthermore, in the second meeting, a greater degree of self-assessment was in evidence. Certain questions were raised. Had he been more courageous, vocal and critical would he have created more impact? Why was this the case? Perhaps, he mused, it resulted from his upbringing as an only child? Was this self-reliance, stubborness or an unwillingness to ask for help? In any event, with the benefit of hindsight, he believes he should have made better use of the contacts and supports available to him. Certain factors may have encouraged the tendancy towards greater reflection at this time. In 2004, six years prior to the second interview, the bishop wrote a book entitled 'On Being a Bishop: Reminisences and Reflections'. This book drew attention to the opportunities and constraints of episcopal life. In the latter interview, he returns to the central events that are addressed in this book. In addition, the relaxed atmosphere of the family home, as opposed to the palatial surroundings of 'The 'Bishop's Palace' encouraged greater informality and openness. Indeed, an early morning telephone-call, enquiring as to whether or not I was a vegetarian, was not a topic of conversation I ever imagined having with a bishop (albeit at this time a retired bishop).

### 4.2.4 Concluding Commentary

The title 'Great Expectations: The Naked Bishop', (see Table A1 Appendix 2) reflects the central theme of the first interview. The sudden elevation to a high profile role brings expectations of superior knowledge and infallibilty, with a resultant sense of

public exposure. In coping with this, while the importance of technical (constitiutional) and experiential knowledge, (his baggage of clerical experience) is emphasised; it is self-knowledge, (an awareness and acceptance of one's knowledge limitations and the extent to which one relies on others), that is prioritised. Table A2, bears the title 'The Cool Bishop', these words were taken from a plaque displayed in the bishop's home (created by his grandchildren), bearing the words "Cool Bishop Award". Once again this title is used to convey the key change that has occurred in the interval between the two interviews. A change in life-stage and a diminution in the role occupied has altered others' perceptions of the bishop, ('no longer a dog-collar'), and his associated sense of identity ('no longer the bishop just John'). This changed context creates a corresponding change in the content and sources of his knowledge: There is a broadening, as opposed to a deepening of knowledge as he delves beyond 'the churchy material' that has long formed part of his mainstream learning. The influence of family and other social-networks are given greater credence as he questions the value of being overly self-reliant in the past. While his changed status diminshes the need to safeguard the knowledge that he publically displays, he is keen to point out that to a large extent, he is, who he was. The impact of his position, (the great expectations associated with being a bishop), reverberate beyond the formal occupation of the episcopal role; while the requirement 'to know' may have diminished, to some extent remnants remains.

## 4.3 Participant B

### 4.3.1 Biography

Participant B graduated with a master's degree in civil engineering in the early eighties. In 1990 she became owner/managing director of a company which distributed a portfolio of computer aided design solutions. In the early years of business ownership she completed an MBA and a Diploma in Company Direction on a part-time basis. In later years, the business extended into training and consultancy services and was acquired by a major IT distributor in 2009. At this point, Participant B became exective chariman of a fully-integrated software solutions company. Currently, she acts as a non executive chairman for a manufacturer of remote software and is a member of the advisory board for a university-based business incubation centre.

### 4.3.2 Participant B's Story: Part One

Having graduated with a masters' degree in civil engineering in the early 1980's, a time of high unemployment and mass emigration, Participant B spent a number of years working on building sites in the UK. She returned to Ireland in 1990, which was a time, she suggests, when the changes in technology were, 'like being part of the industrial revolution'. Unable to get the job she wanted, and identifying huge opportunties for advancing the creative potential of engineers through harnessing new technologies, she became, as she described it, somewhat of a 'reluctant entreprenuer' as she set up her own engineeering design software company in 1990.

The first interview occurred in 1997. Reflecting on her role as managing director, the key thrust of the initial conversation was the altered nature of this role by comparison with her life as an engineer. In this context she spoke of 'leaving the technology to the technocrats' and 'moving into the organisational side of things'. In terms of what she needed to know, the emphasis was more firmly focused on changing market trends, customer information and finance. On renouncing her role as an engineer, mixed feelings were in evidence: On the one hand, there was a huge sense of relief, she no longer felt threatened by not knowing every single aspect of every new engineering application; On the other hand, there was the difficulty in relinguishing her passion for 'playing around with' and 'figuring out' such systems.

While the transition to managing director diminshed her need to know the specifics of engineering applications, it brought new demands. From the outset, the absence of a formal business degree was considered a distinct disadvantage, engendering a sense of inferiority with an underlying perception that she was missing out on some great formula or solution. This was quite quickly rectified through undertaking a part-time MBA and later a Diploma in Company Direction. This hunger for business knowledge and the associated need to learn continued throughout Participant B's career. Describing herself as 'a card-carrying bookaholic' and someone who reads business magazines with a religious zeal, she spoke of her continued fascination with the fads and fashions of management theory.

Participant B expressed a particular desire to understand more about leadership, as this, she felt was an aspect of the job where she and most others in her position,

experienced the greatest amount of self-doubt and uncertainity. Her knowledge of leadership she explained, was largely based on her experience of former bosses; she continues to imitate the behaviour of those she considered to be 'good bosses', while avoiding the behavioiur of those she considered to be 'lousy bosses'.

Recognising the continuing gaps in her own knowledge, she admitted that there were times when she has felt, and continues to feel 'out of her depth' and 'screaming for help'. In terms of ongoing learning and development she spoke of relying on her business partner, to calm her down and keep her grounded; and of learning from colleagues, specialists, employees and the community of customers, suppliers and competitors within which her business operates.

### 4.3.3 Participant B's Story: Part Two

In the ten year interval between the two meetings a key event was the sale of the company's core knowledge management system to a potential competitor in 2003. Recalling, this event, Partcipant B described it as a time when 'the solar allignments changed, the nature of the business changed, her role changed, and continues to change. On the specifics of her changed role, to some extent there was a repetition of the sentiments expressed in the first interview. Once again she spoke (with some regret), of the distance between what she does now, and her original professional qualification: 'It's been far too long since I was a civil engineer even though I graduated as one'. What is different here perhaps is the intensity with which she describes this change. The sense of loosing her voice, being silenced or marginalised in her capacity as an engineer came through on more than one occassion: "For sure my capability in terms of talking the technology is gone; I love to hear the engineers talk; It's great to be able to rely on other people to talk the message". Although she spoke of appreciating it (engineering technology), she admitted 'she didn't know it anymore, or at least she didn't know the detail of it anymore'.

While her life as an engineer was considered 'long gone', her current role continued to afford her the opportunity to 'grow her learning in an organic way'. While sources of knowledge alluded to previoulsly, such as solving customer problems, taking part in project-post mortums and her interest in management theory resurfaced; in this second phase of her career, learning through making mistakes and honing her instincts

through experiencing failure were particulary emphasised. In this latter context, Participant B spoke proudly of 'wearing the scars of business-battle', of learning to be adaptable, never giving up, and never over-reacting to the peaks and troughs of business cycles. A common theme running through this aspect of the interview was her ideas on 'de-demonising business failure', promoting greater humanity, and encouraging more forgiveness in the business community.

Once introduced, the human face of business re-surfaced on a number of occassions. On her own leadership style she spoke of creating a family atmosphere in her business, of looking after people and making them feel cherished. At times, she believed, she may have been too soft with employees, couching the difficult messages to such an extent that the situation then got out of control.

On a personal note, she reflected on the difficulty of being a working mother, the feeling of being torn in two and the isolation that resulted from lack of time to network. In terms of whom she has learnt from, and who continues be most influential in her life, she spoke of her three daughters; their energy and positivity and their ability to make strong and lasting relationships with their peers provide continued inspiration. In terms of regrets, she wished she had been braver and less conservative with respect to her investment decisions. There were times, she admitted, when she should have said, 'to hell with it', and thrown more money behind a particular investment opportunity.

On the future, with her children are almost grown up, she spoke of her desire to 'give something back to the community'. While the intention was not expressed at this time, in hindsight, some of these reflective comments may have hinted at a forthcoming change in her career direction. In view of this, it was not surprising to hear then, that in 2009, just just two years after the second interview, the business was sold and the individual in question took early retirement. This phase of her life was short-lived. Eager for a new challenge, in 2010 she assumed the position of executive chairman of a company providing integrated software for managing R&D experiments, project management, learning and quality. She continues in this capacity today. She has also realised her intention to contribute to the community through her involvement in a number of business mentoring and entreprise programmes.

### 4.3.4 Concluding Commentary

This case illustrates how a career change, (from engineer to owner-managing director), is accompanied not only by a change in identity, but by a modification in the knowledge that is prioritised. As the individual at the centre of this case comes to terms with her new role, and the knowledge inherent in that role, certain emotions are evident. There is a degree of anxiety with respect to assuming a leadership position in the absence of any 'knowledge of how to be a leader'. There is a sense of loss and a sense of grieving for the days when she could 'fiddle around with the technology', and a degree of enviousness with respect to those who can continue to do so.

In the time interval between phase one and phase two of this study, the distance between her 'old' and 'new' life widens. The sentiment that she has lost her capability in terms of talking the technology; that she has given away her voice, is a powerful indicator of the extent to which she feels she has left her professional background behind, relying on others to fill in the perceived knowledge gaps.

Through her experience of operating her own business there is a form of wisdom, an appreciation of the value of imperfection and a celebration of learning through failure. There is a growing awareness of the broader context within which she carries out her role; and an acknowledgement of the continuous struggle faced in achieving a balance in her roles as wife, mother, lapsed-engineer, owner-manager/leader and member of the broader business community. In the end, there is a feeling of resolution. There is acceptance of her perceived short-comings, and a growing recognition of the importance of her children in terms of her own learning and development.

## 4.4 Participant C

### 4.4.1 Biography

Participant C graduated with a Masters in Engineering Science in 1971. Following a period of time working with a consulting engineering firm in the US, he returned to Ireland in the late 1970's and joined his present employment. He was appointed managing director of the company in 1979 and group managing director in 1995. In the year 2000 he became chief executive of the company, and began its international expansion in 2005. In the late 1990's he undertook a Diploma in Business Leadership and Corporate Direction, which was followed by an open-university MBA .

### 4.4.2 Participant C's Story: Part One

The one line descriptor under Table C1 (Appendix 2), encapsulates the trajectory described by this participant in the course of our first meeting. At this point, he had occupied a senior management position for close on seventeen years. Reflecting on his changed role he acknowledges: "I often say, I used to be an engineer, it's a long time now since I was into the guts of the acutal engineering design process; I was a specialist and now it's more important that I am a Jack of all trades and yet at the same time I have to give a certain amount of leadership." This statement is indicative of this respondent's perception of the dual aspects of leadership. First, there is the transition from specialist to generalist. Elaborating on this difficulty he suggested: "We take very good engineers and we give them the title of manager, and very often we lose a good engineer but we don't necessarily get a good manager." In short, the intended metamorphosis is not always realised with the 'Jack of all trades' becoming 'a master of none'. Second, there is the consequent dissimilation that was associated with being elevated to a senior management role. In this respect, Participant C remarked, "You need to stand up there and pretend you know *the* way, when it is not like that."

Much of the discussion on the aforementioned issues was framed in the context of his recent promotion, (two and a half years previously), to group managing director. Three challenges were associated with this new appointment: Firstly, there was the demand arising from the sheer volume of information he had to deal with; secondly, there was the pressure to keep up to speed with new developments; and thirdly, there was the need to balance the day-to-day with the strategic. In light of such tensions there was an overt acceptance and a degree of solace in the fact that others knew much more than he did. In this respect he remarked, "I can't be the IT expert, the HR expert and the marketing expert, in a way its far better if others know more than I do, that wouldn't bother me in the slightest, indeed I'd be comforted by that." The related issue of control was raised in this context. For this leader, there was an overt acceptance that he could not control everything, his control was confined to raising issues, while leaving others to solve them: "The control I have at the moment is to control the agenda, trying to come up with the big issue and then there are lots of people around here who will direct their attention to it," he explained.

The sense of acceptance that one could not know or control everything did not impede attempts to update and expand his own knowledge. In this regard he spoke of a dearth of continued professional development received in the first twenty years of his career; when, partly through a sense of personal curiousity and the desire to 'treat himself to a little bit of training', he undertook an MBA. Here he related incidents of reading course material in airports and preparing assignments in hotel rooms. While he expressed the view that much management theory can be mechanistic, he gratefully acknowledged the manner in which business education has forced him him to 'stand outside the company' and to go beyond his own subjectivity. In this context, he compared his learning to acquiring a new vocabulary and related instances of how he continues to run the company through what he called these 'objective filters'. This desire to remain objective appeared to be particularly important to him, being a topic he returned to throughout the course of the interview. For instance, alongside formal education, he also spoke of the value of consultants in getting 'a true picture' of what it was like to work in his company. In this vein he commented, "I could look out the window and say they are all happy, sure they were all happy ten years ago anyway, but he, (the consultant), is going at it from an objective point of view and he is getting very real and gutsy reactions."

The most challenging aspect of leadership for this participant was mastering the ability to 'keep close to continuous change'. In this context he spoke of the unprecedented changes that had occurred in the organisation in the past five years and the liklihood of even greater changes in the next five. He conceded an inability to predict future changes, attributing greater importance to the idea of being open to change rather than trying to 'get a fix on it'. On the subject of continuous change and the associated adaptation, a particular concern of his was the organisation's inability to capture individual learning. In this regard, he commented: "We are not a learning organisation, even though we learn a lot." This, he suggested, stemmed from a project-based environment wherein the movement of staff between projects does not facilitate sharing of knowledge between individuals. With the sense that this was an issue that he needed to resolve, Participant C brought our first interview to a close.

### 4.4.3 Participant C's Story: Part Two

From the outset, the second meeting engendered a sense of a changed reality. On a brief tour of the company's new offices, Participant C declared: "My world has changed from running an Irish company with all its business in Ireland to an international company with twenty five offices." As he spoke he pointed out the related symbolism of the current reality of operating a 24:7 business. For instance, in the reception area a clock, masquerading as a map, highlighted the potential to do business throughout the world on a twenty-four hour basis; while in the open-plan offices and hallways pictures of international projects adorned the walls. The story of how this journey evolved became the central topic for discussion. Three interelated aspects were emphasised: The move to chief executive, the expansion of the business overseas, and a changed organisational culture. A chronological review of these events provides greater clarity. Particpant C took over as chief executive in May 2000 almost three years after our first meeting. While several facets of this transition were explored in our conversation, they tend to sit neatly within three different time-frames: the initiation period, the transitional period of settling in and making his mark and a final period of letting go in preparation for exit.

The first four years that followed his appointement to chief executive were described as the toughest years of this participant's entire career. As an outsider taking over from the business founder, it was a time of loneliness, stress, anxiety, self-doubt and changing perceptions: "Others see you differently and you see them differently," he confided. The middle period, moving the company overseas and rejeuvinating the management team, was marked by excitement without the associated stress of the first period. The final period was predominantly concerned with planning for succession.

The immediacy of retirement at the time of the second interview resulted in a more intense discussion of this issue, with a number of related aspects being explored. Amongst these, was the issue of timing. Participant C spoke of what he called 'a time to stay' and 'a time to go', one should not leave it too late, he suggested and more importantly one should plan for an orderly succession. On the subject of leave-taking, on the one hand there was a sense of freedom, or a burden eased, "Every CEO carries around an invisible ruck-sack with a lot of heavy rocks," he said, "I will be handing that over to my sucessor, so I will be mightly relieved." On the other hand, there was an admission of the difficulties of letting go and the need 'to practice' in preparation

for the ultimate departure. Having attended interviews for his successor, he recalled the strain of remaining silent, although he felt like 'kicking people under the table,' acknowledging the need to accept he is no longer centre stage, as he concludes, "It's no longer about me now, it's about them."

Reflecting on the overall journey he had taken, and to some extent drawing the three periods (newly appointed, mid career and towards retirement), together, Participant C described his role as chief executive as being responsible for 'taking a map of the world and putting the dots in different places, essentially mapping out the path of international expansion. His sucessor's challenge, he suggested, is to join up those dots, achieving the synergies and collaborations that come with global expansion. This he explained is something he cannot do in the time he has left. In this regard he spoke of the effect of different time horizons on prioritising one's goals. His sense of 'being on the finishing line' brought forth a degree of urgency in terms of 'tying up as many of the knots' that he considered possible. He admitted that in the final two years in the CEO role he had accelerated his pace of work and had become a lot more impatient, and questioning in terms of the time-frames associated with particular tasks. Age was introduced as an explanatory factor here. In this respect he felt that once you reached your sixties you have a different view on life and your own mortality: "all that kind of stuff is going on inside you", he explained. Here, in a manner that almost brought this part of the conversation full circle, he spoke of the desire of some leaders (or despots), to remain on forever. Once again he emphasised the need to retire at the optimum time, which, he clarified, is very much context dependant.

This participant was was re-interviewed at a critical juncture in his life. Stepping down from the position of CEO in six months time, he would remain in a directorship role for a further three years at which point he would retire. Not surprisingly, the substantial and life-changing nature of these events fostered a degree of reflection not apparent in the previous interview. Deliberations centred on lessons learned and advice he would give to his successor. Two categories were identifiable: lessons for business in general and lessons on leadership. On the former, he singled out the previous chairman as someone he had learnt most from. He, (the chairman), always encouraged him to think at least three years ahead, to see the big picuture, to take control where you can, (particularly in your internal environment) and not to get overly tied up by the strategic

plan, but to deviate, or plan emergently as opposed to rigidly. On the latter he distinguished between management as steady process and leadership as dis-location, making impact, or 'doing wild things' (in his case, taking the business to China). In a manner reminiscent of the first interview he spoke of engineers as being very good at steady process, getting into the detail, getting the job done. He mused on the progression from engineer to manager to leader; questioning the point at which one stops being an engineer and becomes a manager, and stops being a manager and becomes a leader. He admitted his desire to be remembered not so much as a good manager, but as a good leader, as he does not think management is what is needed to run company in a period of rapid change. In this sense he would like to think he has grown beyond his engineering days. He accredits his MBA with taking him out of that comfort zone (wherein engineers gravitate towards figures), and providing him with the vocabulary and concepts to think strategicaly. In this regard there is almost a direct repetition of the sentiments expressed in the first interview.

Having distinguished between management and leadership, he expanded on his own leadership philosophy. Central to this was the idea of being yourself, not trying to emulate your predecessor, playing to your strengths and relying on others to fill in the gaps. In this regard, he believed your style, 'the way you do your strengths' was significant. He favoured a collegiate, persuasive, participative style. He believed leading by example and adapting your style to suit followers was critical. Again the importance of context came in here. He talked about the challenges inherent in working in a professional services firm, where "all your senior people are stars, who don't want to be told what to do." His advice once again veered towards recognition and acceptance. The best you can do is allign these people towards the vision with the route towards achievement being of secondary importance.

The third and final thread in the discussion on leadership turned to what this participant might have done differentlly. Here he spoke about his earlier unwillingness to trust his gut feel, and his inclination to agonise and not move the business along at a faster pace. With the benefit of hindsight he might have been too collegiate and his advice to his sucessor would be to 'push and prod' in the sense of gaining more momentum. Despite these misgivings, there is a sense of acceptance, a sense that he takes pride in his achievements and does not beat himself up over what might have been.

### 4.4.4 Concluding Commentary

The tendancy to closely associate oneself with the organisational role that one occupies is clearly illustrated in the first half of this case. At the outset this participant recalls, how he used to be an engineer, but it's a long time since he was into 'the *guts* of the actual design process'. As group managing director, it is more important that he is a 'Jack of all trades'. Inherent in this transition there is a requirement for new knowledge and new skills; which often times the conversion process, (constituting little more than a change in job title), does not address.

For this participant however, perhaps the greatest challenge associated with the transition to leadership, is to create the impression that, as a leader, he truly knows 'the way forward'. In acknowledging what he considers as 'the pretence' of 'the all-knowing leader', there is a recognition of what 'leadership knowledge' entails. Participant C associates the leadership role with knowing the right questions, not formulating the answers; it is up to others to provide the answers and for him to know how to capture and retain that knowledge. Identifying and formulating these issues or questions requires an objectivity, which neccesitates 'learning a new language' through formally studying business management concepts or/and relying on so-called expert knowledge in the form of external consultants.

The interval between the two time periods provides evidence of substantive changes. A changed business landscape encouraged a move to internationalisation and a corresponding change in the company's culture. As a central player in this transformation, these broader contextual changes are once again reflected in the knowledge that is prioritised. The move to the CEO role is perceived in different phases, or rites of passage almost. The initiation phase brings another change in identity, once again others see him differently, and he sees them differently; knowing how to manage his emotions is critical here as he recalls the early struggle, the stress, anxiety and loneliness that this period entailed. The transitional phase is more about acquiring management skills, how to take the company overseas, how to build the management team. In the exit or leave-taking stage, we find this participant in preparation for his retirement. This phase of his professional life requires knowledge of a different kind, knowledge that is more akin to good judgement or wisdom. Here

he speaks of judging the right time to go, accepting that it is no longer all about him and prioritising what he can and cannot do in the time that is left. Acquiring this knowledge requires a form of rehearsal, as he relates incidences of 'practicing letting go'. In contrast to acquiring a new language, (that was very much a part of his initial move into a leadership role), he must now learn how to remain silent. Between stepping down from the CEO role and his retirement, he informs of his intention to assume an interim directorship role for a period of one year. Here there is a sense of experimentation, one final dress-rehearsal, a dummy-run as he gets one step closer towards the ultimate moment of departure.

## 4.5 Participant D

### 4.5.1 Biography

Participant D has a BA and a Masters in English Literature. Prior to joining the organisation with which he was affiliated at the time of both interviews, he spent some time in academia.

### 4.5.2 Participant D's Story: Part One

When Participant D assumed the role of executive director in 1979, he entered, what he described as 'an organisation that was going downhill'. With an infrastructure that had not been upgraded for a number of years, an operating system that allowed for wastage and mis-appropriation of funding, and revenues that were in continuous decline; the impending challenges were significant. Yet, despite this very obvious need for change, it was, he suggested, an organisation where 'change was not on the agenda'.

The underlying resistance to change was in part attributed to the extant age profile within the organisation, at thirty five, Participant D was considerably younger than the prevailing fifty year age average. Additional barriers arose from the organisation's structure, whereby, in the absence of line management, each department was run like a separate fiefdom, with each vying to protect its own 'turf'. These factors were exacerbated by a somewhat unusual governance structure. As an art's organisation the director was answerable to a voluntary board that included shareholders and representatives of both local council and national councils. Engaging with these stakeholders, was, as Participant D described it, the 'real pressure point' in terms of introducing any form of change.

Following a long and stressful period during which he uncovered fraud and consequently reduced the head-count, the board finally conceded to to the introduction of middle- management. It was only at this point that Participant D felt he was in a position to pursue his designated role, the strategic development of the organisation. He described this role as being 'mainly about programming, but ending up doing everything else'. "You need a combination of knowledge to run an organisation such as this one," he added. Elaborating on this combination, he set forth on 'the triple A's,' the three core knowledge requirements of his role: the academic, the artistic and the administrative.

In academic terms, with a background that was principally in english literature, he spoke of an expectation to know the seamless continuity of drama from ancient greek times, through renaissance times through to the development of european theatre. While he acknowledged that this knowledge needed to 'be in place', it was not, he admitted, something he would have to call upon too often.

In artistic terms, he emphasised the need to understand the cultural history of various art forms and to be familiar with newer ones, (such as film), that have emerged and developed in the last century. While he recognised artistic knowledge as important, he differntiated between it, and what he described as the criticality of 'artistic judgement'. This, he described as having a strong sense of idealism, a vision, a belief in your own instincts and how you want 'to mix your hand in programming terms'.

The final A, arts administration and management systems, he acknowledged as a part of the job in which he found himself lacking, yet, it was an aspect of the job that he, and indeed other professionals, were under increased pressure to know more about. With 'the arts' now recognised as an industry, there is, he explained, an increased recognition that those who occupy management or leadership positions within this 'industry' are only qualified in a particular discipline and are not actually prepared or trained for the commercial reality of turning a discipline into a business. As a consequence, many of those in similar roles to himself now have some form of management qualification.

From his own perspective, he acknowledged that most of his administrative and organisational ability was 'brought out by the task in hand'. Having only ever read one management book, Charles Handy's 'The Empty Raincoat', he admitted to being totally reliant on his 'impressionistic and opioninated approach' in managing the organisation. In this respect, he recalled feeling 'a bit put out and slightly off his game' when he first encountered the sort of 'business jargon' which he considers people use to 'impress or get around one another'. In his early years in the job he recalled being asked to put together a business plan, and how he tried for a year, with his narrative going one way and the figures the other. His failure to deliver was attributed to the absence of certain skills, (such as accountantcy or finance) which he did not have and which were not provided for him. In the absence of these supports the struggle continued.

Returning to the subject of formal business education, in an ideal world, he believed, he would, have taken time out to address this knowledge gap. While he had considered part-time management education on more than one occasion, the pressures of work and an unwillingness to sarcrafice his home-life did not facilitate this option. As a consequence, much of his learning has been informal. In this respect, he explained, "I am a customer myself, so I know what people want; I relate very well to a number of people I have met on the theatre circuit, though I don't get to go to too many conferences for funding reasons." While he acknowledged that a certain amount of information 'flows to him' through various publications, he admitted to reading less and less, due to the pressures of home and work-life. There comes a time, he

explained, when you end up reading the reviews, rather than getting to the original source.

For Participant D, the most difficult aspect of management, (that one is ill-prepared for), is acquiring the knowledge of how to deal with people, how to manage them and how to motivate them. This, he perceived as his greatest deficiency. Having come from a mixture of academic, intellectual and artistic life, where one is working with intensly driven, and highly motivated individuals; it is something of 'a sea-change to find oneself surrounded by people who are in mundane, poorly paid jobs, he explained. While acknowledging the important roles that these people play: "Theatres are like circuses or fairgrounds somebody has got to sweep up the sawdust from the spit from the beer," there was a sense that, to some extent at least, he regretted his fate.

While administrative knowledge and people skills were seen as his greatest deficiency, he also related feeling quite vulnerable with respect to certain aspects of the artistic domain, such as ballet, where he spoke of having 'a shallow appreciation', or music, where he admitted to 'needing someone with a good ear'. With opera not being an art form his generation were intimately familiar with, it was only with a degree of irony that he suggested: "I am running an opera house that has lost all contact with opera." Not feeling entirely comfortable with these genres, and yet having to make judgements upon their suitability for particular audiences, resulted in a degree of exposure as was evident when he admitted: "Sometimes I am in a darkened auditorium looking at a work and estimating its worth and I feel quite at sea."

In terms of future challenges, he acknowleded the significance of recent advancements in technology, but disputed the idea that it would create fundamental change in his 'business': "Going from ancient old lime light to an intelligent lighting system isn't a huge change, it's just lighting effects," he remarked. The real challenge, he suggested, was to keep up with changing tastes which are largely affected by economic prosperity. "In the recession of 1980's, people went away from experimentation, back to what they know, what was safe, and as director I had to clue into that," he explained. At the end of the day, he concluded, running an organisation that offers 'artistic and cultural entertainment' is all about tuning into what people want; "it is the times that

are a changing and the people around you that are changing and you have to read into or feed into that zeitgeist," he explained.

On the likelihood that he will continue to occupy the directorship role he was upfront and honest about his own feelings of inadequacy. In this respect he posed the thought provoking question, "people are surprised you are in charge of an organisation, surely there is someone better out there, am I here by the Peter principle or what?" The significance of this question was to become much more apparent as the story of Participant D unfolded.

### 4.5.3 Participant D's Story: Part Two

At the outset, Participant D reflected on the timing of our previous meeting in 1997; at that stage he had come through the first difficult eight years in an organisation that was still on the brink of insolvency and struggling to survive. He admitted, he may not have been completely frank on the extent of the pressure he was under at that time. He related incidents, (one before the last interview and one since), of times he felt stressed and burnt out, times when he had thrown in the towel, lost his compass point, crashed and was unable to turn in for work. He recalled periods of self-doubt when he wondered if he was any good and questioned his ability to do the job. He spoke of taking time out to go fishing, to rest and reflect, and to find new goals and motivations, some ray of hope to lift the despair and help him to move forwards. The sense of a man who has struggled to survive is best illustrated in his reponse to my question concering the major events that had occurred since our last meeting: "I suppose the main event is that I managed to stay in the job."

The turning point in the difficult fortunes of this organisation occurred post 1997 (the time of the initial interview). Extensive refurbishment and an expanded programme offering brought the organisation past the point of mere survival towards sustainability. Ten years later, in the same position, working on the same tasks, Participant D perceived a deepening as opposed to a broadening of his knowledge: "I think I have got to know more and more about less and less," he suggested, hence the heading 'On becoming a fox' in relation to Table D2 in Appendix 2.

On reminding him of the triple A's (academic, artistic and adminstrative), spoken of in the previous interview, he acknowledged, while these are still part of his job, the emphasis amongst them had changed. For instance, whereas academic interests might have felt closer ten years ago (when we first met), they are now further and further behind him. Evidence of this he suggested is the sense of separation that has occured between him and his college friends, with their pursuits being very different from his own.

On the artistic front, while there is still a need for him to combine artistic appreciation with administrative ability, he acknowledges a growing acceptance that he will never be the flamboyant director with the baton, surrounded by a dance or theatre company. His role, as he now sees it is to create the conditions to facilitate artistic endeavour. In metaphorical terms he spoke of 'taking his academic hat off and putting his artistic hat to one side', which suggests that while he has moved somewhat away from both the academic and artistic, the latter remains in closer proximity to his daily pursuits.

While the academic and artistic interests are no longer *central* to his directorship role, they have not totally disappeared, but remain in a supporting capacity. In this context he described them as being like 'trainer wheels', that keep him balanced and grounded. The choice between these pursuits, he believed was absolutely necessary; being in a position where he could not do everything, he had 'tried on the role of producer, manager, chief executive and he had decided to stay with it'. There is a sense of acceptance here, a mellowing of the man previoulsy encountered that is verified in other references where he talks of 'growing old gracefully' and accepting without complaint that he is now 'the elder lemon' in the company.

Participant D's journey which began with a fight for survival and ended with a sense of acceptance, brought new knowledge in two areas. First there is evidence of increased self-awareness. On being asked what he had learned throughout the intervening years, he replied: "I have learned an awful lot about myself, not in a self-obsessed narcissistic sort of way, but I have learned to recognise my own strengths and weaknesses, I have learned how to deal with people." The addendum 'knowing how to deal with people', is particularly interesting here, in one part, because it was earlier (in the first phase of the research), recognised as one of the greatest deficiencies

in his character; in another part because of the manner in which it is closely linked to his increased self-knowledge. In coming to know more about himself, and presumably in moderating his perceived weaknesses, Participant D has developed his ability to deal with others. As an older man he describes himself as being more personable, political and consensual than his younger impulsive, dogmatic and confrontational self.

These changes in Participant D's approach are partly attributed to age, 'no longer a young man, he sees himself as 'not so brittle or confrontational.' He is, he suggests, less inclined to do everything by conviction, though he still works from conviction, he trys to 'manipulate' a consensus. The changed context also played a part here. Participant D recalled the earlier years, when as a younger man, (the new broom), he had 'to root out, or sweep out a lot of bad practice' and 'rattle the cage a bit stronger' against an older staff. Having weathered the storm he is now in the more comfortable position of finding himself surrounded by staff of his own choosing; as a consequence the need to be dogmatic and confrontational is diminished.
In the context of 'weathering the storm' or his struggle to survive, Participant D made a number of references to 'learning through hard, bitter experience, and being purely frustrated'. Observing other people, particularly older people was a rich source of learning. Here he explained what he called the 'myth of maturity', that one behaves better in old age. Age he believed reveals the essential personality, which does not always amount to good behaviour. He spoke of learning how not to behave through the difficulties he experienced in dealing with a board of aging directors, politicians and old fashioned merchant princes, "who failed to recognise it was time to pass on the torch; hanging on till their bony old hands were scorched." With a comparision to King Lear, and a reference to the idea of life imitating art, in terms of the knowledge he was gaining through observing older people; perhaps, he mused, what I am dealing with is not so far away from my original profession after-all.

In the context of his own learning and development he spoke of family for the very first time. He told of how he learned from his children, each of whom brought out something in him, challenging all of his preconceptions. In this respect, he related a story of his son being bullied in school and how in one sense while it was terribly traumatic, in another sense it was fascinating in terms of its contribution to his

understanding of human behaviour. Experience of this situation, he believed, made him more sensitive, something that he has transferred to the workplace in introducing policies on bullying and intimidation. Women and the absence of male egos were singled out as a particularly positive influence. In this context, he spoke of his wife and female colleagues from whom he believed he had learned a great deal. In terms of formal learning, once again he acknowledged the absence of any management education, which he has since attempted to address through participating in a number of occassional courses on leadership.

On reflection, he does not believe he could have done anything differently. As a chief executive or director you are not a solo operator he explained. Acknowledging the impact of the political context, he described the organisation within which he worked as one 'where the art of politics meets the politics of art'. He admitted there are things he is not proud of, in particular he recalled a time when he believed the organisation had lost its way. Moving into the business of a late night club, he describes a form of identity crisis wherein the organisation became a 'giant pub with an opera house attached'. The rhetroic and the reality were miles apart, he recalled. Though it was considered morally ambivalent it was financially necessary, he explains. Then again, he adds, one can always justify one's behaviour on the grounds of survival; that is always the difficultly, balancing the commerical aspects with the cultural interests. This, he remarked is where you really have to examine your conscience, and that process and that honesty is not always easy, sometimes it is easy to go with the line of least resistance he concluded.

### 4.5.4 Concluding Commentary

This case illustrates, while a combination of knowledge, is needed in a leadership role, (succinctly identified as the 3A's, academic, artistic and administrative knowledge), parity of esteem does not exist between the different types. While it is important to have one's academic credentials in place, in the context in question, as director, this knowledge is not often called upon. Indeed, the use of the metaphor 'taking my academic hat off,' provides a sense that one's professional background becomes almost redundant as one progresses to a senior management role.

Artistic knowledge, which is associated with understanding, instinct and judgement also takes a back seat; speaking of 'putting his artistic hat to one side,' this individual now recognises he will never be the flamboyant director with baton in hand, but will rather facilitate and create the conditions for artistic endeavour to flourish.

In terms of knowledge prioritisation, the emphasis then is clearly on the third A, the administrative aspects of the job. Arts organisations are increasingly recognised as 'real industry players' whose leaders must deal with the reality of turning a discipline into a commercially viable enterprise. While adminstrative knowledge, (equated with management skills), is now afforded priority, as previously alluded to, the other types of knowledge, the academic and the artistic continue to play a lesser role. The metaphor of 'the training-wheels' used in conjunction with these knowledge types is perhaps indicative of the support they provide, and the manner in which, (although they are not highly visible), continue to keep this leader balanced, grounded and protected. For instance, whilst one's academic qualifications are no longer central to the directorship role, they provide a certain authenticity to the role occupier, as this participant comments, "my academic credentials give a certain amount of street cred. with the board."

It is at the administrative level that the greatest deficiency in knowledge is perceived; in particular with respect to dealing with and motivating people who operate at the lower end of the career spectrum. In the absence of any formal business management qualifications, much of this knowledge is innate, experientially and organically developed in the face of the tasks in hand. In the artistic domain, this participant also recognises inadequacies in terms what he knows. In particular, he speaks of the superficiality of his knowledge with respect to certain artistic genres, such as opera and ballet; accepting that these are areas that he cannot speak with any great authority on, and acknowledging his need for continued support.

Reflecting on the years since our first meeting, Participant D perceived a deepening, as opposed to a broadening of knowledge, described as 'knowing more and more about less and less.' In particular, he speaks of self-development, a growing inner strength and endurance in the face of the difficulties he has encountered; and a sense of acceptance with the choices that he has made. As a consequence, he acknowledges

greater self-knowledge (particularly of his own strengths and weaknesses), and relatedly greater knowledge of how to deal with other people.

On his greater knowledge of how to deal with others, while the passage of time has brought a changed context, (he is now surrounded by a self-selected team), it is age that is provided as the main explanatory factor here. Now in his fifties, Participant D describes himself as a man who is less brittle, less confrontational and more comprimising than the man I previously met; as a consequence, although he remains realistic of the political constraints that exist within any organisational context, interpersonal difficulties have significantly diminshed.

In terms of how he has come to know what he now knows, there is an evident gentility or mellowness with respect to his endeavours. Rejecting what he terms the 'male-egos and the win-win relationships', there is recognition of the 'softer' sources of knowledge as he emphasises learning from his wife, his children, and his female colleagues. Observation and reflection come to the fore as he talks of the 'bad behaviour' of ageing family members and an elderly board of directors. The re-introduction of the ageing factor here, his reference to understanding 'the myth of maturity' ('old age doesn't mean you will behave any better'), and his earlier recollections on what he has learned from his children's adolescence, is perhaps, his way of encapsulating the essence of what he has truly learned overtime, the very difficult business of growing up.

## 4.6 Participant E

### 4.6.1 Biography

A chartered accountant by profession, having worked with an number of accountancy firms, Participant E, became managing director of a subsidiary of an international brewing group in the late 1980's. He remained with this company for approximately twenty years, during which time he acted in an advisory capacity to a number of voluntary organisations. He completed a Masters in Executive Leadership in 2009.

### 4.6.2 Participant E's Story: Part One

The company at the centre of this case has a long history in the brewing industry. Initially a family business, it has changed ownership a number of times over the years.

When Participant E joined the company in 1988 it had earlier become a subsidiary of an international brewing group. A chartered accountant by profession, he came into the business on a short-term contract (originally six weeks), to replace the exiting financial controller. Remaining on with the company for a further four years he was offered the post of managing director at the age of thirty. At the time of the first interview he had spent almost five years in this post.

Participant E recalled the initial period following appointment as being a time of great difficulty. Indeed, he was of the opinion, had he taken up the position of managing director at a later stage, he may not have been so dogged and determined, and as a consequence, he may not have survived. Within that early period he identified two critical junctures: The first in 1994, when, as a result of the company loosing almost fifty percent of its business, it was necessary to reduce the company workforce by a corresponding fifty percent. The second, a year later, when once again the company was targeted for acquisition, becoming a subsidary of one of the largest brewers in the British Isles.

Looking back on the aforementioned events Participant E spoke of the factors he considered as vital, not only for success, but for survival. Firstly, he emphasised the need to have knowledge, (although not in any great detail), of what is happening in all areas of the business. In this context, while particular reference was made to 'knowledge on the personnel front', knowledge of the marketplace, (information on customers, brands and competitors), was prioritised. Lack of knowledge was not considered to be problematic, 'information' was considered easily accessible, either internally or externally.

Once accessed, this participant placed particular emphasis on the need to 'action knowledge', as opposed to getting overly caught up in what competitors knew, or what competitors were doing. For him, getting things wrong was considered less damaging than pondering on issues or being inactive. In this context, creating (although he used the word 'forcing'), a decision-making culture was a very much part of his agenda. An essential aspect of this, he believed, was surrounding oneself with a well motivated, highly competent team. For him, leadership, was the route to achieving this, with two aspects of leadership afforded emphasis: first, having a leadership style

that encouraged and brought 'good' people on board, and second, openly communicating with the members of that team.

On the subject of open communication he related instigating a system of bi-annually communicating the results of the company and future targets to all senior management and staff, and creating an open forum for questions and suggestions. On a short-term basis he spoke of monthly briefs with staff-teams that encouraged two-way communication on key issues. He dismissed any notion that open communication could lead to greater demands from employees, diminshed management power, or a threat to one's position; emphasising instead the advantage his organisation has over bigger bureucratic organisations in getting things done very quickly. In this context he related his philosophy of 'thinking big and acting small', which, he suggested was at the core of his company's competitive advantage.

Throughout our conversation, Particpant E returned again and again to the topics of 'having good people', 'communicating with them', 'recognising them' and 'rewarding them'. For this reason, it was not surprising, that the interview closed with his over-arching claim: "I suppose the key thing for me within business is leadership, if you can get that right you have done the job."

### 4.6.3 Participant E's Story: Part Two

The second interview occurred in December 2008, a very challenging time for the industry and a time of great uncertainty for the company. Participant E spoke of 'a new Ireland', a seismic shift in industry fortunes as a result of increased regulation, a tarnished public image, and a shift in consumer tastes and preferences. A raft of legislation including random breath testing, the smoking ban and the groceries order (which permitted below cost selling), had particulary reduced 'on trade' consumption. This, coupled with an increased consumption of wine and spirits, (much of which occured in the home), had drastically impacted beer sales. Furthermore, alcohol in general was receiving increasingly bad press, as issues such as the higher than average european consumption levels and teenage binge drinking were continously highlighted in the media. Although not specificaly mentioned, this time period also co-incided with the the beginning of the global economic downturn and the end of the so called Celtic Tiger, the period of economic growth that occurred between 1995 and 2007.

In response to the aforementioned pressures, Participant E spoke of the need to change one's approach to doing business: moving from richer, to leaner, meaner and swifter. In this regard reference was made to delayering and reduced formality in the organisation's culture. Sitting in a building that dated back to the eighteenth century, the portraits of former merchant princes were very much in contrast with the casual mode of dress that prevailed. Participant E commented, "when you came here ten years ago we would all have worn suits, now we only wear suits to meet the bankers."

While organisation structures and symbols (such as dress codes), exhibited a reduction in formality, the opposite situation prevailed with respect to staff processes and procedures. In this context, Participant E, spoke of greater formalisation in systems and procedures related to: staffing, performance reviews, training and grievance systems; all of which were directed at energising the workforce.

In a manner reflective of the earlier interview he once again emphasised the importance of people: "People are the ace card, you can have all the strategy in the world, but if you don't have the right people, it is of little value", he commented. On this point he expressed gratitude for having virtually the same team around him as he had ten years previously. This, he believed, reflected a commited and motivated workforce, as opposed any underlying malaise.

On the changed nature of his own position in the intervening time-period, he explained how he was now chairman of the company as distinct from managing director. This meant increased contact with the international parent company, which for him had become a rich source of learning. He also spoke of voluntary participation in activities outside the domain of his business, for example, local chambers of commerce and mentoring programmes for small businesses. Involvement in something one is passionate about outside of one's business was not only, he suggested, an opportunity to 'fly the company flag', but also a chance to refresh one's thinking.

In terms of the specifics of his role, he recognised, to a greater extent, that his leadership responsibility necessitated 'stepping away from the detail' and 'doing more thinking about mission, vision and the future dynamics of the industry'. Indeed, at

another point in the interview he spoke of a leader that he admired, who was not good on the nuts and bolts, yet was visionary and inspiring. He admits, that while in the past, he may have given insufficient attention to these bigger conceptual issues; this is something he is now attempting to address.

In terms of moving towards more conceptual thinking, at the time of the second interview this participant had just begun an MSc in Executive Leadership, his first venture into formal education in almost twenty years. While previous learning was, as he put it, 'mainly in the trenches', and while much of his ongoing learning is 'on the job', the value of formal learning was seen as an opportunity to take stock, time out from the fire-fighting to examine one's approach and question one's ability to do better in the future. Expresing a particular interest in learning more about leadership, he mentioned books that he had read such a Jim Collin's 'Good to Great' and Gary Hamel's 'Leading the Revolution'. There are similarities here with the first interview when the importance of leadership was again emphasised. In this instance however, he was much more forthcoming about his personal leadership philosophy. The salient aspects of this emphasised: creating inspirational leadership with a strong vision and a challenging mentality; energising people and creating a sense of fun, enthusiasm and celebration in the workplace; and leading by example and maintaining honesty and integrity throughout.

The greater emphasis on leadership in this interview may be explained by his immersion in the related literature as part of the MSc process; on the other hand it may relate to his earlier admittance, that he has now reached the stage where he can separate himself from the detail and assume more of a leadership role. The latter explanation appears plausible. For someone who came in on a six week contract, some twenty years later we find a man who has obvioulsy grown into, and continues to be challenged by the leadership role he has now found himself in. As previoulsy alluded to, at the time of the second interview, the industry and the company were at a critical and very uncertain juncture. On the day of the interview, as part of the worldwide drive towards consolidation in the brewing industry, the media announced the potential takeover of this company by a major international player. Although not discussed in detail, in the course of the interview some reference was made to the liklihood of this event which could lead to ultimate business closure. At this point,

Participant E spoke with some regret that he would be unlikely to ever achieve his ambition to return the business to private ownership. Three months after this second interview the business was sold and the existing plant was shut down. Meeting this participant in a different context some years later, only then did he admit just how frightening this particular time period had been.

### 4.6.4 Concluding Commentary

The chief executive in this case acknowledged his need for knowledge in all aspects of the business, whilst accepting he does not need that knowledge in any great detail. While he recognises the need to know about employment related practices such as recruitment and renumeration; knowledge of the marketplace is afforded priority. Lack of knowledge is not considered overly problematic, most of the knowledge needed is considered readily availabe and easily accessible. Participant E does not spend too much time worrying about what information his competitors have; indeed, for him, having knowledge does not equate with power; taking action on that knowledge, (irrespective of the mistakes one may make), is where the real power lies. In view of this, his main priority is to create an orgnisational climate that is conducive to decision-making. Achieving this, he suggestes, is primarily about knowledge sharing, sharing his knowledge *with* others and sharing *in* the knowledge of those that surround him. The link between knowledge and power is once again emphasised in this context as he dismisses the notion that knowledge sharing, dilutes power; or that the need to access others knowledge would in any sense diminish his leadership profile. Indeed the importance of shared-knowledge and his role in leading his team are very much central to his conceptualisation of leadership.

In the ten year interval between the two interviews, an increasingly competitive and regulated business environment has encouraged speed and economy with respect to business practices. While delayering and reduced formality in terms of dress-codes suggest that the openness in communication, so eagerly sought after in the first interview, has been fostered; practices with respect to evaluating, training and supporting employees have, on the other hand, become increasingly regulated. In the midst of such officialdom, now in the role of chairman, in some sense he appears to have extricated himself from the detail, engaging in a more ideological and futuristic view of the company. It is here that the real gaps in his knowledge become apparent.

Lamenting insufficient attention given to this 'bigger picture' in the past; he now recognises the need to go outside his comfort zone to redress this situation. While 'learning in the trenches' was considered sufficient for dealing with the day-to-day, nuts-and-bolts issues, the need for higher-level conceptual knowledge necessitates a more speculative, questioning and reflective approach to understanding his leadership role. For this chief executive this knowledge comes through formal management education.

## 4.7 Participant F

### 4.7.1 Biography

Having graduated with a masters degree in nineteenth century fine art Participant F became the curator of an organisation that operates within the cultural/artistic domain. At the time of the second interview he occupied the role of director.

### 4.7.2 Participant F's Story: Part One

A key topic in the first interview was the changed role of museums in today's society. According to Participant F, the original function of museums, to cherish aspects of the past, contrasts with their current role as major contributors to the growth and vitality of particular nations. Tracing this development, he initially presented the traditional idea of a museum, a place of curiosity to resort to on a wet Sunday afternoon, an attic or storehouse into which things were put if they were considered to be of any value or interest. Overtime, as the definition of what is considered to be of value or interest has changed, he explained, a more encompassing idea of musuems has emerged; with musuems now capturing popular culture, and general life-culture in the widest possible sense.

Elaborating on these developments Participant F spoke in some detail about the repositioning of museums, which resulted in them becoming an integral part of communities. No longer passive repositories, institutions or storehouses, museums have become more akin to vibrant, fluid and oftentimes industrial spaces of experimentation, innovation and interaction. Perceptions of museums as a societal

burden, or slight abberation, have increasingly been questioned as governments are recognising the important role that they can play in the generation of economic activity.

Having clearly delineated the historical path of museum development, Participant F then proceeded to focus on his own role and its associated requirements. In doing so he emphasised the broad range of knowledge needed; this extended from the philosophical basis on which a particular artist's work is based and the broader context within which it was developed (the theory of the theory), to issues such as what type of roofing one would use on an art gallery. He admitted, while the professional knowledge gained in his M.Lit. was indispensible, it was, he recognised, rarely used. In his current role as curator of a gallery that deals mainly in 18th and 19th century art, having a good command of english and some academic skills in accessing libraries and published sources was the basic skill-set required. In addition, it was important to know about fundraising, how to organise an international exhibition, to know about the regulations governing installations with regard to heat, light and humidity; or how to ensure the transport company will turn up, collect the exhibit and not tramp their muddy boots all over someone's carpet, thus ensuring the continuity in the lender-borrower relationship.

In terms of 'not-knowing', the aspect of the job in which he felt particularlly lacking and rigorously tested was on the information technology front. Technical skills such as how to type, how to get the printer working, how to use the internet, or send an email; while they may not be skills taught in arts administration courses, they are, he suggested, areas that could increase a museum's productivity three-fold. In terms of dealing with these issues, he spoke of being 'self-taught', having 'a do-it-yourself mentality', with long hours spent figuring things out in a rather dispiriting fashion.

Of other areas in which he may be found wanting, on the artistic front, given the breadth of the field, there are, he admitted, areas he knows virtually nothing about. Taking the example of an exhibition of Islamic art, he would, he suggested, be coming at it, 'just like a tourist, seeing what he is seeing and learning from what he sees'. On being tasked to present such an exhibition, he used the metaphor of 'cramming for an exam', 'needing to know the chapter headings' (not the detail of the Koran), and in

some instances ‘having to bluff’. This, he believed, is sometimes necessary; there is only so much one can retain. “When an exhibition is current, the knowledge will be at the top of your mind, come back a year later and it will be gone, you will be at sea,” he explained.

The existence of incomplete knowledge did not appear problematic for this participant. This was mainly attributed to the context within which he operated. On a day-to-day basis he spoke of the acceptability of knowing enough ‘to hack the conversation’, ‘make a reasonable amount of sense’, or ‘a reasonable fist of things’. This, he related to the idiosyncratic nature of the artistic domain. The existence of somewhat arcane and obtuse specialisms created an environment where, (unlike many other professions), the tendancy to ‘quiz one another on the detail’ did not exist. As an example of such specialisms he related the example of someone who completed their PhD thesis on the ink-blot drawings of Victor Hugo. Indeed, according to Participant F, in the current climate, knowledge of specific specialities was considered of secondary importance by comparision with having a sense of what was necessary to ensure finanical stability or liquidity for both borrowers or lenders alike. An additional reason why lack of knowledge was not considered problematic again related to the context within which he was operating. In the artistic domain, the consequences of error were considered minmal by comparsion with for example rocket science, he explained. This, he suggested, brought greater freedom, the latitiude to experiment, to explore and to be creative.

Taking the impact of context to a broader level, Participant F made comparision with the international scene, where museums often play a more visible, symbolic role, important markers that people can relate to, particularly in societies where there is a corresponding social disintegration. In this sense, he acknowledged being in the fortuitous position of operating within a less pressurised, less demanding, less testing environment. This, he pointed out, did not mean substandard operations; on the contrary, it provided greater freedom for innovation and experimentation than those operators tied into a popularising vein.

Continuing on this latter point the conversation returned to what was clearly a central theme of this interview, ‘the new museum concept’. Once again the traditional idea

of a museum was presented; a somewhat static institution in a specific urban location, with rows and rows of paintings, or labelled sculptures on plinths, parquet floors and little barriers to prevent you from touching anything. By way of contrast he then spoke about the Sache collection, a contemporary display held in a nineteenth century industrial building, a converted paint factory, in St. John's Wood. Participant F's vision for this gallery is to incorporate both of these approaches. With a permanent collection on permanent display and a new extension underway, this, he believed is achievable. In planning this extension he spoke of the state of 'flux' (not chaos, he quickly clarified), that exists in the museum world: "I just can't know what this new extension will be for, it could be anything from performance art, to a more technical display, to some form of installation, a ton of ice melting on the floor, I literally don't know", he added. Labelling this new space as 'a temporary exhibitions gallery' he suggested will capture the sense of flexibility, fluidity and openness that he is trying to achieve, allowing the gallery to take its place in the contemporary museum world.

### 4.7.3 Participant F's Story: Part Two

One of the biggest events in the history of this organisation occurred four years prior to our second meeting, when the then Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism announced that this organisation would be designated as a national cultural institution. This was a momentous decision in that the gallery would now be the first institution of its kind outside of the country's capital city. While the idea had been under discussion for a number of years, the catalyst for change was the government's belief that the city in question should have a lasting legacy following its earlier tenure as European Capital of Culture. According to Participant F, the announcement was greeted with a sense of celebration, pride and anticipation by those within the gallery; and a degree of speculation and almost envy by those without.

Despite the earlier perception that it was the best thing that could have happened for the organisation; in Participant's F words: "it was not the golden dawn that was hoped for". Reflecting on what he termed 'a painful, intense, transitionary period' the old adage 'be carful what you wish for', was quoted. While the elevated status meant increased notoriety, very little thinking had occurred on how this change would be implemented. Indeed the consequences in terms of the day-to day-operatons and future positioning of the gallery were far from clearcut.

Participant F compared his current situation to ‘being in a state of limbo’, in fact the word limbo was used several times in our conversation. “I don’t know where I am going and I don’t know where this organisation is going” he admitted. Part of the problem he explained is that the gallery no longer has a full-time administrator. Prior to becoming a national cultural institution, for historical reasons, the organisation was adminstered by an educational institution, which, while far from ideal, provided some support in terms of human resources and finance. The change in status resulted in a transfer of administrative responsibiliy to the Department of Arts, Sports and Toursim. No longer having recourse to the resources of the prior administrator, and not yet being fully integrated at a national level, the operation in question was, ‘bereft of support and left fending for itself’. In this regard Participant F spoke of a situation that ‘on the outside’ appeared to be conducting business as usual, while behind the scenes the organisation was ‘floundering and close to collapse’. Operating with a skeleton staff, in the absence of a curator or registrar, in international terms, resources were derisory. In view of this Participant F believed the organisation was ‘trying to manage the unmanagable’, being expected to perform like a national cultural institution while being resourced like a local operation.

With respect to his own role he related examples of multi-tasking, micro-managing and fire-fighting. Unlike others in his position (where it is now commonplace to have completed some training in arts adminsitration), he lacked any formal management training. Describing his day-to-day activities he used terms such as: ‘parking work’, ‘coping and keeping going’, ‘making it up as you go along’, drawing on ill-advised and well-meaning intuition’, or ‘using string and sellotape solutions to patch things up and get by’. All in all the picture painted was that of an individual struggling to survive through engaging in a range of fragmented and ad hoc activities.

On a personal level, he described himself as being at a very difficult crossroads. The attempted rescue plan is a proposed amalgamation of this institution with a larger one. What would this mean? While it would make economic sense, it would not, he admitted be the best chapter in the long history of this operation. Although it would provide the much sought after and necessary resourcing and support; it would also mean loss of independence whereby the gallery would become an outstation of the

larger operation. This would have significant consequences in terms of its artistic autonomy. Ironically, it would mean loosing the distinguishing feature that gained the attention of the government in the first place; the sense of innovation, experimentation and vitality and the ability to present a vibrant and interesting exhibition.

While the aforementioned implications are clearly not advantageous in terms of the organisation's future; (in a somewhat weary manner), Participant F confessed that at this point in time, he would welcome this decision and the solace and role clarity it would provide. The ideal outcome he mused would be to acquire the resources necessary to allow the organisation to continue with their 'laboratory type approach'. In fact, at an earlier stage, the idea of almagamating this operation with a third player (that holds a modern art collection), was mooted; for him this would have been more a more advantageous solution. On being questioned on the likelihood of this happening, he remained hopeful, saying 'the game isn't over yet'; while stressing the that the current situation was unsustainable: 'the cracks are too deep not to continue'.

On reflection, Participant F did not think he could have done things differently. Suggesting that the situation sounded a bit like a a Greek tragedy, while stressing his wish not to appear so fatalistic, he admitted to feeling somewhat powerless. Museums, he pointed out, to a certain extent, have their own life-blood; being part of the fabric of a society they are shaped by and respond to the prevailing conditions within that society. In this sense they do not fit neatly within the 'normal' strategic development mode. At the close of the interview this participant issued an invitation to return: Come back in a year, a year will tell a lot, he said. From a conventional viewpoint, this statement would would be atypical of the museum world; indeed sitting in an eighteenth century georgian building, the sense of timelessness was almost palpable. In this instance however it was entirely appropriate and provided re-newed emphasis to one of the central themes of this particular case: the changed nature of museums, from archaic static institutions, to innovative spaces of creativity and flux.

### 4.7.4 Concluding Commentary

This case illustrates the changed nature of museums, from organisations whose business was the storage of sacred objects or oddities, and whose economic survival was largely dependant on grand philanthropy or government support; to organisations

whose business is about the development of innovative, experimental, interactive programmes and market sensitive endeavours. The participant at the centre of this case, simultaneoulsy explores the redefined concept of a museum and his own place within it. With a academic background in 19th century art, he speaks of a professional knowledge, which, while indispensible, is rarely used. Much of the knowledge he requires is transient, tending to be task specific (for a particular exhibition), and time-specific (for the duration of that exhibition).

Given the myriad of archaic and obtuse specialisms that exist in an artistic domain and the reduced likelihood that that one will know, (or indeed need to know), the minutia of any one; and the mimimal consequences of error by comparison with other industries or sectors, lack of knowledge was not considered problematic in this context,

This is borne out in discussions on his role. As curator of an art gallery, Participant F considers his role in the wider context of museum operations, needing to be more of a generalist than a specialist; knowing everything from the history and philosophy of a particular piece of artwork, to knowledge of the type roofing best suited to an art gallery and everything else in between. As he speaks of the criticality of having a sense of financial stability and liquidity, over being a expert in any one artistic genre, the musuem world and his role within it is at once more closely alligned to the world of commerce.

Whilst he defines his role quite broadly, he is quite specific in terms of identifying the aspects of this role where he feels greatly lacking and most severly challenged. Developing a basic level of computer literacy and coming to grips with advances in information technology were deemed considerably demanding; requiring a learning by doing mentality which was particularly time-consuming and often times accompanied by a inner-struggle, between learning how to do it oneself or bringing in an outsider.

As previoulsy alluded to, the overriding emphasis in this first interview is on the changing nature of the museum value proposition; no longer repositories of objects, but spaces for innovation, creativity and flux. In line with this, although not overtly

alluded to, is the changed role of the museum professional. In the context of this research it is perhaps pertinent therefore to speak of museums as 'respositories of knowledge', and curators, as not so much keepers of artistic collections, but facilitators of ideas, questions and speculations.

The second interview brings forth a different scenario. While an elevation in status (from municipal gallery to national cultural institution), brings increased notoriety; the absence of a clear vision on how this change will be put into effect leads to an absence of role clarity. The associated anxiety is aptly captured in the repetitive use of the phrase 'being in limbo'. This limbo, or uncertain period of awaiting a resolution is much deeper than any lack of knowledge referred to in the first interview. Not only does this participant not know what is going to happen, he does not know what the eventual impact of each likely outcome might be and as a result does not know what he wants to happen. In this situation we witness an inner struggle, in his quest for some form of solace, he may, he admits, accept an outcome which he is aware may not be in the best interest of the gallery in the long-term. Thus, in the presence of real uncertainity, individual self-preservation comes to the fore.

## 4.8 Participant G

### 4.8.1 Biography

Participant G spent over thirty years in the public sector with twenty of these in a senior management role. He retired from this position exactly one year after our first meeting, yet continued his involvement with local communities. Particpant G holds a Diploma in Company Direction and an MBA.

### 4.8.2 Participant G's Story: Part One

As a senior manager in the public sector charged with overseeing the provision of local government services, from the outset, the span of the role and the extent of knowledge required by this participant was apparent. Particpant G spoke of his factory floor of 3,000 square miles, 300,000 people, 15% of public roads and one fifth of the coastline. Describing the demands placed upon him, he differentiated between what he called the 'the ordinary straightfoward aspects of the job' and the 'job of vision': 'doing the job' and 'owning the job', 'keeping the business going at breakneck speed, whilst thinking and planning'.

In terms of ‘doing the ordinary job’ he spoke of the need to be ‘knowledgeable’ in three areas: The fundamental operations of the county council, a knowledge of the county itself and a general knowledge of the environment within which the county council operates. The first two aspects he spoke about in some detail with only passing reference to the third. In terms of the first area, he focused on the legislation governing county council operations in housing, roads and sanitation. Being knowledgeable, in this regard, he explained, meant ‘going beyond following the detail religiously or slavishly’. He admitted to not being fully conversant with all the rules and regulations, believing it was enough to have a good background knowledge, (‘to be half-way up there’), while ensuring his team knew that they were expected to know such detail. His role he described as being more about examining the nuances (such as new legislation), and coming back to brainstorm with his board of directors in terms of future implications and actions. In this context, he described his role as a bridge (between the council and the board), a negotiator, but a negotiator with a bottom line. In this respect he remarked: “It’s a difficult tightrope to walk, you can’t negotiate away the jewels of the county council. I’m in charge, I’m the boss of this organisation, I come back from council with ideas and I shape them out, prise things open, I run the show; There’s only room for one prima donna and that’s me”.

As a lead into the second area, Participant G spoke of his desire to do the ordinary aspects of his job extraordinarly well. There is, he explained, a straightforward way of doing any job and there’s a way of putting your own stamp on it. The latter he believed could only be achieved by having a more detailed understanding of the needs of an area, the economy that underpins that area, and the community groups within that area. This approach reflected a change in the modus operandi of the county council; whereas previoulsy the council did its job and the local community could take it or leave it, they now worked in partnership. Relating examples of working with community groups he spoke of not wishing to be seen as ‘the fellah who rides in on a white horse, solves all the problems and rides back out again.’ He spoke of his efforts to determine the ‘figure’ that would allow communities to achieve their goals, whilst at the same time stretching their necks and not making it so easy that they get lazy: “I’ll come in but you must keep the monkey on your back you must feed him I will give you some food to feed him but that’s it.”

Turning to the second aspect of his job, what was earlier called the 'the job of vision or owning the job,' he then spoke of the leadership expectations that people have of the county council; the obligation it has 'to put flesh on the structured strategic plan', to support people and to provide them with the self-assurance to develop enterprising and innovative ideas. For him an essential aspect of this was to assume a figure-head role. He emphasised the importance of being able to 'put a face on the county manager' and talked of going 'out to the peripheries' where, in his predecessor's time people never saw the county manager, they never heard of him and they never knew what he looked like. In this context he also spoke of the related roles of spokesperson and gate-keepker, emphasising the opportunistic nature of rural events to impart a message and instill confidence in communities, whilst in turn providing valuable feedback on public perceptions to his staff.

On a less positive note he spoke of the difficulties of being the spokesperson in an organisatin that equates to the public's 'fairygodmother'. The county council he explained spends its time looking after everyone, while there is little acknowledgement of this role when things are going right as soon as things go wrong people ask, "Who got us into this mess?", "Who hasn't rescued us?". As a result, he recalled a considerable amount of time spent acknowledging mistakes, answering charges and attempting to put things right.

All of the aforementioned roles, he believed are performed with deference to certain personal values, charactertistics that he believed 'others' would use to describe him: A bias for action; operating with integrity, humanity and equity; and prioritising innovation. In elaborating on these he captured the essence of his leadership approach. First, he described himself as someone who is willling to take a chance, someone who gets on with the job, not a 'double-check, treble-check, belt and braces type guy', but someone who believes in doing something when there is a reasonable chance of success. Next, he spoke of 'caring', taking the equitable aspects of bureaucracy while introducing a degree of humanity or balance: bending the rules when it is fair to do so, and treating others like you would like to be treated yourself. Finally, he stressed the importance of creating an innovative culture and spoke of how he had succeeded in promoting an awareness amongst his staff of his willingness to support creative

endeavour. Overriding all of these was the importance of having a team-approach. Alluding to his earlier personfication as a prima donna, he attempted clarification: I don't believe I am alone, even though I said there is ony room for only one prima donna at the same time I believe in team-work. Elaborating on this duality he spoke of the importance of bringing people on board, allowing them to contribute to decision-making, whilst remaining adament that there would never be room for compromise: "The ultimate decision is mine," he remarked, "It's a majority decision as long as I go along with it." The one line descriptor to Table 7a, 'The Prima Donna with the Team Approach' highlights the somewhat contradictory nature of this discussion.

In addressing his personal values, the subject of this participant's own learning and development arose. While he acknowledged the importance of formal education in providing the background information necessary to do the job; the role of experience and informal learning was also emphasised. On the former, he mentioned (on more than one occasion), that most of what he does is on autopilot. On the latter, he drew attention to unplanned and informal situations, where it is possible to 'touch-down' so to speak, either openly or covertly, to gain insight into the *relevance* of the county council to peoples' lives. One such occasion he recalled meeting someone half-way down a mountain and having a very insightful discussion on the problems of the area and what the council were doing to solve them; all the whilst not revealing his occupation.

While Participant G acknowledged the importance of what he called 'background knowledge' (formal education and reading), he stressed the importance of achieving a balance, between the time spent doing the job, the time spent learning how others deal with similar situations (colleagues, outsiders or experts), and 'the cold-time taken for thinking, putting it all together, taking from it what is relevant and pointing yourself in the right direction'. In this respect, he spoke of the need to be proactive, as opposed to doing the background research, while commenting, with a level of seriousness, that if people saw him reading they would think he was sickening for something.

Creating that balance between doing and thinking meant peforming a role that stretched him to the absolute limit, provided great satisfaction, yet at times made him

very nervous. In this context, he recalled moments of great doubt where he questioned himself: “Am I doing things right?, Should I be doing things differently?, What would someone else do?, Who is doing things better?” At such times he has sought consolation through validation from external sources. The board of directors having unanimously voted to renew his contract was provided as a recent example of this. “I know I am not doing everything right,’ he admitted, ‘but I must be doing something right.”

Continuing on the subject of doing things right he spoke very positively and with great certainty of the ‘legacy’ he would leave behind, describing an organisation where the core operations would be conducted more efficienctly, where a greater sense of openess and friendliness would prevail, and where the communites at the periphery would feel cared for. While he accepted, even lauded the fact that he would not be able to decant everything, that there would be, indeed should be, space left behind for the efforts of someone new; the notion of ‘leaving a footprint’ appeared particularly important to him. In the course of this first interview he described himself as someone who does not copy or model himself on anyone else, but rather someone who ‘strikes a blaze’, or ‘makes his own mark’. Relatedly, he returned again and again to what he termed, his ‘raison d’etre’, doing something to make sure that the organisation is considered *relevant.* This, he was adament, was achievable in the time he would remain in office.

### 4.8.3 Participant G’s Story: Part Two

Participant G retired exactly one year after our first meeting. Given the time lapse between both meetings one might have expected him to be somewhat divorced from the operations of local government. This was not the case. Almost immediately he turned to the more recent events that have impacted on his former employer, with two key changes dictating the direction of our conversation. The first of these was the introduction of a governmental campaign to improve public sector services at a local level. While it was acclaimed as *the* most comprehensive series of measures ever, Participant G spoke of a system that was ‘fundamentally flawed’ and the ‘missed opportunity’ it represented for local government reform. Weaknessess were identified on two fronts. First, in terms of formulation, he spoke of a centralised ‘Big Brother’ type approach, with all of the main issues being decided at departmental level and an

absence of any real consultatation with those with direct responsibility for the delivery of these services. Secondly, he spoke of the associated difficulties of implementation wherein the directors responsible for strategic policy were also involved in the day-to-day administrative activities. The absence of any mid-level management resulted in a 'dilution of strategic thinking', with, in many cases, the immediate driving out the important.

The second major event recalled was the emergence of cases of fraud and corruption with respect to land zoning, planning permission, and development. Participant G recalled the shock, shame and disillusionment he felt when such incidents were uncovered; while describing a system that was 'cowardly in the handling of this mis-behaviour'. In particular he criticised a judicial system which shyed away from punishing the wrong-doer, indeed was overly protective of the wrong-doer in an extraordinary effort to avoid any form of procedural error.

Reflecting on his own handling of 'bad behaviour', he spoke of a system of zero tolerance with respect to cases, where, to put it politely, "people got their own money confused with the council's money." In this regard he related a number of incidences where it was necessary to terminate people's employment for what might now be considered fairly minor offences. This, he suggested was the real root of the problem. Somewhere along the line he believed the controls had been loosened, so much it became difficult to know right from wrong. His approach, 'nipping things in the bud', avoided the potential for things to get out of hand. "Things start small", he pointed out, "it is not the intrinsic value of things but the damage done to the element of trust in any relationship." Particularly dispiriting for him was the way in which the unethical actions of a few resulted in many being guilty by assocation. At this point in the interview he revealed how deeply saddened he was about the manner in which the image of a tremendously principled service (that a number of people had given the best part of their lives to), was now tarnished.

On a personal front, the other major event was his retirement from public sector life a year after our last meeting. Since then much of his attention has been devoted to greater involvement with the rural community. This was something he was particularly passionate about when we first met, and an aspect of his previous job that,

in his own admittance, had been somewhat neglected. In this regard, he spoke of a greater appreciation of the spirit of volunteerism and the enthusiasm and dedication of those who give freely of their time for community development purposes. Expounding on this subject, the language used was particualrly indicative of not only a change in thinking, but an associated change in identity. In times past, he regretted being 'on the outside' and not being 'in there enough'. Evaluating his former employer's 'partnership' with the rural community brought forth evidence of a new 'them and us' mentality, with Participant G clearly shifting his alliegances towards the latter. Obviously frustrated, he related a number of difficulties with respect to this relationship: First "*they* think they can do what *we* are doing better, but the advantage *we* have is *we* are close to, *we* have our tenticles into the rural community". Having used the term 'we' he was quick to add that he was something of a maverick in this regard. Relating incidents of how the council sought all of the recognition and praise, he talked of 'the big boys' (the council) and 'the small boys' (the commuity). In this regard he spoke of the lack of respect and acknowledgement that the council has for volunteers and the heavy handed manner 'using a sledge hammer to crack a nut,' in which the council polices community initiatives in their effort to prevent cases of fraud. In conclusion, the council, he believed, has lost touch with the issues on the ground and has becoming increasingly alienated from its public.

In his assessment of the former situation, Participant G revisited some of the themes of the previous interview. The first of these was the structural weaknesses within his former employment. Once again he spoke of too many layers, with too many chiefs at each layer, and the consequent dillution of talent referred to earlier. On this occasion, he spoke of not being a passive insider but of his attempts to instigate change through a position paper he sent to the department. While to a large extent this fell on deaf ears, it also resulted in some very bitter accusations that he was trying to create positions for close colleagues in advance of his retirement. He was greatly offended by this remark, being adament that he was a strong believer in everyone, including himself, having to earn their stripes.

The importance of strong leadership was a recurrent theme in this interview. In Participant G's view, "the leader, must be all things, the hired hand, the gallow glass, the paid servant, more than that, the leader carries the very soul of the organisation."

In this respect two of the roles identified in the first interview were re-visited. As figure-head, Participant G believed the leader must be seen, 'people must know you are around', while as spokesperson 'the leader must be answerable, must acknowledge criticism and defend against it or change it'. On his personal leadership philosophy once again the values of honesty, integrity and equity were emphasised. He spoke of having a clear conscience, 'being able to sleep at night' and with 'hand on heart' having treated everyone he has come into contact with 'fairly and without vindication'.

On the notion of regrets, and he did not think he had too many, one was perhaps that he had lived too much by the rules and had been and bit too strict. By way of illustration he told a story of encountering an old school teacher of his and refusing him a certain grant on the basis of missing a deadline by twenty four hours. In hindsight, he reflects on this incident with shame, and has often wondered what his former teacher thought of him. In another incident he recalled being particularly blunt or rough when dealing with a request for grant aid. Again, looking back, he thinks he could have been more humane, he now sees his reaction as unwarranted and later apologised to the party concerned. He hopes there were few of these incidents.

On a domestic front, his biggest regret was that he 'neglected his family more than he ever neglected his job'. In this regard, he spoke very emotionally about 'the job taking him away from his family' and the pressure this created for his wife and children, though he is confident they do not hold this against him. He also explained how in local government one is personallly associated with the decisions made; as a consequence, at any given time, one can be considered the hero or the villan. In this respect, Participant G, related stories of how he came to the shocking realisation that his children, at a young age, were often placed in the awkward position of having to publically defend his actions. On reflection, he does not think he could have done anything differently. His sense of duty remains. In his own words, "you take the shilling and you do the fight."

### 4.8.4 Concluding Commentary

In describing his role this participant differentiates between two aspects of the job: 'the ordinary job' and 'the job of vision.' Doing the ordinary job, he suggests, requires environmental, functional and technical knowledge: knowledge of the economy, the county, the fundamental operations of a local authority, and specific expertise in areas such as finance and law. With a vast 'factory floor' (3,000 square miles and 30,000 people), it is not, he stresses, necessary to embrace the detail of this knowledge, but rather to rely on others to keep him informed of the essentials. Doing the job of vision, he suggests, means owning the job, living up to public expectations, defending the council's actions, acknowledging mistakes and taking the blame. Here he speaks of a duality of roles, being the fairy-god-mother (granting everyones wishes), whilst also being the scape-goat, the wicked witch that everyone wants to blame when things go wrong.

Whilst he intially differentiates between the ordinary job and the job of vision, he stresses the importance, (for him), of doing the ordinary job in an 'extraordinary way'. Here both aspects of the job begin to merge; doing the ordinary job in an extraordinary way means 'going beyond following the detail religously or slavishly', it means going *out* into the community and coming to a real understanding of the needs of a particular area. In a similar vein, on the job of vision, he talks of 'going *out* into the peripheries' becoming the face of the county council, becoming the flesh of the strategic plan; touching down with the community and not being 'that fellah who rides in on the white horse'. The commonality between both aspects of the job is their recognition that, to truly perform the role of the county manager means pushing the boundaries, going beyond the factual knowledge, (which to some extent he suggests is superficial), towards coming to a truer, more realistic, more personalised sense of the issues inherent in that role. In doing so, there is a sense of confluence, he becomes the role, his face is the face of the county manager, his body is flesh for the strategic plan. There is a stark comparision here with his predecessors, who remained aloof from the community, remained invisible as county managers. His legacy, is to have made that role visible again, as he speaks of leaving his footprint while remaining cognisant of the space required for his successor to do likewise.

The second interview presents him in a different role. Now retired his has become more actively involved in local communities in a voluntary capacity. This role change

has brought a change in identity, a switch in allegiance, as we find him more strongly than ever in alliance with the community (us - the small boys), against the council (them - the big boys). There is a sense that he has almost forgotten that he was once one of *them.* He is particularly critical of the council on two fronts: There has been a dilution in strategic thinking, he suggests, as through lack of middle-management appointements, the immediate concerns have driven out the important ones. There has been a repetition of the pattern that he had tried to undo, whereby the council, (unlike the voluntary groups that have their 'tenticles in close' to the community), continue to remain aloof. These concerns are representative of a stronger desire to become a more intimate knower, getting in closer to the community which he is involved in, putting a face on the requests that are made, and exhibiting a greater degree of humanity. In a related example, he recalls, with a sense of shame, the dismissive manner in which he treated his old school-teacher who was one day late in making an application. Over the years he has learned an important lesson, while knowledge of factual rules and regulations are essential, one must not become bound up by them at the expense of treating people fairly.

This participant's career-long desire to do the ordinary job in an extraordinary way has came at a cost. He became personally associated with the role occupied, the role was personified and the decisions made in that role were seen as a manifestation of him. On personal sarcrafice, he spoke of the time spent away from family and the pressure he unknowingly placed upon his children in terms of defending him and worrying about him. Of this, while there is some regret, there is acceptance, if you take up the mantle, ('if you take the shilling'), you must own that job, you must own that role ('you must do the fight'), and wear the scars associated with that role.

## 4.9 Participant H

### 4.9.1 Biography

Participant H was the chief executive of a registered charity that provided schooling, training, supported employment and housing information for adults and children with a range of intellectual disabilities. Having joined the organisation in the early 1950's in an administrative capacity, he took over the chief executive role in the 1970's. He remained in this role until the late nineties, at which point he retired.

### 4.9.2 Participant H's Story: Part One

Participant H began our first meeting with a brief overview of the organisation's history and the nature of its 'business'. The foundation, he explained, has commited itself to providing services to people with a broad spectrum of intellectual disability: from individuals with profound disability who require extensive support, to people who have a moderate disability who require some form of sheltered accomodation and occupational activity, to those who have a mild disability requiring schooling and vocational training in preparation for open-employment. This type of commitment, he continued, requires a person-centred approach to planning, where the service-user is central to their individual programme of development.

Adopting an individualised, person-centered approach involves consultation with, and inputs from a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations, he explained. Elaborating on the nature and content of this consultation process, the importance of statistics and information (on the numbers of people requiring their services and the types of services they would need), was emphasised. While in the past, the absence of accurate and timely information presented particular difficulties for this organisation, this is no longer the case. In this regard, Participant H attributed particular importance to recent advancements in government publications on the spectrum of potential clients and their associated needs.

Beyond the statistics and information, 'being able to slot people in' according to their degree of independence, was according to Participant H the next stage in this process. Here the importance of shared knowledge was emphasised. In this context, examples of 'internal case conferences' and 'multi-disciplinary assessment teams' that would assist in the determination of dependancy levels, associated staffing and budgetary requirements were provided.

Outside of the structured case-assessments and formal monthly meetings with heads of departments, Participant H stressed the importance of informal and ongoing interaction with the relevant constituent players. While the latter was considered essential in terms of keeping up-to-date, it also facilitated the co-ordination and synchonisation of the foundation's services with those of related service-providers. In this regard, a simple, yet illuminating example of the manner in which domestic

science teachers liased with house-parents to ensure that the kitchen appliances used in school mirrored those used ‘at home’ illustrates the effective transfer of learning.

The importance of international contacts in terms of exchanging ‘knowledge, expertise, ideas, and experience’ was also alluded to. Participant H reflected on a changed environment, where the standards governing the provision of services for those with intellectual disabilties were rising, and the taken for granted was no longer acceptable. In particular, he drew attention to the more inclusive approach to education apparent in the United States, where many of those with less severe intellectual disabilities are being integrated into mainstream schools. The Irish system, (whereby those who attend mainstream education at primary level are not catered for at secondary level), was seen to lag behind the US system in this respect. While acknowledging a modicum of development, the scope for advancement was considered immense. With Participant H stressing his personal determination to ensure continued progress in satisfying the unmet and changing needs of service users, this first interview came to a close.

### 4.9.3 Participant H’s Story: Part Two

On the signficant events that had occured since our last meeting, Participant H first turned to the personal, relating the sad loss of his wife four years previously and the way it had changed everything for him: “Everything has changed, everything has changed, I live alone now, all my children are living their own lives; that is how it should be, he added, they can’t be mollycodlling me.” In this context, he also related, with obvious pride, an account of his son who went forward for local election and while he failed to get elected in the local constituency, found himself appointed at national level.

On his professional life he spoke of his retirement, and of his continued involvement (albeit with less responsibility), with his former employer; an organisation that has ‘changed radically’ in the intervening time-period. The nature of the envirionment within which charitable foundations currently operate was considered particularly instrumental in these changes. In this respect, the challenges identified included: a centralisation of funding sources (where face-to-face relationships have been replaced by more distant and formal structures); changes in human resource legislation,

(particularly with respect to maternity leave and part-time pay), that have made continuity of service a nightmare; and the inadequacy of government support and funding towards a more inclusive education system. On the latter, as a board member of 'Inclusion Europe' and a committee member of a national self-advocacy group, this participant was particularly concerned with providing his clients with 'their own voice', with this becoming a re-ocurring theme throughout the remainder of our conversation.

Turning to the subject of self-advocacy, Participant H recalled 'the old days', when one spoke of 'the dignity of risk' whereby those with intellectual disabilties were granted a fair and prudent share of risk-taking commensurate with their abilities. Underlying this approach was the belief that denying them exposure to normal risk would have a damaging effect on their dignity and personal development. In addition, the removal of all risk was seen to diminish those with intellectual disabilties in the eyes of others, and to limit their sphere of community interaction in terms of jobs, recreation and relationships. Today, he pointed out, while some of the barriers towards promoting 'dignity of risk' have diminshed, others have increased.

On a positive front, Participant H spoke of 'the changed lives' of those with intellectual disabilities, where there is greater acceptance of them, and people are more educated about, their needs and abilities. A critical aspect of this was the advancement in residential care and the migration of those with so called 'mental handicaps' from psychiatric hospitals, to large scale residential homes and in more recent years to 'smaller regular houses out in the community'.

One consequence of the latter developments was a greater level of community integration, with greater involvement in activites such as sport, art and music. In this context, Participant H also spoke of the more active role played by parents, with much more of a partnership between the parent and the service provider. In illustrating this progress a number of distressing stories were related. One particular case related to an incident that occurred forty years previously, where on a particular friday afternoon a little boy was brought into one of the residential homes, the same day his parents emigrated to America. He is still there today, never having seen his parents again. Only on the parents death did his siblilng discover that she had a brother.

Another case related to a young couple that came to see him asking his advice on their 'mongrel child', having mis-understood the term 'mongoloid' which was then in common usage. Such appaling terminology, he explained, compounded the levels of fear, ignorance and oftentimes hostility, that surrounded intellectual disability. While the use of such language has long been frowned upon, pondering on the term 'intellectual disability', Participant H wondered if sufficient progress had really been made in terms of highlighting the abilities of those who are intellectually challenged.

While progress has been made in terms of promoting inclusivity, dignity of risk, and self-advocacy, he lamented an increasingly bureaucratic system, that in most cases exists to meet the needs of the service provider, (in particular to ensure avoidance of litigation), as opposed to the individual needs of each client. For many years, he suggested, the system has worked very hard to find clever ways of building avoidance of risk into the lives of those with intellectual disabilities; now it needs to work equally hard in trying to find ways to find the proper amount of risk to suit each person. To some extent the essence of the second interview may be summed up in one sentence, there is human dignity in risk, there is dehumanising indignity in a system that speaks of safety yet promotes an overly protective approach.

### 4.9.4 Concluding Commentary

The environment within which those with intellectual disabilities are cared for has changed dramatically over the professional life of this participant. Amongst the more positive changes identified were increased public acceptance and understanding, a greater move towards inclusivity in terms of education, accomodation, and leisure activities, and rising standards in the provision of services both here and internationally. Such changes have encouraged a more person-centered approach to service provision. Understanding the needs of clients in terms of their dependancy levels and their associated requirements is an essential aspect of this approach. While the necessity for timely and accurate statistical information is emphasised; it is judgement, the ability 'to slot people in' to varying support structures, that is prioritised. Shared knowledge, through internal consultation (as part of a multidisciplinary team), close relationships with related service providers, and

working in partnership with clients, their families and support systems are all considered central to this process.

Notwithstanding such positive advancements, in more recent years, service provision for those with intellectual disabilties has become increasingly burdened by an overly bureaucratic, centralised system, within which risk avoidance is often at the expense of human dignity. The voice metaphor captures the loss of power experienced by those who are not understood. In a related theme the power of language and the negative connotations that arose from the use of inappropriate terminology is similarly captured. Although not directly alluded to, the symbolism and subtle language of buildings is nonetheless present. The incidents recalled bring to life a story of a marginalised people, people who were 'put away', placed out of sight, in hospitals or homes where the underlying, yet unspoken message was, 'you need to be kept under surveilance, you need to be controlled, we will watch you like a hawk'. Recent attempts at greater community integration in the form of assisted living arrangements aim to communicate protection with some degree of risk normalisation. In other words 'We will protect you but we won't take all the dangers of human life from you; we will allow you to live like other human beings'.

Living through the aforementioned changes this participant now recognises the power of language to inform and misinform, to create understanding and misunderstanding and to articulate the intensity of the message. He has learned how to legitimise that power. He has also learned a new language, an integrity of self-expression and a respectfullness. There is some evidence to suggest that this has not been an easy process. At times he lapses, almost stumbling on his words, between old terms such as 'mentally handicapped' and the more politically correct 'intellectually challenged'.

The knowledge gained in the course of his professional life is reflected in his personal life. He opens the second interview with his own story, a story of adjustment, the loss of his wife, living alone, determined not to burden his children or to encroach on their freedom to live their own lives. The balancing act alluded to, balancing safety and security with loss of dignity, independence and personal freedom; while professionally learned is now personally lived.

## 4.10 Participant I

### 4.10.1 Biography

Participant I, entered the family business at the age of seventeen. At the time of the first interview, with twenty years experience in the business, he occupied the role of managing director. Two years after the first interview the business was sold. Following the closure of the business he undertook a part-time programme in project management. Since then he has set up a company that provides off-site document storage and records management services to companies in the banking, legal and financial sectors.

### 4.10.2 Participant I's Story: Part One

Setting the context for our conversation, Particpant I spoke about what it was like to work in a seventy year old, three-generation family business. He depicted an organisation that was built on inheritance and a sense of entitlement, "full of stick in the muds, who continued to do things in a particular way because they had always been done that way". He spoke of carrying employees, who, despite an absence of purpose, were allowed to remain on in the business 'serving out their time until retirement'. These people, who were family relatives in the main, may have understood the business in the 1950's, 60's or 70's, he explained; but beyond this they had lost touch, becoming illequipped to deal with the uncertainties and instabilities that were now an integral aspect of this industry.

Charting the phenomenol changes that occurred in the past twenty years, Participant I described an industry in which it was becoming increasingly difficult to survive. With their core business, the wholesale distribution of solid fuel in decline, they had become a nice player in a growing home heating industry. In this respect he remarked: "Our business hasn't grown in the past ten years, people aren't lighting coal fires anymore, we are has beens." "The avenues for growth are limited," he continued, "you can redefine your business all you want, you can say we are in the home-heating business, or the stay in on a Saturday night business, but at the end of the day you can only stay in one core thing and peddle that knowledge as much and as much and as much as you can." Exacerbating this situation was the declining cost competitiveness of older incumbents vis a vis more recent players. In this regard he spoke vehemently of the irrelevance of much that was previously considered essential. Dismissing the

surrounding office space, its associated trappings, and the building in which they were housed as being 'absolutely useless,' 'a big zero', he envisaged a future where the business could be operated from a tree-house. Picking up his mobile phone he remarked: "We found the greatest thing for the transmission of knowledge was one of these things, so now we give all our key people one and we don't communicate in writing anymore."

The inclination to consider the tree-house scenario referred to earlier was possibly encouraged by the timing of my first visit very shortly before the company was due to leave the current premises. Acknowledging that it was a pleasant building to work in, it was, he stressed, no longer necessary. The lead up to the exit decision was characterised by a sustained period of rationalisation or 'elimination' which began in the mid 1980's. Reflecting on this time period the importance of being able to differentiate between what is essential, and what can be done without, what is obselete and what is in vogue was emphasised. On the former, Participant I recalled how several retired positions were not replaced, leading to a significant reduction in staff numbers and management layers. On the latter he spoke of a reversal of authority, from being product-led to being market-led, and the associated change in the knowledge and skills required. We are now a trading company, he remarked, the market dictates what we do; all the skills that we have developed down through the years of sourcing, bagging and supplying the product in the right format has been replaced by knowledge of customers, suppliers and competitors.

In discussing the change in orientation from product-led to market-led several insights emerged in terms of what Paritcipant I perceived knowledge to be and how he came to 'be in the know'. Perceptions of knowledge varied: Firstly, it was considered to be a store of experience, shared history or stories passed down from one generation to the next. Phrases such as 'a reservoir of folklore,' 'stored in folklore' and 'reservoir of experience' appeared throughout. Participant I recalled how his father 'spent a lot of time in the shadow' of his predecessor (his grandfather's partner), 'picking up bits and pieces after him.' Similarly, he spoke of the knowledge that he posesses that goes right back to when his father worked in the business in the 1940's. This knowledge was seen to create value for the organisation, providing a useful backdrop, a means of avoiding repetition of the same errors. He spoke of how events in business repeat

themselves, customers move to competitors, suppliers go out of business. Such incidents are, he suggested, 'virtually uncollectable when they happen, you need a reservoir of experience to anticipate them.' In this context, he questioned whether he had twenty years experience, or just one year's experience repeated twenty times. He elicited some surprise at the number of organisations that don't possess this reservoir and are thus destined to a cycle of forgetting and then repeating the same mistakes.

Relatedly, Participant I spoke of knowledge as "a common-sense approach to problem-solving, that is not so much about developing flows of information, but about eliminating bad thoughts such as we will do it this way because it has always been done this way; while at the same time clinging onto the good stuff, the connections and relationships that you have with suppliers and customers." The reference to 'bad thoughts', the idea that prior knowledge can be more of a hinderence than a help, was alluded to elsewhere with respect to the competitiveness of new entrants with his comment: "those new to the industry don't come in with the raft of bad thoughts that we have." In this respect Participant I emphasised the need for caution, in the process of ridding oneself of 'bad knowledge,' one should be careful not to destroy the underlying linkages that were the source of value created in the first place.

In another respect, knowledge, was considered as a form of judgement, or as Participant I quite bluntly put it, 'having a nose for bullshit'. In light of this he a told a story of a colleague who had earned the nickname 'the roundabout' as he was always in the way of change, and so it was necessary to get around him and sell new ideas to him. According to Participant I, the roundabout was, unbeknowns to himself, "a huge fountain of knowledge, who was vastly experienced, and shrewd in judging people; he (the roundabout) doesn't know what he knows, and doesn't know the value of what he knows, he just knows." Such knowledge, Particpant I pointed out, "would be of little value to competitors as they wouldn't be able to unlock it' or tap into it."

Interspersed within the converstation on what he perceived as knowledge, there were equally insightful references to how he came to 'be in the know'. Indeed at times it was rather difficult to separate the two. Again a number of themes were in evidence. At the forefront was the idea of 'staying close to' and 'keeping in touch with' your operations and your marketplace. Participant I spoke with some disdain of the manner

in which senior management have become more remote and rarified through the addition of management layers as the business grows. Indeed he appeared rather intimidated by the idea of 'management'. "I always felt a bit isolated by those guys in suits, wondering what they knew that I didn't," he remarked. He also appeared to be somewhat uncomfortable with the idea that he was a manager or a leader himself; giving the impression that to think so would be to automatically suggest that you were better than others: "I wouldn't ever designate myself a manager or leader intentionally," he said, "I wouldn't ever claim to be better than anyone else." Describing himself as 'a hands-on down to earth type of guy' he spoke of needing to get out of the office: "nothing flows to you in here, I learn nothing in here; you need to get out into the fields where you can dig things up yourself." The reference to nature here is interesting and might be interpreted as further evidence that for him the office environment is somewhat unnatural or confining, he is certainly at pains to emphasise that he doesn't need the trappings of an office.

In terms of how he knows what he knows, the language used by Participant I was very informal and causal. He spoke of the importance of insignificant 'tittle-tattle', 'swapping yarns', 'the little subtleties, knowing the customer's wife's name, that the daughter recently celebrated her 21st birthday'. He admitted to being stunned by the little 'asides' or 'utterances' that are picked up from suppliers, or competitors, for example, 'so-and-so has gone out of business,' of little signifcance to others, but of huge consequence to him. In a similar vein he spoke of accidental learning from unusual as opposed to more obvious sources. For example, he related stories of adapting and eliminating machinery through visits to building sites, fertliser plants and cement factories. Trial and error and the value of mistakes (his own and others), were also mentioned as routes towards the evolution of what would and would not work.

Formal learning did not appear to play a significant part in Participant H's development. He spoke of doing an executive development programme in the early 1990's, of which he remembers just one thing, the importance of benchmarking, 'lining up or improving on what the other guy is doing, if you don't do that you are going backwards'. The downside of formal learning he pointed out is the difficulty in finding a programme to suit the level you are at and the waste of time it can be if you get that wrong. For this reason, with respect to new technologies, most of his learning

comes from ‘fiddling about and trying things out’, which, he added, can also be a very inefficient way of learning.

Coming towards the end of our meeting, Participant I wondered had he really answered my questions. He revealed that prior to the interview his expectations were of a discussion on the importance of controlling knowledge. Revealing his thoughts on this, he spoke of how one has to be careful to control what is allowed to seep down, or percolate hrough the cracks in the organisation. The problem with knowledge, he explained is that you have to learn as much as possible, while giving it out as economically as possible to those who need it. The difficulty is to get the balance right. In his opinion, some companies ruthlessly delegate, overloading those on the ground with knowledge and information way beyond their abilities; some struggle to survive and others just can’t handle it. This was something that puzzled him. While he appreciated to grow a company you can’t do it all yourself, he was adament that the more sucessful companies were those operated by down to earth guys. Although he did suggest it, in view of his earlier description, the unspoken reference to himself did not go unnoticed.

### 4.10.3 Participant I’s Story: Part Two

Of all the participants in the study, Participant I was the most difficult to track down, indeed, he seeemed to have disappeared off the face of the earth. When I finally made contact with him and remarked how he was a very difficult man to find, he responded: “My life has been turned upside since I met you last.” On meeting him, indeed this seemed to be the case. He immediately spoke of the sale of the former company, approximately two years after our last meeting. For his 73 year old father, who was retired by then, it was a time of great sadness and disenchantment. This was a business he (his father), had ‘taken from his father’ and passed to his son. While his father saw the sale of the business as an admittance of failure, for Participant I, this was not the case. Given, as he put it, ‘the impossible task of continuity in any family business’, it’s demise was inevitable he explained. “There is no future in family businesses, he added, family businesses are doomed to fail, they are designed to fail.”

Family businesses he explained are usually held together by an autocrat, and when it comes to passing the business from one generation to the next all sorts of problems

with respect to meritocracy arise; particulary when the family members themselves have family that they wish to have in the business. “There comes a time, he explained, when you need to recognise that your family are your wife and children, not your brothers and sisters; If you don’t do this, he warned, there can be all sorts of exalted expectations and misplaced loyalties.” “In truth, the only way to run a family business, he suggested, is to get rid of the family, treat them like shareholders, buy them out or bring in a professional manager.” According to Participant I, the only family businesses that could survive were craft or skills-based operators, those that were more of a vocation, such as artisan cheese makers. “If you are making or selling widgets then your business is doomed,” he said. “Family business is all about ego”, he added, “it’s all about controlling things beyond the grave, it would be great if it worked but it just doesn’t and you have to accept that and move on.” Posing the rhetorical question, “Does anyone make it to the fourth generation?”, he quickly answered, “I don’t think so.” He quoted the saying ‘Find it, Make it, Break it’, then laughed, adding, “my grandfather was the finder, my father the maker, and I was the breaker.”

The break-up of the business, was, for Participant I, a difficult juncture in his life. In his mid forties, he recalled feeling too young to retire, (in addition to being unable to afford it), and too old to take up employment. He recalled going for a career assessment and gettting the message that he was ‘too opinionated to be an employee’. While he knew he had to do something, he was not clear on the direction he should take. At one point he considered emigrating, he recalled considering a warm climate, (somewhere like Spain), but thought it would not be a good idea. Laughing, though with an underlying seriousness, he admitted he lacked the self-discipline to live somewhere where the bad weather wouldn’t drive him into work. “I am very weak like St. Agustine”, he admitted, “I would give into all sorts of temptations, I would be a mess, an alcoholic, an awful eejit, maybe I am one now but at least I am concious of what I am supposed to be” he added.

In the aftermath of closing the business, Participant I spoke of ‘taking time out’ and taking part in a part-time programme in project management. He spoke of being ‘badly burnt’ in the coal trade (no pun intended), and of ‘scratching around’ for a very different business opportunity. In 2001 his efforts were rewarded; responding to increased legal and financial regulation that requires companies to retain business

records, he saw an opportunity to provide off-site document storage and records management services. The business has been very sucessful, with eleven full-time staff and a growing client base that includes the banking, legal, accountancy and medical professions.

The developemnent of the new business has not been without its difficulties. Seven years after the business start-up Participant I recalled a type of epiphany, which had a immediate and lasting effect on both his professional and personal life. He remembered waking up on the morning of January 1st 2008, suffering the effects of the previous new year's eve celebrations, looking in the mirror and uttering the words, "Johnny you have to cop on boy." Elaborating on this statement he spoke of a business that was overstretched, and yet had plans for expansion. He told of having a celubriouis office, a private secretary (whose purpose he was not entirely sure of), a huge number of back-office staff, and time spent in meetings talking about how great he was. Returning to an earlier sentiment he spoke again of ego as being the biggest problem in business today.

In view of his earlier realisation, the message was clear, he was heading for a fall. He had done exactly what he had condemned in the first interview. He had repeated the same mistakes, mistakes he had said he would never make again, now it was time to shout stop. Shouting stop meant severe cut backs in incomes and staff layoffs, (particulary with respect to the back-office), while continuing to support the customer through front-end staff and keeping services levels up. On being asked to explain how he came to this sudden realisation, Participant I returned to the cycle of repetition alluded to in the first interview. "I am young enough, he said, to remember the 1980's, I read the tea-leaves, the writing was on the wall; I knew I couldn't continue to trade on recklessly and hope things would turn, I learnt that from my time in the coal industry." Other people have not been as fortunate as him in making this observation he concluded. In this regard he spoke with derision of the 'Celtic Tiger', wherein the country lost the run of itself entirely, lost all sense of core values, bringing out some of the worst of our collective traits, greed, jealously and selfishness. He recalled his father's wise words as the economy grew, "Jeepers people want America at home; and later as it reached its peak, 'Jeepers, people have America at home but this can't last." He spoke of 'the me generation', the elevated expectations and the resultant feelings

of being let down. He prided himself on not leading a very profligate life; which to some extent meant his family felt hard done by. As human beings we are not equipped to deal with huge success or failure he insisted, people go off the rails, he added. In this regard he spoke of various lotto winners and the case of one of the survivors of the recent Chilean mine disaster who had become a drug addict. "We are not equipped to deal with change and I know because I have been through lorry loads of change and I have had to learn how to deal with it and to re-invent myself more than once and that has been very difficult," he continued.

Explaining how he learnt to deal with change, how he learned to re-invent himself, he spoke of 'going back to the kitchen table he grew up at and finding out what is normal'. The image of the kitchen table is a very powerful one. It creates a sense of permanence and solidness, a space where domestic life was lived out and family history created. Participant G would belong to a generation that gathered regularly around the kitchen table for family rituals such as the Sunday dinner. It is often the place where people congregate in times of celebration or sadness. In his youth, the kitchen table was probably the place where school-work was completed, lessons were learned and advice was given, stories were shared. The idea of 'going back to the kitchen table' creates a strong sense of going back to one's roots, back to reality, back to a time when things were simplier. The return to his birth family at a time of crisis and re-invention presents an interesting contradiction when placed alongside his earlier admonishment that at some point in your life you have to leave your original family behind in favour of the family that you have created through marriage or partnership. Indeed, despite all his misgivings about the family aspect of the family-business, the importance of his upbringing and his birth family is a topic he returns to again and again. For instance, on the subject of recruiting new staff he told of how he uses 'his kitchen table measure of normality' as a guiding principle in selecting employees: "I want to find out about their kitchen table, what is their idea of normal? If it is too far away from mine I won't hire them no matter what skill-sets they have."

At another point in our conversation, where he reflects on what he has learned in his career, he returns yet again to his upbringing, and its intrinsic values. "What I learned is that your parents were right all along, and the importance of the core values they gave to you – work hard, play fair, don't deal in short-termism, don't milk the situation

when times are good, as times will turn again." These core values he stressed will stick with you for the whole of your life. "These are the things I tell to my own children but they only half listen to me," he added.

Turning to his professional life, he described the world of business as a lonely place, where one doesn't really have friends, only colleagues. He strongly believed as a boss, he could not get too close to people, he couldn't over-engage, he had to keep a distance. He would not call himself a spiritual person, he believed he was too cynical and too opinionated for that, and as a result he has had to seek out other resources to help him deal with the pressures he faces. In this regard he spoke of his good fortune in having a tight network of friends who run a variety of different busineses. He told of speaking with many of them at least twice a day, teasing things out, learning from them and vice versa. They would, he admitted, know his innermost business secrets and he would know theirs. The other resource he relies on is reading. While he would not call himself spiritual he expressed a keen interest in phillosophy. He mentioned the book 'A little book of calm' as one that has helped him enormously. He spoke of keeping it in his car and dipping into it every so often, at one stage once a day, now maybe once a week. Alongside his bed he told of having Machievelli's 'The Prince.' He continously reads this book and gets much guidance from it. He quoted passages from this book, in particular the following: "Those who stand to loose from change will currently be in the various chains of command and will see nothing of certainty in the change and will conspire against it; people will conspire against you if they don't trust you and they won't trust you if you are inacessible, if you are a big chief," he explained. "There is a really good message here," he concluded. "Don't spend your time in a castle, get out amongst people and yet here I am in a castle," he remarked waving his hand to encapsulate the surrounding office, "but I only came here to meet you, and to make you a fancy coffee," he added, "now that meeting is over I will return to my normal office, which is a portakabin down there on a building site." This final comment left me thinking this is a man who has indeed returned to his kitchen table.

### 4.10.4 Concluding Commentary

The concluding comments on this case are best presented in the trajectory through which this participant's professional and personal life have developed. On first

meeting him, as a third generation member of a family business, it is not surprising that the role of the family in terms of what he knows is given particular emphasis. While the unfavourable sense of entitlement that family businesses encourage is acknowledged; on the positive side, continuity of service, (that often extends to psuedo family), serves to retain knowledge within the business through the generations.

Knowledge is spoken of in terms of folklore, stories, a reservoir of experience passed down from one generation to the next, 'bits and pieces' picked up in the shadow of his father and his grandfather. The use of the word shadow is perhaps suggestive of his perception that these people had a greater presence than him, he looked up to them and worked under their guidance. The emphasis here is very much on *remembering;* having a backdrop or store of knowledge means you do not make the same mistakes. In an interesting aside, it is suggested that 'this experience is uncollectable when it happens' and while it is difficult to determine exactly what is meant here, it suggests a bank of knowledge that is developed more through accident rather than by design; in other words it is unintentional; one is unaware that one is accumulating new knowledge. In contrast to the emphasis on remembering, knowledge is also perceived as *forgetting,* not repeating the same mistakes, having the common sense to approach problems differently, and eliminating, (which in some respects is akin to a cleansing process), the 'bad thoughts' (bad habits presumably), of predecessors.

In a another guise, knowledge is equated with commonsense, shrewdness and judgement. In this context he speaks of an older colleague, whom he describes as having 'a nose for bullshit'. The terminology used, which at first may appear rather crude, is perhaps his attempt to convey the almost hidden ability of the knower to *sense* what is right, a skill that is developed overtime, a refinement, like as having a nose for a fine wine. The tacitness of this knowledge is borne out in a related statement about the same colleague, whom he suggests 'doesn't know what he knows, or the value of what he knows, he just knows'. The knowledge embedded in this individual is considered particularly valuable as competitors, 'would be unable to unlock or tap into it'.

In the face of significant industry changes, the knowledge prioritised by this participant changed. A switch from being product-led to being market-led has resulted

in much of the technical knowledge built up over the years (bagging and supplying the product in the correct format), becoming obselete; replaced by knowledge of customers, competitors and suppliers. Dismissing the relevance of many of the organisation's physical assets, considerable emphasis is placed on the notion of 'peddling one's knowledge', 'transmitting knowledge' and getting to grips with what others know. Being 'a down to earth type of guy' and not 'one of the suits', this participant likes to get out and about, digging things up, getting his hands dirty. Repetitive references to nature suggest knowing and learning is very much a natural process; knowledge is spoken of in very pedestrian terms, 'tittle-tattle', 'customer-asides' and things that others might consider insignificant.

The interim period following the closure of the family business and the start-up of his own venture was a difficult time. Whilst he dismissed the feasibility of any family business moving to the fourth generation, and joked that he was 'the breaker' of the business; one sensed he felt somewhat guilty, that he had in someway failed the family, in particular his father. A time of self-assessment, self-development, reflection and a growing self-awareness followed. During this time Participant I came to a greater understanding of his own weaknesses, his lack of discipline, his difficulty in dealing with authority, and the need for structures in his daily life. All the whilst, he speaks of 'scratching around for a business idea'. The term scratching (with its origins in chicken feed), conveys the idea of scarcity and starting from very little. In this sense it strongly conveys the idea that he was in effect starting from nothing, it also suggests a certain desperation that he may have been feeling at this time.

Having set up his own business a number of very positive years followed. The turning point in this participant's fortunes came about seven years later. Previously described as a sort of ephihany, once again there is a period of self-questioning, self-berating almost, as he realises he is loosing control. In the face of this realisation he speaks of returning to his birth family, (the kitchen table in the original homeplace), to bring him back down to earth. This is an interesting turnaround. Having spent a considerable portion of the second interview arguing for the necessity to relegate ones original family in the presence of one's family through marriage or civil partnership; in the face of uncertainity, he returns without hesitation to that central core of normality. The fact that he does not acknowledge this is not surprsing, indeed he is proably not

even aware of the contradictory nature of the scenario he has presented. Although he remains adament that family businesses are destined to fail, he recognises the overriding influence of his family of origin in terms of his own knowledge and learning. The basic principles imparted to him by his parents, 'work hard and play fair' have become, to some extent, all he really needs to know. He speaks of imparting these same values to his own children, whilst recognising that may chose to ignore him.

In the final phase, we find him back on track. Having begun the second meeting by telling me that his life has been turned upside since we last met, now he appears to have managed to turn it around again. He has come to recognise and accept the boundaries that he needs to maintain as a boss. This differs somewhat from his earlier admission that he would never consider himself as a manager, a leader, or as he put it someone better than anyone else. Creating that detachment, he recognises, brings a degree of loneliness; he speaks now of needing other support structures and resources and relates stories of delving into religion, philosophy and psychology to find answers. To some extent he has created yet another family, a very close network of friends that are privy to the 'secrets' of his business and he to theirs. To suggest that he has created a 'virtual kitchen table' may be to extend the original metaphor a bit too far; although there is little doubt that he is more at peace with himself. Emerging from the shadow of his grandfather and his father, leaving behind many of the trappings commonly associated with a succesful business, his story is one of coming to know himself; and for the moment he appears content with the ending.

### 4.11 Participant J

#### 4.11.1 Biography

As the great-grandson of one of the original owners, Participant J worked in one the oldest family-owned newspapers in Ireland and Britain from about the age of fourteen. Initially employed during the summer holidays and prior to going to college, having graduated with a degree in science he took up full-time employment in the early 1950's. Having undertaken some postgraduate study in Sweeden he returned to the business in the late 1950's where he assumed the role of technical director throughout the 1960's and 1970's. He was appointed chief executive in the early 1980's and assumed the role of executive chairman in the early 1990's. At the time of the first

interview in 1997 he occupied the role of chairman. He retired in 2001, yet continues his involvement in the company, coming into the office on a daily basis. Locally he is known as 'the city's quintessential newspaper man,' and once famously described himself as 'a chemist by training, a shovel engineeer by vocation and a manager by desperation'.

### 4.11.2 Participant J's Story: Part One

Our first meeting took place in what is today known as 'the old building', in the rather opulent surroundings of Participant J's eyrie-like office. Here, he recalled his early association with the print media industry. From about the age of fourteen he was encouraged to familarise himself with the family business, spending much of his summer holidays there, literally learning the business from the ground up. With a keen interest in model making, he quickly became absorbed with how the printing presses worked. One of the fitters eventually taught him machining skills and elementary fitting, thus enabling him to build on his fascination with modern engineering principles. He spoke of this time, the period during, and in the immediate aftermath of Word War 2, as a time of scarcity, when "business was not so much about selling something, but about adding value to what you could actually get." He told of the huge paper shortages that significantly reduced the circulation figures and page content of their publications, and spoke with great admiration of the workers whose ingenuity was tested to the limit in keeping the machines functioning in the absence of supplies.

Participant J recalled the early years spent in the family business as "the years that had the greatest influence on his life." It was a period, he explained, "which was primarily about meeting demand in the most efficient way possible, knowing your trade better than your opposition and using your judgement on investment to keep improving it." These lessons stayed with him throughout his entire career. Alongside an appreciation for craftmanship this period also engendered a deep respect for those that had suffered the hardships of war and the circumstances that have shaped past (and indeed present), business practices. "Leadership has nothing to do with knowing your job, well, it has something to do with knowing your job but it is also to do with the realisation of the conditions that we live in and the conditions that we have come through," he suggested. Returning to those post war times he recalled, how in 1949, at the age of

eighteen, having just finished school, he was put on the business payroll for £3 a week. He told of a very short career in the office, where, he felt, "nobody really wanted the chairman's son around," and of being quickly and very carefully shifted into the area where the printing blocks were made. Describing this work he spoke of "an absolutely unique process, undertaken by very skilled men who taught him how to use his hands, something that he has kept onto to this day." During this period of induction, the seeds were sown for what was to become his pivotal role in the company. While his involvement with the business was indeed all encompassing, his ability to 'use his hands', as well as his head, was very much in evidence throughout the trajectory that followed. Participant J's initial inclusion on the company payroll lasted until the time came to make choices with regard to his future education. Enthralled by chemistry at school, it seemed only natural that he chose to study science at university from which he graduated with "a full honours degree in chemistry and physics in 1952."

On his return to the family business Participant J was allocated the task of advising the engravers on chemical usage. Within the first year his father encouraged him to undertake some post-graduate study in Sweeden. There he spent nine months studying cellulose chemistry and paper testing in one of the major paper suppliers. Of his time in Sweeden, he spoke of acquiring great respect for 'good scientific and engineering principles applied properly', a value that he has retained throughout his professional life. Returning to Ireland his focus remained on the technical aspects of the business, through which he earned the respect of the craftsmen as he could literally take a problem printing press to pieces, get it fixed and put it back together again.

By the early 1960's, on studying changes in the print industry, he identifies himself as being one of the first in Ireland to realise that the days of lead, ink, sweat and tears associated with the hot metal printing processes were coming to an end. In the 1970's, as technical director, he began the process of designing, commisioning and training for the change-over to the new era of web offset printing, which came on stream in May 1976. This placed the company at the cutting edge of the newspaper industry in Ireland. The long process of change was not without its moments; Participant J related his father's advice in the early stages, when wastage of paper was very problematic: "Never have anything to do with litho boy, it's like putting water in the product." When his father passed away a few years later, and the workers were 'up to their necks

in waste paper', he recalled "looking up to heaven and saying, how right you were Dad, how right you were."

As chief executive, from the early eighties Participant J continued to lead the group through dynamic developments. In 1986 '*The Reviewer'* was the first Irish newspaper to produce full colour photography and the journalists became the first in Ireland to input their stories directly into a computer system. These critical periods of change created great challenges for the company and its workforce. Alongside the technical development, he was also actively involved in labour relations, where his cost cutting expertise was vital in ensuring a dispute-free transition.

Particpant J stepped down from the post of chief executive in 1993 and was replaced by another family member. On the subject of handing over the role, he believed "the time was just right." As somewhat of a latecomer to the chief executive role (at the age of fifty), he believed his ability was somewhat diminshed in the latter years. Of this time, he spoke quite emotively of a increasingly pressurised environment, one in which he was gradually loosing his grip. The final two years he described as a period of time when things were "getting away from him, the fires were boiling up under him, things were going on he should have noticed, and he was tired and mentally transmogified." He admits that he was unaware of this slippage himself, but thankfully, there were others who noticed.

Of his sucessor, Participant J spoke quite graciously and at times in a self-deprecating manner of the way in which things have changed for the better. He told of how his replacement recognised the gaps in management, quickly re-designing the management committee which provided greater clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities. On the change in leadership style he acknowledged 'the more collegiate approach' of his successor; "he made his managers manage as opposed to watching the chief executive manage' which was my style", he admitted. "Under my leadership in the 1980's we reverted back to the 1930's," he added, "it was a very divided culture, the them and us, the leaders dealt with the trade unions and formalised agreements, while the foreman got the paper out, he ran the place really and yet and was stuck in the middle to some extent." Without hesitation (and a rogueish laugh), Participant J admits that the business is being managed much more effectively now

(in 1997), than it was in the 1980's when he was at the helm. He does not condone his actions, nor is he defensive, in short he explains, he didn't know any better: "I lacked the knowledge to spread the effectiveness of leadership across a broader number of people, but I never learnt to do it any other way," he explained.

Exiting the chief executive role, yet wishing to retain some executive responsibility, Participant J retained the role of executive chairman until April 1997, when the title changed to chairman. In terms of his current involvement in the business, his drive is not what it used to be, he confessed, though quickly amended this admission with "but I am still searching things out all the time". On keeping up to speed, he spoke of continuously reading (four technical trade-related publications a week), attending exhibitions and talks in the trade, and liasing with management and staff. In terms of international travel, he spoke of not moving around much in the past year, due to the tragic loss of his wife, which he is still coming to terms with. He then quickly apologised, ("I didn't expect to get into all this"), for making the interview so personal.

On keeping in touch with what is happening within the organisastion, he spoke of routinely having members of the management committee and various staff members to his office to discuss what is going on: "Just yesterday the head of machines was here making a presentation on the inking system they are using in Spain, so I think my technical side is as strong as ever", he said. Participant J's technical side, as previoulsy alluded to, is very much his core competence. He makes this very clear in the following statement: "I have a rudimentry knowledge of finance, I have taught myself enough to know if things are going wrong, I have never sold advertising, but I know how it works; but if you were to ask me what special knowledge I have that takes me outside the other directors in the business, I would say it is knowledge of the nuts and bolts of the trade." For him, the importance of skills, know-how, or craft-knowledge is sadly underestimated in business today. In his own industry he laments the absence of formal training structures: "The apprenticeship model is fast dissapearing being replaced by modular learning, coupled with a huge rise in part-time and free-lance workers", he explained. This he believed creates instabilty, "under the old system there were credible stuctures, you could measure where you were at and how far you had advanced, but all that has been done away with." On business in general, he pointed to the demise of the craftsperson, "you see very few people now who are

running a business because they have made something or developed something or created something, yet I think that is the best kind of business you can start up, if you have somebody with an idea and with the money then that is the best combination, but it is usually the accountant that gets ahead."

On the future, Participant J told of his ambition to see further increases in the circulation of the recently (1996) re-branded core publication and to commence work on the planned for off-site printing facilty. For the moment, he is content, taking pride in the state of the art facilities and the remarkable achievement of having a five-generation family business. Getting this far, he explained, comes down to taking a long-term view, being in business for the long haul; which in turn means being responsible on profits. "It's not all about profits, some years you have to take a loss," he explained, "in the 1980's, we kept investing though there was not much return on investment, now that takes leadership." "Leading an organisation," he added, is about "having faith in your product and faith in your company, while not being so starry eyed about it that you think it is so sacred you won't change it." "I am coming to the end of my career now," he aptly concluded, "and for me the big difference between the beginning of my commerical life and the end of my commerical life is that the changes at the beginning were very small compared to the end, things were much more predictable in the past; nowdays I think you need a bit of luck and a bit of common sense to survive in business." Common sense is not something that this participant is lacking, indeed there appears an underlying wisdom in much of what he imparts, even that which may at first appear as a throwaway comment, or a littlle bit of banter. A rich example of this is illustrated by the title taken from Table J1 in Appendix 2, 'Everything Stops For Tea'. This was a comment made by Participant J when our conversation was interrupted (quite early in the meeting), by the arrival of a silver tea-tray laden with china and a silver service. While at the time, though duly noted, the comment did not appear overly signifcant; later, I believed there was a message he was trying to impart; while I could only conjecture as to exactly what that message might be, it initially spoke to me of the immediate driving out the important. In light of what I came to know of this very interesting and accomplished man, later still I came to revisit that message.

### 4.11.3 Participant J' Story: Part Two

The second meeting took place in the new company premises. On arrival I was particulary struck by the stark contrast in décor between this building and those I previously visited. This transition from traditional to modern was again very much in evidence in Participant J's office, which while very minamalist, was not lacking in the latest technology. I was pleased to see he had not sacrificed everything to the move and somewhat amused in imagining him defying the interior designer in his bid to do so. An antique writing desk housed, what I was later to discover was the engine of an old printing press, and his pride and joy the original type-setting from *The Reviewer*.

The sense of modernity replacing tradition was re-inforced by the arrival of the morning coffee. The ritual of the silver-tea service now replaced by the disposable cup in hand. Prior to switching on the tape-recorder Participant J related the major events in his life since we last met: "Last time I met you my wife had just died, my daugher died two and a half years ago, so I am living on my own now", he revealed. Having offered my condolences, he quickly turned to the business at hand. Turning on the tape record, he spoke of his 'official retirement' in 2001, which is very much a retirement in name only, given that he continues to come into the office each day until at least 3p.m. The other major event, he said jovially, is a slow moving event, "I am growing old, I will be seventy nine in April, though life never stays still, even when you get old." In this vein he spoke of the continued development of the company's core business and its growth and expansion through acqusitions. In particular he recalled the re-branding of its main publication in 2000, (in a bid to increase circulation), and, in 2002, its entry, via acquisition, into the Sunday weeklies market. The other significant event, (and one which was part of his wish list at the end of our first interview), was the outsourcing of the printing function in 2006. This was a new departure for the company which had not previously engaged in outsouring. It also represented a significant advancement in the print technology resulting in a degree of standardisation of colour quality throughout all publications. While there were obvious positives associated with the move, it was the end of an era. Shutting down the old facilties resulted in a significant change in staffing, with many of the existing staff opting to take early retirement.

The earlier comment, 'life never stays still, even when you get old', certainly rang true as Participant J turned to more recent developments in the industry. Here he spoke of

a media landscape, that has changed so much as to be virtually unrecognisable. While he belongs to the generation who remember when media was confined to newsapers, the wireless, magazines, and later one basic black and white television channel; now, a little over a half a century later Generations Z's 'digital natives are travelling with the internet in their pocket'. Evidently unphased by such profound transformations, he spoke with ease of concepts such as: You tube, social networks, facebook, blogging, twitter and wikileaks. A specific concern of his was the rise in 'citizen journalism', whereby members of the public play an active role in collecting, analysing, reporting, and disseminating news. In particular, he spoke of the dillution of power and loss of control that widespread usage would encourage. He provided a rather unusual, yet insightful, example of this. Taking me back a thousand years, he set the scene where there were no printing presses and no movable type. The image of a monk sitting up on his stool, producing a copy of a beautiful illustration. He is under the authority of the abbot (editor), what appears on that script or that page is under the abbot's control. If they needed another copy, another poor monk was given the illustration and copied it again. Along comes printing and Guttenburg and moveable type in the 14th century; and "if you worked for twenty four hours you could probably get two hundred copies with a small sweating boy pulling the handle." "Now skip along a bit faster", Participant J continued, "and today the monk does his work with his laptop." "Now think of forty-nine other monks, they've all been up since 4a.m. had a poor breakfast, been in the fields for twelve hours, had a poor supper, and they are celibate and they are all very tired and cranky; they all have their laptops, and they are no longer under the control of the abbott (editor), so they can write what they like and they can now press a button and communicate with some five million people." That, according to Participant J, is citizen journalism. Citizen journalism, he explained, brings a huge danger in that there is no editorial responsibilty. That danger, he stressed, must be recognised; "newspapers and their editorials have to re-estalblish that responsibility. how is it to be done? now I wish I had the answer to that one he laughed, but it will probably not come in my lifetime, I will be gone, it is your generation and the generation after that will have to solve that one."

Considering his own demise and the changes that he will not be around to witness brought a moment of quite reflection from which Participant J returned with renewed energy, reclaiming the conversation to speak on a subject that, was central to our last

meeting, and is obviously still very dear to him. "One of the things I believe, he began, is that we are swinging too far towards what is called the smart economy, and we have moved too far away from what I call value-added; you have to get that mix of the intellectual and the manual right, and that is not happening," he explained. "But then I suppose I would consider myself a value-added person", he continued, "I always did a fair bit of tinkering about." At this point, with a chuckle of gleeful memory, he recalls how he built a small car that he called 'Aluminium Alice' from the chassis of an old Morris Minor in the early 1950's. "In the process of building and maintaining her I learned a lot about engines and learned to use my hands, which stood to me all my life," he added. "I trained as an engineer," he continued, "I get a lump of metal and I create something else, I create model steam engines in my workshop at home, I don't sell them, I do it for my own entertainment." Returning to the sentiments expresssed in the first interview, he spoke again of his great respect of people who have the capacity to make things, warning against the accountants or 'the bean-counters' taking over. Terms such as 'value-added', 'ingenuity' and 'skill-sets' were scattered throughout examples of companies he admired and innovative accounts he observed on television and elsewhere.

Continuing in reflective mode, Participant J posed the rhetorical question, "What have I learned looking back over my professional life?" Here, without prompting, he turned to the lessons learned with respect to management or leadership. "It is what I learnt in school", he laughed "there is no such thing as a bad boy only bad teachers, there is no such thing as a bad worker only bad managers; I am not sure I was taught it so much as having to learn it – everyone has to learn that you know," he added. "Something else I learned, as a leader," he continued, "you don't need to know everything, but you do need to assembe a very good committee under you, that was my leadership role from the early eighties onwards, making sure the committees were doing their job." And finally, he added, appearing to bring the interview to a close, "more recently I have learned there is a time to go, you loose your edge, you get tired, that is what happened to me in 1993, and you have to step down and you have to go through that change without resentment." One gets the sense that resentment or regret are not emotions that this individual entertains too often. His conversation continously lapses into warm memories and amusing stories of family members and former colleagues. He speaks of those who influenced him most, chief amongst these is his

father whom he describes as “a bit of a depressive, but a great humanitarian who taught him to always treat the unions with great respect”. The memory of his father brings him back to the war and once again he holds forth (in words almost identical to our first meeting), on the need to pay tribute to the war-time generation. “We were a very lucky generation, I have been fortunate, in that I had a comparatively easy life commerically and economically, I try not to be self-satisfied, I have had my own hardships in other ways but I am very lucky, of my six children five of them are alive, they are all married with lovely children living within five miles of me, so that’s not bad”, he explains. “It would be easy to get self-satisfied but I do think a little,” he adds and with that great understatement our conversation ends.

### 4.11.4 Concluding Commentary

While this participant has over sixty years experience in the newspaper industry, it is his early life, (the period during and directly after World War 2), that he returns to in recalling the critical learning episodes of his career. As a time of great scarcity in terms of raw materials and resources, the lived experience from this time brought forth an ingenuity and skilfulness that remained with him. His inclination towards technical and craft knowledge is very much in evidence throughout the first interview with numerous references to his fascination with engineering principles, the concept of value added and being able to use his hands as well as his head; these skills, have become his signature knowledge, that which has set him apart from the other directors in the business, and earned him the respect of his fellow workers. In a closely related sentiment, the demise of the apprenticeship model and credible training structures that provided definitive measures of ‘where one was at and how far one had advanced’ in terms of any profession were lamented. In a business housed by freelance, temporary and part-time staff, he bemoans the absence of tangible evidence of the knowledge and skills of employees. Indeed his self-description, ‘a chemist by training, a shovel engineer by vocation and a manager by desperation,’ encapsulates the essence of this man’s proclivities.

While his reference to graduating with a *full honours* degree in chemistry indicates he is undoubtedly proud of his academic qualifications, and while he understands the necessity of, indeed laments his lack of knowledge in the management/leadership domain, his true calling is very much in the realm of creativity; it is with respect to the doing, the making, and in the solving of technical problems that he appears at his most

passionate. The value he places on craftmanship, skill and dexterity, exist alongside a strong sense of honouring and respecting the past; those circumstances that have shaped, and continue to shape business practices. Both of these themes reappear in the second interview. In terms of the latter, one senses a struggle between revering the past while remaining firmly in the present. Initially this manifested in the physical space he now occupies. As previously described, Participant J is now housed in a bastion of modernity, saving one corner for the vestiges of a previous life. The enduring silver-tea service, now replaced by a disposable cup, is suggestive of a time when nothing stops for tea. In the fast-paced world of electronic media, while he speaks intelligibly of the various developments, he remains concerned with respect to an absence of control that such advancements facilitate.

In the midst of all this change, we find Participant J holding firmly to his core values: again honouring the past, he repeats, (in words that are almost identical), the sentiments regarding the various world wars expressed in the first interview; returing to the importance of value-added, once again he bemoans the imbalance between the intellectual and the manual so prevalent in business today. Telling of his new home-workshop, he continues to describe himself as a value-added person, a grizzly old bear who likes to tinker about, who takes a lump of metal and makes something of it. There is a sense of getting closer to the real person here; not so much the quintessential newspaper man, but the nuts and bolts man, the man who is returning to what he really knows, his true vocation, his true passion, that of the shovel engineer. This is a new departure. There is a blurring in the boundaries between his personal and professional life here that was not previously evident. In the first interview, having spoken of his wife's death, he then apologised for making it so personal. On meeting him ten years later, while he initially recalled the death of his wife at the time of our last meeting, and related the recent loss of his daughter, once the interview proper began these events were never spoken of again. While there is no doubt that these life-changing events have significantly impacted on how he has operated within the business domain, how he makes decisions, how he learns; on the face of it he appears to discount them. This explanation is unlikely. Reflection and self-questioning are no strangers to this individual, our conversation is scattered with moments of total honesty that range from mistakes he made, his perceived inadequacies as a leader, times when he was loosing his grip, and aspects of the business which he considers

more efficient in his absence. A more likely explanation is that he is concious of not allowing these personal circumstances to cross the personal-professional divide. This is not unusual. The requirement to compartmentalise one's personal and professional life, succintly expressed in the expression 'leave your personal problems at the door', is an well-known, if not accepted, part of corporate life. This explanation is borne out by this participant's apology "I am sorry to have made it so personal; I didn't realise I was going to get into that." Though the knowledge of these traumatic events are obviously uppermost in his mind, (particularly in the second occasion when he opens the conversation with reference to them), he does not feel at liberty to bring them into the main conversation. This tendancy to discount knowledge of a personal nature may shed light on the earlier quip 'everything stops for tea'. While it initially suggested the insignificant drives out the importance, perhaps the word insignifcant does not capture the message he was trying to impart. The morning ritual of his tea drinking may be a metaphor for daily rituals. Perhaps, he was hinting that there is no human activity, however significant, that is not interrupted impacted upon, or affected by, the rituals and happenings of our daily lives. While there is a tendancy to consider these events as being somewhat separate from the workplace, they are what gives our lives order, structure and most of all meaning. We cannot truly discount them, nor should we attempt to discount them, as part of our past hisory, they most be honoured, they will continue to influence our present and our future. This explanation sits more comfortably with the man I have come to know, the nuts-and- bolts-man who respects the past, remains grounded in the present, while being mindful of the future.

## 4.12 Participant K

### 4.12.1 Biography

The individual at the centre of this case is employed as a director in a state agency that provides training and employment services to both jobseekers and employees. It also acts as an advisory service for various industries and supports community-based enterprises. Operating throughout Ireland, it is divided into eight regions, with directors appointed within each region.

### 4.12.2 Participant K's Story: Part One

At the time of the first interview Participant K was director of services in a state agency engaged in the direct provision of labour market services. In broad terms, this role

entails anticipating the needs of, and responding to, the evolving labour market requirements within this particular region. For Participant K, the most critical aspect of this role was to understand how the emphasis in the labour market is changing, and the subsequent impact on the nature and content of the services this organisation is charged to deliver. "We are a public service organisation", he began, "and what is often forgotten in a public service organisation is that our first job is to serve the public; in recent years this reality has come to the fore and the realisation and acceptance of this has been quite traumatic for this organisation," he added.

On the specifics of the changes that had occurred in recent years, he told of a more demanding client that wants to be involved in determining the shape of the services that affect their lives. From a strategy perspective, he explained, "When you are developing programmes and allocating resources you have to be aware of that; you can no longer have a single-minded autocratic way of saying you know, we think this is the best programme for this group of people, people are no longer prepared to accept these dictats." In a similar vein, he told of the manner in which clients are now playing a greater role in programme evaluation, with a formal requirement of any programme provided being that some form of evaluation must taken place. In addition, (though it has always been an underpinning requirement in the allocation of funding), the provision of value for money and the presentation of best practice models have become chief requirements in terms of programme delivery. This client-centric orientation has largely been driven by supply-side changes. While the organisation in question has been a monopoly for almost thirty years, government policy has moved towards the provision of services at community level, with training programmes now being offered in conjunction with (and sometimes in competition with), community, voluntary and public organisations. Furthermore, while much of the planning in the past was more centralised, in recent years this organisation has been granted greater regional autonomy. While continuing to dovetail into national programmes, this creates an additional demand to tweak services to suit regional requirements. From a strategy point of view, Participant L commented on the lack of attention that would have been afforded to these issues in times past.

Framing his own role in the context of this changed environment, he initially focused on what he termed, 'the things he needs to know at the director level'. Firstly, he

spoke of the need to have accurate information on the evolving demographic frameworks, (the key inputs into the system in terms of future demand); next, he spoke of the need to understand how and why skills profiles are changing, and to be able to match those requirements with the programme development strategy; while finally he spoke of the need to be able to anticipate the up-skilling required. Acknowledging the difficulties and challenges that often accompany this process, he admits, "there are things we don't know and things that we don't know enough about: The growth in physical skills is being gradually outstripped by knowledge-related skills, but we are not sure of how much or how far that is changing." In addition, he spoke about the uncertainty associated with skills obselescene, whereby resources are put into the development of skills whose life-cycle is difficult to ascertain: "A company goes from manufacture of hardware to software, some skills are transferrable a lot are not, you may put investment into the wrong area, balancing that, it is something we know little about," he added.

On being asked to recall a specific incident where he lacked the knowledge needed; and how he dealt with it; Participant K provided an example from what he called the non-glamourous side of the business, where restructuring or re-organisation results in company closure. In this particular case, the company in question was a longstanding state-led company which had undergone a number of interventions and was now being sold off to an international operator. For these reasons the situation became one of heightened sensitivity that was played out in the public arena. "Work practices and skill levels all had to be changed over a very short period of time," he explained "and the difficulty was we didn't have full disclosure, with the sale of the assets going on in the background the full picture wasn't clear; we didn't have the information on ultimate manning levels, the ultimate skill profiles required, or the timing cycles within which it was to be achieved, these outcomes were being negotiated throughout the process of review." "We dealt with this", he continued, "by putting two people into the plant full-time for about eighteeen months, these people had to do two things, firstly they had to determine the skill profiles for the residual staff and ensure that the programme development at the centre matched with what was required; and secondly they had to interview and assess those that were displaced and to cater for their needs." Looking back on this event, Participant L suggested, the absence of full disclosure and the politically charged environment made this one of the most difficult cases he has

ever been involved with. While his experience of similar company closures was a useful fallback, for him, the key to bringing this situation to a satisfactory conclusion involved 'staying close to the client throughout the entire process'.

The idea of 'staying close to the client' is an aspect of Participant K's operating strategy which he believes sets him apart from those in a similar role: "I am not an office-bound director of faxes," he states, "I would only spend two days a week at most in the office, I would be a bit different than other directors, I think, in that I walk the floors of the workshops, I walk the floors of the unemployment offices more than I sit here." Re-appearing in various guises, there is sense that this closeness to the client is something he feels very passionate about: "I learn quite a bit by going to some of the groups that would have strong reservations about the provision of some service, I listen to people, I listen to the consumers as to what they have to say about programmes rather than just trying to review things based on structured impressions; I spend time interviewing unemployed people, I spend a bit of time each year teaching myself, I tend to work on some of the projects myself as an operator, and that is where I particularly learn." For Participant K, it is very important that "the chief executive is seen to do these very simple things." This statement captures two essential aspects of his leadership style: Being prepared to do the ordinary, simple things and leading by example. The latter is particulary evident when he talks about the central mission of this organisation, to promote learning: "We can't on the one hand be an organisation that promotes systematic training and development within companies and then not apply it ourselves, so we try to practice what we preach," he states. In line with this he acknowledged his success in demonstrating the need for ongoing skill-renewal and development: "I think the pattern has been established, it is very evident to staff that you have to bring something to the table, in terms of best practice, new knowledge, new skills and so on if you want to part of the more progressive types of programmes; similarly when the product life cycle of some programmes reaches decline, we have to retrain our staff for a totally new direction." Skill-renewal, according to Participant K, must occur across all levels of the organisation, and this, he explains, is 'part of the pattern' that he has tried to demonstrate through continuously updating his own knowledge and skills. The repetition of the word pattern, and his reference to being part of this pattern is suggestive of the more visible role that this director plays in the realisation of the organisation's mission. This is borne out in his reference to the

strategic planning process; while on the one hand he recognises the value of the plan in terms of transparancy, equitable decision-making and accountability; for him the process of consultation takes precedence over the finished document. Holding up a copy of the current strategic plan he remarked, "too much time is often put into the actual drafting of text, we have much less text now than we ever had in the past, our plan is much more of an operational document now." "To me, the process by which you get to the final plan is much more important than the actual building of sheets of paper," he continued, "ultimately it is not just a plan you need, but a series of them; we haven't got that far yet but we are working towards it," he added. As a closing remark, this reference to continuous improvement, from the director that appears to embody this principle, appeared an appropriate point at which to bring this interview to a close.

### 4.12.3 Participant K's Story: Part Two

Speaking with Participant K exactly ten years later, his initial comments concened the enormity of change in the time interval since our last meeting. "The concept of managing change was a theoretical concept to some extent ten years ago, (at least in manufacturing), he remarked; but the changes that arrived, came thick and fast, and the reality of change bit hard." On these events, he first recalled the closure of significant tracks of industry, indigenous companies that were perceived as the bedrock of security dissappeared over-night; while the declining cost competitiveness of multi-national subsidiaries resulted in many choosing to relocate overseas.

His role with respect to these changes was two-fold: To encourage those engaged in manufacturing industry to move up the value-added chain, and to develop re-deployment policies with respect to displaced workers. Of the latter, he admitted he could never have anticipated the extent of the re-alingnment that would be required; particularly when it came to moving workers from traditional non-regulated industries to regulated industries such as pharmacueticals. On a particularly poignant note he told of uncovering significant numbers of workers who lacked the basic foundational skills of literacy and numeracy; a problem that came to light, in many cases, not through the workers themselves, (who were unprepared to admit this), but through their families whose lives had been disrupted by changes they could not understand. This was a humbling experience, it was a reality that he believed belonged to a bygone

era, a time of poverty, not this current time of prosperity. The use of the word prosperity here is a reference to the so-called 'Celtic Tiger', the rapid period of economic growth that the Irish economy experienced between 1995 and 2007. While traditional industry was in decline, this period saw an exponential growth in construction, a significant reduction in unemployment levels and a massive inflow of workers from Eastern European countries. Of this time, Participant K recalled the massive demand for apprenticeships that accompanied the growth in construction related industries, and a demand for up-skilling the like of which was never seen before. With near full employment the pendulum had very clearly swung in favour of the employee, providing greater choice, freedom, and flexibility with respect to work and study. It was a time of increasing capacity to meet increased demand, continously shortening programme life-cycles and the provision of training in non-standard hours and formats. Summing up what this period has taught him, he stated: "Skills obselesence is not an abstract concept."

Elaborating on the aforementioned statement, the focus turned to his own career. "The concept of skill-renewal, as applied to myself is much quicker than I could ever have imagined," he explained. In this respect the told how the engineering principles he had learned in the 1950's and 60's are now virtually redundant. He recalled leaving college with a degree and virtually no practical skills to speak of. Entering the workforce, began, what he described as 'a time of waiting to see where he could apply what he had learnt'. The early realisation that the skills given to him as an engineer were not the most pertinent to the job he was doing, encouraged him to study business economics. Having completed an MBA in the late 1980's, he spoke of continually 'bolting on' additional qualifications to meet the disparate skills that his role entailed.

On workplace changes he spoke of the rise of a more participative work-culture; I grew up in an era of autocratic management, he explained, now you have to engage in project-work and team-work which was unheard of in the past. Learning, he recalled, was a matter of default, with no one person having all the skills necessary to undertake a particular project, people naturally assumed different roles in line with their partciular capabilities; "in the past we would have assumed everyone had equal capabilties," he explained. Participant K continues to a be an avid reviewer of develoments in pedadgogy. In his view, the changes that have occurred, on balance

have been, quite positive. In particular, he pointed to the university alternance model, whereby one can alternate periods of work and study as a very favourable advancement. It is, he explained, a means of growing your academic skills at the same time as you grow your pracical capabilities; “it means people don’t leave college like I did with no practical understanding of anything.” There is however, he continued, still room for improvement. Here, he returned to the theme of the earlier interview, “we need to go to the ultimate consumer, we need to ask the ultimate customer what they want,” he stressed. In this regard he suggested the provision of greater opprortunities for second chance education with increased access and routes to transfer and progression. For too long we have paid lip service to all these things he added. Of his own part in this, he speaks with some regret of his failure to increase the international mobility of qualifications. With his recent appointment to the National Qualifications Board this is something he hopes to rectify.

“Things have changed utterly and then things haven’t changed that much at all,” he pointed out, “there are still fundamental weaknesses in the schooling system, to some extent we have inherited the same problems that there were there thirty years ago and we keep making those mistakes again and again.” Continuing in this vein he ponders on the value of experience, acknowledging that he has thirty years experience, he is thirty years older, but he is not sure if he is any brighter. On the other hand, in defence of experience, he speaks of the re-occuring nature of economic cycles, things that have new names and new titles, but are essentially the same as what has gone before. Such parallels, he explained, help us to buld a little caution into the planning process, they help to put a bit of reality into it. “There is too much reliance on hard data these days, he adds; time was when you could interview a fellow for a job in the back of a taxi, that’s all gone now that sort of gut feel that tells you to go ahead, and as a result we have lost something.” Concluding on the important strides that have been made in education, Participant K stressed the continued importance of experience. While he clarified that his reference to ‘five year cycles’ may not, in precise terms, actually be five years, there is he stressed repetition over time and an associated intuition that one needs to hold onto.

### 4.12.4 Concluding Commentary

As a public sector organisation engaged in the provision of labour market services, recognising ones core purpose in serving that public, and correspondingly operating a more client-oriented organisation, at the behest of a more demanding client, was one of the central themes of this case. In the role of director, this participant referred to the 'different things he needs to know.' Instinctively, he relates this in terms of the hiearchical distinction commonly made between information (demographics), knowledge, (how this changing demographic will affect the demand for certain skill-sets); and understanding, (why this is the case). Taking this understanding to another level, anticipating the upskilling that would be required in the future, could be interpreted here as a form of judgement, even wisdom. The lack of knowledge and uncertainty, that is commonly associated with the progression between these levels is also recognised here. For instance, while in terms of demographics, he speaks of a bank of information that is readily available; beyond this, he speaks of "being unsure of the balance between the growth in knowledge skills and physical skills; and of being uncertain of the life cycle of certain skill-sets."

Recalling an incident (the sale of a semi-state company), where he lacked the knowledge needed, or as he puts it 'there was an absence of full disclosure', he expalins how he dealt with this through 'staying particularly close to the client'. This idea of becoming intimately involved with the client is very much a part of how this director operates, how he knows what he knows. In the course of the first interview he emphasises the importance of doing what he calls 'the simple things', walking the floors of the workshops, walking the floors of the unemployment offices and working on projects. Such behaviour serves a dual purpose; not only does it allow him to see things from the client's perspective, a more intimate or connected form of knowing; it also allows others to see that he is not above doing the ordinary and mundane tasks himself. This idea of leading by example is very important to him. As an organisation charged with the task of promoting and addressing the need for skill renewal at all levels; communicating this purpose is, he believes, much less about documenting it in a strategic plan, and much more about imparting it (his vision), in a very conspicious way. In this sense, he sets himself apart, as the arbiter of the company's strategy his role is to create a pattern and in doing so to guide the evolving process of organisational change.

Meeting this participant ten years later he speaks of significant changes, whereby much of the theoretical knowledge that he had, with respect to change management and skills obselesence 'became the reality'. Recalling the changes 'that bit hard' he conveys the pain suffered; and the manner in which many of his pre-conceived assumptions were challenged. In this context, he provided a very honest example of his own ignorance, (not knowing what he didn't know), where he had no idea of the existence of a widespread problem with respect to literacy and numeracy skills. Facing up to a new reality, that he could never have imagined possible taught him a valuable lesson: things are not always what they seem, true knowledge can differ from assumed knowledge. The process of uncovering his own ignorance he describes as a very humbling experience. Trying to get to grips with the extent of the problem brought him face to face (literally and metaphorically), with the sense of shame, embarrassment, and helplessness, that often accompanies the admittance of not knowing how to do something, that it is naturally assumed everyone can do. Dealing with this situation brought a greater awareness of the need to tailor one's approach to knowledge acquisition to the sensitivities of any given situation; and in turn, to tread carefully on how one acts on this knowledge.

In contrast to the first interview, in the second, this participant focused more acutely on his personal situation; the story of his own skill-obslesence. This is not so surprising. As he comes close to retirement the inclination to reflect on the path of his own development would have been quite strong. On reflection he sees the inadequacies of his early formal education in preparing him for his initial role. He speaks of a sort of 'cart-before-the-horse approach', learning and then waiting to see where he could apply it. When the gaps in his knowledge quickly became evident, he first opted to fill them with formal learning, and later a combination of learning by default and 'bolting on' additional qualifications. This combination of formal and informal learning he believes is the better way. He believes there is an overreliance on hard knowledge today; that is to the detriment of the softer, intuitive, gut feel, the experience that indicated patterns and parallels, at time cautionary, at others urging you to go ahead. Balancing these two knowledge sources, is something that needs addressing.

## 4.13 Participant L

### 4.13.1 Biography

In 1971, as a qualified ergonomist, Participant L joined the company at the centre of this case. Following a two-year period as a management trainee, he was appointed to his first management position in 1973. Over a period of twenty years he progressed from managing one brewery in one country, to managing seven breweries across a number of European countries. In 1993 he came to Ireland to take up the position of chief executive of a subsidiary of one of the leading brewers in the world. After five years in this role, he returned to his home country, where, two years later he took early retirement.

### 4.13.2 Particpant L's Story: Part One

Reflecting on the twenty years experience he acquired prior to becoming chief executive, Participant L described it as a sustained period of 'solving identical technical and organisational problems that only varied in terms of scale and location'. After twenty years he felt he had really mastered the job, he had seen all the challenges and was eager to broaden his scope and to move on. It was at this time, (1993), that an opportunity arose in the Irish subsidiary when the incumbent chief executive was appointed general manager to the U.S. operation. Prior to taking up this role, Participant L took part in an intensive, four-week executive development programme in the US. As the first full-time period of study since his undergraduate days, he recalled this time as excellent preparation in terms of understanding the problems, interactions and route to cohesiveness across the different disciplinary areas.

Despite his prior experience as part of the management team, and the management education provided, the transition to chief executive was, in his own words, 'a big thing'. "There is that first time," he explained, "when all of a sudden you find yourself outside of your technical area, and you have all of the responsibility of the organisation, all of the responsibility for the co-ordination, and all of the responsibility to know the way forward." Reflecting on that time he described the first few weeks in his new role as "a time of looking around him, talking to people, getting to know them, winning their trust and coming to an understanding of their perspectives on the problems and challenges that existed for the organisation."

This time of observation and conversation could not continue indefintely however. In words reminiscent of those used to describe the crucible moment of assuming the CEO role, he spoke next of "a time when you have to come with your own vision and your own set of programmes, you have to decide what you are going to do with the problems and challenges; how you are going to solve them." It is at this juncture that the key difference between his previous role and his new role is articulated. For twenty years Participant L was used to dealing and co-operating with all of the different functional areas. While he acknowledged the value of this knowledge in the context of his new role, of itself, he considered it insufficient: "As CEO of a highly intensive technical operation you need a certain depth of functional know-how, you need to know the technical and economic side of beer manufacture, you need to know about marketing, human resource management and finance; but above all that you need to have the experience to differentiate between what is critical and what is not critical," he explained. The elevation of the CEO role beyond the detail, towards the abstract and concpetual is borne out in later statements where he describes the position, as "a state of mind, that involves thinking into the future, questioning, what can I do, what should I do, what should I not do, what opportunties are there?" Though initially presented in the form of a solitary process of self-questioning, as the conversation continues, he goes to some lengths to acknowlege that this is not the case. Referring to a conceptual exchange of different ideas, he speaks of encouraging those reporting to you by "giving them a problem, asking them to come up with a solution, getting them to take ownership and giving them the discretion to come back with an answer." There is an interesting contrast here between his earlier perception that as CEO he has *all* of the responsibility, and his acknowledgement at this point that this is not the case. "I am the first among equals, it is not me who is managing the company, it is the team that is managing it, we have joint responsibility," he states; "It is not about me saying I want it this way because I am responsible, it is about saying *you* are responsible aswell."

The idea of shared responsibility, and his reliance on what others know that he doesn't know, are parallel themes throughout the remainder of this interview. In the position of chief executive, he explains, it is more about *who* you know than *what* you know. In this regard he speaks of others who are much more specialised, and consequently much more knowledgeable in certain areas than him, admitting that he is comfortable

drawing upon them to compensate for what he does not know. On one occasion he refers to his role in the context of defining the problems or identifying the opportunties, whilst knowing he does not know the solutions, he is not going to formulate the solutions on his own; on another he speaks of knowing that if he has a problem he is not going to solve it himself, very often it is those around you that help to do that. His sense of feeling supported is further emphasised in his reference to the multinational subsidiary-headquarter relationship; here there is a sense of being almost cosseted, cocooned by the parent company, continuously 'fed' up-to-date information, alongside regular meetings with head-quarters, in-company presentations/training and the availablilty of specialist training or consultants where required. While recognising the manner in which he leans on those around him to develop his knowledge, real learning, he points out comes through reflection, the analysis of mistakes. Here, at the close of the first interview, the image of the self-questioning chief executive returns: "I learn most from the mistakes I have made, analysing for example, have I made a mistake in terms of the organisation's direction, how can I change that, how can I re-direct that; that is how you learn to lead and be a leader, by doing it and making mistakes," he concludes.

### 4.13.3 Participant L's Story: Part Two

In this company it is common practice to rotate the senior managers every five years. Appoximately one year after the first interivew, having spent five years in Ireland, Particiapnt L returned to his home country to take up the position of chief executive there. Of his time in Ireland, his abiding memory concerned the overall effectiveness of the team in working together to achieve a common ambition, and the over-riding importance of group-chemistry in that overall equation.

On returning home he assumed responsibility for the production and distribution of beer in the domestic and export market. A key concern for the company at that particular time was the relatively poor performance of the export market vis a vis the domestic situation. In addressing this situation, it was, according to Participant L, necessary to introduce a complete change of mindset in the company. From a culture of thinking 'my boss really is the general manager of this organisation', it was necessary to think 'my boss is the U.S. client, because ultimately he is the guy who is paying for everything in the supply chain'. This paradigm change was dependent on

two requirements: Firstly creating awareness that a problem existed, that the old ways were not working, that there was a need to change; secondly, convincing everyone that the problem could not be solved without external support. At the height of the change process Participant L spoke of a time where there were upwards of one hundred consultants in the company assisting with the new processes and the new systems to support these. It was, he recalled, a delicate and complicated process to give leadership to. With over one hundred workers released from their normal jobs and the entire process taking approximately two years, it was often difficult to maintain the momentum. At such times, he spoke of 'keeping going because he knew he was not alone,' he had the help of the consultants, the management team and those who were reporting to him. In terms of what he learnt from this experience he spoke of the importance of not loosing focus; not getting distracted by matters that were not conducive to the completion of the project; and of coming to a greater acceptance, through experience and age, that as the leader you are ultimately responsible for the organisation's progress. In light of this he spoke of coming to terms with making decisions in the absence of full information and living with the consequences. This, he explained, is a lot easier when everyone is behind you; when a decision is required in the absence of follower support, it is then, he pointed out, that the real question of leadership comes into play.

At the time of the second meeting Participant L was close to his seventieth year, and well into his retirement having taken the opportunity for early retirement in advance of his sixtieth birthday. Following retirement, he joked, that he had gone to work in the Zoo; here he was referring to four years voluntary work with the 'Animal Ambulance Service'. In this role he told of his experiences in uncovering management corruption, of problems with motivating state employees and of a lack of co-operation between volunteers and staff. The problems in this organisation, he remarked, were much the same as every other organisation I have worked in, again only the context and the scale of those were different. The ease of transferring the knowledge he has to different organisational contexts and the repetitive nature of many organisational problems were similarly highlighted in the first meeting when he recalled the twenty year period he spent in a technical role. Before the close of the second interview he returns to this matter. "I think I probably would have liked to get general management responsbility at an earlier stage in my career," he admits, "twenty years in a technical

discipline is too long," he explained, "it doesn't widen or deepen your knowledge." On reflection, he believes he should have been more forthcoming in asking for the responsibility: "I didn't ask for it he says, I waited to be asked." On my final question, as to whether he regrets this action, he answers with, unequivocal honesty, "Yes, maybe, I don't know, maybe I have not reflected on it."

### 4.13.4 Concluding Commentary

For this particpant, twenty years experience in a middle management role, solving the same problems, (only on a different scale and in a different location), meant he had reached a plateau in terms of knowledge development. The transition to a senior management role, while it provided an opportunity to broaden and deepen his knowledge, was presented as a particularly unsettling experience. This participant speaks of "finding himself outside of his technical area; with all of the responsibility of the organisation, all of the responsibility for the co-ordination, and all of the responsibility to know the way forward". The use of the words, 'finding himself outside' are suggestive of being flung, hurled, or propelled, beyond his comfort zone. The repetition of the words 'all of the responsibility', conveys the burden of accountabilty that he felt, the significance of the challenge, and the transformation that it represented. In describing this transition, he was keen to differentiate between an initial period of coming to grips with what others knew; and the point at which he comes to own this knowledge, and subsequently to create his own knowledge. Once again this is described as a particularly transformative moment: "There comes a point when you have to take ownership, what you are going to do with the problems, your own vision, your own solutions." Owning knowledge in terms of deciding the future of the organisation represents an analytical and conceptual leap, beyond the functional detail that he has been accustomed to. He now speaks of knowledge in terms of developing a state of mind, of which self-questioning is an integral part. Growing into the CEO role, and owning the knowledge that comes with that role, brings a dilution of the earlier sense of isolation and being over-burdened with responsiblity. His rather dramatic reference to being 'first among equals' indicates, while he recognises his authority, he does not see himself as omnipotent.

In the second interview he recalls his return to the company he originally worked with and his involvement in a fairly dramatic cultural change from a domestic to a more

international orientation. While the sense that he was not alone carried him through this difficult process; he is very clear that it is he, and he alone, who has ultimate responsibilty for the organisation. To some extent this second meeting recalls the themes of the first. What is different here perhaps is his reference to lack of knowledge. While previously, he appeared confident, even protected by the amount of knowledge at his disposal, in the latter period of his career he recognises the inevitability of uncertainity as he frequently operates in the absence of complete knowledge. While age and experience are identified as factors that mitigate the fear of decision-making in this climate; above all the support of followers in those crucial moments of judgement is recognised as the overriding criticality that can make or break a leader.

## 4.14 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has provided an indvidual case-story (Richmond, 2002) of each of the research participants. Central to each case are the changes that have occurred over the time period under review and the researcher's interpretation of what this represents in terms of the content and process of these leader's knowledge, knowing and not-knowing. The next chapter, Chapter 5, provides a cross-case analysis of the recurring themes and patterns across each of the twelve case over both time-periods.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS
# PART TWO

## 5 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS: PART TWO

### 5.1 Introduction

Chapter Four, the analysis of findings part one, presented a case-by-case analysis of each of the twelve research participants. Each case was presented in the form of a case-story, a chronological review of events over both phases of the research, with an emphasis on the key changes occuring during this time period. This chapter continues the process of analysis providing a systemic view of the re-occuring themes and patterns across the twelve individual cases. The process of cross-case analysis is organised as follows. The first half of the chapter analyses and presents the research findings under the original research question from the first phase of the research. For the purpose of clarity these questions are re-iterated here:

Research Questions: Phase One

Q1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?

Q1a How do they perceive knowledge?

Q1b What knowledge do they prioritise?

Q2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

Q3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'?

The second part of the chapter adopts a similar structure presenting the research findings for the second phase of the research under the following research questions:

Research Questions: Phase Two

Q4 How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of leader's knowing/not knowing evolve?

Q5 What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?

## Research Findings Phase One

### RQ1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?

## RQ1(a) How do they perceive knowledge?

### 5.2 Knowledge is Perceived as a Possession

Many of the leaders in this study viewed knowledge as a possession or belonging, that they, or indeed others owned, a stock or store of something that had accumulated over time. Evidence of this perception is contained in the following sub-sections in which these leaders speak of knowledge as a tangible asset or resource (Section 5.2.1), or an intangible asset in the form of a competence, a skill, or a particular form of know-how (Section, 5.2.2).

#### 5.2.1 A Tangible Asset or Resource

One participant relied on a metaphor to develop this idea, describing his knowledge as 'the baggage' one brings from past to present, from one situation to the next.

> We all bring baggage with us: political, cultural, theological, liturgical, spiritual and one of the pieces of baggage I carry with me is the people that I know that I can turn to. [Participant A]

While initially presented in a positive light, he was keen to point out the more commonly held negative association that the word 'baggage' incites. In such instances previous experience and long held opinions are considered to be of more weight than value. The leader's need to achieve the optimum mix between drawing on one's history and the acquisition of new knowledge is expressed in terms of 'balancing one's luggage'; the caveat being, one should unload some baggage and hold onto what might continue to be of use. In the words of Participant A:

> There can be occasions when the baggage we accumulate en route comes to dominate our ministry in an obsessive manner. Over the years I have seen baggage being totally divisive as a new broom seeks to sweep clean the perceived archaic practices of the past. While one cannot be expected to jettison their baggage completely, neither must they so impose their personal predilections that people feel dragooned in ways that undermine the practice that may have sustained them over the years. What this means in effect is that a bishop more than most has to perform a diocesan balancing act.

The portable nature of knowledge alluded to in the above quotation was developed in related perceptions of knowledge as something that would remain in one's absence as a type of legacy or inheritance. In the following excerpt this participant tangibilises

the relationships he has formed as he speaks of leaving behind 'a residue' of that which he has 'fermented and formulated'. While 'know-who' in the form of a list of contacts can be inherited by one's sucessor as a form of tangible knowledge; the necessity for the benefactor to personalise these contacts, 'make their own of them', turning that explicit knowledge into something tacit or personal, is also emphasised in the following excerpt:

> If you have built up good relationships with people and communites there will always be a residue of that remaining when you go. I would hope that if I were to leave in the morning my successor would be able to enter into the community relationships that I had helped to ferment and formulate while I was here, so I don't think it's starting from a tablula rasa each time. I think you leave behind you this residue of relationships, that you have built up, but the person coming in is a different person and while they inherit excellent relationships you've got to make them your own and you've got to develop them in your own way. [Participant A]

The following comment from Participant G is similar to those of Participant A on two fronts: His use of the verb 'decanting' once again portrays knowledge as a tangible entity, a set of 'facts' that can be held or contained until required. He similarly, speaks of the necessity for the inheritor to make his own mark, judging the likelihood that some knowledge will exit the organisation with the previous role occupant as a positive occurrence, that will, it is assumed, allow space for the creation of new knowledge.

> When I move on a certain amount of knowledge will go with me, you can't decant all your facts, I'd say an awful lot of people around here don't want it anyway, I think it's good that change comes at the top and that someone will come after me and they'll try again.

### 5.2.2 An Intangible Asset: Ability or Know-How

While the above examples represent times when participants' knowledge was, in the first instance, perceived as a tangible asset or resource, at other times they spoke in much less concrete terms of their own and indeed others' knowledge. Cases of 'others' knowledge are included here as the researcher has interpreted them as examples of 'others' who were judged to be 'knowledgeable'; that such individuals had 'knowledge' that these participants clearly admired, or indeed envied, was considered insightful in terms of their own perceptions of what knowledge was.

While the terminology used in the following quotation is very much in line with those presented in sub-section 5.2.1, there are underlying differences. Participant I's use of the terms 'reservoir of knowledge' and 'fountain of knowledge', powerfully capture the depth of knowledge that is possessed by his colleague, the character known as 'the roundabout'. As a reservoir, he is a receptable, a container, a holder, a stockpile or supply of knowledge that is held in reserve until required. As 'a fountain' he is a wellspring, or a natural source of something desirable. Each of these images is compatible with the perception of knowledge as a possession. However, the knowledge spoken about here is rather different to the knowledge described in the preceeding examples. In this case, the knowledge possessed is intimately connected and particular to the knower. The appearance of the word 'folklore' supports this assertion. Taken literally the 'folk' dimension suggests a form of knowledge that is uncontrived, unaffected and unpretentious; the term 'lore' suggests a form of oral history passed from one generation to the next. In essence, this is knowledge that is very personal to this particular individual, it is *his* story so to speak. Indeed, as Participant I explains, the roundabout's knowledge is so much a part of him, he does not recognise it as being of any real value. While the admission that competitors would be unable to unlock, or tap into this knowledge strongly re-inforces its intangibility, its tacitness and the associated opportunity for competitive advantage; the closing comment, that this participant could unlock it anytime he wants to, is suggestive of a type of knowledge that has the potential to be made explicit by those who know how to do so.

> It's stored in folklore, all in folklore, that's why we'd be down now talking to this guy 'the roundabout', the guy whose really in the way, he's a huge reservoir of knowledge, he doesn't know it, but all you've got to do is ask him the right questions and you'll get the answer, he doesn't know he is giving me a very important answer, he just happens to know, he doesn't even know what he knows, he doesn't know if it's of any value, but he's vastly experienced and very shrewd about judging people. He's a huge reservoir, a fountain of knowledge, no good to our competitors because they wouldn't know how to unlock it, but we can go down and unlock that any time we want. It's just one of the reservoirs that are rafting out there. [Participant I]

The personal, intimate and tacit knowledge that the roundabout possesses is knowledge that has been partly inherited and partly acquired through personal experience. It is

knowledge with respect to people and how to judge people. In this sense, it is practical, action-oriented knowledge, or a form of know-how.

In similar examples, other particpants spoke about their knowledge in the context of their ability to perform, highlighting the possession of certain skills that conferred 'knowledgeability'. For instance, for the museum curator, being, and possibly more importantly, appearing knowledgeable, meant being *able to* keep up with the conversation. In Participant F's words:

> When you enter into a conversation with a museum professional you have got to be able to hack it to a certain degree.

For the artistic director 'being knowledgeable' was seen as having the abililty to discern or detect changes and trends in popular artistic culture.

> You have to be very tuned into your society and where each generation is coming from… *you have to be able* to read where the whole culture is going – the Zeitgeist, what it is that people want… it's the times and the people around you that are changing and you are trying to feed into it. [Participant D]

While for Participant G, being knowledgeable meant knowing how to customise his knowledge to suit the requirements of a particular context.

> What I mean by knowledgeable is, it's one thing to know the detail and just follow along with it religiously or slavishly, it's another thing to come back and do a bit of brainstorming with your colleagues and see are there ways in which we can prise open the cask of central government. You know what I'm talking about, there's a straightforward way of doing any job and a way of putting your stamp on it and part of the way of putting your stamp on it is to understand the needs of an area. [Participant G]

Some participants suggested that the knowledge associated with these skills and abilities was intuitive or instinctive; they knew it without knowing how they actually knew it, they just knew. For example, in reminiscing about his father, Participant I, recalls a cuteness, (in the sense of astuteness), that relies on an inner-voice or gut-feel. He describes knowledge as 'a little judgement call,' which in the apparent absence of rational step-by-step analysis provides answers to various decisions.

> My father would have been cute enough to know when to cut the price, to go for the business, that judgement call, that little call that you have to

> make, when to buy out your competitor, when not to buy out your competitor. [Participant I]

In another example, (in more polite terms), the same individual speaks of the ability of his sales manager to distinguish between that which is authentic or inauthentic. His use of the term 'having a nose' suggests a refined sense (like having a good nose for fine wine), that is innate or instinctual. The description of this character as a country (rural), kind of guy' re-inforces the idea that his abilities are natural or basic; he is 'a very straight talker,' who, in the opinion of this participant, has none of the slickness or smoothness of his urban counterpart. As Participant I explained:

> My sales manager is a country kind of guy and he is a very straight talker and he doesn't take no for an answer, he tends to have a nose for bullshit.

Participant D, similarly describes his programming skills in terms of 'having a strong sense' of how he wants to mix his hand, and his marketing skills as 'having a very strong instinct for what the market wants.'

> I have a strong sense of how I want to mix my hand with some of the programming, this is what would be called 'the halo effect' to my programming, this is deserving, this is intellectually or artistically stimulating but cannot survive in a popular market, this has the potential to draw from a wide audience and be perceived to be worth the money that's put into it. Similarly, I wouldn't have any training in marketing but again I would have a very strong instinct for trying to research and analyse what the market wants. [Participant D]

While the author recognises that the terms intuition and instinct may have been employed interchangeably here, in at least one case, there are clear differences between their usage. For instance, while Participant D's description of his sales manager's nose suggests that knowlege is innate or instinctual; his description of his father's knowledge as deep-rooted judgement is more akin to intuition. The role of experience is often cited as the differentiating factor between these two and while experience was not overtly referred to in the examples provided so far, (other than a rudimentary reference to 'the roundabout's vast experience), this was not always the case. For instance, in the following quotation Participant G recalls the influence of prior experience on his ability to make decisions without recourse to concious reasoning. For him, experience builds up a resource base or a stock of automatic knowledge that he refers to as 'this autopilot thing'.

> You learn from experience, if there is something new or novel that has worked you go away and have a look at it and see is there relevance in it, it's amazing many things I would be doing now, 10 or 15 years ago I would not have seen the relevance of, but you are all the time building up this autopilot thing I was talking about, you're all the time building up this resource and you say, Yeah I remember now I saw something, I might have seen it ten years ago and thought that's nice but it wouldn't' work for us and all of a sudden you see some use for it and you say God… you know. [Participant G]

Other participants similarly recognised the contribution of experience to their intuitive knowledge and related decision-making. In a manner similar to Participant G above, Participant I, returns to his reservoir metaphor explaining, without this stock of experience he would not have the knowledge (or memory), to recognise that certain events represented little more than a repetition of previous ones. As a consequence he would not have the associated ability to anticipate their re-occurance and to act appropriately. As Participant I noted:

> Everything repeats you know, all your customer get fed up of business eventually and they let you down and they go broke and they get you for £10,000, well that might be £20,000 today, but it could have been £5,000 twenty years ago, £2,000 in the 1950's but it's the same thing, it's a constant repeating process, its virtually uncollectable when it happens that's why you need a reservoir of experience to anticipate it.

Drawing on experience to recognise this repetition, anticipating a re-occurrence and acting accordingly ensured the same mistakes were not made over and over again. Once again Participant I explains this in the context of a reservoir of folklore (this time possessed by his father), that allows him to remember back to the 1940's. In the latter half of this quotation he questions the value of this, wondering if the collective memory makes the organisation resistant to change ('stick in the muds'), and pondering on the benefit of learning through mistakes. This point is taken up again at a later stage of the interview and is discussed below in the context of 'forgetting'.

> I am amazed how outfits continously forget, they forget the mistakes they made and keep making the same mistakes again, they don't have a backdrop of knowledge at all. If you maintain a backdrop of knowledge like we have a constant reservoir of knowledge all the way back, I do it through my father going way back to the 1940's, but maybe that makes us stick in the muds I don't know, maybe we are staying too close to the pack. Maybe you have to keep making all these mistakes all over again,

> maybe that's what success is, I really have no idea, I'm constantly scratching my head and saying jeekers, you know.' [Participant I]

Participant K makes a similar point, describing his knowledge in terms of repetitive cycles of experience, recognition of this underlying pattern informs decision-making, wherein one can apply the same solutions to problems which essentially differ in scale, context or time-period only.

> Well, After 30 years I suppose experience doesn't make you any brighter, it makes you older. But it does give you an interesting thing I have found in cycles of five years roughly while some of the things have new names and new titles, fundamentally, in the labour market things begin to repeat themselves in different ways. Even with the difficulties in companies, or the high demands that come now for big groups of inward investment, there are parallels for those in the 80's the 70's and the 60's, okay the scale was smaller but there are parallels. That is what the experience is, you can fallback, like big factory closures, the one we had with Z, we previously had it with X and Y and the models we developed for X and Y for the interviewing and appraisal and re-development of staff were quite useful to us. Okay it was a different era but the principles were the same [Participant K]

Participant K returns to this point at a later stage in the interview when he talks of the way experience provides for discretionary decision-making.

> Experience is also good from the point of view of putting a little bit of caution into your planning process, it doesn't help sometimes if you are too open-ended with the plan, I don't use caution to mean one wants to be reserved or sluggish or slow, I mean it puts a better reality and a better balance into it. [Participant K]

While experience was mainly spoken of in terms of remembering or 'a backdrop of knowledge', it was also seen as a form of 'forgetting'. In the following example, reminiscient of the earlier reference to being 'stick in the muds', Participant I equates experience with having the common sense to hold onto what is good, while knowing what to let go of. In this respect, 'negative knowledge' is associated with 'wrong information' and redundant thoughts, such as 'let's do it this way because it was always done this way':

> It's all about common sense, it's not about developing flows of information, if anything it's about eliminating wrong flows of information, about eliminating bad thoughts, about eliminating 'it was always done that way' and yet clinging on to the good stuff that you have and the connections that you have with your customers and your suppliers. [Participant I]

The underlying sentiment here, that not all knowledge is necessarily valuable or positive, was repeated at another point in the same interview when Participant I spoke about the negative impact of prior knowledge in creating a 'first-mover disadvantage'. Newcomers to the industry, he explained, 'don't have the same raft of bad thoughts as long-term industry incumbents'. In this sense he questioned the relationship between experience and knowledge development; did cumulative experience result in greater knowledge or was one simply repeating the original experience over and over again? Participant I remarked:

> I'm almost twenty years, nineteen years in this game now and I often wonder have I nineteen years experience or one year's experience repeated nineteen times.

The similarity between this latter comment and that of Participant K above is worth noting. While Participant K extols the virtues of experience in terms of pattern recognition, his opening comment, that 'experience doesn't make you any brighter, just older', suggests he is partially in agreeement with Participant I. Both of these comments reflect the earlier sentiment of Participant A, that not all knowledge is necessarily good, indeed being in possession of certain knowledge can create blind-spots for the knower, or encourage divisive or co-ercive behaviour.

**RQ1(b) What knowledge do they prioritise?**

## 5.3 A Prioritisation of Explicit Environmental Knowledge

When questioned on what they needed to know, to do the jobs they did, for a number of these leaders, explicit environmental knowledge, often in the form of hard data and information, was first mentioned. Indeed in one case, the interviewee began the interview with the assertion, that, above all else, understanding one's external environment was of critical importance. In the words of Participant B:

> From my point of view, the knowledge I need to have, an awful lot of it is outside the company. Basically what's happening in the states, what's happening in Europe, what changes are happening in the information technology revolution, what's become an new standard in engineeering or in the area of electronic document management?

This idea, that *the* most important knowledge exists on the boundary of the organisation and its external context, was given additional support by Participant C who spoke of 'looking for trends out there.'

> Knowledge of the external environment would be I think the most important, anybody who would be running a business today like ours, a service industry who wouldn't be keeping in touch with the external environment would be daft. Where is the engineering design business going, where are our customers taking it, what are the customers of tomorrow going to be interestd in? So I would be looking for trends out there, what the market is doing.

Participant E also emphasises the importance of knowing one's external environment, asserting that 'market information' is 'the single biggest and most important piece of information for the business'. Repetition of the word information (a total of six times), lends further weight to the priority that he affords to it.

> If you were to ask me 'what is the single biggest and most important piece of information we get in the business to force us and to help us make decisions?' it is market information. I would say the uppermost thing in my mind would be market information, information about what competitors are doing, information about what's growing, what's declining and so on, that's the critical part. Brands are the lifeblood and the more information we have on our brands and on our competitors brands the more we can think readily and more forcibly make decisions in terms of moving us forward. [Participant E]

While the type of environmental knowledge that was considered important varied in terms of each individual case, there was some semblance across cases with nearly all participants citing some combination of the macro-environment, the industry environment and the marketplace. Participants related their knowledge requirements in objective terms such as: 'engineering standards' [Participant A] 'information' [Participant E] 'statistics' [Participant H] and 'demographic frameworks' [Participant K].

On other occassions, this knowledge was related as a form of restriction or constraint, within which one had to operate. For example, in the following quotation, Participant G, speaks of needing a thorough knowledge of local government law, as the practice either fits with the law or it doesn't.

> You have to have a thorough knowledge of local government law in practice, if members want to do something it either fits with the law or it doesn't, it's my job to advise them and if they go wrong I'm culpable. [Participant G]

Participant A, the Church of Ireland Bishop, speaks in a almost identical way of the manner in which he is restricted in what he can do and say by the church's constitution.

> In a sense the Church of Ireland's constitution is the final court of appeal and therfore the bishop, who in a sense is also the final court of appeal has got to be pretty familiar with the contents and know what he can do and say. Problems that may arise, concerning relationships or to do with authority and parochial life often relate back from a bishop's point of view to the constitution.

While explicit knowledge of the external environment appeared to be foremost in these leaders minds, at other times, their attention turned to the neccessity for core-business knowledge, in other words, their need to know the 'nuts-and-bolts' of the business. Participant L, CEO of a brewery gave particular weight to this aspect of his knowledge base. For example, in posing the rhetorical question, 'What do you need to know to manage an operation like we have? he answered:

> First of all the core of our business is the production and marketing of beer, so you need to know a little bit about the economics of beer manufacture, the process of beer manufacture and the quality of beer manufacture.

He quickly followed this by the need to 'know' the different functional areas:

> Secondly, since the company is basically about beer brands, consumer marketing is tremendously important so you need to know about that. Then of course to run a business you have the other support functions.

In addition, given that the initial interviews were conducted in the late nineteen nineties, a time of significant advances in information technology; for a number of these participants knowledge of new technologies (such as the internet and e-mailing) were areas that were becoming increasingly important in their roles. In the words of Participant A:

> More and more whether one likes it or not, one is going to have to become a bit familiar with this whole internet thing [Participant A]

The other 'knowledge' that appeared with some regularity throughout the various discussions was knowledge of how to deal with people, how to manage them, motivate

them and understand them. For example, one participant spoke of the need to know how to lead a diverse workforce:

> I have a board of forty-eight members, now forty-eight members of diverse backgrounds, diverse knowledge bases, diverse political persuasions; trying to get them all to think strategically for the county council when they are part-time, with all due respects to them is an extremely difficult task but that is my job. [Participant G]

Another spoke of his difficulty in motivating those at the lower end of the scale in terms of renumeration and advancement [Participant D], while yet another talked about needing to understand how his workforce felt about working for the organisation.

> The other knowledge then, if we move away from the customers and the market and the whole technology back to the people side, 'what's it like for someone to be working for us out there in the corridoor? [Participant C]

While explicit knowledge, (and in particular that which related to the external environment), was afforded priority by many of these participants; the need to get beyond that which is explicitly known was also recognised, albeit by fewer numbers. As participant A explains, having 'book information,' the history of methodism or presbyterianism (explicit knowledge), does not replace the lived experience of worshipping with another denomination; while the former is seen to provide a snapshot or brief impression, the latter brings an implicit or deeper understanding.

> No matter how well structured post-ordination training courses may be, there is no substitute for time spent in a parish with an experienced colleague. You can have what you would call book information about another church, I can read the history of methodism or presbyterianism, but unless I am actually living the life, worshipping with another denomination over a period of time I don't know how they tick. We're not all that good at doing that, it is much easier to make snap decisions rather than actually coming to grips with how other people think and worship and live their lives. [Participant A]

Participant D speaks in a similar way of the difference between knowledge and the judgement that can only be honed through extensive experience. While the former is valuable, the latter has much greater potential in terms of its ability to add value.

> Knowledge is very important, but then after knowledge comes judgement, you've got to make decisions, call the risks, so I suppose it's best informed by a good knowledge of your subject but it's no guarantee you are going to be right more than half the time. You have to have someone who believes

> in their own judgement even though you know you are wrong half the time. [Participant D]

The importance of judgement was further emphasised by the chief executive of an organisation that provides services to those with mental and physical disabilities. While he initially spoke of the vital importance of client data and statistics, later in the interview he stressed, on more than one occasion, the importance of being able 'to slot people in'; in other words being able to use this data to differntiate between clients in terms of their dependency levels and associated service requirements. In the words of Participant H.

> We need to determine whether they are going to be in the independent group, semi-independent group or the dependent group.

Thus, for a few participants, while knowledge (often in the form of explicit data or statistics) is important, using this information judiciously is of greater importance. In this sense, a minority of participants appear to differentiate between knoweldge as information (the statistics and data) and knowledge as experience and judgement; placing the latter at a higher level of the hierarchy in terms of added value. While this section addresses the types of knowledge that these leaders prioritised, the knowledge that they believed that they needed to possess, the extent to which they felt they were actually in possession of this knowledge is dealt with in a section 5.4.6 which deals with the issue of not knowing.

## RQ2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

### 5.4 The Process of Knowing is Informal, Emergent and Social

When questioned on how they came to know what they need to know, across the twelve participants the following sources were identified: Networking and involvement with professional associations, attending seminars/conferences, learning from customers,

clients, suppliers and colleagues, on the job/project work, reading trade and company publications, the internet, expert advice and benchmarking. While a number of these sources are suggestive of a deliberate and directed effort to build and maintain one's knowledge base; the overriding sense was of a more informal and unintentional endeavour. Participants related numerous examples of how the manner in which they came to know what they needed to know was grounded in their ordinary every-day activities, both work-related and non-work related. In some instances, this knowledge was considered task-specific and time specific, emerging to meet the needs of a particular situation and remaining only for the duration of that situation. The majority of leaders in this study did not possess a management qualification and engagement in further education and training was limited. While the value of a formal education was acknowledged, there was much less emphasis on validated knowledge (including reading), and much greater emphasis on the colloquial. Knowledge development was particularly dependant on learning from other people, both in and and beyond the workplace. While the role of reflection was not directly refererred to, self-questioning, self-assesment and a form of retrospective analysis were at times alluded to. Each of these aspects are expanded upon in more detail in Section 5.4.1 to Section 5.4.5 inclusively.

### 5.4.1 Knowing is Grounded in Every Day Activities

Across the full range of participants, incidents of how they developed their knowledge were related in the context of the ordinary everyday activities that were part of their working and non-working lives. In this sense much of their knowledge evolved in action, while undertaking tasks associated with their role, or during their own leisure activities. Examples of statements relating to each of these sources are provided in the sub-sections that follow.

#### 5.4.1.1 Every Day Work-Related Activities

Across all of the participants, the examples provided suggested that much of their knowledge was developed in the course of doing the job, and as a consequence as the job evolved so too did their knowledge. For example, Participant D described how, administrative skills, which he considered innate, emerged through the necessity to undertake this work due to staff shortages:

> Almost all administrative experience or organisational ability was innate and was just brought out through the challenges in hand, something acquired through a desire to do things. [Participant D]

Other participants also spoke of knowledge acquisition through engaging in certain tasks. For instance, Participant K placed particular emphasis on the importance of project-work in terms of his own development.

> I learn from other people through project-based work, I am a great believer in the building of teams, project based work is very applicable to our business. [Participant K]

In a similar way, Participant A, the Church of Ireland Bishop, recalled how his knowledge developed through 'being put to the test', having to answer questions in the ordinary course of events. The use of the word 'ordinary' here again signifies the day-to-day evolutionary nature of knowledge development.

> Being tested by people asking you questions and just in the ordinary course of events. [Participant A]

Participant F, the art gallery curator, drew attention to what might be considered the perishable nature of task-specific knowledge. In the following quotation he compares preparing for an exhibition to cramming for an exam; in advance of the exhibition you fill your head with as much knowledge as possible, after the exhibition that knowledge is gone, presumably to make space for the knowledge required for the next task. In view of the sheer volume of knowledge that pertains to any given artistic domain, this approach is deemed acceptable.

> Coming up to an exhibition, it's rather like cramming for exams, because you can only retain so much in your mind, it is a very quick and intensive trawl through reference books and so at the time of the exhibition it would be all fresh in my mind, but you come back in a year's time and ask me about 5$^{th}$ century Greek sculpture and I'd be at sea, I would really have to go back and research it. So I find that like when the exhibition is current, that the knowledge tends to be at the top of my mind, but a year later you really have to delve, but it is such a huge span anyway, I am not sure any historian would be expected to have that in-depth knowledge of such an enormous area.

#### 5.4.1.2 Every Day Non-Work Related Activities

In conversation with six of the participants, there was a sense that the spatial boundaries for knowledge acquisition were not confined to the workplace. For example, one participant related how he tries to fill perceived knowledge gaps in his knowledge of technology, purely by playing around with the computer at home:

> Most of my knowledge about data processing has been through owning a computer at home and playing with it and trying to learn and trying to keep up to date, your best way is just fiddling around.

Participant B, an engineer, simlarly spoke of filling in the gaps in her knowledge of business through reading when 'off-the-job'.

> There are four or five trade and business magazines that I would religiously read from cover to cover at weekends or evenings

On another occassion, recreation and leisure time was seen as an opportunity to engage with the community, gaining insight into the relelvance or otherwise of one's organisation. In the following example, Particiant G relates, how an afternoon's hillwalking provided a covert opportunity to 'touchdown,' and uncover the 'true' relevance of the county council to the rural community.

> I go out sometimes on social occasions just to find out what the general public think of the county council. Like I was coming down a hill someplace last year and a lady stopped me to give a man a lift and without actually knowing who I was we had a good discussion, a good debate. I use those opportunities to try and find out from people, particularly without identifying myself, 'what are the problems in this area what are the things that are causing ye problems and what is this organisation doing about it'. So I use it as a kind of touchdown, try and find out about the organisation, how relevant it is. Then when I talk to our own people invaribly I'll be told how great we are or whatever and I'll say well that's not what people are telling me. So that's all building up a kind of cadre of information a bank of knowledge. [Participant G]

The reference here to a 'cadre of information' and 'a bank of knowledge' re-emphasises participants' earlier perception of knowledge as something tangible that can be captured, stored and accessed as required.

### 5.4.2 A Dearth of Formal Management Education Exists

Of the twelve leaders in this study, ten were educated to at least primary degree level, (with qualifications mainly in engineering and the arts), but only four possessed any

formal management education. Across the twelve participants, one was an accountant, one had completed a business degree, one an MBA and one was in the process of undertaking an MBA. For example, Participant D made the following admission:

> I have an academic background that's principally in english literature and there would be no formal business training whatsoever. I think I read 'The Empty Raincoat' last summer and that's the only business book I ever read, so there's no formal background. [Participant D]

Reasons cited for the absence of a formal management education primarily related to the pressures in balancing home-life and work-life. Yet, for a number of participants, particularly those from the creative industries, they were under increased pressure to operate as commercial enterprises; thus the absence of a business education made them feel increasingly vulnerable: Participant D explained these competing commitments in the following way:

> I think there's a huge pressure on us to know more about business than we used to know. I think it's there both for lawyers, doctors, for English literature graduates, because there's a recognition that we're only trained in a particular discipline and we're not actually prepared and trained for the commercial reality of turning a discipline into a business. And I remember to some extent feeling put out and a little off my game when I first ran into the kind of jargon that some business people will use and they use it partly just to impress their little bit of knowledge in getting past or around you.

He continued:

> So, yes, I am conscious in an ideal world we would be taking off to do one of the courses, I mean I enquire about them every year, will I do an MBA, a Postgraduate Diploma in Management and Marketing is it impossible? And the answer every year is yes I'm afraid. Partly because my work is already so night-oriented that part-time study is just going to kill off all contact with children and domestic life.

In other domains, beyond the artistic and cultural ones, the absence of a business qualification was similarly construed as something that was lacking; a knowledge gap that needed addressing. In this regard, the following comment was made by Particpant B who originally graduated with a masters in engineering and has since undertaken an MBA and a Diploma in Corporate Direction (an executive education programme for business directors).

> Having come from an engineering degree and not having any management component in it, it was something I always felt I was missing out on, that there was some great system out there, and because I didn't have a business

> degree I didn't know what it was. So as a result I have everything that Charles Handy or Tom Peters ever wrote. [Participant B]

Participant C, another participant with an engineering background, also spoke of taking a formal business programme. His comment that he decided to 'treat himself' to a little bit of training suggested that business education was more the exception than the norm in his organisation. Participant C explained:

> Over the past twenty years I would have put a huge amount of time into project work, all my focus would have been on customers and their demands and getting projects out. I set out then a couple of years ago, not having received a days training in something like eighteen years with the company, I said I am going to treat myself to a little bit of training. The first thing I did was the Business Leadership and Corporate Development programme, and then I got particularly interested in the area of strategic management so I did the strategy module with the OU two years ago and I liked that so much I did corporate finance last year and I am doing HR this year. If I keep going like that I will have an MBA in two years time. So that is what I do on planes and on my Monday and Tuesday nights in Dublin.

The following quotation from Participant K encapsulates much of what has gone before. His opening admission 'for my sins' suggests not having a business education is considered a sin, something those in positions of organisational authority should to be ashamed of. For him, the value in having that knowledge is the manner in which it increases his ability to examine the dynamics of competitive positioning.

> Well, myself, for my sins, a few years ago, I did a postgraduate thing in Business Studies. But I suppose anyone in my position what would you do? I think, business skills training at postgraduate level helps you to position your organisation, from an intellectual framework anyway. To look at things, not just in the hinterland of your own area, and even compared to what you are doing nationally, but also internationally, because you need to have benchmarks established.

Participant C made a similar point with respect to his MBA programme, describing each module as an 'objective filter' (through which issues are highlighted), which offered a new vocabulary' to think things through.

> I am now an MBA and even though it is fairly mechanistic it has still forced me to stand outside myself, not so much outside myself but outside the company in a more objective manner and it has given me a filter, that's the best way I'd describe it. I run the company through these filters all the time, a filter on strategy, a filter on finance, a filter on HR. And I say 'what are

> we doing well and what are we doing not so well'. So that is how issues are being thrown up. In a way it has given me a vocabulary I didn't have before and a lot of people say if you don't have a vocabulary you can't think it out. And it allows me to be objective because I could look out the window there and say everyone is happy, they were all happy ten years ago anyhow, but it has forced me I suppose to get closer to change, the concept of continuous change. [Participant C]

In summary then, while time and family commitments created barriers to the take-up of formal management education, its absence created gaps (both real and perceived) in these leaders' knowledge. The value of having a formal management education therefore was more about filling this gaps than being awarded a badge of honour.

### 5.4.3 Little Time for Reading

In comments reminiscent of the earlier one made by the participant who had only ever read 'The Empty Raincoat' (Charles Handy, 1994), a number of participants spoke of no longer having the time to engage in reading academic or popular management publications. Participant D in relating 'the danger of reading the reviews' (as opposed to the full article) explained how reading time has been sacrificed to the demands of family and professional circumstances. The use of the word 'danger' here perhaps signifies what is for him the balance between reading enough to get by, at the risk of not being fully informed. Participant D explains:

> While I would have read an awful lot, I'm reading less and less. The pressures of work, there's two of us, two jobs, two children, too little time. The danger is I think at a certain age you're reading the reviews rather than always getting to the source.

Other participants gave the impression that reading was a luxury, something that one certainly did not do in the course of the working day: In the words of Participant F:

> I spend about an hour each day reading, and that's fortuitous as I get the train in and the train home and that's thirty minutes each way.

For another participant, reading was considered an abberation, the underlying suggestion being that if one is reading as opposed to 'doing' then there is something wrong. Similar to Particpant D, Participant G gave the impression that one might have spent more time reading at a different point in one's career. In addition, there was an emphasis on the discretionary nature of reading, the idea that you 'chew things around

and take what is applicable to you'. To some extent this reflected participants earlier comments on the need to personalise their knowledge or adapt it to suit the given context. Participant G elaborated:

> If they saw me reading here they would think I was sickening for something. I suppose on management, I used one time read Drucker and Peters, whatever his name is. Okay, you take them on, and you chew it around. You look at others and you say okay, I'll take that point and I'll drop the other, I do things one way, others do it another way.

### 5.4.4 Knowing is Dependent on Significant Others

All of these leaders recognised that what *they* knew was particularly dependant on the knowledge they gained from others. These 'others' existed both within (colleagues, employees and previous bosses) and beyond the workplace (customers/clients and professional contacts). The findings with respect to each of these are presented in the sections that follow.

#### 5.4.4.1 Significant Others in the Workplace

As indicated above, amongst these leaders there was a strong awareness that they were not working in isolation. The following quotation captures this sentiment. At an earlier point in our meeting, Participant G claimed, with only a degree of jocularity, that he was *the* chief or most important person in the organisation. "There is only room for one prima donna and that is me," he remarked. At a later point in the interview he returned to that comment admitting, although he is the prima donna, he is aware of, and accepting of, the reality that he relies heavily on those around him, 'he does not [actually] believe he is alone'.

> Although I did say there's only room for one prima donna, at the same time I'm saying I believe in a team approach, I have a team approach, I don't believe I am alone. [Participant G]

Within the work-environment the process of obtaining knowledge from others was both an emergent and informal process. As the opportunity arose, or the occassion demanded it, participants availed of or sought out additional knowledge. For example, in the following example Participant B relates how a throwaway comment ingnites interest and results in a quest for further knowledge.

> Somebody would say something that would spark my interest, you know, 'such and such a company have done scenario planning, whatever' and I would think, well okay, 'what impact did that have?' That would be enough to get me interested.

Similarly, in the case of Participant J, developing one's knowledge through others is often considered as little more than a casual conversation, albeit one, as in this case that was somewhat engineered.

> I have total freedom to talk to any member of the management or staff and as a matter of routine, I have umpteen members of the management committee and various members of the staff up here [to my office] to discuss what is going on. I had the head of machinery in here yesterday and he gave me a presentation on a system that they are using in Spain, he had been out there to improve and automate the inking system. I keep myself up to speed like that. The chief executive would do the same, but he would do it in a slightly more formalised manner through the management committee, but I don't do it that way. [Participant J]

For other participants, their dependency on colleagues in keeping up to speed was a great deal more orchestrated. In the following quotation the language used is rather forceful, for example: 'I am prepared', 'I must know', 'I'm to be told', 'I want to know', leaves no doubt of the extent to which this individual makes a concerted effort to furnish his own knowledge through mobilising the knowledge of others. Participant G explains:

> I am prepared, I have never said 'I've no comment,' no matter how controversial it is, so I must then know if I am going to talk about something. So I have a message around this place if there is anything controversial or likely to be controversial I'm to be told the background to it so that if I am asked by the media I can answer it, I don't want to say 'I'll ring you back or I'll check it or whatever'. I have a situation where all the key people in this organisation ring me up and say 'by the way there was a problem, someone was killed on the road, there was a skid' and I want to know was the road deficient or was the car deficient, were we responsible, if we are why, what are we doing about it, to know the background to it so that I can actually acknowledge mistakes, if there are mistakes, make steps to put them right or whatever.

In addition to the acquisition of explicit knowledge, as in the case of Participants J and G above, the role of others in terms of developing one's self-knowledge and one's abilities was also mentioned. In both of the following examples, Participant B speaks

of how she came to see the weaknesses of her approach through her interactions with colleagues and employees.

> I tend to be you know, drive straight through things, and I'm smiling because my business partner gives out to me quite a bit about doing that, he's much more people oriented than I would be, he calms me down quite a bit.
>
> You learn ways in which their [employees] approach is probably better than yours. [Participant B]

While the above examples speak of acquiring knowledge through personal interaction, only three participants spoke of the role of observation. In two of the three cases identified, observation was associated with the development of certain skills, as in the examples from Participant L and B that follow:

> Well one of the ways that you learn is in specific meetings or from projects where people carry particular responsibility for doing something and you see how they are doing it and you gain knowledge from the way they are presenting it. [Participant L]

Participant B was alone emphasising the role of observation in leadership development. For her, observing 'good' and 'bad' beahaviour was considered equally informative in terms of developing one's leadership style, with the former teaching one what to do, and the latter teaching one what not to do.

> You learn an awful lot about how not to do something from the bosses that you've had. I was lucky in that I had some lousy bosses while I was coming out of college which helped formulate for me, well that's something I would never say to someone who is working with me, or that's something I would never make somebody feel like that. On the other hand, I had one boss in particular who I used to say like if I ever become a boss I want to be like him. [Participant B]

Participant I, managing director of a family business also spoke of observation. Here he recalls the manner in which their accountant shadowed his father. The re-introduction of the word folklore and the use of the words 'bits and pieces' once again emphasises the knowledge that emerges from engaging in common common ordinary everyday activities:

> My father would have been folklore, our accountant here who spent a lot of time with my father, spent a long time in his shadow just picking up bits

> and pieces around after him. He would have an awful lot of folklore. [Participant I]

#### 5.4.4.2 Significant Others Beyond the Workplace

Going beyond the confines of the workplace and being more proactive in terms of what one needed to know was considered particularly important in terms of building up one's knowledge base as Participant I explained:

> People ring me now and say 'you're never in the office', I'm never in the office anymore, I learn nothing in the office, you need to be out and about now all the time, that's where you need to be and that's where you learn things, you learn nothing in here because nothing will flow to you, you have to be out in the fields, dig it up yourself or talk to people who have already done some of the work.

Participant G supported this idea emphasing the criticality of external relationships in terms of shaping his thoughts.

> I would have a very good relationship with the business community, like I'd be close, part of the people, part of the networking, I would be dealing with the key people in the Chamber of Commerce, the President of the University, the key people in the IDA, they would be the outside influences that I would be meeting with regularly shaping my thoughts. [Participant G]

The use of the term 'networking' by Participant G, and the idea of 'digging things up for yourself rather than waiting for them to flow to you', provided by Participant I above, are indicative of a formal and intentional process. Further analysis discredits this idea. Indeed, for the most part, participants' 'networking' activity appeared more casual and sponteanous than formal or engineered. For example, Participant J, in relating the business trips he has made of late, spoke of 'meetings with friends in the trade'. In a similar vein, Participant D, speaks of a 'casually convening with those on the theatre circuit' to 'pick each other's brains'. In short, the manner through which these participants build up a network of 'significant others' is much more an emergent, organic process, than any deliberate, orchestrated or contrived endeavour. In the words of Participant A:

> I think you build up a core of people to whom you can turn and you can only do this over a period of time, it's not something you can do instantly. I'm not sure that I ever deliberately set out to build them up.

One consequence of the unplanned nature of participants' 'networking' activity was the manner in which these engagements were perceived, with Participant B emphasising the support and reciprocity that such relationships offered; while Participant A spoke of a familial relationship with his church community.

> I would tend to talk to other people in a similar businesses, talk to them about the models that they use and watch very carefully and see the impact of different things that they use. We even share marketing and bright ideas that work for us, we would make sure they know aswell, we would pass on the same information. [Participant B]

> If there was an issue arose on which I felt I needed help or advice, I would sit down and think 'who is there that will be able to help me?' because we are a small community, more like a family. [Participant A]

Another consequence of this activity is the nature of the knowledge gained, that is oftentimes more casual and anecdotal than verifiable or factual. This idea is richly conveyed in the following quotation where Participant I speaks of 'swapping yarns' and 'picking up on small utterances'. The personal or contextual nature of this knowledge is conveyed in his admittance: "it is of no consequence to anyone else but me."

> I swap yarns with people and network more than anything else. I am constantly stunned by the small things people say, utterances they make, 'course we won't see him any more', real small stuff that's of no consequence to them, but to me it is very important. [Participant I]

In addition to acquiring knowledge through business contacts or associates, the other commonality across participants was the emphasis placed on the knowledge sourced from customers or clients. In the following quotation, through his use of the words 'customer asides' and his emphasis on 'finding out the most important things by mistake', Participant I once again stresses the informal, colloquial nature of such exchanges.

> Customers say the most important things in asides. You learn a hell of a lot about your competitors from your customers, 'oh so and so retired now, he took early retirement, there's a new policy in that outfit' and you listen away and you find out about their personnel policy which is directly applicable to you, and you find out all this by mistake and he doesn't even realise he's telling you the personnel policy. [Participant I]

While the above quotation speaks of valuable knowledge that customers provide about others (such as competitors in the case above), in the following quotation Participant I talks of the valuable knowledge that customers impart about themselves. His use of the term 'relativities', 'subtleties' and 'tittle-tattle' are again characteristic of knowledge that is very much rooted in what might be considered common or ordinary. Indeed, the word 'tittle-tattle' is very much suggestive of gossip, tale-telling or some form of heresay. In Participant I's words:

> You've got to think about all the relativites, who this guy is, all about him. If you don't know all about your customer' little subtleties, about the wife's name, the mother-in-law, the daughters 21st, that kind of stuff, we've a little memo system and it does that…. That's knowledge, that's all tittle-tattle data-based knowledge, and that's the kind of knowledge that can loose you business if it slips down through the cracks in the floorboards.

In addition to providing knowledge about themselves and others, clients were also considered a useful source of new ideas. Working with clients to solve their problems often led to innovative and novel solutions that benefited both parties.

> You can learn from the customers, your big customers, I went up to the sugar company which I always thought was a rather snoozy state company, we had a problem with a product that we supplied and we got together and tried to solve it. [Participant I]

At other times, the unique requirements of clients brought forth novel and innovative solutions which again were mutually advantageous. Alongside the insightful and valuable nature of such knowledge; in the following excerpt, Participant I again highlights its commonsensical and ordinary character:

> There was a guy who said he wanted everything delivered to him on a forklift truck. And we said 'oh, we'll have to get one of those' and we went off and found out who made them and we saw drivers and unions and grief if we were to go down that road. And then the rep. saw this guy driving along with one of them and he said 'we could do with that one day a week' and the guy said 'that would suit me grand'. The guy has now bought two trucks to service our business and all we did was we saw him go along the road. There's nothing special about that, that's just common sense.

## 5.5 Knowing Entails On-Going Reflection and Self-Questioning

While the majority of leaders in this study did not speak about reflection *per se,* on a number of occasions they related efforts to develop their own knowledge through

deliberating on past actions or events. In this context, learning from what went wrong, as opposed to what went well, at both a personal and organisational level, was emphasised by a number of participants. In posing a series of reflective questions, Participant L highlights the painful nature of reflection that demands a degree of courage:

> Your learning comes from making mistakes aswell, as an organisation or as an individual you have got to have the courage to learn from that, what went wrong, what should we change, what should we do to prevent it happening again in the future? Very, very important.

Other leaders spoke in more personal terms of their tendancy to question themselves and their ability to actually do their job. Participant B posed a series of questions with respect to her own performance:

> I never met anyone who hasn't doubted their leadership skills or their ability to do the job. It's kind of reflected over and over again, about you know am I communicating this properly? Have I got the right vision first of all and if that's the right vision am I sure everybody here understands it? [Participant B]

Participant G adopted a similar stance. In the following excerpt, using the words 'stretched to the absolute limit,' he creates a sense of the pressurised environment within which he operates. While he views this as a positive and opportunistic experience, he subsequently speaks of 'a nervousness' that ordinarily preceeds a period of self-doubt, and self-questioning.

> I would say this job stretches me to the absolute limit of my ability, time-wise, mental-wise and other wise and that's what makes it so satisfying. But I get nervious at times, always wondering aswell you know, am I doing the right thing, should I be doing it differently, I mean someone else will do it differently, who is doing it right? You don't know. [Participant G]

Of interest here is the manner in which, towards the end of this passage, Participant G questions how someone else might do his job, and indeed whether their performance would be more favourable than his. His tendancy to seek self-validation in others is an issue that is re-visited at a later stage in this interview when he speaks of the consolation he gets from achieving an external seal of approval.

> One of my consolations in this is I have to have kind of checkpoints now and again and recently the council passed an unanimous vote, unanimous

> of the 48 members, asking me to remain on as manager. So I must be doing something right, I know I am not doing everything right but I must be doing something right." [Participant G]

As suggested, while these leaders did not identify 'reflection' as a practice they engaged in, there was evidence throughout many of the interviews to suggest that reflection was a normal occurence in the course of their daily lives. For instance, while participants did not make the connection, on-going reflection played a fundamental part in much of what they came to know through their clients. For example, in re-visiting some of the earlier incidents where participants spoke of developing knowledge through 'customer asides' 'small stuff' and 'utterances,' the knowledge gained here is very much based on the signficance of what, for others is deemed insignificant. In such instances understanding and reflecting on the signficance of what has been said is of critical importance. Similarly, in examples given where participants developed knowledge through observation, as in the case of Participant I below, once again this knowledge comes not from what he saw, but reflecting on the value and adaptability of what he saw for his own business.

> We eliminated a huge piece of machinery through a visit to a building site. We were using a conveyor belt that was very old and giving a lot of trouble. We went to a building site and we saw a wheel-motor with a telescopic arm, and I saw it and I said that's exactly what we want… and certainly the guy who was selling it would never have thought of calling on us about it. [Participant I]

Two participants were alone in recognising the need for greater balance in their daily lives, between 'doing the job', and what this participant eloquently described as: cold time for thinking putting it all together and pointing yourself in the right direction.

> You can't be all the time away, you have to draw proportion on how much time you actually spend doing the job, how much time do you spend learning what others do in a similar situation and how much time do you get off to, kind of cold time for thinking and putting it all together, pointing yourself in the right direction. [Particpant K]

Supporting this comment, Participant A explained the associated difficulties in achieving this balance. In the following passage he laments what he refers to as an absence of 'space away from the doing' and the continued 'chasing of tails' that gets in the way of reflection. This comment is somewhat ironic in an environment one would associate with quiet contemplation.

> As a church we tend to place a greater emphasis on the doing rather than the being, in other words unless the person is actually seen to be doing something, you know the activist type, that's where our emphasis tends to be and that of itself can often be a barrier to acutally the promotion of learning. To actually step out of it, take time to recharge the batteries and recoup, I think we are not as good as we could be on that. [Participant A]

**RQ3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'?**

### 5.6 Not-Knowing is Inevitable and Acceptable

While leaders engaged in numerous activities to keep up to speed with what they needed to know, at the same time they recognised that one's knowledge never reaches a saturation point, there is never a sense of completion with respect to what one knows. Participant A put this very succintly:

> It's hard hard to know you know, you never achieve a point where you say that's it I know it now.

This sentiment is borne out by others, with incidents of not-knowing seen as commonplace, an accepted and inevitable fact of daily life. For example, Participant F compares his knowledge of certain artistic domains to what he perceives as the superficial knowledge of the tourist; the tourist who takes things at face value ('sees what he sees') and ultimately depends on some form of simplistic instruction ('good labels'). As in the earlier comment from this participant in which he compared knowledge acquisition to 'cramming for an exam', his description here of 'getting the chapter headings' and 'making a reasonable fist of things' is considered adequate for the context in which he operates: In Participant F's words:

> There are areas I know virtually nothing about, Islamic art for instance, and I know nothing about it. If I walk into a museum to an Islamic exhibition I am just like a tourist, I'm simply seeing what I see and learning from what I see and after that it's a question of how good the labels are and so on. If we were to present such an exhibition here, a lone exhibition here of Islamic manuscripts, it wouldn't be necessary for me to know the detailed history of the development of the Koran, one gets the headlines, the chapter

> headings, and as long as you are able to make a reasonably competent fist of introducing it and explaining it and putting together a good presentation that's about it. I suppose in that way the museum world differs radically from rocket science where if you get it wrong, it blows up you know.

In a similar vein, Participant D evokes an image of himself in a darkened auditorium which is quite powerful in its suggestion that he is literally 'in the dark'. The irony that he is running an opera-house that has lost all contact with opera, and his admittance of having a shallow appreciation of other art forms suggsts he is uneasey with respect to the depth of his own knowledge. Despite this, there is a confidence in 'knowing what he likes,' that is reflective of his earlier comments with respect to the importance of judgement.

> There would be some occasions where I would be to be in a darkened auditorium looking at work and estimating its worth – can I translate it into a reasonable risk. I run an opera-house that has actually lost all contact with opera, I feel I don't know much about opera because for my generation opera had disappeared. It's a tradition that I'd like to be better acquainted with. Other forms like ballet and all the rest you feel you've got quite a shallow appreciation of them. I mean it's the old story, I know what I like but I wouldn't always be able to analyse why it's good in an area like ballet or opera. [Participant D]

The sense of acceptance and inevitability with respect to 'not-knowing' displayed by Participants D and F above, was reflected in the views of other participants; in such cases however, the emphasis was more firmly placed on advancements in information technology and the potential for information overload: As Participant C said:

> One of the pressures at the moment I suppose is just trying to keep up, so much knowledge comes at one you know, it comes out of the floor.

This pressure to 'keep up' and the possiblity of being found wanting in terms of what one knew, was, according to Participant A, heightened by the culture of real-time communication in which more demanding clients have become accustomed to instant answers.

> It's quite a problem literally finding time to keep up. People don't want to give you time now, everything is instant, there must be an instant response. [Participant A]

As the volume of information and the speed with which it became available was changing so to did the so-called received wisdoms. As Participant I explained:

> They say small is all, the say big is everything, they are constantly changing things around you know. You look at THF the hotel group, they built and built and built, and then when Ramada took over it was restrict, restrict, restrict and then some other guy will come in six years time and he will buy, buy buy. I just don't know.

The terminlogy adopted in the preceeding examples suggest a view of knowing that is never complete, these leaders are aware that there knowledge at any given time is perhaps no more than adequate, or satisfactory in the context within which they operate. The picture created is of a pressurised environment, a world that demands instant responses, in which they struggle to keep up with changes in what is considered best practice. This is perhaps summed up in the following quote:

> You are always under pressure, that pressure always exists. Of course you are always finding areas that you know very little about. [Participant L]

### 5.6.1 Not-Knowing is Associated with the Transition to Leadership

While the volume of information availabe, the immediacy of requests for that information, and changes in received wisdoms undoubtedly impacted on one's ability to maintain knowledge currency, for a number of these participants, the transition to a leadership role was viewed as a major influence on what they were expected to know. Two aspects of this transition were spoken of: the actual change in role and the associated tasks one was expected to perform, and the change in identity that was associated with this role change. Although these aspects are strongly interrelated, for the purpose of analysis they are examined separately here. While incidents of 'not-knowing' (where they lacked knowledge or knowledge was absent), were reported on with respect to both aspects of this transition, the implications differed. These points are elaborated upon in the following sections:

#### 5.6.1.1 Changed Tasks and Not-Knowing

The transition to a leadership role brought altered demands in terms of the tasks one was expected to perform and the contribution one was expected to make to the organisation's activities. Participant C elaborated:

> I suppose it's almost, I was a specialist and I suppose it's more important now that I be a kind of Jack-of-all-Trades.

Participants B spoke in a similar fashion. Having come from an engineering background she was now managing director of her own soft-ware company. For her, the transition involved leaving behind her technical specialism in favour of management knowledge. She explained:

> My side has moved more into the organisation, certainly I'm leaving the technology to the technocrats and that's very different from what I used to do before. [Participant B]

In knowledge terms, the common thread across these admissions is the manner in which the new role is explained in terms of moving beyond one's functionalist or specialst area to occupy more of a generalist position. Elaborating on this, several participants spoke of the way in which their former professional knowledge, (while somewhat indispensible in providing a foundation and a sense of credibility or legitimacy), had become relegated or somewhat redundant. Participant F explained:

> I did a Masters Degree in 19th Century Art and to a degree I've certainly found the knowledge gained during those years of study to be more or less indispensable. In my day-to-day work I would use that knowledge very rarely.

Participant D made a comparable point. In a manner similar to Participant F, who has found that his knowledge of art history is used very rarely; his knowledge of dramatic tradition is, as he puts it, not called upon too often.

> On the one level, I come from an academic tradition which would be say from TS Elliot and the idea of tradition, I mean I am meant to know the seamless continuity of drama from Greek times, the plays, the tragedies, through the Renaissance times, through the development of European theatre. It may not be something I call upon too often, but it's there. [Participant D]

Dispensing with much of their professional knowledge, becoming generalists as opposed to specialists changed leaders' knowledge requirements in a two main ways. Firstly, in contrast to having an in-depth knowledge of a particular specialism, knowing a lot about one big thing, they now found themselves in the generalist role of needing to know a little about many things. As Participant E explained:

> For me I like to know what's going on throughout the business in all areas, not in huge detail but generally.

Participant G, the County Manager, made a similar point. Describing his factory floor as 3,000 square miles, a tenth of the landmass and the population of the Republic of Ireland provides some idea, he suggested, of the scope of what he is required to know. On this basis he discounts the necessity to know the detail.

> I want to know what's going on in the 'factory', I don't want to know the detail of everything that's going on but I want to know the significant things that are going to pinch the community or pinch an individual. [Participant G]

Secondly, the knowledge now required, often went well beyond their original core specialism. Many of the earlier comments with respect to needing to know about business/management are pertinent in this regard. In this respect, the opera house director's previous comment is worth repeating here:

> There's a recognition that we are only trained in a particular discipline and we're not actually prepared and trained for the commerical reality of turning a discipline into a business. [Participant D]

The need for knowledge and skills in information technology was also of particular concern, as explained by Particpant L below:

> One area where personally I feel a little weak, where there is a lack of knowledge, is in the area of information technology, the changes that are taking place, what direction it is going, it is enormous, so it's hard to get a full understanding of it. But then again we have within this organisation, we have an IT department which is very up to date, so you compensate. [Participant L]

Participant F made a similar comment. Here he speaks, in almost derisory tones of the necessity to 'figure out the technology' as opposed to immersing himself in art history (his original academic background):

> I'm far more concerned now with issues such as trying to figure out how computers work or how to get a printer working or how to get an internet link or how to use e-mail. [Participant F]

At a later point in the interview he speaks again of his increased involvement in what might be termed the very ordinary, mundane, day-to-day tasks that are entailed in his new role:

> Issues which would be far more important and germane is knowing that the transport company that you ring up is able to do the job, that they are going to arrive and collect the work and handle it in a proper manner and not tramp their muddy boots all over somebody's carpet so that you end up with somebody who is happy to lend the work.

In the context of these new roles and the breadth and relative unfamilarity of many of the associated tasks they were expected to perform, the sense of acceptance and inevitablity with respect to 'not knowing' referred to in the introduction to this section (see 5.4.6) was particularly evident here. These sentiments were communicated in a number of ways. Firstly, in contrast with their previous roles, these leaders defined their responsibilities in an entirely different way; now they were responsible for identifying problems, not for solving those problems, thus an obvious and related consequence of this was a greater awareness and acceptance of the collective nature of their knowing in terms of their continued reliance on others to know what they knew. As Participant C explained:

> I see my role as trying to bring up issues, probably other people will solve the problems. When I say I don't need to know it, what I mean is that somebody here is keeping an eye on it.

In elaborating on this idea, in the course of our meeting he picked up a blank sheet of paper; pointing to it he remarked, that the control he now had was limited to deciding what to put on the agenda, other people he pointed out, would take responsibility for solving these issues.

> In a way the control I have at the moment is I can control the agenda, the biggest thing for me at the moment is to make decisions as to what goes on the agenda If can get that right there are lots of people around who will direct their attention at it then. [Participant C]

Participant L made a similar point:

> Very often, in this position, we define problems, or we see problems and maybe we see opportunites, but you don't know the solution, or I'm not going to formulate the solution, it's very often the people around me that together we find the solution to a particular problem or seek a way to exploit an opportunity.

Indeed, for Participant J an essential aspect of the leadership role was to ensure that someone else knew what he didn't:

> There was knowledge I needed, but I never had, one was marketing, one was the capacity to sell, but I always made sure we had someone in the place who understood it. [Participant J]

Other participants shared this view. In the following examples, Participants G and L both speak of bringing in expert knowledge in the form of external consultants. The idea that the outsider knows best and the tendancy to turn to the old reliables, the consultants and so-called experts, is perhaps reflective of some participants earlier admission that the most important knowledge exists outside of themselves and their organisations. In the words of Participant G:

> If we don't know something or if there's some new thing we'll get someone to wise us up on it. I always say if there is somebody here who isn't knowledgeable about it we'll buy in expertise, rather than have the idea we know it all, and we don't know it all.

Participant L re-inforced G's viewpoint:

> You ask a consultant to help you, that is definitely a very normal way, so that once you are involved in a very major exercise you know, very often you detect a consultant who has expert knowledge in his area, his specialisation.

In recognising that they did not know everything and that they relied on others to fill in the 'knowledge gaps' so to speak, the majority of these leaders were comfortable with (and in some cases comforted by), the reality that, at any given time, these 'others' upon which they relied, would often know much more than they did on a particular topic. For instance, Participant C explained:

> I'd be comforted more by the fact that there's quite a few people who know a hell of a lot more than I do and if they are tuned into it and if I trust them I am reasonably happy. In a way it's far better if each one of them knows more about it than I do, that wouldn't bother me in the slightest. I can't be the IT expert, the HR expert, the Finance expert and the Sales and Marketing expert.

Indeed, as Participant E commented, to avoid 'information overload' it was infinitely better that they did not attempt to know everything.

> People at senior management level or leadership level try to know everything that's going on and access as much information as possible, but

> then they have too much, it's like information overload and they don't know what to do with it. [Participant E]

While Particpant B similarly spoke of her relative comfort in no longer needing to take ownership of every minor decision, she was alone in her admittance that until relatively recently (the past year), she felt quite threatened in not knowing 'every single aspect' of the job. This confession is all the more revealing when one considers that at the time of this interview she had occupied the chief executive position for close on seven years.

> I used to feel quite threatened because I didn't know every single aspect … but now I feel a bit more comfortable saying…that's your decision, your responsibility.. That's something that changed in the past year. I don't feel now I have to take ownership of every single solitary decision about, you know, paper-clips. [Participant B]

In the above quotation, while she speaks with some relief at not needing to assume ownership of every single solitary decision, and while she seems to almost relish being in a position to say 'that's your decision your responsibility', the sense that this transition has not been easy is re-inforced by a later comment. Indeed, her use of the words 'I'm still hung up' suggests there is continued difficulty with letting go and a residual longing for her old life and the person she used to be. In this sense the following quotation is an appropriate lead in to the next sub-section which examines role transition and a changed identity.

> I'm still hung up when someone gives me a problem, I love the idea of sitting down at the computer and I find it hard to say 'oh well okay that's your problem, I have to fix something else. [Participant B]

#### 5.6.1.2 A Changed Identity and Not-Knowing

The transition to a leadership role not only entailed the relinquishment of one's old role, it also involved loss of the former identity associated with this role. In the words of Participant C.

> I often say, I used to be an engineer, I mean my job now is such that it's a long time since I was into the guts of the actual design process

At another point he commented:

> My life as an engineer is over.

This transformed identity was accompanied by changes both in terms of what one was *expected* to know, and what one *needed* to know. In terms of expectations, participants related an unenviable presumption, that as leaders, they were expected to know everything. For example, in the following excerpt, Participant A describes the elevated profile and sense of infallability that comes with the episcopal role; an expectation, that somehow, 'because you are *the Bishop*, you know. Whilst such exaltation is, as he suggests, rather flattering, its accompanying demands create considerable pressure on the role holder.

> You move out of that sphere, where it's in a sense a much lower profile and the next day you find you're in a much higher profile position you don't suddenly acquire an infallability but there's an expectation and that I think can be quite daunting. You try and not let it get to you because you are yourself yesterday and today, but I think in other peoples' mind there can be an expectation. There is pressure insofar as there is an expectation in peoples' minds that somehow you know, or that you are a source of information. Also the expectation because you say it, because you're a bishop, that somehow or another it carries authority and that can be quite daunting. You are aware of this expectation which in one sense is flattering but in another is desperately demanding. [Participant A]

In view of such unrealistic expectations, Participant C, (in a manner that would not be becoming of a bishop), openly admitted to the necessity for pretence:

> You almost have to stand up there and pretend you know the way and it isn't like that. [Participant C]

The pressure to appear knowledgeable to the extreme was predominantly driven by public perception. Elaborating on the old proverb 'if the stove isn't hot no one will sit beside it,' Participant A related, what was in the earlier years of his training, something akin to a received wisdom; to ensure followers, one always needed to create the impression that one knew, and relatedly was in complete control. The publically driven nature of this perceived omniscience was re-inforced by the reported incidents of lack of knowledge. Two examples were provided. In both examples participants found themselves in social situations where, in the absence of the usual support structures that exist within they workplace, they were unprepared for the challenges they encountered with respect to their core knowledge. In the first example, Participant A spoke at length about a court case he was invegiled into attending at the last minute. On being asked to present the church's position on homosexuality, his

lack of preparation left him feeling 'very very naked and very kind of bereft'. He spoke of feeling 'hot and cold', being 'absolutely grilled' and 'clinging like a leech' to the teachings of the church's constitution on the three pillars of scripture, reason and tradition.

In the second example, Participant B recalled taking part in a media interview about the impact of the technological boom on her company. Faced with unanticipated questions about the impact of changing economic indicators, she confessed to 'not having a clue' and to finding herself 'out of her depth and screaming for help'. Participant A, suggested a three-strand coping strategy to deal with such difficulties. Firstly, one must remain true to oneself, one copes, as he explains in the following example by being yourself and acting within your own limitations.

> You cope first of all by being yourself, I think you must be yourself, there's no point in trying to act a part and I would hope that I am the same person I was ten years ago. I think that's the basic thing because if you in any sense try to act as though you are on a pedestal when in fact you're not and never were, and that's not your nature, I think you die a thousand deaths, and so I would say try to be yourself and act within your own limitations.

Secondly, one must be honest, come clean and own-up to not knowing. In this regard, he spoke of 'the clergy, like everybody else, being jealous of their own position and not wanting to admit that they have blanks.' The word 'protective' might be a better substitute for the word jealous here to indicate the form of safeguarding that he is alluding to.

Thirdly, having owned up and come clean, one must be willing to seek help. In this regard, he re-iterates the earlier sentiment that not knowing is acceptable.

> You can't always be prepared. It's okay to rely on others who know more. It's a myth to think you must have it all in your own head. Sometimes rectors are reluctant to come to their bishops with a problem, perhaps they are afraid that this will be viewed as a sign of weakness. Turn to people, don't be afraid, it's not going to diminish you. Once rapport has been established there is the possiblity that latent concerns may emerge, concerns which in isolation can develop a cancerous like quality. [Participant A]

While the above discussion is indicative of the manner in which the transition to a leadership role created an expectation that one should know everything; in the midst

of this, there was an underlying and indeed habitual expectation that, as an appointed leader, one should know about leadership. However, as one particpant indicated, given that the transition to a leadership role was often times little more than a title change; this knowledge was often lacking.

> I've always been of the opinion that just because you give somebody the title of manager you don't make them a manager. I always had this contention here that we take very good engineers and we give them the title of manager, what have we done with them, very often we loose a good engineer but we don't necessarily get a good manager. [Participant C]

Participant D elaborated on the difficulties of this transition, the lack of preparation for the chief executive role and the deficiency in knowledge that he has identified:

> I'd say the toughest area to acquire knowledge and work as chief executive has been personnel. I think that is something you are not prepared for at all, particularly in my kind of background, a mixture of academic/intelectual and artistic life. I suppose what I have had to try and acquire is a better handle on dealing with people who are in fairly mundane, humdrum jobs which don't offer then great hope for advancement. That would be the biggest deficiency in knowledge, in my character to date. [Participant D]

Participant J took a slightly different stance. In the following excerpt he explains how his leadership weaknesses, particularly his inability to delegate, had ramifications for the next generation of leaders who had spent their time not managing, but 'watching the chief executive manage'. In this respect he is very honest and open on the extent to which his sucessor has done a better job than him.

> I think what I really didn't have was knowledge of how to spread the effectiveness of leadership across a broader number of people. My successor took a much more collegiate approach to the thing in so much as he made his managers manage, rather than watch the chief executive managing which was my style, but I don't think I learned to do it any other way. [Participant J]

This absence of leadership knowledge and the desire to know more about how to lead was succintly put, (almost like a cry for help), by one participant on two separate occassions:

> I would love to talk to someone who has a kind of vision or formulae for leading people.

> If someone could give me more information on how to lead I would appreciate that. [Participant B]

The pre-ceeding analysis indicates, while lack of knowledge occurred in two contexts, an action context where the leader was engaged in the peformance of a particular task, and a social context, where the leader was acting in a figurhead/spokesperson role (as in the case of Participant A and B above), it was the latter context that created greater anxiety for the leaders in question. It is worth re-iterating here that in both of the social occasions referred to the leaders in question faced situations for which they were unprepared, they lacked their usual support structures and they faced challenges with respect to their knowledge of their core domains. This chapter now turns to an analysis of the research findings from the second phase of the research, which are presented under research questions four and five respectively.

**Research Findings Phase Two**

**RQ4 How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of leader's knowing/not-knowing evolve?**

## 5.7 A Prioritisation of Experiential Knowledge

In contrast with the first phase of this research where explicit environmental knowledge was priviledged; in the second phase, experiential knowledge was afforded much greater priority. On the most significant knowledge acquired since our last meeting, participants concentrated on the knowledge they had gained through personal experience. Reflections broadly fit within two categories: self-knowledge and knowledge of how to survive. Examples within each category are provided in the following sub-sections:

### 5.7.1 Greater Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness

Across the second round of interviews there was a strong sense that these leaders had come to know and accept themselves on a deeper level. At the very early stages of our second meeting Participant D made the following comment:

> Well I have learnt an awful lot about myself, not in a self-obsessed or narcissistic way but I have learnt to recognise my own strengths and weaknesses.

In a comparable way, Participant I provided a very candid account of an epiphany of sorts, a sudden moment of great revelation when, looking in the mirror, he literally comes face to face with himself and comes to realise that he, (similar to many others in Ireland's Celtic Tiger era), had over-invested in his business and over-stretched his resources. The realisation that he was pandering to his own ego and that he was heading for a fall resulted in him 'copping on' and calling a halt.

> This time three years ago, I found myself inside in this office, I had a private secretary nextdoor, I don't know what she did, I have no idea. But I was going to meetings all the time and I always had to have minutes taken. I was always meeting builders and I had spent the bones of 200,000 euro on an extension to this building and it was all go. And I got up the 1st January 2008 and I looked in the mirror and I said 'Jaysus, you'd want to cop on here boy, you are going to build another building and the lights are going to be off and you are going to pull yourself under and go bankrupt if you don't stop if it isn't already too late.' I had to shout Stop! [Participant I]

Other participants provided equally honest examples of their own weaknesses, times they had treated others badly and aspects of the job they could have done better. For example, Participant G spoke with some regret of an occasion where he believed he played too close to the rules, which, on reflection, resulted in unfair treatment of another:

> There were a couple of incidences where I feel I may have been just too dictatorial, I always remember there was a religious organisation that ran a farm and the fellow in charge of the farm had been a teacher of mine and he came in with an application for doing work on the farm and he was late. The form should have been in on the 1st October and it was the middle of October and I threw it out. Now he had been given an appointment, he had made an effort, and it didn't matter a damn whether it was in on the 1st or the 5th of October it didn't matter but I went strictly according to the rules. I often thought afterwards what did he think of me and is that what he educated me for? I cringe when I think of it you know, it just caused me to think that everything wasn't about working to the rules and therefore your man might have been wronged you know.

The same participant recalls with shame, another incident where he believes he may have mistreated a client. His repetitive use of the words 'I could have been' with respect to being overly pre-occupied, rough, harsh and not kind enough, highlight the extent to which he has questioned (and indeed continues to question), himself. His

efforts to make amends show an awareness of his wrongdoing and his resolve to do better:

> I could have been a bit too pre-occupied and not given people time, or I could have been rough with people, for example in a deptuation, if I didn't agree with what you were looking for I told you and then maybe if you handled your case too forcefully I could get rough. There was a case one time, there was a guy who sought a meeting with me looking for some ridiculous amount of money to put a causeway across boats and all that sort of thing and at the time I was bursting my backside trying to get money to repair cobbles in the rural community. He came up with this proposal and I said, 'forget about it', and he said 'if you don't give these people what they are looking for I am going to go back home' and I said 'I don't give a damn where you go, I am saying to you and I can write it up on the wall in big letters they are not entitled to it and they are not going to get it and it is a stupid idea and there are far more important priorities,' and I left. I had to ring him afterwards and apologise and I said 'I will stick with my decision but I just think I could have been more kind to you in the presence of your community'. [Participant G]

While the example that follows is somewhat different from the proceeding ones, in that the central decision was largely beyond the control of this individual; nevertheless one gets the impression that through this experience he also came to a greater knowledge of himself. Reflecting on the opera house's diversification into running a late-light club, he describes this period as a time when he found himself up too close to something he never signed up for. The sense of having one's values compromised by being drawn into a 'morally ambivalent' activity is viewed with some regret and while he attempted some form of rectitude, even many years later, it still does not sit easily with his conscience.

> I look back and I recognise that at one stage the theatre took off on a huge rip, exploiting its license for late night activity. That is one development I look back with a little ambivalence. It was a huge source of cash and we were forced into that market I would argue because the arts council started to starve the venue sector of revenue funding. We were being pushed towards sustainability and independence from the arts council. It was a fairly interesting development, it was the e-generation – there was a lot of drink and music and drugs – and I wouldn't be against drink, music or drugs by the way, but I was up closer to it, you know I never thought I was going into that business – I didn't want to become dependent on a night club who seeks to run an opera house, and for a while we were a giant pub with an opera house attached. At one point I said to them [the board] 'here we are posing as a municipal opera house pretending to be interested in the higher cultural life, alright, truth is we are making all our money out of late night

> activity as a club. There is a huge gap between how we are presenting ourselves and what the reality is. But they didn't want to engage with that conversation back then. [Participant D]

#### 5.7.1.1 Greater Evidence of Self-Questioning and Self Reflection

While the previous section provides examples of times when these leaders came to a greater awareness and understanding of themselves as individuals; at other times participants spoke more specifically of times when they were forced to question their own assumptions and perceptions. Often times these assumptions and perceptions were incorrect; things were not always what they seemed to be; what these leaders thought they knew, they did not know at all. For example, Participant K, the county manager, spoke about his ignorance of the extent of illiteracy that existed in certain segments of his client base. Assuming that this was characteristic of a bygone era and being forced to come face to face with the reality, was for him a very humbling experience.

> We now know now that even in the growth areas such as construction, there are at least twenty percent of people that don't have correct literacy or numeracy skills. I would never have believed that that was a reality. [Participant K]

In a very different context, with the benefit of hindsight, Participant F questions his own perceptions. In the following quotation he recalls the point at which the art gallery became a national cultural institution, initially perceived (by him and others), as the 'golden dawn', the reality he explains was rather different. Citing the proverb 'be careful what you wish for', he comes to accept the error of his judgement, realsing, in a manner similar to Participant K above, that perceptions and reality are often quite different:

> The chinese proverb that isn't a chinese proverb because, 'be careful what you wish for in case you get it', it's not a chinese proverb as I understand, it's a sort of invented one. Because if you had come in 2004 when the news came through, there was a golden dawn for the art gallery then, no doubt about it, everybody was excited, everybody was delighted, this was the *best* thing that could have happened for the art gallery. However after about a year it became evident that there wasn't really .. while a good amount of goodwill had been put into the decision, a lot of thinking had not been put into how to effect the change, the transformation.

In the above examples, the individuals in question were forced to re-assess their assumptions and perceptions as a result of new knowledge or changed circumstances. The following examples are drawn from a different context. At the close of each interview participants were asked, with the benefit of hindsight, what they might have done differently. While regret may be too strong a descriptor, there was some consistency across responses with participants lamenting a lack of courage with respect to: taking risks, making decisions, trusting their own instincts and vocalising their own convictions. For example, looking back, Participant B wished she has been less conservative in terms of her investment decisions:

> I am a little disappointed that I wasn't a little braver in some areas and gone 'Oh to hell with it and thrown the fire at it' and it would be interesting to see the results of that, so on one or two occasions I was a little more conservative than I wish I had been right now in terms of investment. [Participant B]

Participant C made a similar admission as she speaks with some dissapointment of the pace of the company's international expansion. In particular he recalls a period of self-doubt and self-questioning, and an inability to trust his own instinct or gut-feel in place of the business indicators. The combined effects of these actions slowed the pace of international expansion.

> If I could go back in time there are a few things I would have done differently, I think I was agonising over the international expansion, and it was part of that early period you agonise over are you making the right decision, are you taking the company in the right direction? I am just sorry I didn't start it earlier. Looking back I should have started to shift the company internationally at a faster pace. I think there was a bit of doubt and not having sufficient confidence in my own personal gut feel and I am a great believer in gut feel, as well as formal strategic management, scenario plannning, all the stuff that we do, there is a lot to said too for your gut feel. [Participant C]

In a similar vein, Participant A spoke about lacking the courage of his own convictions, being, as he described it, overly careful at the risk of rushing in and exposing himself to unwanted criticism. He recalls:

> What would I do differently? Occassionally through my ministry I wrote to the paper on issues, not at any great length, not very often, and I feel if I were to go back again maybe I might have done a little more of that. What I discovered was that when you write on a subject, you are never quite sure

> what the reaction is going to be be and where it is going to come from and you have to be prepared for things coming out of the woodwork and that made me a little chary about going down that road, and I think on reflection that was wrong of me. I should have been prepared to put my money where my mouth was. I think I should have been a little braver, I tend by my nature to be rather more, more careful, rather than rushing in, but I think sometimes you can be too careful, and you can let issues pass where maybe criticism would have been in place. If I were going back I think I would be a little more critical at times.

In what might be considered a natural antecedant, whilst regretting their lack of courage, participants also questioned the extent to which they should have sought more advice. In this regard, for Participant A, what was initially perceived as a strength, in hindsight, appears as a weakness. The true extent of his self-reflection is seen in the manner in which he attempts to understand the source of this. Here he returns to his childhood as the root cause.

> Well, I probably should have asked more advice from people, 'what do you think, should I do this, what will the reaction be, is it worth it? I think that perhaps I tended to make decisions on my own rather than using people whose opinion I would value, both clerical and lay. I think probably it is the nature of the beast, first of all being an only child myself, I think that I tended do things my way, or to make decisions on my own bat, because that's the way I grew up – I think in hindsight it would have been better all around if I had on occasions tested the waters with other people. [Participant A]

In a similar manner Participant B revisited an earlier time, when a young family and the pressures of balancing home and work life made it more difficult for her to seek out the very resource that she needed most - the support and advice of others.

> I know one of the things I could have benefited from, especially as a working mum type of thing, when you are at work you are at work when you are home you are at home. One of the things men do quite successfully is they gather around them a kind of peer group of people in similar businesses or whatever and they *do* discuss issues that they have and I think they have sounding boards that they can bounce things off or whatever. I think I didn't seek out that either from a male or a female point of view, and I think that there are times when perhaps I should have done that, where I could have gone to somebody and said 'look what do you think, what does it sound like to you?' I would have benefited from that and I didn't do that. Time was a factor there, you know, I need to get to work, I need to get home, I think you are a little bit torn as you know with family it can be difficult. [Participant B]

In the excerpt below, one participant linked both of these factors. Despite his earlier admission that his reduced propensity for risk taking stemmed from his inability to trust his own instinct, here he speaks of the difference the advice of others would have made. Participant C remarked:

> If I could have gotten some advice starting out it would probably have been 'move things along at faster pace'. As engineers you can get drawn into the detail of projects, its to stay above that, it's kind of like the progression from engineer to manager to leader, when do you stop being an engineer and become a good manager and when do you stop becoming a manager and learn how to become a good leader it's that progression. That is the advice I would give my sucessor, to move the company along at pace and probably I was too collegiate in the earlier days, probably I could have prodded and pushed things along a bit faster. But I don't beat myself up over it looking back now, now it was not as if I was sitting around doing nothing.

As indicated in the final sentence of Participant C's comment above, and those that now follow; in the final analysis, there was a great deal of acceptance, circumstances were what they were and these leaders had done their best. In this vein, Participant D drew attention to the political context within which one operates and the limited autonomy that, (even as a chief executive), one has in shaping circumstances.

> Sure we would all be better people if we could re-live the last ten years I mean I would drink less, I would never loose my temper, I would have perfect children. Well considering, by and large, the information available to me, and my interpretation of that, I couldn't see that things could have been shaped greatly differently, unless I left the place. I mean even if you are a chief executive you are not a solo operator, you can only work within a particular context. And I think this opera house is where the politics of art meet the art of politics. It is an interesting one. And considering the levels of funding, the levels of growth, the levels of development in the city, I couldn't have done much more. [Participant D]

In a similar manner, Participant F drew attention to the idiosyncratic nature of the museum context. Museums, he suggested have 'their own life-blood' within which one is to some extent powerless, a player in a Greek tragedy.

> I don't think I could have done anything differently, … Possibly not, possibly not… I'm not sure. When I talk about it sounds like a Greek tragedy where the players are pre-destined to go through their sort of cycles of life without choice in the matter, which seems at variances with Western Civilisation… but the longer you work in art museums the more you begin to see that these institutions have their own life blood and they fit within

> society in a way that is determined by society, which often doesn't correlate quickly or easily or perfectly with strategic development plans or sort of abstract analysis. [Participant D]

While the above examples are largely confined to the organisational context, one participant spoke with obvious emotion, of his 'only big regret,' the manner in which the needs of his family were sacrificed to his career.

> The only big regret I have is I probably neglected my family more than I ever neglected my job. [Participant G]

In this regard, he related an incident where his young daughter was quite upset over the criticism he was receiving in the media as a result of decisions he made with respect to planning permission. His admisson that it was an indication for him that 'his children took notice,' are suggestive of a sort of epiphanic episode, somewhat along the lines of that described by Participant I earlier. The advice given to his children, 'don't get involved in defending me, because you are too small for that' suggest a re-evaluation of his primary role. His painful recollection all these years later of the way 'it got to him' are truly indicative of the extent to which he regrets the difficulties his job caused for his family.

> Mary was very quite and she said to me 'It's terrible Dad' and I said 'What's terrible?, 'What they are saying about you,' and I said 'Who is saying what about me? And she said 'What they are saying in the paper about you'. And you know this is the thing that got to me, she said 'You are away at night, and you are doing this and the other thing and you are away from us and it's not being appreciated,' and I thought out of the mouth of babes. And that was an indication that my children took notice of it you know and I had to say to them all, 'If I am criticised ignore it, or if someone says something to you, say 'jealousy will get you nowhere,' don't get involved in defending me because you are too small for that and you are too young for that, and don't get hurt, just laugh it off. [Participant G]

Once again however this leader displayed acceptance. Indeed, throughout this second interview he spoke a great deal about the role of the leader as figurehead and about becoming personally and publicly associated with the role occupied. At one point he remarked:

> I just think the leader carries more than the business, he carries the soul of the organisation, he is the hired-hand, the gallow-glass, the paid servant, he should be seen, he should be there and he should make himself available. So that's it, you take the shilling and you have to fight.

Taking the shilling and having to fight, accepting the right of others to openly vilify him necessitated an acceptance of the wider implication of his role in terms of his personal life; while he regretted the impact of his public persona on others, in the end he had made peace with it, admitting that he did not believe his family held it against him.

### 5.7.2 Knowledge of How to Survive

In addition to self-knowledge, drawing on their experiences since the time we first met, a number of leaders spoke of a knowledge gained that broadly speaking, relates to survival. For example, Participant B proposed 'tenacity,' advising on 'adaptability', 'staying positive in the face of change', 'never over-reacting' and 'never giving up'. In a similar vein Participant K exhorted the necessity for 'continuous change'. Participant L advocated the importance of having 'a common vision' and 'maintaining focused', while Participants C, E and J commended 'thinking ahead'. While the particularistic nature of this knowledge made it somewhat difficult to identify commonalities across participants, one particular theme appeared to cut across all cases. The common factor endorsed behaving in a moral, principled or ethical fashion. This sentiment was communicated in a number of ways, examples of which are provided in the following sub-sections.

#### 5.7.2.1 The Importance of Humanity: Giving and Forgiving

Participant B spoke about giving something back to the community in which one operates and promoting a degree of humanity and forgiveness in business. In the following quotation she speaks of her involvement in an organisation that exists purely in service to society. She explains:

> This group is a little bit different it gathers together people from the private industry, private partnerships the guards, county councils etc. and the idea is to find a common thing to do outside of our businesses to improve the environment that we are in, to improve the opportunities, they do a lot about emigration and that kind of stuff. It's fascinating and I thoroughly enjoy it and I thoroughly believe that you do have a social responsibility if you are lucky enough to have a business that is doing well.

This same participant was particularly passionate about the idea of failure. For her, mistakes and failure provided a huge opportunity to develop one's knowledge base

and should be seen as such. As a consequence, she believed there should be greater forgiveness in business, suggesting that showing greater humanity towards those who have failed would encourage business start-ups and second-chance innovation.

> I am getting on my soapbox here because I think it is one of the things that I really think is incredibly important. If you are in the US and you own a business and fail people are saying 'Oh what are you going to do next'. In Ireland if you have a failed business you are just shunned almost. I mean it often surprises me that there isn't a more forgiving nature with respect to failure in Irish industry.

#### 5.7.2.2 Maintaining Core Values and Integrity

Other participants were primarily concerned with maintaining core values and integrity. Participant G, a retired public sector manager, spoke at length on the issue of corruption and the extent to which 'the system' has been 'loosened,' making it difficult to know right from wrong. It is not the amount, he explained, but 'things start small and continue to grow.' He advocated policy of zero tolerance with respect to any form of wrongdoing, 'cutting it off before it took hold'. In the following example he talks of the cowardice inherent in the system and his personal efforts to maintain and promote integrity in the face of that:

> I just felt that if there was fraud or corruption, you just don't tolerate that for a minute, you just investigate it immediately. So the handling of that kind of misbehaviour – it was cowardly. In my forty two years in local government, I caused, I use the word fired just for ease, five people, it was all in connection with money, I just wouldn't tolerate corruption, I wouldn't tolerate people getting their own money, (I am trying to be polite about it), confused with the council's money. And that's why that irritates me, because there was a way of dealing with it which was shyed away from, I just feel, the behaviour of the courts, the wrong-doer is given seventy five percent protection. [Participant G]

Continuing in this vein, his repetition of the words 'I can put my hand on my heart' is indicative of the extent to which he feels his conscience is clear:

> The public service had to have a tremendous ethic, I always said to people, if someone comes in looking for a service if they are entitled to it, give it to them, if they are not entitled to it it doesn't matter who canvases for them, if they are not entitled to it don't give it to them and then that's fair. I can put my hand on my heart, particulary in planning, and I made it so, if I was ever brought before an enquiry I could put my hand on my heart and say No, I never, for friend or foe I treated all equally. [Participant G]

In another example he relates a story of an incident where he had a disagreement with a voluntary association who subsequently came seeking planning permission. On refusal of the permission they accused him of holding a grudge. His answer, that he would resign his position rather than comprimise his values is again illustrative of the importance to him of operating with integrity.

> The big shots in this association were developing a quarry, and when they came into me and I said No, they said you're still carrying a grudge against us about the rates, I said I disagree with ye, and I still disagree with ye, and I think ye were wrong, and I think ye won the battle but ye lost the war, and it's costing ye more now in accountants fees to prove ye are not liable for rates than it was to pay rates. But I said if you can find one example with any of your colleagues where I treated them wrong or vindictively, I will resign, because I shouldn't be here. I might jump up and down the streets, and I would do it all over again if it had to be done, but I won't be vindictive, I won't deny you anything you are entitled to.

Participant I similarly emphasised the importance of core values. For him, the values of greatest importance were those imparted to him by his parents – the very simple advice 'cop on, get your hair cut, and get a job.' The content of this quotation suggest this advice also included 'treat people well on the way up as you will meet them on the way down'. He recalled:

> What all of this had taught me is how right your parents were when they told you to cop on when you were twenty two, get your hair cut and go out and get a job. I keep saying that to my kids who are that age now and they half listen. But really those core values will stick to you for the whole of your life. Because people will always want to lend money to you when there is loads of money around and people will always want it back off you when it goes scarce and it always goes scarce. There will be a time of plenty again, which seems far-fetched right now, but five years ago a time of scarcity seemed far-fetched. If you want your business to last in other words you can't deal in short-termism. You can't be milking things because if you do that you will end up with nothing, you will have no business.

Returning to the core values instilled in childhood allowed one to remain somewhat grounded in the midst of continuous change. Participant I, elaborated using the very thought provoking and memory inducing metaphor of the kitchen table. Traditionally, in Irish culture, the kitchen table is where normal everyday life is lived out, problems aired, advice given, good news and bad news shared and much of it over cups of tea!

Here he advocates a return to this base of normality, to reign people in, to avoid those in business from trading on recklessly hoping things will come right.

> You learn [to cope with change] by going back to the kitchen table you grew up at and you find out what is normal. What is normal? And when I am hiring someone I want to find out about their kitchen table, what is their normal and is it too far away from my normal. The closer it is to my normal the more inclined I am to hire them. Whatever skill-sets they have how ever many rings they have in their noses, that's kind of irrelevant really, what's their idea of normal, do you know what I mean? And I don't know what normal is. [Participant I]

## 5.8 Knowing Remains Informal, Emergent and Social

In a manner strongly reminiscient of the first phase of the research, in the second phase, once again, the process of knowledge development was described using terminology that is representative of an informal, emergent and ongoing process. Much knowledge was developed in the course of doing the job, for example: Participant F, spoke of adopting 'string and selotape solutions', Participant K, told of 'learning by default', Participant F 'described a situation of 'making things up as he went along and managing on the basis of well meaning and ill-advised intuition', while Participant E explained:

> Most learning is done in the trenches, the way I see it is I am learning everyday, it is an ongoing process.

While the outcomes of such experiences were generally positive, the process was invaribly described in a negative way. For instance, the use of the word 'bitter' in the following remark by Participant D, is suggestive of a harsh, acrimonious and conflict-ridden occurence. The more elaborate excerpt below indicates that this was indeed the case.

> A lot of my learning just came out of hard and bitter experience and being purely frustrated. [Participant D]

Repetition of the words 'hard experience' alongside 'being on the brink', 'crashing and burning', being 'stressed out' and 'throwing in the towel', evoke a strong sense of Participant D's predicament.

> I learnt from hard experience – when I went into the job it was a very difficult situation, we were on the brink of insolvency, ready for closure and there was an extremely difficult board of directors who met about thirty six times a year – I was the youngest person in the building, I went in at thirty five and I was the youngest, all the staff were in their fifties and sixties. In ten years what's happened is, I mean I crashed and burned certainly got stressed out and burned out on at least two occasions in the early 1990's, just threw in the towel, didn't want to go into work, so just stepped out – went fishing you know. [Participant D]

Participant B was also adament that much knowledge was developed from adverse experience. Adopting the words battle scars, (although somewhat in jest), is suggestive of a rather militant situation. Yet, as someone who came across as particularly optimistic, for her, these circumstances are viewed as positive opportunities to gradually or 'organically' build ones knowledge.

> So how did we learn? I would say battle scars (laugh) you know going back down to project meetings and going 'well we did deliver you x number of widgets and them saying, 'yeah but we wanted x and we wanted it to do more' and we go 'well where is that? And they say, from the order specification we would have thought that you understood that? So very carefully you write that down and say is this what you want, are you sure that this is what you want? And you get them to sign the changes. So basically it's like growing your intelligence and your experience in an organic way. [Participant B]

As previously mentioned, learning from mistakes and failure was something Participant B admitted to being particarly passionate about. In the following quotation she describes how her own knowledge develops as a result of conducting what she refers to as postmortums where she reflects on what was done wrong and speculates on what might have been done differently.

> I look at the different schemes and strategies and directions that we have gone in and I think okay well there is a huge flaw in that which is why it was slower to the market than we expected; or we didn't make as much money as we expected, or we had to make serious changes in the middle to make sure we would make money, and those to me would always be the more interesting things than studying successes.

### 5.8.1 Mixed Views on the Value of Formal Education Remain

In the interval since our last meeting there was some evidence of increased participation in formal education. One participant had since completed a Masters in

Business Administration that he had begun shortly before our first meeting, while another was at the early stages of a Masters in Executive Leadership. While others had not engaged to the same extent, they had made some attempts to address what were perceived as knowledge-gaps in our last meeting. Participant D explained:

> There has been little formal learning. I have no business degree. I have only studied literature in my life. But in the last while I have tried to put myself through various small training one-day, two-day courses, courses on everything from leadership to ..

While time and the interruption of family-life were originally mentioned as barriers to the uptake of formal education, this time around participants questioned the value of engaging in further, or indeed any, formal management education. For instance, one chief executive who had attended a three-week executive development programme on appointment, argued that management was more about applying common-sense than the application of formal management knowledge:

> I never really felt the need to go back and do further formal education because management basically is not the application of science, it is very much using common sense of course. Now you have to have a certain level of knowledge but it is much more the application of common sense. [Participant L]

By contrast, for Participant F, who was 'surviving' through improvisation and what he described as well-meaning but ill-advised intuition, professional management education was perceived almost as a panacea.

> Management training would have helped, because of taking on this sort of combined role of HR management, day to day and policy. management training is probably quite important, simply knowing how to manage situations that arise from time to time in the workplace without doing so just on the basis well meaning and ill-advised intuition. Yes management training would be very important, some professional training, maybe on-the-job training there is no process of professional training for really any of the staff here. So when we are doing exhibitions or education you know we are effectively trying to do our best and making it up as we go along, and so far so good but the cracks are too deep now for it to be sustainable. [Participant F]

### 5.8.2 Increased Evidence of Reading

In the previous interviews participants related little time for reading. Indeed for some, alongside 'doing', reading was considered a somewhat odd or peculiar use of one's

time, an anomaly that would not be looked upon favourably by others. In the second phase of the research only three participants made any reference to reading in terms of their knowledge development. Each of them assumed a different perspective. Participant B, who had a background in engineering, originally spoke of having to compensate for a perceived knowledge deficiency; this, she related resulted in her reading as much as possible in the business domain. On meeting her for the second time it was clear that this habit remained. She explained:

> I do as much reading as possible in terms of, I think I mentioned something on management strategy and stuff like that, and that I am still completely hooked on that, I read an awful lot, and I can take from that, I love when people come up with a new theory that they say is going to revolutionise everything and that's fantastic because again I say yeah, yeah its another path or another mechanism.

In contrast, Participant A, the retired bishop, reported a change in his reading pattern wherein the opportunity afforded by retirement allowed him to read more broadly, beyond what he called 'churchy material'. The following quotation is taken from a longer excerpt in which he tells of a recent trip to Poland. Having been there, turning *then* to the book he believed made sense in that 'he knew exactly what they were talking about.' This is interesting in light of a comment he made in the first interview, "you can have book information, but you need to know how people live their lives what makes them tick". While it appears in reverse order here, the overall sense is that the two, (reading and experience), continue to work in tandemn:

> It is different now, I find I have a much greater opportunity to broaden my reading, so that it is not just eclesiastical, it is not just of a churchy nature, for example, I am just after finishing Schindler's List. That is something I would have found very difficult to do, because it is quite a tome, so that kind of book one is able to you know get stuck into to it, to find time to do that. [Participant A]

Describing himself as a 'no nonsense, down to earth kind of guy' who respected those who had 'a nose for bullshit', Participant I did not make any reference to reading when we first met. At our second meeting he confessed to an interest in philosophy and a desire to study 'the ebb and flow of life', and 'that which makes people happy and unhappy'. He also spoke of relying on a few 'core' books, beyond the mainstream business management material, that for him had become sources of comfort, support

and insight. In the following excerpt, the admission that he turns less and less to 'the little book of calm' may suggest that he has become more serene.

> A big influence in my life was a small little book called 'the little book of calm,' I keep that in my car, I open a page of it every so often, I used to open it once a day, now I might only open it once a week, but it will tell you an awful lot about how to stay away from things. Another book which has had a huge influence on me is a much misunderstood genteleman from medievel Italy, Nicolli Macheavilli, greatly misunderstood, because Macheavilli is constantly quoted as how to stay in power –Macheavill is mostly about what not to do, how not to treat your people, how to be decent. [Participant I]

The above quotation is taken from a much longer passage in which he discusses his understanding of Machiavelli, which suggests unless you have ownership from those in the middle, change is not going to happen. On this basis he returns to a sentiment that was very much at the core of our first meeting, the need to get out amongst your people, your staff, customers and clients. His closing remark that he is in his fancy fortress for our interview (to impress me), but that he will return to his porta-kabin office after the interview, is very much in fitting with the down to earth, no-nonsense guy who spoke of 'copping on' and 'returning to his kitchen table'.

### 5.8.3 Family, Friends and Females Become Signficant Others

In a manner similar to the first phase of this research, for these leaders, 'others' (both within and beyond the workplace), played a significant role in their knowledge development. However, in contrast with the first phase, the role of family, friends, and females, received much greater recognition. Indeed, in the first round of interviews, Participant A, the bishop, was alone in his reference to a family member as a source of knowlege:

> It's my wife who would pick out relevant bits out of magazines.
>
> I'm not a computer buff, my wife is much more into the computer thing. [Participant A, Interview 1]

On this occasion, a number of participants allowed the subject of their families into the conversation. For instance, Participant J, spoke of how his father had taught him how to treat people with respect.

> There have been a number of people who I have learned from, my father

> first and foremost, was a great humanitarian, he taught me that while they could be a damn nuisance, that trade unions were very, very important and had to be treated with great respect. [Participant J]

While Participant B recalls how the advice of her late grandfather encouraged her to make the best of every situation she faces:

> My grandfather used to say, nothing is ever as good as it seems, and nothing is ever as bad as it seems, it's up to you. [Participant B]

Participant D also related an example of how observing the behaviour of family members, in his case his father and mother-in-law, caused him to change his thinking with respect to maturity and indeed his own ability to mature. Here, he speaks of the 'bad behaviour' we are all capable of, even in old age; in other words, to some extent we don't ever grow up, we just grow old. His comments here are strongly reflective of his earlier admission that he has come to a greater knowledge of himself in the interval since our last meeting.

> I think because I am fifty three now, you get caught between two generations, a growing generation beneath you and the ageing generation above, it would have been a period, and still is a period in which I am watching older people with a lot of interest as well as with a lot of criticism and fear, right. Like on my own side my own father and my mother-in-law would have been alive during that period, so just watching people age, and I suppose I am just interested in observing how badly older people can behave, very self-centered, very afraid and unable and unwilling to let go of the status they once had, controls they once had, and very head-strong. So I think that maturity, while I might seem to be talking about maturity in myself over ten years, I think maturity may be more of a myth – I think time reveals more and more of the essential personality that's in there and sometimes it's not always a positive revelation, you know ageing doesn't guarantee a better person, sometimes I think people get worse. [Participant D]

While children were not spoken of at all in the first phase of the research, in the second phase they were mentioned in some context or other by at least eight of the twelve participants. For example, Participant B commented:

> I think you always have to say you learn from your children, I suppose being a woman in business as well, it's impossible not to, I am very lucky I have three fabulous girls and they are all very, very positive and they are very bright and very clear about what they want to do when they come out of college. The twins are just going into leaving cert, their confidence and their approach or whatever, I think it's impossible not to learn from them, especially I think when they are that age and that's great.

In this context, Participant D related a very personal and rather disturbing incident of the knowledge he gained as a consequence of his son being bullied in school. Here, the boundaries between home-life and professional-life are blurred as he recalls the manner in which he transfers this knowledge to the workplace. In the following excerpt he speaks of a greater sensitivity with respect to his treatment of such issues. He recalled:

> I think all of the phases of my kids development were fascinating and each of them drew out something different in me, kids are fascinating as you know, they test all your old preconceptions about life and yourself and your philosophy, so that has been great and it hasn't always been entirely easy. I had a young boy who was bullied and I had to get him out of a bad school, he was stuck in a school in a group for a year or two, so I found that very interesting and very traumatic in its own way. Something of that would have transferred to work, in work I was bringing in health and safety policies on bullying and intimidation in the work place; and it made me fairly sensitive as to how it should be approached.

At another point in the interview he returns to the topic of children. The following remark brings together his earlier comment about the 'myth of maturity' and the above reference to his children and their influence on his development. Here, although he does not finish some of his sentences, one can assume he is trying to explain how through his children he has become less confrontational, more compromising and perhaps, more mature.

> We were talking about children earlier, I think ten years is a time of huge change in family life as well I think if you are living with kids who have grown from five to fifteen, six to sixteen, right, you become very used to dealing with change, with people, with immaturity in other people, suddenly you are expected by everyone to be the mature, stable person, slow to…I mean I would have been more impulsive when I was young, more up for confrontation, less willing to comprise…

Personal friendships as a source of knowledge, while not mentioned in the first phase of the research, were referred to in the second. Participant I spoke of what he called a very 'tight network', people who know his innermost business secrets and he theirs. The idea that these friends are a resource, a spring-board upon which to test out ideas is framed in the context of the loneliness of leadership also alluded to by Participant A in the first interview. Participant I explained:

> I have learnt most from my friends, I have a very tight network of people and we talk to each other twice a day and we can hangup on each other and then continue the phone conversation later on without insulting anyone or without insulting each other. My innnermost business secrets they would be familiar with and I would be familiar with theirs and we are always teasing things out. The friends that I have they are all involved in businesses different to my own, they have been a great resource to me and I know I have been a great resource to them. Because when you are running a business it is a very lonely place you don't really have friends you have colleagues.

Another participant spoke of the role of females in terms of his own knowledge development. While it was only a brief reference, his use of the word 'sympathetic' in the following quotation is suggestive of a more supportive relationship that is conducive to knowledge sharing as opposed to one that is based around protecting or controlling knowledge.

> I suppose I have learnt an awful lot from the people I recruited and I talked about in the financial and marketing areas and they were usually, not always, but usually they were women. Maybe it was good that there were no male egos competing or something, but we had a very sympathetic relationship. So I have always learnt a lot from women, including my wife. [Participant D]

### 5.8.4 Formative Experience Gains Greater Recognition

While the influence of core values that were established in early life and the influence of early role models (such as parents and grandparents), has already been discussed (see sections 5.6.2.2 and 5.7.3 respectively); 'formative experiences (specific life experiences or incidents which made a strong impact on the individual's development), in themselves, represent an additional source of leaders' knowledge. Participant J was somewhat of an outlier in his attention to such experiences. Indeed, in both interviews he recalls, using almost identical wording on the huge impact that entering the workforce in a post-war environment had on the rest of his career.

> I have always been influenced by that thirty years which was primarily a thing of meeting demand in the most efficient way you could, knowing your trade better than your opposition and using your judgement on investment to keep improving it.

Recalling the knowledge gained during this time he speaks with great admiration of those skilled men who had the ingenuity to work with scarce resources and from whom

he learned how to use his hands rather than his head, a skill that he has retained to this day. The following quotations are taken from interview one and two respectively.

> If you ask me what special knowledge I had that took me outside the other directors that were in the place, I had a very good knoweldge of the nuts and bolts of the trade. [Participant J/Interview One]

> I am a value added person, I have been trained as an engineer, I get a lump of metal and I create something else, mind you I don't sell it, I do it for my own entertainment, but I am always appreciative of the capacity for people to make things you know. [Participant J/Interview Two]

At another point in the interview, he returns to another source of formative learning, what he leared at school. And while the meaning is open to interpretation, in the context from which it was taken it might be interpreted as a self-depreciating remark on the manner in which leaders can dis-enfranchise their followers.

> What have I learnt? The old thing going to school, there is no such thing as a bad boy there are only bad teachers. There is no such thing as bad staff only bad managers. I am not sure that I learned that or that I have been taught that, I just know it.

**RQ5 What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?**

## 5.9 Changed Environmental Professional and Personal Contexts

In the intervening years between phase one and phase two of this research, the leaders in this study related changing circumstances in three areas, their environment, their professional situation and their personal circumstances. While it is accepted that these factors are closely interrelated, an individual account of each of these is provided in the sections that follow.

### 5.9.1 A Changed Environmental Context

For the majority of participants in this study, the time interval between the first and second interview was one of enormous change. Much of this change occurred in their external environment, with a great deal of this relating to econmic factors such as: the decline in the global economy, the opening up of Eastern Europe, increased competitiveness, changing industry/market dynamics, increased regulation and legislation, the emergence of the internet and new social media, and a more informed and demanding client. These changes were accompanied by the undermining, and to

a large extent the collapse, of the lonstanding pillars or societal strongholds of church and state; with the uncovering of political and business corruption and clerical scandals. Not surprisingly then, a number of these leaders spoke of a more challenging environment, and for many, these challenges were presented in a negative light. For example, Participant E, who was chief executive of a brewery spoke at length of 'seismic shift' in his industry, with changes, it would appear coming from every direction.

> The changes happening are just huge, there was a time when the pub was like the only social outlet for people, now people have lots and lots of things to do and they are doing them. There is big move from the on-trade, pubs and hotels, to what we would call the off-trade, the multiples and the independent off licenses. Home consumption has been going through the roof in the last three to five years, people have invested in their homes, what we call cocooning, they put in the wide screen televisions and they are now happy to stay at home with their families to bring in friends, rather than almost discommoding themselves and going out to the pub, which is just very new for Ireland, it's a new type of Ireland. People are moving away from beer to wine and white spirits as well and that's created its own pressure on the beer market. The whole alcohol industry has really come into light, the anti-alcohol lobby is putting a lot of pressure on the industry and that's a difficulty, certainly ten years ago that wasn't there. There has been a lot of regulatory stuff around the pub as well – the smoking ban, the introduction of the groceries order, which allows retailers now to sell below cost and more legislation on the introduction of random breath testing which has really created a lot of problems for pubs, so this industry is not one that is standing still.

Participant I, reported similar market dynamics and changing industry fortunes. At this second meeting he reveals the true extent of the company's misfortunes at the time of our last visit, admitting, last time we met 'the company was sailing off a cliff'. In the following quotation he elaborates on this describing a declining market and increased competition from industry substitutes:

> We were a 3rd generation family business. I don't know if I said this to you, but when I met you last we were sailing off a cliff. We were involved in a bidding war to try and take over a competitor but it was a blessing in disguise that never happened. The industry was in decline, lifestyles were changing, people weren't lighting coal fires anymore, we were up against an aggressive marketing campaign by the gas company. It was very hard to keep going, we were loosing the urban market, it was very hard to compete, to put our cost base in line with the big players.

Others had different, yet nonetheless valid concerns. For example Participant H told of his struggle to provide services to those with intellectual and physical disabilities in an increasingly regulated environment. While Participant J spoke of the onslaught of new media in the absence of any control.

> The other thing that will affect the whole communications business is the whole question of internet blogging and facebook, citizen journalism, you have this extradordinary communication system and no legisaltion.

While the above examples are just a small sample of the concerns of participants, they are representative of the more challenging environment within which these leaders sought to conduct their business. For other participants, the issues facing them were altogether more hostile, threatening the very ethos of the organisations they represented, and the services they sought to provide. For example, in the second meeting with the bishop, our conversation was dominated by negative occurences: declining worshippers, church closures and cases regarding child sexual abuse. Describing the situation as 'traumatic' and 'fraught', the sense of powerlessness brought about by these circumstances came through on a number of occassions. Firstly, there was the sense of apathy that surrounded religion in general, as its relevance in an ever-changing society was increasingly questioned:

> At the Lambeth conference 1998 the Bishop of Colorado summarised it as akin to 'playing squash against a haystack'. A picturesque but potent analogy, and one that many a cleric in Ireland could identify with. However it is unlikely that this apathy will be banished unless the church is perceived to be relevant to the world in so far as it is different from the world and challenging worldly assumptions, otherwise it will got on playing ecclesiastical squash against a secular haystack.

Secondly, was the manner in which the image of the church had become tarnished and its clerics guilty by association:

> The whole clerical abuse issue which has tragically affected the Roman Catholic church, clegy in general tend to have I think suffered because of this. People who are, for want of a better term 'a dog collar' tend to be identified in some way, maybe not directly, but you get the feeling, I put it that way, it's more a feeling, that people are wondering when they see you. [Participant A]

The bishop was not alone in the being guilty by association. Participant G, a retired public-sector manager, reflected on the corruption that undermined the ethics of the public service, bringing everyone connected with it into a state of disrepute.

> Regarding the corruption, corruption spreads, I was giving a paper at the regional authorities conference and the chairman of it was having lunch with me and he said 'you are retired' and I said 'yes' and he said 'was it before or after the case of Joe Bloggs? And I said 'be careful, bi curamach, I deeply resent any association'. I said 'unfortuantely that is what it has done it has tarred everybody else'. I just think it was very sad, it was very sad that the people who were involved in that couldn't see that they were really damaging a service that they had spent their life building up. [Participant G]

### 5.9.2 A Changed Professional Context

Leaders reported changed professional circumstances in two areas: At the organisational level in the form of growth and expansion and changing business practices; and at the individual levels in terms of changes that had occurred with respect to their own careers.

#### 5.9.2.1 Changes at the Organisational Level

In the interval since the last interview, there is little doubt that the majority, if not all, of these participants would have experienced changes within their own organisations. Across their individual case-stories there are incidents of a changed purpose, globalisation, internationalisation, a changed organsational culture, rationalisation and company closure to name but a few. Two cases in particular stood out from the others in terms of the extent to which these organisations had literally been transformed since our last encounter. The fact that they present both a positive and a negative scenario is purely co-incidental. The first, was an engineering design company, which at the time of our first meeting conducted at least ninety percent of its business in Ireland. Three years later this participant was promoted from managing director of the Irish operation (which had two offices), to chief executive of the international operation. At our second meeting the chief executive estimated a 30:70 split between Ireland and overseas.

> In the last four years my world has changed from running what was essentially an Irish company with all its work in Ireland, to an international company with twenty five offices. We are now working a twenty four hour

> day. With an office in singapore eight hours ahead and an office in San Jose eight hours behind Ireland. So that would sum up our new world. [Participant C]

The second, was the case of a municipal art gallery, which in the intervening time period had been awarded the status of a national cultural institution without any of the associated resources or funding to ensure that it could actually function as one. Again, during this time, this participant had changed roles from curator, to director. Describing this time as a period of 'intense transformation and painful transition,' the current director spoke of the organisation as feeling virtually 'abandoned,' 'floundering,' 'being in limbo' and coming 'close to collapse'. While the ramificaitons for the organisations at the centre of these changes are immense, in part, driven by the nature of the research questions, these leaders focused to a greater extent on what the changes meant in terms of their own role. This was particularly evident in the second case, where the director of an art gallery admitted that finding a satisfactory resolution to the current unsustainable situation, while it may provide a personal solution to the dillemas of his role, it may not be in the best interest of the organisation.

> Well, what I am looking for myself may not now be in the best interests of the gallery. If I was to be transferred tommorrow to being an employee of the National Gallery, with the consequent conditions of employment and definition of responsibilities and clarity of responsibility, I personally would probably welcome that. If you were to say would that be good for the gallery, it probably wouldn't be, because with that would go the autonomy of this gallery, which of itself has been of such importance in gaining the attention and support of the government. [Participant F]

The next section examines in greater detail the changes that occurred at the individual professional level across these participants. Three different sceanarios were identified: Firstly, there were those who had remained in the same role since our first meeting. Secondly, there were those who had moved to a different role, either within or beyond their orginal organisation. Finally, there were those who had reached the end of their careers; these included those who had already retired and those in the preparatory period that exists prior to retirement. In this latter case, all of these participants had remained with their original organisations.

#### 5.9.2.2 Changes at the Individual Level

Less than half of the leaders in this study were in the same position at the time of the second interview. Three had moved to new positions, these included: one participant who was promoted from managing director to group chief executive (and was now preparing for retirement); another who had since assumed the position of director of an art gallery (having been the curator at the time of our first meeting); and another who had moved from managing director of a family business to managing director of his own business. A total of five participants had retired. Of those that had retired, one remained with the company in the capacity of chairman. Leaders reflections on their changed professional circumstances spanned three phases: The intial phase of taking up a leadership role, the intermediate phase of acting in the role and the final stage which included preparing for exit and role exit.

#### 5.9.2.2.1 Taking up a Leadership Role

Reflecting on his promotion from managing director to group chief executive, in a manner similar to the leaders in the first phase of this research, Participant C spoke of the changed perceptions and heightened expectations that acompanied this move:

> The people who were your peers are now looking at you in a different light, and you have to look at them in a different light. So that brings a personal pressure. [Participant C]

The sense of separation and loneliness that occupying a more senior role entails was again emphasised:

> From a personal point of view, when you take over as CEO you suddenly begin to realise it is a lonely spot. [Participant C]

For Participant C, the first four years in the chief executive role were considered to be the most difficult years of his entire career. His reference to the enormous stress, self-doubt and self-questioning that was endemic in this period are very much in line with those attributed by other participants, in the same context, in the first phase of this research:

> Those first four years of being the chief executive were definitely the toughest four years of my entire career – much more difficult than the last four years. Definitely the most stressful, because number one, you are wondering are you up to the job, So that period of great stress and kind of personal doubt, can I do it, will I do it, can I make it? was in those first four years not in these last years. [Participant C]

The knowledge gained from this difficult transitionary period, emphasised the importance of authenticity. Participant C, explained:

> But one thing I said to myself the day I took over from my predecessor, and I have said this publically, I set out not to be my predecessor Mark 2, but to be Joe Blogs Mark 1. And I have said that to my sucessor, 'Make sure you don't become or try to become Joe Blogs Mark 2, be 'John Murphy' Mark 1. Because I think that to me is the most important thing.

#### 5.9.2.2.2 Acting In A Leadership Role

For those participants who had remained in the same position since our first meeting, the passage of time created an even greater distance from their original professional background and its associated knowledge. The sense that this was of necessity rather than choice, and may for this reason have, (at some point), engendered some regret, is eloquently captured by Participant D below:

> I suppose over the years I accepted, in a way, which wasn't there when I went in at the start, that I wasn't going to be a flamboyant director – I wasn't going to have the baton, I wasn't going to be in rehearsal room, I wasn't going to be surrounded by a working opera company, or drama company or dance company – it is just too much pressure. Instead I kind of worked to make sure that the artistic people got as much freedom and resources that I could make available right, if they did their job very well we all benefited, so I created the conditions for it - that kind of jump in productivity that happened. It meant sort of saying, you know I put my academic hat off, but I also had to put my artistic hat to one side. And suddenly now I am the old man, I am the elder lemon in the company – you better just grow old gracefully and accept that is your role. [Participant D]

Later he elaborates on this, explaining that his academic interests have all but disappeared 'being further and further behind him', and that he no longer has the time or the inclination to be engaged in academic pursuits. His artistic interests remain closer (he has put them to one side), athough clearly they are no longer a priority. Re-iterating what he originally called the triple A's, the academic, the artistic and the administrative, he now sees his role as more firmly rooted in the latter, with the other two knowledge bases playing supportive roles; like 'trainer wheels' on either side that keep him grounded. He provided the following description:

> I suppose they are like little trainers wheels on each side of me at the moment, they keep me balanced. [Participant D]

Participant B makes a similar admission. While Participant D's hat metaphor creates a physical image of the distance between his current and previous role, she speaks of this distance in terms of time: 'it's been far too long,' 'and seventeen years down the line'. While on the surface of it, her role has essentially remained the same since our last meeting, for her the sense that she is moving further and further away from her original engineering background engenders a feeling of continuous change:

> It's been far too long since I was a civil engineer, even though I graduated as one, and I love to hear, to listen to the civil engineers talk about the technology and what it can do now, but for sure my capability in terms of talking the technology has very much gone and its great to be able to rely on other people to be able to talk the message, and to be able to sit back. And seventeen years down the line listening to what architects can do now with the technology, listening to what the CAD engineers can do, what the pharmaceutical engineers can do its fascinating, but I know it at such a high level that it's great listening to the others talk about the detail and I appreciate it but I certainly don't know it anymore. So my role had changed and continues to change. [Participant B]

Both of these cases emphasise acceptance. Participant D now knows that he is not going to be the flamboyant director; rather his role is to create the conditions that will facilitate others' artistic endeavours. In the quotation above he speaks of growing old gracefully and accepting that he is now 'the elder lemon' in the organisation. This, in contrast to being the youngest staff member when we first met. Later he speaks of 'having tried it on as manager and producer', and having decided that 'this is his role', why should he complain. He has come to terms with not being the flamboyant director, and left behind that sense of regret he momentarily displayed in the first interview when he compared his role to directing a circus: "theatres are like fairgrounds or circuses, somebody has got to sweep up the sawdust from the spit from the beer."

In a similar way Participant B has learned to accept her altered knowledge and related capabilities, 'she can no longer talk the technology, she certainly doesn't know the detail of it anymore' and while there is a feeling that she has become somewhat marginalised in loosing her voice to the engineers, she speaks of knowledge 'at a higher level', (a reference perhaps to conceptual thinking). Again this is a very different picture to the one first encountered when she was struggling to let go.

#### 5.9.2.2.3 Exiting A Leadership Role

As previously indicated, at the time of the second meeting, five of the leaders originally interviewed had retired, and one was preparing for retirement. It was not surprising therefore, that for these leaders a significant amount of time was given to reflecting on the substantial change in circumstances. Reflections focused on two aspects of retirement, preparation for retirement and actual retirement. Participant C was due to retire approximately six months after the second interview. For this reason, many of the references in the first hlaf of the discussion below relate to his case. Similarly, in the final part of this section, much of the material is drawn from the case of Participant A, who having retired approximately one year after our first meeting has since written a book reflecting on his time in episcopal office. The content of his second interview drew heavily on this material.

In preparing to exit their organisations, the knowledge these leaders relied upon to some extent equates with wisdom, cetainly it entailed what could be termed 'wise judgement'. This was particularly evident in relation to judgement on timing. Participant J spoke of the finite life of a leader, and the neccessity to relinquish this role at the appropriate time. Lacking awareness of this timing, as in participant J's case, may neccesitate a reliance on others and a willingness to accept their judgement.

> You can only lead for a certain amount of time you know, you get tired, you loose that edge and one of the problems, and I think this happened with me in 1993, I didn't realise that I had been at it for so long, but there were a couple of people who did and that is why I went through that change from chief executive to chairmanship. And I think you have got to do it without resentment, even though it is hard. [Participant J]

Participant C expressed a similar concern. As a leader, he explained, one needs to balance one's desire to remain immortal with what is best for the organisation.

> I have decided to step down because I am all of sixty three, going on sixty four. So I think it is very important and I do think it is part of leadership aswell. When I look at your man in Egypt now, up there at eighty two or something, sure that is a nonsense, he is being forced out at eighty years of age. So what you have to say is, when is the right time to hand over to a sucessor, the worse thing is leaving it too late. When you are into your sixties, you have a different view on life aswell, your own mortality all that kind of stuff is all inside you. You know there is a difference in perspective and I think that is why some of these despots want to stay on and on and on

> and on and on, they have been ruling countries for thirty and forty years and you can see it is not good for a country, to have a leader in place this long, nor is it good for a company. [Participant C]

For this participant an awareness of his own mortality and an acknowledgement that his time as a leader is finite, provided him with the knowledge to differentiate between what was feasible and what was not feasible in the time that remained. It also engendered a feeling of acceptance that somebody else would finish the work that he had started.

> I often say my job was to take a map of the world and put the dots in different places, to kind of gain this global footprint, to get into peoples psyche we are no longer an Irish firm we are an international firm. My successor's challenges is to join up the dots and the get the synergies and collaborations that come from having offices in different parts of the world. That is a piece of business I cannot do in the time I have left, well I can help to do it but it will be my sucessors job to put that in place.

Potential retirement was generally viewed in a positive way, for instance, Participant C, who would remain on in the company as a full-time director spoke of 'shedding certain tasks' and getting the opportunity to focus on the thing that switches him on. He also spoke of the reflief he will experience in handing over the burden of responsibility to someone else:

> I said to my sucessor, every CEO carries around an invisible ruck-sack with a lot of heavy rocks and I will be handing that invisible ruck-sack over to him so I will be mightly relieved.

While the above quotations present retirement as 'a release', this eventuality was not totally devoid of misgivings. Chief amongst these was the difficulty of letting go. In this context, in preparation for his eventual departure, Participant C spoke of 'practicing for letting go' and 'being put to the test'. Such terminology is suggestive of a form of rehersal dummy-run, or experiment. In other words, knowing how to let go is not knowledge that is easily acquired, instead it requires a form of tempering or indurance. In the following excerpts he recalls particular incidents that formed part of this process. Particularly poignant is the sense that to some extent, though he has not yet departed, he is already absent; in the first quotation he speaks of 'remaining silent', in the second, he is no longer centre stage, 'it is no longer about him, it is about them'. He finds it necessary to remain insignificant, though this is not his default position.

> If you are in a position like this for… I am into my eleventh year, there is letting go. But I have gone to a few sessions recently now, for instance the first big test for me was the interviews for my position. The non-executives interviewed thirteen people for my position and each one came in and presented their vision of the future, and naturally as part of their vision they were saying some of the things that weren't working and I was sitting there and I was tempted to jump in as I would at board meetings but I stayed silent through everyone of the thirteen. And everybody is amazed that I actually was silent for twenty six hours and that was part of my letting go.

In trying out his future persona he struggles between a return to childhood as he recalls his desire to 'kick people under the table', and the need to accept what will become his new identity.

> My sucessor organised a two day away strategy away-day and I sat through two whole days and apart from making positive supportive comments on my colleagues, (even though I could have kicked them under the table), I stayed quite for two days, I could have challenged them every five minutes on something they said, what's the point? Then the whole two days would have been about me and it should have been about them. So yeah I am practicing letting go.

Participant A's account of his actual retirement provides a interesting contrast with Participant C's preparation for exit above. In the following excerpt Participant A speaks of the similarity that existed between taking up the role of bishop and exiting that role: 'As it was in the beginning, so it was in the end'.

> Within the church very little is done to prepare the person elected or appointed bishop for the work that lies ahead. It is though one is expected to don the mantle of episcopacy and assume almost infallible powers overnight, a short retreat and in at the deep end. As it was in the beginning so it was in the end. Apart from the constitutional requirement to inform the archbishop of the province of one's intention to retire on a specific date, there was absolutely no preparation for retirement, none at all, or for one's spouse.

While there are strong similarities between taking up and leaving the role in terms of an absence of preparation, equally there are tangible differences. The language used in the following quotation is particularly powerful in this regard. The richness and resplendence conveyed by the word 'splendour' sits in stark contrast to the abysmal emptiness that is suggestive in the words 'indefinable void'.

> I was very conscious that on this occasion the bell was tolling for me, and also for my wife. We would return later that evening divested of the rights and privileges of office. One could not help but contrast the setting on that new-year's eve with the splendour and dignity of the consecration ceremony almost eleven years before - at the actual moment of departure one felt there was an indefinable void.

While Participant C spoke of practicing letting go and learning that it is, (and will be), no longer all about him, Participant A, reflected on this actuality. Interestingly, the ramifications of his retirement were, he suggested, much greater for his wife than for him. She later verified this on joining us at the close of the interview. Again he creates a contrast, this time between 'being the centre of things and obtaining deference', with just being 'part of the crowd'. The physicality evoked by the phrase 'moving out from parish life' and the feeling of a strong support structure endemic in the repetitive use of the word 'circle' strongly convey the depth of the change encountered.

> It's funny, it didn't worry me as much as it worred my wife, and her point was that for so many years, not least, when she was a bishop's wife, you are very much the centre of things and rightly or wrongly there is a certain amount of deference paid, that goes, you suddenly find that you are just kind of part of the crowd and you have to readjust to that. When the cleric retires there is not the same support needed so you can feel a bit like a fish out of water. It was the whole relationship of moving out from parish life where you have a circle, from episcipol life where you have a circle, albeit a wider circle, into a situation where you don't have that kind of ready-made circle.

While loss of identity was seen as one aspect of role exit, the establishment of a new identity was another. This was evident in the case of Participant C above, who, whilst exiting the CEO role was continuing in a supportive role within the organisation. For Participant A, the scenario was somewhat different. For him, relinquishing the role and related responsiblities of being a bishop, to some extent meant he could return to being himself.

> I am now known as John, So I feel a greater freedom almost in a sense to be yourself, now that is not to say when you are a bishop or a rector that you are not yourself it's just a slightly different emphasis.

Pointing out that it is not that you are not yourself when you are a bishop, rather it is the emphasis that is different, brings the notion of dual identities into the picture, the identity associated with one's role and one's former identity. The suggestion here is that in exiting a role one returns to this former identity and all that it entailed.

Participant A spoke at some length on this topic comparing the requirements of bishop's life with the freedoms of 'just being John'. Such freedoms provided for a wider circle of contacts, less caution in terms of making closer relationships and public comments, and the opportunity to draw on a broader range of reading material:

> It is different now, I find I have a much greater opportunity to broaden my reading, so that it is not just eclesiastical, it is not just of a churchy nature, for example, I am just after finishing Schindler's List.

Whilst recognising and accepting the changes that retirement brought, in one of his final comments, the bishop returns to the dual identities alluded to earlier. His statement, 'you are who you were', because you once were a bishop you are expected to continue to be informed on certain matters, to some extent re-inforces the existance of competing identities. Although he is now John, his identity as a bishop remains and at times competes for supremacy.

> You are very often put in the position of making a comment and because you are who you were somehow it's expected to be an informed comment you know, I find that one needs to as it were keep up with what's happening, with what's being said, whose saying what, because there can be a great deal of misinformation spread, so although one is retired I don't think you can totally isolate yourself from what is happening in the sphere in which you were involved which in my case was about fifty years.

### 5.9.3 A Changed Personal Context

In addition to changed envirionmental and professional cirumstances, in the interval since we first met, the personal situations of each of these inviduals had undoubtedly changed in some way. The most obvious change, and one that was common to all participants was that at the time of the second interview, each individual was at least ten years older. As Participant J commented:

> Well one of the significant events that has affected me (since we last met), is that I will be seventy-nine in April, that is what is called a slow moving event [Participant J]

The process of ageing brought a number of additional changes. On first meeting these leaders many of them had young famlies, now they were parenting teenagers, college students and young adults. As Participant D remarked:

> I think ten years is a time of huge change in family life aswell, if you are living with kids who have grown from five to fiveteen, six to sixteen, you become very used to dealing with change.

In this context, for a number of these leaders it was their children that were identified as one of the chief sources of new knowledge. For example, as previously related, for one leader, dealing with the case of his son being bullied in school, assisted in him implementing harrasment procedures in the workplace with, as he described it, greater sensitivity. The passage of time also brought personal loss. At least two of these leaders had experienced close personal bereavements since our last meeting, one participant told of the recent loss of his wife, another the passing of his daughter. Another participant spoke of the financial loss and hardship of terminating a third generation family business and starting all over again at the age of forty three. He began our second meeting with the following comment:

> My life has been turned upside down since I met you last. There have been big changes, big changes. [Participant I]

These very honest words perhaps summed up the feelings of many of the other participants in this study and provide a fitting point on which to conclude this chapter.

## 5.10 Conclusion

This chapter provides a cross case analysis of the research findings according to the original research questions. This analysis is presented separately across both phases of the research, with part one presenting the findings from phase one and part two the findings from phase two. As indicated in Section 5.9 above, these findings are explained in the light of the changed context that emerged over the period of the research. Chapter six will examine these findings in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two and additional literature which is considered insightful in shedding light on the issues raised in this chapter.

# CHAPTER SIX
# DISCUSSION

# 6 DISCUSSION

## 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the research findings that have emerged in chapter five with the literature contained in chapter two. However, despite numerous updates of the original literature, as the research progressed, the author found that not all of findings could be explained through the original literature reviewed. For this reason and following the lead of Murray (2002), this chapter incorporates, where it was considered appropriate in terms of assisting the discussion, additional literature, that is both related and unrelated, to that which is presented in Chapter 2.

This chapter is divided into two parts: In part one, the findings from phase one of the research are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two and other literature not previously considered. Part two follows the same process for the research findings from phase two of this study. A central feature of the second part of this chapter is its identification of the key changes that have occurred in the time period reviewed. These are explained in terms of the contextual changes that have occurred during the time interval between both phases. These include: the external environment, professional circumstances at both an organisational and individual level; and personal circumstances. While this research points to the overriding influence of changing professional circumstances (at an individual level), in terms of what and how these leaders know; the researcher is mindful of the difficulty in isolating moderating influences in any longitudinal study (Saldana, 2003). All of these issues are expanded upon in the discussion that follows.

## Part One: Discussion of Research Findings: Phase One

## 6.2 Knowledge as a Multi-dimensional Possession

Research finding 5.2 suggests, for many of the leaders in this study, knowledge was primarily perceived as a possession. This idea is strongly representative of an objectivist perspective on knowledge (Hislop, 2005). Indeed, the primary characteristic of this perspective is its entitative nature, wherein knowledge is regarded as content, a commodity that people possess and which can exist independently of

them in codifiable form. Hence Cook and Browne's description of this perspective as an 'epistemology of possession' (Cook and Browne, 1999).

In its characterisation of knowledge as a possession, the objectivist perspective further differentiates between knowledge as a tangible asset or resource and knowledge as an intangible skill, competence or form of know-how. While the dichotomous terminology is varied, for example, 'know that/what' and 'know-how' (Ryle, 1949), 'knowledge about' and 'knowledge of acquaintance' (James, 1950), 'tacit' and 'explicit' (Polanyi, 1962), 'embrained knowledge' and 'embodied knowledge' (Blackler, 1995) the underlying distinction is the same: while in each case, the former aspect of the dichotomy is abstract, the latter is intimate and the immediate result of experience (Polanyi, 1962).

The research findings partially support this distinction. For example, at one extreme, the 'baggage' metaphor created a definitive image of knowledge as a solid personal possession; an asset or resource that could be transported from one situation to the next. In this case, the knowledge alluded to is not specific or idiosyncratic to the individual that is in possession of it (Sobol and Lei, 1994), it can be easily shared and is seen to lose little in the process of transmission (Winter, 1987). At the other extreme, participants spoke of the innate and instinctive knowledge upon which they performed varied tasks without recourse to concious reasoning; the intuitive judgement, 'the gut-feel' and 'the 'refined nose' that resulted from experience. Such knowledge is intimately attached to the knower; it is personal knowledge (Ravetz, 1971), and practical knowledge (Sternberg, 1994) that takes the form of skills and know-how (Kogut and Zander 1992). It is context specific, typically acquired in the context in which it is applied (Sternberg, 1994). As a consequence, this knowledge is hard to express, difficult to share and can only be communicated through activity (Nonaka, 1991).

While these perceptions reflect the characteristics of explicit and tacit knowledge from an objectivist perspective, the distinction was not always so clearcut, with the knowledge alluded to failing to sit comfortably within either perspective. For example, on some occasions these leaders recognised that it was not possible to communicate *all* of their knowledge or to acquire *all* of the knowledge possessed by

another person; in such cases the knowledge in question remained partially tacit and inseparable from the individual who possessed it. On other occasions, participants recognised the necessity to adapt the knowledge received to suit the particulars of a given context. In such instances, through a process of adjustment, the knowledge acquired became personalised or idiosyncratic to the inheritor.

The above findings provide direct support for one of the chief criticisms of the objectivist perspective, that which emphasises the multifaceted nature of knowledge (Spender, 1994), the associated inseparability of the tacit-explicit dimensions (Tsoukas, 1996; Werr and Stjernberg, 2003), and the consequent inability to communicate what is known in its entirety (Blackler, 1995). Latterly, in their references to the necessity to adapt received knowledge to suit their personal requirements, these findings also draw attention to the personal, contextual, situated (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger, 2000) and indeterminate nature of knowing, which always necessitates some form of personal judgement (Tsoukas, 1996).

In recognition of the above characteristics, these findings also lend support to the argument that, in its aim to make tacit knowledge explicit (Nonaka, 1994), the objectivist perspective undermines the very basis upon which competitive advantage can be sustained (Lipman and Rumelt, 1982, Kogut and Zander, 1993; Teece, 1982; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1998). The example of 'the roundabout', (the character described by one participant), who did not know what he knew, or that it was of any value (Section 5.2.2), is an unequivocable example of this. The observation that the company in question could 'unlock this knowledge any time they wanted', while competitors would not know 'how to tap into it', is indicative of the role of tacit knowledge in maintaining a competitive edge.

### 6.2.1 Negative Knowledge and Mis-Use of Knowledge

An additional issue that emerged in the context of how knowledge was perceived concerned the value of knowledge. Although primarily viewed in a positive light, perceptions of knowledge as 'personal baggage' (Section 5.2.1), and intuitive knowledge that was associated with prior experience (Section 5.2.2), brought forth some negative connotations. In this context, one participant recognised a propensity

for overreliance on prior knowledge that was considered undesirable or unreliable, and a resultant inability to remain open to the possibility of new knowledge. This knowledge included: 'bad knowledge' (knowledge that had resulted in misguided decisions in the past), 'redundant knowledge' (the residual effects of knowledge that had lost its currency), and 'biased knowledge' (knowledge that was overly influenced by one's personal predilections). Relatedly, the participant in question spoke of the need to 'balance' prior knowledge and related experience; 'remembering', with a corresponding process of 'forgetting', thus allowing the space for new knowledge to emerge.

While the aforementioned examples relate to types of knowledge that were of themselves considered adverse or undesirable; being 'bad' or 'redundant' and as a consequence unreliable, negative perceptions also stemmed from the manner in which knowledge is employed. In this respect, one participant acknowledged the obsessive and devisive behaviour that is used to ensure that one's own knowledge achieves dominance, or to coerce or undermine another's ability to act.

In their realisation that knowledge is not necessarily 'a good thing', these leaders have rejected one of the central tenets of the objectivist perspective; that knowledge is, in *all* cases, a valuable, functional resource. Their assertions support more critical perspectives that question the ability of knowledge to *always* solve problems, and in doing so recognise the potential of knowledge to both enable and constrain (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). Recognition of the overriding influence of undesirable, or unreliable, knowledge such as knowledge that is considered bad, biased or redundant, highlights the manner in which the objectivist perspective emphasises propositional knowledge that definitively claims something to be the case (Spender, 2008a). In imprinting a norm in terms of what things *should* be like, such knowledge results in the sublimation of all other knowledge claims (Chia and Holt, 2008) and the direction of effort towards a false ideal (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). The comment 'having a raft of bad thoughts' that newcomers to an industry would not be in possession of, succintly captures this idea.

The contribution of the second participant; that while knowledge itself may be positive, the manner in which it is used might be less so; reflects the intrinsic

relationship between knowledge and power (Foucault 1980), and the related assertion that knowledge is not necessarily virtuous or innocent, but can potentially have negative or dangerous consequences (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). Such sentiments again appear contrary to the objectivist perspective that assumes it is possible to produce a form of knowledge that is truly objective, non-contestable, justifiable and trustworthy. In recognising that a leader may use his/her own knowledge in a coercive, undermining or divisive manner, this participant's assertions reinforce the contestable, conflictual and political nature of knowledge identified by more recent studies that are closely aligned with a practice-based perspective (Contu and Wilmot, 2003; Goodal and Roberts, 2008; Storey and Barnet, 2000). Similarly, the same participant's reference to the corresponding need for impartiality in diminishing biases and personal agendas, reflects the persistent struggle to balance compliance with subversion that is strongly characteristic of knowing in practice (Nicolini Gherardi and Yanow, 2003; Suchman, 2000).

While the author is cognisant of the fact that the above discussion is based on the responses of just two participants; it could be argued that a paucity of references makes them all the more interesting. This is particularly true of the remarks that relate to 'knowledge and power'. In view of the acute nature of power-dynamics in any organistional context, and more particularly in discussions of leadership and authority; it is unusual that other than some underlying references to the bureaucractic nature of certain organisational contexts, and the reference by one participant to the political manner in which knowledge can be used; any discussion of the impact of political influences and power struggles on what these leaders knew and how they came to know it was entirely absent from our conversations. This observation sits in stark contrast to the results of a recent study into CEO's learning in non-profit organisations, which points to the overriding influence of the political context in terms of what and how CEO's learn (Shercock and Nathan, 2008). While explanations as to why this was the case were not presented, one might conjecture that the struggle to follow for-profit rules in a not-for-profit setting, where there is often a higher moral purpose or ideal, amplifies the existence and perceived influence of political factors.

That the sole reference to the political use of power was made by a religious leader may speak of an honesty, openness and self-awareness that is more representataive of

this domain; although to suggest that such qualites were not in evidence in other participants is not borne out by the findings presented in Section 5.7.

### 6.3 External, Explicit, Environmental Knowledge is Prioritised

While the importance of core-business knowledge, functional knowledge and knowledge of how to deal with people were recognised as important by these leaders, it was explicit knowledge, and particularly that which related to the external environment, that was afforded priority. At the outset, three participants identified environmental knowledge as by far *the* most important knowledge they needed to have, while across all of the participants a combination of the macro-environment, industry environment and marketplace was afforded emphasis. Describing their knowledge requirements, participants spoke in unequivocal terms such as hard data, information, statistics and demographics; and in restrictive or controlling terms that encompassed legislative requirements and regulatory frameworks.

Only in a very small minority of cases, (three of the twelve leaders, to be precise), was experiential knowledge afforded priority. In these cases, participants differentiated between knowledge as 'book information', 'data' or 'statistics' and 'judgement' based on 'lived-experience'. In each case greater value was attributed to the latter.

The propensity of the majority to grant authority and legitimacy to the abstract and universal, over that which is individual, personal and implicit, is interesting given their earlier recognition that knowledge is multi-dimensional; part tangible, part intangible, part explicit, part experiential (see Section 6.2 above). One explanation relates to the meaning attributed to the term 'knowledge'. In both research and practice, 'knowledge' is often equated with 'information', with these terms used interchangeably (Alvi and Leidner, 1999; Stenmark, 2002; Vouros, 2003; Wilson, 2002). Such interchangeability is in evidence throughout the research findings with participants slipping easily between terms such as 'knowledge', 'information', 'data' and 'statistics'.

The perceived interchangeability between knowledge and information reflects the longstanding pre-dominance of a positivistic epistemology wherein knowledge is considered a value-free, objective, neutral abstraction; a canonical body of scientific

facts or laws that are considered justifiably true (McAdam and McCreedy, 2000). In view of this, it is is perhaps not surprising that these leaders would naturally gravitate towards more tangible, concrete, universal truths (that existed outside of themselves and, indeed, outside of their operating domain), in favour of the particularities of their own and others' experience.

As a canonical, non-contestable body of scientific facts or laws, knowledge was seen to embody power to the extent that it dictated, controlled, or constrained participants' behaviour; and to confer power, to the extent that in having it and exhibiting an awareness of it, the knower was deemed 'knowledgeable'. Both of these sentiments reflect the objectivist perspective's viewpoint. With knowledge conforming to a hard-edged visibility, exactitude or form of dominant logic (Chia and Holt, 2008) it embodied power in affording legitmacy or priority to that which fulfilled these criteria (Czarniawska, 2003). As a consequence, the notion of 'being knowledgeable' or 'in the know' imposed a kind of perfection on the knower which engendered superiority (Wittgenstein, 1980),

This idea, that knowledge embodies power and relatedly confers power, contrasts with an absence of political references as identifed earlier (Section 6.2.1). While these leaders (with one exception), did not acknowledge the likelihood of using their own knowledge in a powerful or controlling manner they nevertheless considered knowledge to be a powerful and controlling force.

## 6.4 Knowing is an Informal, Emergent and Social Process

Descriptions of how these leaders developed their knowledge bore all the hallmarks of an informal, emergent and unintentional endeavour. While the value of formal education was acknowledged, the majority of these leaders did not possess a business management qualification and engagement in further education, training, and reading beyond the confines of the workplace was limited. Instead, participants related numerous examples of how the manner in which they came to know what they needed to know was grounded in their ordinary every-day activities.

A related issue that emerged in this context was that which might be termed the 'perishable' nature of knowledge. As 'knowing' developed in the course of doing

one's job, the associated knowledge was often task-specific, in that it emerged to meet the need of a particular task, and time-specific, in that it existed only for the duration of that particular task, subsequent to which its utility diminished.

These findings provide minimal support for the objectivist perspective's assertion that the creation and development of knowledge comes from a cognitive process of individual intellectual reflection; where knowledge is considered a cognitive entity, that is, some*thing* that develops in the head and is held in the head (Cook and Brown, 1999). Instead, the findings are closely aligned with a practice-based perspective on knowing (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003), which views the development of knowledge as occurring on an on-going basis through the routine activities that people undertake; knowledge develops through practice and is situated in, and inseparable from, practice (Blackler, 1995, Orlikowski, 2002, Cook and Brown, 1999).

With much less emphasis on 'validated knowledge', and much greater emphasis on the colloquial, the findings re-inforce the importance of 'non-canonical forms' of knowing in organisations (Brown and Duguid, 1991), and the extent to which informal, incidental and accidental learning exists at a leadership level (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Burygoyne and Hodgson, 1988; Davis and Easterby-Smith; 1984; Marsick, 1988; Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Mcall, 1988).

Participants' recognition of the emergent and perishable nature of knowledge corresponds with its 'enacted nature', as part of practice, knowing is considered as a performance or event, that is both provisional and ephermal. As Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003: 21) suggest:

> Practice conjures up a world that is always in the making, where doing more than being is the centre of attention.

The above discussion illustrates the manner in which the research findings reinforce two of the central characteristics of a practice-based perspective: the rejection of any distinction between 'thinking and doing' ('the mind-body dichotomy') and the rejection of any distinciton between 'knowing and doing'. With much of these leaders' knowledge developed in the course of 'doing their job', thinking, knowing and doing occur simultaenously. One implication of this is in terms of reflection. In

a world where thinking, knowing and doing occur simultaneously, reflection becomes an integral and inseparable part of the action (Schön, 1991). Faced with the ongoing contradictions, uncertainties, and paradoxes, participants 'remember, interpret and revise their thinking' and, in doing so, 'transform their own learning' (Engeström et el, 2003). The research findings support this claim. While the majority of the leaders did not identify 'reflection' as an integral aspect of their 'knowing' (with only two of the twelve participants distinguishing between what they called 'doing' and 'being', or 'doing' and 'taking cold time out for thinking'), the research findings suggest that reflection often ocurred. This is, to some extent, captured by the rather ironic comment of one participant:

> I suppose I reflect, I don't really think about it (Participant K).

Evidence that these leaders engaged in reflection was provided by the experiences they shared, with numerous examples of Schön's 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (Schön, 1983) amongst them. Regarding 'reflection-in-action', in accounts of on-going interaction and observation (particularly in the context of the marketplace, with customers, competitors or suppliers), participants recalled incidents where they saw or heard something insignificant, yet surprising, that encouraged them to alter some facet of their operations. In all of these examples, while the real value of what was seen or heard arose from reflecting on that event, as opposed to the particular event itself, in relating what had happened, these leaders placed much less emphasis on this aspect of their account.

With respect to 'reflection-on-action', participants related various incidents where, after a particular event, they replayed in their minds what worked and what didn't work, in the hope of improved performance. At other times they questioned and assessed their *own* performance in response to some action or event, or more generally in terms of their ability to do the job. This latter form of self-questioning and self-reflection was particularly evident in the early stages of taking up a leadership role.

In view of the pressurised environment which these leaders inhabit and the pace at which they operate, it is hardly surprising that they did not attribute greater significance to the role of reflection in what and how they came to know what they

needed to know. Indeed, to some extent, to engage in reflection, or to be seen to engage in reflection, contradicts the emphasis on action, performance and outcomes that pervades corporate life in general and the leadership role in particular (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Simpson, French and Harvey, 2002). The comment with respect to reading (Section 5.4.3) was somewhat suggestive of this:

> If they saw me reading around here they would think I was sickening for something [Participant G]

Despite their denial of any form of reflective activity, the research findings suggest, not only is it an integral part of these leaders' 'knowing', in its absence they may fail to capture the value of what they see and hear, the knowledge contained in the perceived trivialities of their ordinary, everyday lives.

While the discussion this far indicates how the research findings re-inforce two of the central characteristics of the practice-base perspective, additional findings lend support to its third and final characteristic; the social nature of knowing (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As presented in the literature review, from a practice-based perspective, knowing is always conceived of as collective, (Cook and Yanow, 1993), with the individual 'knower' always participating in and belonging to social activities (Blackler, 1995), networks (Suchman, 2000) or communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In this sense, no one individual is responsible for knowing everything, but 'collectively they know' (Cook and Yanow, 2003).

In this study, the social character of knowing is particularly evident in the extent to which these leaders are reliant on others, both within and beyond the workplace; so much so, that even the participant who at first suggested there is only room for one *prima donna*, later clarified this remark, stating: "Although I did say there is only room for one prima donna, I have a team approach, I don't believe I am alone." Leaders' dependancy on 'significant others' (Garrat, 1987; Kotter, 1990), 'notables' (McCall et al, 1988; Kempster, 2007), or 'agents' (McCauley and Douglas, 2004), features prominently in the leader development literature and in specific research on how leaders learn to lead (Kempster, 2007). The range of significant others cited by the participants in this research, which included superiors, colleagues, employees,

clients/customers, suppliers, professional groups and informal networks (trade contacts and those in similar businesses), mirror those identified in these studies.

While much learning through others involved face-to-face interaction, (or some form of engagment), incidents of 'vicarious learning' (Bandura, 1977), that is, through observing and imitating the behaviour of others, was also a feature of participants' responses. Knowledge with respect to 'how to be a good leader' stemmed from this category, with the 'good' and 'bad' behaviour of one's previous bosses considered equally instructive in terms of what a leader should and should not do. This finding supports the claim that observation both facilitates and inhibits certain behaviours and that the credibility of the role model and the vividness of the detail are important considerations in terms of what will be observed and imitated (Manz and Sims, 1981). In the case of the participant who recalled her previous superiors, there was, even many years later, a strong sense of the impression that their good and bad behaviour made on her as she affirms her initial and continuous aim to be like the 'good one', and her lasting promise to herself that she would never be like the 'bad one'. In this respect, the finding also supports Ibarra's assertion that the observation of 'notable others' is central to the process of developing one's self-image and identity (Ibarra, 1999).

While the literature highlights the role of narration in vicarious learning, whereby people learn from narrative accounts of successes and failures, both real or fictional (Barry and Elmesm 1997; Denning, 2001; Ready, 2002; Sparrowe, 2005), this aspect of vicarious learning did not feature in participants' responses. Indeed, reading of any form did not figure strongly in terms of knowledge sources. Given the demands of home and work-life, most of these leaders (with two exceptions), spoke of having little time to engage with academic or popular management publications. This finding re-inforces their earlier emphasis on colloquial, non-validated learning.

While notable individuals from one's formative years represent a specific category of influence on leaders' learning in the literature (Avolio and Luthans, 2006; Avolio and Gibbons, 1988; Bennis and Thomas, 2002; Gardner et al, 2005, Janson, 2008; Kempster, 2006; Shamar and Elam, 2005), these were notably absent in the accounts provided by the leaders referred to herein. The exception being the earlier account of

one participant's prior bosses. Kempster (2007), through his research on the impact of 'notable people' on leadership training, suggested that gender has a part to play here. In contrast with their male counterparts, whose notable influences were limited to the organisational context, Kempster's female leaders reported an extensive sphere of influence that included the formative influences of family, educators and friends. Given that eleven of the twelve participants in this study were male, the nature of the research sample does not facilitate additional commentary on the impact of gender on the identification of formative leadership influences; although it is worth noting that the only formative influence spoken of (in this first phase of the research), is attributable to the sole female participant. This chapter returns to the subject of formative influences in part two, where an explanation that extends beyond the influence of gender is suggested.

## 6.5 Not-Knowing is an Inevitabe Aspect of Practice

As finding 5.5 indicates, for the participants in this study, most of their knowledge developed in the course of ordinary everyday events, both work-related and non-work related. In this sense, their knowledge was very much 'a work-in-progress' that was always incomplete, with their requirement for additional knowledge never truly satiated. The comment from Participant A bore testament to this assertion:

> It's hard to know you know, you never achieve a point where you say that's it I know it now.

As previously stated in Section 6.4, in presenting a world that is "always in the making, where doing more than being is the centre of attention" (Nicolini, Gherardi, and Yanow, 2003: 21), the practice-based perspective richly captures the sense of incompleteness, imperfection, and uncertainty that these leaders alluded to. This sits in stark contrast to the objectivist perspective's portrayal of knowing, that, in its continuous quest for rationality, does not recognise the existence of anything less than a definitive, precise, or perfect form of knowledge (Chia and Holt, 2008; Spender, 2002, 2008a 2008b).

While the research findings indicate that not-knowing (an absence of, or insufficiency in knowledge), was, in a general sense, an inevitable and un-avoidable aspect of these leaders' professional lives; in this first phase of the research, the most acute incidents

of ‘not-knowing’ were specifically associated with the intial take-up of a leadership role. For this reason, the following section is devoted to a more in-depth discussion of this issue.

### 6.5.1 Not Knowing is More Acute in the Initial Stages of Leadership

For a number of these leaders, the transition to a leadership role was a critical turning point in terms of their own knowledge requirements (Section 5.4.6.1). Two aspects of this transition were emphasised: a change of identity and a change in role-related tasks: From an identity perspective, the initial move to a leadership role entailed the sudden relinquishment of one’s old identity and the assumption of a new identity. For example, two participants spoke of leaving behind their identities as engineers, with one remarking: “my life as an engineer is over” and the other commenting: “I often say, I used to be an engineer.”

While, for the most part, the move to a leadership role was signalled by little more than a change in title, in reality the change was accompanied by greatly altered and unrealistic expectations in terms of what one *should* know. Firstly, as ‘a leader’, one was ‘naturally’ expected to know about leadership, yet for a number of these participants, this was an area they knew very little about. Secondly, appointment to a leadership position encouraged unrealistic expectations, with some leaders relating the sense of omniscience that accompanied their appointment; a perception that ‘as a leader you should know everything’, you were ‘infallible’, because *you* said it, it had to be the case. Such unfounded and grandiose preconceptions created considerable pressure on the role holder engendering feelings of anxiety and inadequacy that encouraged defensiveness and pretence, as Participant C remarked:

> You have to pretend to know the way, when in reality it’s not like that

All of these emotions were intensifed when these leaders’ were tested and found wanting (in terms of what they knew), in unanticipated public forums in which they lacked the support structures that are commonly intact in the workplace. In this context, the descriptions provided were extremely sensual and emotive as the leaders in question recalled feeling ‘naked and bereft’, ‘hot and cold’, ‘screaming for help’ and ‘clinging like a leech’ to what they knew.

The changed *tasks* that accompanied the transition to a leadership role impacted on leader's knowledge in a number of ways: To a large extent, background professional knowledge became redundant; leaders were no longer expected to have specialist knowledge in one particular area, but, rather, to have general knowledge of a broad domain that extended far beyond their original core specialism. Lack of knowledge in this context contrasted with that which was publically experienced in a number of ways: First, it was considered a *normal* aspect of the transition to a leadership position and, as such, it was not accompanied, to the same extent, if at all, by the feelings of inadequacy and anxiety spoken of earlier. As leaders, these participants had re-defined their focus from solving problems to identifying problems, from providing answers to defining the 'right' questions. In view of this, lack of knowledge was not viewed as a personal weakness or an indication that this knowledge was absent from the organisation entirely, while the leader in question did not personally know it, it was accepted that there was someone else who would. In such situations, recognition of the fact that one did *not* know, a willingness to admit this and to seek the support of those that did, was considered optimal. Fostering this approach did not appear problematic, with the majority of these leaders acknowledging that others knew *much* more than they did and that they derived considerable solace from this fact.

The nature of work role transition is well documented in the literature (Ashford and Taylor, 1990; Ashfort et al 2000; Nicholson, 1984) with 'a role' understood as an organised collection of behavioural expectations; and 'role transition'[7] considered as a two stage process involving the initial event or 'rupture' that causes a change to one or more aspects of the role followed by a period of adjustment (Neale and Griffin, 2006). The transition to a leadership position, as a 'special' case of role transition, has also been examined by a number of researchers who have explored the unique challenges associated with 'becoming a leader/manager' (Bennis, 1989; Benjamin and

[7] This research focuses on 'macro' role transitions, infrequent and often permanent changes such as a promotion or retirement (Ashford and Taylor, 1990) as oppose to 'micro' role transitions (frequent and recurring transitions such as the transition between home and work (Ashforth et al, 2000).

O'Reilly, 2011; Golding, 1986; Hill, 1992; Kempster and Stewart, 2010; Lafley, 2009; Leavy, 2013; Porter et al., 2004).

While individual studies adopts their own terminology, across both research streams (general studies on role transition and studies specifically related to the transition to leadership), there is some consensus on the specific 'role components' that are altered through the transition process. Three categories[8] appeared with some regularity, these include changes to: 'the role requirements' (what is now required of the individual 'in role' – what must they do and what must they know); changes to 'the role schema' (altered expectations or perceptions individuals have of their roles – what behaviour typifies this new role); and personal changes to the individual's role-related self-concept, identity, and their associated relationship with other people (Alvesson et al., 2008; Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al., 2000; Ibarra, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2007).

The research findings from this study re-inforce all three categories with these leaders reporting changes in: how they perceived their own role (from 'problem-solvers' to 'problem-identifiers'); the nature of the tasks they were expected to perform (from 'generalists' to 'specialists'); the relationship between their occupational role and their own identity ('their lives as engineers being over') and the manner in which they are now perceived by others ('the leader who knows').

Where the research findings deviate from the literature is with respect to the relationship they identify between role transition and not-knowing. Of significance in this context, is the manner in which they differentiate between 'not-knowing in action', (or with respect to conducting specific tasks), and 'not-knowing in a social context' or public forum. While not-knowing with respect to the conduct of particular tasks is considered accceptable, indeed 'normal', given their altered role from specialist to generalist; in view of the authorative nature of their position and the associated expectations that 'the leader' should *always* peform, deliver (Fournier and Grey, 2000) and 'give a strong lead' (Needleman, 1990), not-knowing in social situations discredits their legitimacy and presents a risk that they will be devalued in the eyes of their public. In such situations, their tendancy to disperse into defensive

[8] The author acknowledges the interrelatedness of these categories.

routines ('clinging like a leech' to what they knew) and the effort employed in masking their own lack of knowledge ('pretending to know they way'), are driven by the ongoing struggle between the expectation that as a leader, one always knows, and the increased anxiety that arises when they are operating at the limits of their own knowledge.

Although the difficulties experienced by these leaders in tolerating the anxiety that accompanies lack of knowledge or not-knowing have been addressed elsewhere in the leadership literature through the concept of 'negative capability' (Eisold, 2000; Simpson et al., 2002), and while attempts to hide one's knowledge-absences bear some resemblence to 'the wearing of a mask' that is associated with leaders employment of 'impression management' (Sosik, Avolio and Jung, 2002), the 'social-stigmatisation of not-knowing' is a concept that has not emerged previously in the knowledge related and leadership literatures. As a novel concept that has particular implications for leadership it will be re-visited in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

## Part Two: Discussion of Research Findings: Phase Two

### 6.6 A Prioritisation of Experiential Knowledge: Self-Knowledge, Values, Morals and Integrity

In the second phase of this research, experiential knowledge, that which is gained through personal experience, was afforded priority. The type of experiential knowledge spoken of broadly fits within two categories: self-knowledge, and knowledge gained with respect to survival. In terms of self-knowledge, participants recalled epiphanic moments, in their careers and personal lives, when they reached a greater understanding of themselves and their shortcomings. They recounted incidents when they lacked self-discipline, when they found it difficult to deal with others in authority, when they played too close to the rules, lacked empathy, treated others unfairly, compromising their own values in the face of external pressures. In a related vein, they recalled rather humbling incidents when they found themselves forced to question and re-assess their own preconceived assumptions and perceptions, coming to a new understanding of the reality they were dealing with.

In some cases, such admissions were accompanied by a form of regret, perhaps they had operated too much in isolation, failing to seek out the advice or support of others. Perhaps they should had been braver, more critical and outspoken, having the courage of their own convictions and trusting their own gut instinct. Notwithstanding the importance of these issues, for one participant, they paled into insignificance when viewed alongside his 'one big regret,' the neglect of his own family.

Despite their misgivings, for the most part, these leaders had reached some form of resolution in terms of their perceived weaknesses. In view of the constraints of their role (dictated by the internal and external context), their personal situations, and in at least one case, one's early life experience, these leaders felt they had done the best that they could in the circumstances in which they found themselves.

While the second category of knowledge prioritised broadly related to lessons learned with respect to survival that encapsulated adaptability, tenacity, positivity and visionary thinking (traits and behaviours that are often associated with 'effective leadership' (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991); across a number of participants, there was a common emphasis on the knowledge gained with respect to the value of operating in a principled, ethical and moral fashion. Aspects of this included: 'exhibiting humanity', 'returning something to the community', showing 'forgiveness in business' and maintaining core values and integrity. For these leaders, many of these sentiments were reminiscent of the lessons or morals instilled at a very early age: play fair, be honest, treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself; values that they had perhaps lost sight of in the course of their professional lives.

These findings closely reflect the recent turn in the leadership literature towards 'positive forms of leadership' (Avolio and Gardner, 2005), in particular, that which has been labelled 'authentic leadership' (Avolio, Luthans and Walumbwa, 2004; Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009; Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; George, 2003; George and Sims, 2007; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). While various definitions of authentic leadership abound, three different viewpoints are currently in evidence (Chan, 2005). These include: the 'intrapersonal perspective', which focuses closely on the leader and what goes on within the leader (Shamir and Eilam, 2005); the 'interpersonal perspective' which suggests authentic

leadership is relational, created by leaders and followers together (Eagly, 2005); and the developmental perspective, which views authentic leadership as something that can be nurtured and developed over a lifetime (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). In the discussion that follows the author will illustrate how the findings from this second phase of the research present evidence of all three, but more particularly, the first and third of perspective.

From an 'intrapersonal perspective', Shamir and Eilam (2005) describe an authenticity that emphasises self-knowledge, self-concept clarity, self-regulation or person-role merger. In esssence, authentic leaders are those that possess a stable sense of self-knowledge, strongly held values and convictions and the ability to remain true to those at all times (both in or out of role). Similarly, Luthans and Avolio (2003) identify the four components of authentic leadership as: 'self-awareness', which refers to understanding one's strengths and weaknesses and the impact they have on others and coming to grips with who you really are through reflecting on your core values, identity, motives and emotions; an 'internalised moral perspective', which is a self-regulatory process in which individuals use their internal moral standards to guide their behaviour; 'balanced processing' which entails remaining unbiased and objective; and 'relational transparency' which means being open and honest in presenting one's true self to others.

Much of the knowledge that is prioritised in this second phase reflects the characteristics or components identified by the 'intrapersonal perspective'. In terms of self-knowledge and self-awareness, in highlighting the changes in what they have come to know and value, over time, these leaders speak of coming to understand and accept themselves at a much deeper level, recognising their own strengths and weaknesses and the mistakes they have made (Section 5.7).

Relatedly, they reflected on the impact their behaviour had, or may have had, on 'others', (such as clients, staff, and members of their own families), and what this behaviour indicated to them about their own leadership. For the most part, these reflection comprised a process of 'examining one's conscience', how did they treat others, to what extent were they equitable or driven by a misplaced reliance on rules and regulations, by altruistic motives, or their own egos?

An underlying and essential aspect of this questioning process entailed a re-iteration or reflection on their core values and beliefs. These included the necessity to operate with integrity, morality, honesty and humanity. Indeed, in reflecting on their dealings with others, these leaders returned again and again to times they may not have remained true to those values, times when they exhibited less humanity and forgiveness than they would, in hindsight, have preferred, and times when they should have questioned their own preconceived assumptions.

While for the most part, these leaders concentrated on the impact their behaviour had on others, there were some references to the affect that 'others' had on their ability to act authentically. In this context, compromising one's values in response to pressure from 'others', the necessity 'to fake' an all-knowing façade in response to the elevated expectations of followers; and the struggle to behave authentically at the point of role exit as others treat you differently, are indicative of the 'interpersonal' nature of authentic leadership development.

The validation and emphasis that is afforded to experiential knowledge in the aforementioned discussion sits in stark contrast to the first phase of the research, where explicit, environmental knowledge (that which existed beyond oneself and beyond one's organisation) was afforded priority. The tendancy to look beyond oneself to more tangible forms of knowledge, (such as hard data, information and statistics), was originally explained (Section 6.3), in terms of a positivistic influence that created a perception of knowledge as something that is always definitive, hard-edged and exact (Chia and Holt, 2008); something that compares to a canonical body of facts or laws that is justifiably true and that exists independently of the individual (McAdam and McCreedy, 2000). As a consequence, implicit knowledge; in operating below conciousness and proving difficult to define, grasp or transfer, was considered somewhat inferior and illegitimate. In their desire to appear knowledgeable and in control, these leaders naturally gravitated towards that which was explicit, exact, safe and secure.

One explanation for this 360 degree turnaround in participants responses is provided by the third and final perspective on authentic leadership, 'the developmental view'

(Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). This perspective considers authentic leadership as something that can be nurtured in a leader, rather than a fixed trait. In this sense, authentic leadership develops in people over a lifetime, often triggered by major life events. The development of authentic leadership rests heavily on the self-relevant meanings the leader attaches to his or her life experiences, with these meanings captured in the leader's life-story (Shamir and Eilam, 2005, Sparrowe, 2005).

The longitudinal nature of this research provides a perfect opportunity to capture this perspective. These leaders are at least ten years older than when we first met. Many of them are coming to the end, or close to the end, of their professional lives (Carstensen, Isaacowitz and Charles, 1999). They have gained much 'lived experience' (Burgoyne and Hodgson, 1983; Kempster and Parry, 2006) and, as is evidenced by this research, they are beginning to realise the real value of this experience compared with that which they previously felt necessary to hold in high esteem. The familarity brought about through meeting these leaders for the second time, reduced the constraints of formaility (Saldana, 2003), allowing them to deviate beyond the confines of the workplace in addressing the issues at hand. In this mode, many of these leaders adopted 'a story-telling approach' (Bennis, 1996, Gabriel, 2000), relating life-changing or 'crucible events' (Bennis and Thomas, 2002; George, 2003; George and Sims, 2007) such as: their experience of business failure, over-trading, being exposed to corruption, subjected to suspicion, drawn into areas they found ambivalent; and the personal struggle they underwent in coming to terms with bereavements, retirement and ageing. In relating their life-stories these leaders were, as suggested by Shamir and Eliam (2005) and Sparrowe (2005), attempting to make sense of their life events; and in doing so establish greater clarity with respect to their own self-concept, their values and their convictions. As indicated earlier, the conversations with these leaders are interspersed with references to core values, operating with integrity, exhibiting humanity and equity in their dealings. For a number of these leaders this knowledge reflects the values and morals instilled in them at an early age by grandparents, parents and teachers. In this respect, there is an strong sense that in telling their life-story, these leaders are returning to knowledge that perhaps they possessed all along, but which is now being held in much greater regard; in other words, in revisiting their lives as 'leaders' they are re-establishing and re-

validating their own self-concept, core values and beliefs. This sentiment is evocatively described by one participant as 'returning to the kitchen table' of his childhood (Section 5.6.2.2). For others, this knowledge now comes to them through their offspring, as they live through the various stages of their childrens' development, the opportunity to question, re-evaluate and re-establish their own beliefs is an ongoing developmental process.

## 6.7 The Process of Knowing Remains Informal, Emergent and Social

In a manner reminiscent of the first phase of this research, the process through which these leaders developed their knowledge was predominantly viewed as informal and emergent, with most knowledge developed in the course of actually doing the job. There was some evidence of increased participation in formal education, with two participants engaged in management development programmes since our first meeting. In general terms however, these leaders remained somewhat ambivalent on the value of such pursuits. As in the initial research phase, reports of reading were minimal, although two participants told of reading beyond the confines of their profession to encapsulate lessons from history, philosophy and spirituality.

These findings are broadly similar to the first phase of this research (Section 6.4), with much knowledge developed in the course of the routine day-to-day activities that these leaders undertake. In this sense, they are, once again, supportive of a practice-based view of knowing (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow, 2003) and the related assertion in the leadership development literature that, for the most part, leaders' learning and development is attributable to on-the-job experience (Broderick, 1983; McCall, Lombardo and Morrison, 1988; Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1992; Wick, 1989; Zemke, 1985).

Notwithstanding these similarities, in the interval between the first and second phase of this research two notable differences are apparent. The first is the increased importance attributed to the role of adversity. The second is the greater emphasis that is afforded to the role of non-professional or personal relationships. On the role of adversity, throughout this second phase, participants recounted stories of business failure, mistakes made, the day-to-day trials and tribulations of business survival and the general difficulties of operating in an altogether more demanding, questioning,

sceptial, and, at times, corrupt society. The knowledge gained across these experiences broadly fits within three categories: survival (coming to a greater understanding of how to cope), self-knowledge (developing an awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses), and self-improvement (learning how to change one's approach based on what one has learned from the experiences encountered).

As previously indicated in Section 6.5, the influence of 'leader crucibles' or traumatic, unexpected experiences that one is not prepared for, on learning and development is well documented in the literature (Bennis and Thomas, 2002; Collins, 2001a, 2001b; George, 2003). The experiences cited are for the most part negative, extending to: business failure, problematic working relationships, demotion, missed promotion and personal experiences such as bereavement, illness and separation (Bennis and Thomas, 2002, Janson, 2008; Kelleher et al, 1986; Little 1991; McCall et al, 1988; McCauley and Brutus, 1998; Morrison et al, 1992; Reuber and Fischer, 1993; Ruderman et al 1990, Valerio, 1990). The lessons learned through these experiences (McCauley and Brutus, 1998), are very much in line with those cited by the leaders in this study, as those in parenthesis indicate: how to cope in stressful situations (survival), an awareness of one's shortcomings and limitations, (self-knowledge), and how to motivate oneself and take charge of one's career (self-improvement).

There are a number of possible explanations why adversity plays a greater role in this second phase. In part, it may be attributed to the prevailing economic and social circumstances: the time period between the two research phases corresponded to the downturn in the Irish economy and the death of the so-called 'celtic tiger'[9] (Gardiner, 1994). It was also the period during which some of the former bastions of Irish society lost their former stronghold, with widespread incidents of clerical sexual-abuse, political scandals and cases of corporate corruption. In view of these prior and continued difficulties, it is not entirely surprising that adverse experiences were at the forefront of these leaders' minds.

[9] The Celtic Tiger was the term used to describe the period of rapid economic growth that occurred in Ireland between 1995-2007.

The longitudinal nature of this study (and the use of re-interviewing in data collection) provides another explanation (Holland, 2007). Negative experiences promote learning when they trigger self-reflection because this reflection occurs after the experience. It is not surprising that more reports of learning from adverse experiences are found in retrospective accounts (McCauley and Brutus, 1998). In addition, interviewing the same participant more than once is seen to generate a feeling of familarity between the researcher and the researched; a degree of security and safety with respect to what is being discussed develops as the respondent believes they have an established relationship with the interviewer (Saldana, 2003). It is not unreasonable to suggest that having met me before, these leaders felt more comfortable in admitting to mistakes they had made and failures they had experienced. Equally, as a researcher, I felt more confident in probing for these details.

A related factor is the existence of unfinished business, meeting me again, and most likely, in this context at least, for the last time, these leaders may have felt compelled to 'come clean', to present the 'real' picture. This is also characteristic of a re-interview situation (Holland, 2007). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the fact that many of these leaders were coming close to the end of their careers might suggest that the stakes were reduced; they no longer had to save face or to appear at all times in control, they had, in some respects, nothing to loose. In at least two cases there was overt evidence of this renewed openness, with participants admitting that their organisations were 'close to collapse' when we first met, although they did not admit this at the time. In this context, it is worth re-iterating the comments of two participants: "Last time I met you, I don't know if I said this to you, but the company was sailing off a cliff," and in another case, "When we last met this organisation was on the brink of insolvency, ready for closure; since then I have crashed, burned out, and threw in the towel, gone fishing more than once."

Once again, the passage of time and the ageing process cannot be discounted in terms of its influence on participants' responses (Saldana, 2003). My own feeling, that these individuals had mellowed in the intervening time period, that they were less arrogant and more humane, is at least to some extent, borne out by the earlier references to greater self-knowledge, humanity and integrity (Section 6.5). In this respect, there

was an underlying, if not altogether verifiable, interpretation, that, second time around, I was eliciting a truer picture of how these leaders came to know what they knew.

As alluded to in the first paragraph of this section, 'significant others' continued to play an integral role in what these leaders knew. However, in this second phase, a notable difference was the greater importance that was attributed to personal as opposed to professional relationships. Within the context of 'the personal' two sources of influence figured prominently: formative influences and the influence of the leader's own children. In terms of formative influences, in contrast with the first phase of this research where only one participant spoke of the influence of former bosses; in the second phase, a number of participants recalled the advice of grandparents, parents and early educators. As indicated earlier (Section 6.4) the influence of formative relationships is well recognised in the leadership development literature, (for example, Janson, 2008; Kempster, 2006, 2007; Ruderman and Ohlott, 2007; Shamar and Eliam, 2005) with the role of one's birth family, earlier educators and real and symbolic parents (such as former bosses or sports coaches) feature prominently within this body of work.

In terms of the knowledge that these leaders developed through their children, while reference to children were entirely absent from the initial conversations, on re-interviewing, eight of the twelve participants spoke about the role of their children in the context of their own development. In the leadership and learning literature the role of children is notably absent from discussions of personal influences on leader development. Indeed, the exclusion of children from scholarly conversation about organisations in general has recently been commented upon (Kavanagh, Kuhling and Keohane, 2011).

The affordance of greater space to formative and personal influences at this juncture may, in part, be explained by the increased familiarity and security engendered by the re-interview situation that was referred to earlier in this section. Having met me before, it is possible that these individuals felt more at liberty and more comfortable in introducing me to their lives beyond the boundaries of the workplace. An additional explanation returns to the passage of time. These leaders are older, and on the basis of the earlier discussion of self-knowledge and leader crucibles (Section 6.5), one

might go so far as to suggest that they are wiser. One aspect of this, as recognised in the literature, is the manner in which experience brings greater recognition of the leader's own role in a wider network of relationships of both a professional and personal nature (Kempster, 2007). For the leaders in this study, their own children are now a recognised aspect of this network. Furthermore, as these leaders have matured, so too have their offspring, with many of them reaching adult or early adult-hood their life-experience and its contribution to their parents lives is achieving greater recognition.

### 6.8 Changed Environmental, Professional and Personal Contexts

In the time interval since we first met, the research findings present evidence of a changed context across three areas: the external environment, the professional circumstances and the personal situations within which these leaders operated. From an environmental perspective, the interval between the first and second phase of the research represented a period of signficant economic change; while Ireland's economic boom was underway when the first phase of the research was conducted, the second phase co-incided with the beginning of the economic downturn. With the economy in decline, participants spoke of an altogether more competitive marketplace, a more informed and demanding customer or client, increased legislation, all coupled with huge technological advancements in terms of new social media and the internet. As earlier indicated (Section 6.6), all of these changes were occuring within a society that was becoming increasingly hostile and sceptical as former bulwarks of respectability, such as the catholic church, collapsed, and cases of corruption and fraud were uncovered across both the private and public sectors.

On these leaders' changed professional circumstances, at the organisational level, these ranged from globalisation, changed organisational culture, changed organisational status, rationalisation, company closure and business start-up. At the individual professional level, participants described how their own role had evolved. Since our first meeting, across the twelve participants, five variations were in evidence: continuation in the original role, elevation to a new role (within the original organisation), taking up a new role in a new organisation; pre-retirement and retirement.

On a personal front, as previously indicated, the fact that these leaders are at least ten years older is a change that is common to all participants. Beyond this, for the most part, there was very little in terms of 'the personal' in the accounts that they provided. This was particularly evident in the first phase of this research. Indeed, when we first met, there was a sense that personal factors were very rarely allowed to cross the private-professional divide. That they did not feel at liberty to speak of such matters was borne out by at least one participant who apologised for bringing the subject of a very close and very recent family bereavement into the conversation, he remarked: "I am sorry for making it so personal I did not expect to get into that."

By contrast, in the second phase, (as indicated in Section 6.6), there were times when I believed I was getting closer to knowing the 'real' person. One manifestation of a blurring in the private-professional boundary was the emergence of each leader's family, and the significant role attributed to their children in terms of their own knowledge development. Suggestions as to why this change may have occurred, such as, the passage of time and the feeling of familiarity and openness engendered by the re-interview situation (Holland, 2007; Saldana, 2003) have already been explored in Section 6.6.

In any attempt to identify the contextual factors that appear to affect changes, their interrelatedness needs to be considered (Saldana, 2003). The factors that affect changes in what and how leaders know over time are no different in this respect; the impact of the external environment filters through to one's professional circumstances (at both organisational and individual levels) and one's professional role impacts on one's personal identity, in both a public and private capacity. In view of this, isolation of one set of factors over another is somewhat problematic. While the author recognises this difficulty, nevertheless, it must be acknowledged, that across both phases of the research, these leaders related the most signficant changes in the content and process of their knowledge in the context of their changed professional roles. As suggested earlier, (Section 6.5.1) in view of the intricate and intimate relationship between one's identity and one's role, (Ashfort, 2001; Alvesson et al, 2008; Brown, 2006; Ibarra, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2007; Schein, 1978), and the recent conceptualisation of roles as repositories of knowledge (Gosling and Case, 2011), this is not entirely surprising.

While, in the first phase of this research, the transition to a leadership role was primarily spoken of in the context of 'not-knowing' this second phase brought greater elaboration on the nature and content of the transition process. Three stages of role-transition were identifiable: taking up a leadership role, acting in a leadership role and exiting a leadership role. These phases are broadly similar (albeit here in reverse order), to those ordinarily associated with any 'rite of passage' (Van Gennep, 1909), or 'life transition', (Bridges, 2004). For example, Van Gennep (1909) speaks of three phases: 'separation', 'transition' and 'incorporation', while Bridges (2004) identifes three comparable stages: 'the ending', 'the neutral' or 'in-between' phase and 'the new beginning'. The influence of these generic frameworks is similarly reflected in models of organisational or institutional role transition which are similarly characterised by a beginning, middle (adjustment) and final phase. Nicholson's (1984) framework, which incorporates: 'preparation', 'encounter', 'adjustment' and 'stabilisation' being the most frequently cited in this regard.

Research across the different phases of role-transition illustrates a commonality of experiences and emotions for the 'new recruit'. For example, the 'beginnings phase' is devoted to the state of marginality experienced (Trice and Morand, 1989; Van Maanene, 1973), the feelings of anxiety, vunerability and uncertainty and the rites and rituals associated with the socialisation process (Trice and Beyer, 1984; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). The findings from this research concur with the aforementioned studies and in particular with research into 'becoming a leader' (Bennis, 1989; Benjamin and O'Reilly, 2011; Golding, 1986; Hill, 1992; Kempster and Stewart, 2010; Lafley, 2009; Leavy, 2013; Porter et al., 2004).

The findings from the first phase are re-inforced in this second phase as these leaders recall the loneliness, challenging expectations, increased pressures and personal doubts associated with assuming a position of authority. The importance of authenticity and the associated requirement for self-knowledge were emphasised in this context.

In the staged or phased models of transition referred to earlier (Bridges, 2004; Nicholson, 1984; Van Gennep, 1909), the interim period is considered unique in terms

of the feelings of 'liminality' experienced (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988; Ibarra, 2004; Osherton, 1980). Those 'in-transition' invariably feel in-between identities, describing their state as like 'being in a vacuum', 'in mid-air', 'neither here nor there' or 'at a loose end' (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988; Ibarra, 2003); with one foot still planted firmly in the old world and the other making tentative steps towards the new world (Bridges, 1980). The findings that relate to the that which this researcher describes as 'the settling-in' or 'acting-in' phase provide limited support for these descriptions. In relating a greater distancing from their original professional background and the necessity to engage with an extended knowledge domain, across both phases of this research, participants spoke of leaving behind their old lives and associated identities. Evidence of the 'in-betweeness' referred to in the aformentioned studies was not particularly evident, with the exception of one former engineer who admitted to still feeling 'hung-up' or 'torn-in-two' when someone presented her with a technical problem; finding herself eager to sit down at the computer, yet knowing it is no longer her job. The research findings that relate to this phase speak more of the difficulties associated with letting go of one's former professional specialism to engage with a leadership role that is generalist in nature. In accounts of this same period across both phases there is one noticeable difference; the sense of regret and resistence that is related in the first phase is diminished in the second. Two plausible explanations exist: retrospectively, the transition does not appear as difficult as it did originally, or, with the passage of time, there is a greater degree of acceptance with respect to their current role and the choices it entailed.

The final phase of role transition, role-exit (Allen and van de Vliert, 1984; Blau, 1973; Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988), featured prominently in this second phase of the research, unlike the first when it was referred to by only one participant. This is understandable, with the majority of these leaders coming to the end of their professional lives at the time of re-interview, role exit, in the form of retirement, was imminent. Indeed, as previously stated, five of these leaders were already retired. While all of the exit cases in this study broadly fit the category of enforced organsational role exit, the possibility to leave in advance of the statutory retirement policy provided a voluntary exit route. For various reasons, including personal, economic and professional (for the 'good' of the organisation), three of the leaders in this study took up this option; voluntarily vacating their roles in advance of the prescribed time.

The most cited study on role exit is that of Fuchs Ebaugh (1988), and while she also focused on voluntary role exit, her participants were making life-styles choices (such as the decision to divorce, leave a religious order or have a sex-change); in this respect there was no start or end point to the process with the decision to exit and the act of separation entirely at the behest of the individual. As a consequence her participants recount a initial period of 'simmering doubt', followed by a process of 'seeking and weighing alternatives', followed by 'a turning point that symbolises the impossibility of a return to the old life'. For the participants in this study, the simmering doubt experienced by Fuchs Ebaugh's participants, was replaced by uncertainty with respect to the optimum timing of that exit. In this respect, these leaders emphasised the importance of accepting the 'finite life of any leader' and the criticality of knowing 'when to relinquish one's positional power' in the face of 'one's desire to remain immortal'.

Once the decision to exit was made, the greatest challenge these participants faced was knowing how to let go of their former role and all that it entailed. In this context, participants spoke of slowing down, needing to know and understand what was feasible or possible in the time remaining, and accepting that one would no longer be centre-stage. Fuchs Ebaugh defines this process as 'learning to disengage', or disassociating oneself from the rights and obligations of the previous role; with 'disengagement' leading to 'disidentification' wherein one ceases to think of oneself in, or identify one's self with, the former role. One participant who was simultaneously in the process of 'disengaging' from his role as CEO and taking up the interim role of chairman, related this process in very vivid detail. He told of the challenge to become insignificant, as opposed to being the centre of things, and although he had not yet absented himself from his leadership position, there is a sense that he is already gone, as he stresses, "it is no longer about me, it's about them" ('them' being his successors). There is some semblance here with the notion of 'role exit as a social death' (Ball, 1976; Kalish, 1966; Rosenburg, 1981; 1984), where others treat the ex players of professional sports as if they were dead (Stier, 2007).

In view of the above scenario, the preparatory period prior to departure resembles something of an endurance test in which the 'potential exiter' is continuously tested

in terms of their ability to relinquish their old role ('disengagement') and its associated identity ('disidentification'), whilst dealing with the challenge of taking up yet another new identity ('reidentification'). The research findings suggest that this was not a knowledge that was easily acquired. While it is accepted that certain guidance may have been available, in the form of pre-retirement planning, by and large, for these leaders, knowing-how to disengage could only be acquired through painstaking practice and continuous rehearsal in preparation for the final event. In this respect, the leader in the aforementioned case speaks of the period prior to taking up the chairmanship as a form of 'dummy-run' or 'rehearsal', a chance to experiment and to try out what it might be like *not* to be the boss. The neccessity to balance the conflicting emotions associated with this transition are also highlighted as he relates accounts of the pressure to remain silent in the face of new proposals, whilst supressing the inclination to 'kick his colleagues under the table' in a display of his disagreement. In this respect the knowledge spoken of in this phase has much in common with wisdom, as it encompasses a form of refined judgement or prudence that sits in stark contrast to the childish behaviour that is briefly considered and then disregarded. Byrnes (2010) study of former business owners' experience of 'a sense of self' during separation and transition from their companies, uses the term 'exit wisdom' to capture the knowledge gained during this process.

As previously stated, the experiences shared by participants in this research spanned both pre-retirement (preparation for exit) and post retirement (exit). While five of the leaders in this study had retired at the time of the second interview, only one of them spoke at length about this event. The sense of finality that is engenderd by Fuch's Ebaugh's description of the final phase of exit as 'the point of no return' (Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988), was eloquently captured by the bishop as he contrasted the bleakness of the final moment of exit with the resplendence of his initial appointment. In this context he provided a very emotive and harrowing description of the 'moment of departure,' and 'the void,' that existed as one was 'shorn' of all rights, responsibilities and privileges. His wife, who joined the interview in its latter stages, spoke of the loss of 'ready-made-contacts', a social circle and the deference that is normally paid to the bishop's partner. Such sentiments reflect Becker's notion of 'the loss of side-bets' such as, friendships, status, money and fame that 'becoming an ex' entails (Becker, 1961). In a similar way, the move from 'a life at the centre of things', to 'being at the

peripherary' that Stier, (2007) associates with ex-professional tennis players, was vividly described by the bishop's wife as she spoke of "moving out from a sphere where you are very much the centre of things, where there is a certain amount of deference paid to you, to being one of the crowd and feeling like a 'fish out of water."

While there are obvious differences in pre-exit and actual exit scenarios, on the subject of disidentification there is commonality. Across both stages of exit, the existence of 'dual identities', or 'competing identities' is evident. In the former case of pre-retirement the leader in question was struggling to let go of his old identity as CEO whilst preparing to take up an interim role as chairman; Merton's (1968) notion of 'anticipatory socialisation' is in evidence here, as the participant anticipates 'what it might be like not to be the boss'. The latter case, where retirement is retrospectively spoken of, strongly supports Fuchs Ebaugh's observation that "being a non-member is very different from being an ex-member" (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988: 5). The bishop's comment that 'one never really stops being a bishop' (as people still look to you for soundbites) and that, in many respects, 'you *are* who you *were*' eloquently captures Fuchs Ebaugh's concept of 'the hangover identity' (in which the residue from a former identity lingers). At the same time, the notion of 'stigimatisation of role', (where social reactions towards the role holder are often unfavourable and prejudiced), is equally apparent in his description that, 'wearing the dog-collar' (the clerical collar), leaves you open to all sorts of suspicion.

While the discussion in the preceeding paragraphs highlights the simlarities and differences between the research findings and the phases of role-transition as portrayed in the literature, one factor remains unexplored; the prevalence of the voice metaphor throughout the various stages of the transition. In the very early stages of taking up the role, the notion of self-questioning and the inner-voice was raised, 'Can I do it, will I do it, will I make it?' Later, in acting in the leadership role, these leaders told of losing their original voice as they recalled 'losing their capability to talk the technology', 'listening to the engineers speak' and 'relying on others to talk the technical message'. At a later stage, appearing more comfortable in the leadership position, they spoke in terms of 'knowing enough to hack the conversation', 'never saying I have no comment', 'walking the talk', 'practicing what they preached', continuously 'swapping yarns' and relying on 'shared tittle-tattle'. Later still, in their

efforts to remain knowledgeable, they related the necessity to aquire new words, a new vocabularly or a new language. In the stages prior to exit, images of remaining silent for hours and hours while listening to others, and 'having to stay quiet when one wanted to make noise,' paved the way towards the final 'void.'

While the voice metaphor has previously been adopted in studies of gender-related knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, GoldBerger and Tareule, 1997), the literature on role-transition has not adopted this metaphorical stance. The findings from his research indicate that the voice metaphor and related aspects of it are repeatedly used by these leaders in the context of their own authority: taking it up, using it and relinquishing it. That these individuals speak in terms of their own voice in revealing the depths of the dislocation experienced on entering a leadership role, the power and authority exercised in that role, and the powerlessness and loss experienced as they exit this role presents a fitting point of closure for this chapter.

## 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a discussion of the research findings in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two and related literature, which, while not previously reviewed, was considered pertinent to the issues uncovered. The next and final chapter will revisit the research questions and draw conclusions from this discussion in order to outline the contribution of this research and its implications in terms of theory and practice. The author will close this thesis with her reflections on the research journey.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# CONCLUSION

# 7 CONCLUSION

## 7.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this final chapter is to weave together the various strands of this thesis. To this end, the research questions, as originally outlined in Section 1.2 are revisited and reviewed in light of the research findings presented in Chapter 5. The contribution of this research to the broader conceptual area and to practice is outlined and the research limitations and opportunities for future research are identified. This chapter concludes with the author's personal reflection of her experience of the research journey.

## 7.2 The Research Questions Revisited

The original purpose of this study as presented in Section 1.2 was to conduct exploratory research into the lived experiences of individual leaders[10] with respect to the content of their personal knowledge, and the associated process of knowing it. Based on a review of the knowledge related literature, as presented in part one of Chapter 2 the following research questions emerged:

RQ1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?

RQ1a How do they perceive knowledge?

RQ1b What knowledge do they prioritise?

RQ2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge: how, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?

RQ3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised, how are they accounted for and how are they manifested, perceived and 'managed'?

As explained in Chapter 3 an unanticpated break in the research process presented an opportunity to conduct a longitudinal study. Thus, the overall research purpose was extended to examine whether, and if so why, the content and process of leader's knowledge changes overtime. To this end, the following questions were introduced:

RQ4 How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of their knowing/not knowing evolve?

RQ5 What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?

[10] The author has previously outlined her definition of 'a leader' in both Chapters 1 and 3. This encapsulates four elements: authority, influence, followers and change.

The following sub-sections summarise the key findings in relation to each of the research questions.

### 7.2.1 Research Question One

**RQ1 What is the nature and content of leader's personal knowledge?**

**RQ1a How do they perceive knowledge?**

**RQ1b What knowledge do they prioritise?**

For many of the leaders in this study knowledge was initially perceived as a personal possession, a stock or store of something that they (or others), had accumulated overtime that could be held in reserve until required. As a possession, knowledge assumed a variety of forms: a tangible resource that could remain in their absence in the form of a legacy; tacit knowledge that was innate or intutive and knowledge that manifested in skills or know-how.

While distinctive accounts of tacit and explicit knowledge were provided by participants, there was an underlying recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of knowledge, with most knowledge seen to have both tacit and explicit elements. As a consequence, these leaders acknowledged that it was not possible to communicate all that they knew (some knowledge remained personal), or to acquire all of the knowledge that someone else possessed; personal judgement was considered essential in adapting one's knowledge to the contextual requirements.

Although knowledge was primarily perceived as something positive, a resource, or asset that enhanced one's knowledgeability and associated status; a minority of these leaders (two of the twelve participants), recognised that the knowledge they possessed could, on occasion, adversely impact any given situation. Two variations on this theme were identified. On the one hand, knowledge itself was considered negative, being biased, bad (associated with poor decisions in the past), or redundant. In such situations, the value of impartiality, balancing prior knowledge with new knowledge through a process of 'remembering' and 'forgetting' was acknowledged. On the other hand, while the knowledge itself may have been considered positive, indeed valuable, opportunities where knowledge could be mis-used or abused were recognised. In this respect, the leader in

question alluded to the intrinsic relationship between knowledge and power, and the propensity for divisive or coercive behaviour that can co-exist with authority.

While participants alluded to the importance of core-business knowledge, technical know-how and knowledge of interpersonal relations, explicit knowledge of the macro environment, the industry environment and the marketplace was prioritised by the majority of these leaders. In gravitating towards tangible, concrete, universal truths, (such as statistics, market data, standards, or regulations) as distinct from the particularities of their own experience, knowledge was in part, seen as a powerful constraint or limitation in terms of what one could do or say; while in another part a safeguard or check-point that provided direction, security and affirmation.

### 7.2.2 Research Question Two

**RQ2 How do leaders build and maintain their personal knowledge? How, when and where is knowledge acquired and who is involved in this process?**

For the leaders in this study, at the outset, the process through which they acquired and maintained their knowledge was described as an informal, unintentional endeavour, with much less emphasis on validated knowledge (such as reading and formal education) and much greater emphasis on the colloquial. In terms of the latter, much of what these leaders knew was developed through their involvement in routine practices or day-to-day activities, in the context of their working and non-working lives. A salient aspect of this process was the provisional and ephermal nature of knowing, with much knowledge emerging to meet the requirements of a particular task and remaining only for its duration. Relatedly, while the research findings from the first phase suggest evidence of 'reflection-in-action' and 'on-action', with few exceptions, the contribution afforded to reflective activity in terms of their own knowledge development was marginalised.

The social character of knowing was also evident throughout the initial phase. In ensuring adequate and up-to-date knowledge, these leaders were heavily reliant on 'significant others' both within and beyond the workplace. Such 'significant others' included colleagues, superiors, customers, clients, suppliers and industry experts. In the context of these 'others' much knowledge was acquired through opportunistic and unintentional

interaction with fewer participants identifying vicarious learning as a knowledge source. When observation was cited, it was in the context of acquiring certain skills such as, project management, process improvements, how to behave as 'a good' leader and how not to behave as 'a bad leader'.

### 7.2.3 Research Question Three

**RQ3 To what extent are knowledge absences recognised and how are they accounted for? How are the manifested, perceived and 'managed'?**

The initial research findings suggest that 'not-knowing,' (an insufficiency or absence of knowledge), was considered both an inevitable and acceptable part of being a leader. With much knowledge developed in the course of 'doing the job', knowing was a work in progress that was always incomplete. In addition, given the volume of knowledge available, the immediacy of responses required and the ongoing changes in received wisdoms or best practices, there was general acceptance, that one's knowledge would only ever reach adequacy or sufficiency, as opposed to perfection or completion.

In this first phase, the primary incidents of 'not-knowing' were reported upon in the context of the transition to leadership. Two aspects of this transition were emphasised. A change in one's identity and a change in the tasks one was expected to perform. In terms of the associated change in identity, taking up a leadership role necessitated the relinquishment of one's old identity and the assumption of a new identity that brought altered and unrealistic perceptions and expectations of omnipotence, omniscience and infalliability. On the changing tasks that leadership necessitated, 'becoming a leader' was variously described as the transition from 'a specialist-doer' to 'jack-of-all-trades-agenda setter', As a consequence, background professional knowledge receded in favour of a general knowledge that went far beyond one's core specialism. Such changes impacted on these leaders in very different ways. While an absence or insufficiency of knowledge in an action or task context was considered a 'normal' part of the leader's new role, and as a consequence caused little anxiety; in social situations or public forums, 'not knowing' resulted in significant anxiety and a move to mask or hide one's perceived knowledge absences.

### 7.2.4 Research Question Four

**RQ4 How does the content of leader's knowledge and the process of leader's knowing/not knowing evolve?**

In view of the findings discussed in the pre-ceeding section, Section 7.2.3, it was not surprising that, with the passage of time, the *content* of these leader's knowledge reflected an even greater distancing from their original professional background; with such knowledge becoming almost entirely redundant in favour of a general knowledge of the business.

Notwithstanding this development, of greater significance at this second phase was the increased legitimacy afforded by all of these leaders to the knowledge they had gained through their personal experience. This appears in stark contrast to their intital prioritisation of all things explicit and external to themselves, and indeed their organisations. On the specifics of this knowledge two broad and interrelated categories were identified: self-knowledge and knowledge with respect to survival. Across these categories three main themes were in evidence. Firstly, there was an increased awareness of their own weaknesses, times when they had behaved badly and times when they were ignorant of the reality they were dealing with. Secondly, there was an awareness of what they had lost through over regulation and bureaucratisation. In this respect, they recognised that making knowledge explicit and at times generic through rules and regulations had removed the personal, humane element from their decision-making. Thirdly, there was an awareness of what was truly important, operating with honesty, integrity and humanity. For a number of these leaders these latter values represented knowledge acquired at an early age; knowledge that they had lost sight of over the years. In the latter stages of their professional lives this knowledge was afforded renewed importance.

In terms of the *process* of knowing, broadly speaking, while the manner in which they came to know what they needed to know remained unchanged across both phases (continuing as informal, emergent and social in nature), two key differences were evident. Firstly, while there was continued recognition of the role of 'day-to-day experience' in developing one's knowledge, the nature of that experience had changed with the influence of adverse experiences (mistakes, failures and losses) gaining increased recognition.

Secondly, while 'significant others' were considered a key source of knowledge in their earlier accounts, and while they continued to remain so, in this second phase, the identity of these 'others' had altered with an increased emphasis on personal in favour of professional relationships. A notable aspect of this was the latent recognition of these leader's own offspring as a source of new knowledge, with eight of the twelve participants relating the developmental influence of their children in this second phase.

### 7.2.5 Research Question Five

**RQ5 What contextual factors appear to account for these changes?**

In the interval between phase one and phase two of this study three factors[11] appeared influential in terms of the changes that occurred in what and how these leaders knew, or indeed did not know. These included: the nature of the external environment, professional circumstances (at both an organisational and individual level) and personal circumstances. While these factors are listed from macro to micro here, in the discussion that follows they assume a different order. First, the impact of the external environment is examined, this is followed by the personal domain, and finally the impact of professional circumstances is considered. It is within this latter domain that the overriding influence of the leader's individual professional context is isolated and expanded upon.

That the external environment impacts on what and how these leaders know is indisputable, with continuous references throughout both phases of the research to the importance of understanding and complying with the changing environmental requirements. Of greater signficance here is the *changed* nature of this environment in the second phase and its related impact on what and how these leaders knew. The research findings document the collapse of the Irish economy and the corruption, scandals and wrongdoings unearthed across corporate, political and religious divides that occurred in the intervening time period. In the midst of these changes, all of these leaders related experiences of a more competitive, demanding, challenging, and at times hostile environment. There can be no doubt that the increased value afforded to knowledge gained through adversity directly reflects their lived-experience of this time period.

[11] In view of the interrelatedness of these factors, attempts to isolate the affect of one factor over another can be problematic (Saldana, 2003); while the author has elaborated on this difficulty in Chapter Six, Section 6.8 Each factor is nonetheless considered separately.

Although the influence of personal factors was marginalised in the first phase of this research with few personal issues allowed to cross the the strictly observed personal-professional boundary, the author has earlier acknowledged the inability of any researcher to discount the impact of 'the personal' (Section 6.8). In the second phase greater recognition was afforded to personal concerns such as family, bereavement and ageing. With a minimum time-interval of ten years between both phases of the research, this latter facor was a personal change that was common to all participants. This goes some way to explaining the legitimisation and prioritisation of their own experiences at this second juncture, in favour of the validated, external, explicit sources that were reified in the first phase. In this respect the findings allude to the critical reflection that oftentimes underlies self-knowledge and the self-reliance and and more instinctual knowing that this encourages.

An additional change that is attributed to the passage of time, was the wider sphere of influence validated, with formative influences and family coming to the fore. In this vein, as stated in Section 7.2.4, while children were notably absent in the first phase, the majority of these leaders (eight from a total of twelve) latterly recognised the influence of their own off-spring on what they now know. The parallel maturity of these 'children' over the time period reviewed was acknowledged here; as their offspring grappled with the trials and tribulations of growing up, the life-lessons they provided were perhaps considered more significant.

While this research recognises the influence of environmental and personal factors on what and how these leader's know/don't know; it was in the context of their professional circumstances that the most significant changes in the content of their knowledge and the process of knowing and not-knowing were related. Drawing upon the combined findings of both phases of the research, three stages[12] in the transition to leadership were identified: The initial stage of 'taking-up' or 'entering-into' the leadership role; the interim stage of 'acting-in' the role; and the final stages of 'exiting' the role.

[12] The author acknowledges that like all staged models there will be some blurring in the boundaries between these phases

The initial stages of becoming a leader were seen as a critical turning point in these leader's lives and a juncture at which not-knowing was most acute. In part, this related to an altered identity that was accompanied by elevated and unrealistic expectations; in another part it related to the change in role-related tasks, as the individual leader was now expected to be more of 'a generalist, jack-of-all-trades' and yet 'set the agenda and give a certain amount of leadership'. The research findings place particular emphasis on the influence of context here. While not-knowing in action (with respect to doing particular tasks) was considered acceptable in view of the extended nature of their responsiblities, encouraging an increased reliance on other peoples knowledge; in view of the altered and elevated status that accompanied the transition to leadership, not-knowing in a social context engendered stigmitisation. In a social context, lacking the support structures normally present within their place of work, these leaders moved between a complete dependancy on explicit knowledge or a reliance on what they implicitly knew.

In continuing in the leadership role, participants related a further distancing from their original professional background and the necessity to engage with an extended knowledge domain that took them far beyond their original core specialism. While much of this knowledge emerged as these leaders engaged with their day-to-day tasks and interacted with others in and beyond the workplace; the knowledge of how to advance beyond specialist, technical or procedural knowledge in favour of more conceptual thinking proved more difficult to acquire. While a few leaders turned to formal education in search of 'leadership knowledge', for others this was an aspect of the job that they continued to struggle with, realising as they did that to acquire it necessitated 'time-away from the doing'.

In view of the extended time-frame of this study, in the second phase of this research, many of these leaders were reaching or had reached the latter stages of their professional lives. The knowledge that was considered a priority at this stage was largely gained through personal experience comprising self-knowledge, knowledge of how to survive and the necessity to behave in an ethical and moral fashion. A significant finding in this latter stage was the altered nature of the the knowledge required just prior to exiting the leadership role and the unique process that is associated with knowing it. Much of this knowledge is akin to a form of 'wisdom', refined judgement or humility as these leaders relate the necessity to know when and how to relinquish their authority, when to remain

silent and how to remain gracious in the midst of their apparent loss. This becomes a process of delicate negotiation as the leader in question struggles with taking up an 'interim identity', balancing 'dual identities', or coming to terms with the gradual erosion of their former identity. The latter situation is particularly challenging as despite his/her continued presence, the leader becomes partially invisible or marginalised as followers move towards the existing or potential successor. Acquiring the knowledge to cope with these different scenarios necessitaties a form of practice or rehearsal that is significantly different from any of the 'knowing' processes previously described.

In cases where participants had already exited the leadership role, there was some evidence of continued identity-related issues as the remnants of their former roles remained intact.

## 7.3 The Research Contribution

The research outcomes from this study contribute to knowledge on three fronts: theory, methodology and practice. These are elaborated upon in the following sub-sections. Section 7.3.1 examines the theoretical contribution. Section 7.3.2 presents the contribution made from a methodological perspective. While Section 7.3.3 outlines the contribution this research will make to leadership development.

### 7.3.1 The Theoretical Contribution

As previously stated in Chapter 1 and elaborated upon in Chapter 2, one commonality across the leadership and knowledge management literatures, is the apparent neglect of the leader's *own* knowledge. Addressing the content and process issues that surround this topic represents the core contribution to knowledge this thesis makes. This contribution spans two bodies of literature: the knowledge-related literature and the leadership literature. From a knowledge-related perspective, exploring leader's personal knowledge shifts the central focus of the knowledge-related research from its heretofore concentration on corporate level matters, to matters concerning the individual. In doing so it addresses a dearth of conceptual development and empirical work within this area and adds to nascent developments within the knowledge management field such as those pertaining to 'personal knowledge management' (Pauleen and Gorman, 2011). From a leadership perspective, the literature remains rather one-sided in its treatment of the 'knowledge leadership' phenomenon (Politis, 2001; Viitalia, 2004); outwardly focusing

on the leader's role in developing others' knowledge, while failing to provide a corresponding focus on the leader's *own* knowledge. In its attention to the personal, this thesis addresses this knowledge gap.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, addressing the research purpose necessitated drawing upon aspects of three bodies of literature: knowledge, leadership and learning. A secondary contribution stemmed from this endeavour; as in unpacking the issues at the intersection of these three, greater linkages have been created between them. For example, while the importance of leadership with respect to knowledge management has been recognised (Armstrong and Sambamurthy, 1999), with the exception of Skyrme, (2000), the field of knowledge management, has not engaged with the the subject of leadership (Dirkx, 1999). Furthermore, despite implicit linkages and synergies between the knowledge management and learning literatures, until relatively recently researchers within each field have failed to acknowledge each other (Chiva and Alegre, 2005; Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003, 2011; Easterby-Smith and Prieto, 2008; Vera and Crossan, 2003). The leadership literature has developed in a similar fashion, while it has advanced the study of 'knowledge leadership' in conjunction with the learning literature (Politis, 2001), it has done so in isolation from the knowledge-related literature. Increasesd integration between these bodies of literatures is of value, not only in terms of more fully understanding the personal aspect of leader's knowledge/knowing; but also in contributing to a reduction in the theoretical overlap and confusion that exists between the knowledge-related and learning literature.

The longitudinal nature of this study makes a significant contribution to the fields of leadership and knowledge management in capturing the temporal, non-deterministic character of the leader's personal knowledge, and the criticality of context in understanding the unfolding process of change. A significant findings relates to the altered nature of the knowledge that is prioritised by these leaders in the intervening time period. As discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6.6, such knowledge comprises: self-knowledge, knowledge with respect to core values, principles, morals and ethics, and knowledge of how to behave in a balanced, equitable and honest manner. This knowledge is characteristic of the 'intrapersonal' perspective on authentic leadership (Shamir and Eliam, 2005). The research findings suggest, these leaders have taken the knowledge they prioritise to a new level, from a prioritisation of all that is explicit and external to

themselves, to implicit knowledge of how to be an authentic leader. This assertion is re-inforced by the manner in which they relate this change through tellling and retelling the story of their lives as leaders (Shamir and Eliam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005). In view of these findings, this research provides empirical support for both the 'intrapersonal' (Shamir and Eliam, 2005) and 'developmental' (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) perspectives on authentic leadership.

While a triad of moderating influences are recognised as impacting on the content and process of these leader's knowledge, (environmental, professional and personal), and while the author has earlier acknowledged the interrelated nature of these factors in practice (Section 6.8); the research findings indicate the overriding influence of the leader's professional context on the knowledge that is valued and the process through which it is known. The analysis of the research findings takes this influence to a further level of refinement, examining it in terms of the different stages into and out of a leadership role. These include: the transition from 'novice leader' to 'seasoned leader' to 'potential ex. or ex. leader'. In establishing a link between these two bodies of literature (role transition and knowledge), this research provides empirical support for the conceptual relationship previously identified by Gosling and Case (2011).

A particular contribution that stems from this insight is the identification of two 'critical pressure points' where 'knowledge-absences' are most likely to arise: the initial stages of 'take-up' or 'entry' into the leadership role, and at the final stages of preparing for the actual moment of 'exit'. In taking up a leadership position, while the challenges associated with 'becoming a leader' have been variously described (Bennis, 1989; Benjamin and O'Reilly, 2011; Golding, 1986; Hill 1992; Kempster and Stewart, 2010; Lafley, 2009; Leavy, 2013; Porter et al., 2004), of particular significance is the manner in which this research differentiates between 'not-knowing in action' and 'not knowing in a social context'. While the former is considered natural and acceptable in view of the increasing redundancy of one's background professional knowledge, and the assumption of a more conceptual and all encompassing role, the latter uncovers the stigma that is attached to 'not-knowing' in a social context. The 'social stigmitisation of not-knowing' is a novel concept that has not previously been identified elsewhere. The opportunity to explore this in further detail is highlighted in Section 7.5, the directions for future research.

At the ‘leave taking’ stage, a critical finding related to the unique nature of the knowledge that is associated with knowing how to disengage from one’s role, necessitating as it did a form of practice, rehearsal, dry-run or dummy run. While the notion of knowing as doing or ‘practice’ is now well recognised in the knowledge related literature (Nicolini, Gheardi and Yanow, 2003), this notion of ‘rehearsing’ for exit in the sense of “trying out what it might be like not to be the boss” (Participant C), has not been referred to in other studies of role exit (Allen and van de Vliert, 1984; Blau, 1973; Byrnes, 2010; Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988; Stier, 2007). In this respect the finding provides additional insight into the concept of ‘exit wisdom’ (Byrnes, 2010).

### 7.3.2 The Methodological Contribution

From a methodological perspective, the longitudinal nature of this study makes a significant contribution to the study of leadership and leadership development where a paucity of longitudinal research has recently been highlighted. In a special issue of the Leadership Quarterly devoted to longitudinal studies of leadership development, Riggio and Mumford (2011) highlight the multiplicity of retrospective studies on the early precursors to adult leadership (Murphy and Johnson, 2011), and the absence of qualitative longitudinal studies that extend much beyond a few weeks or a few months (Day and Sin, 2011). In spanning almost two decades, the developmental trajectory of the leaders at the heart of this study is unique amongst other longitudinal and developmental studies in the leadership field.

Furthermore, in capturing the temporal character of leader’s personal knowledge this research addresses the additional request of Day and Sin (2011) and Harms et al (2011) that greater emphasis should be afforded to individual developmental trajectories in leader development efforts.

### 7.3.3 The Contribution to Practice

In the absence of any empirical research on what knowledge is actually important to leaders and the factors that shape the manner in which they develop their own knowledge, our assumptions may be rather different than the reality. In addressing this knowledge gap, the research findings from this study have several implications for management education at an executive level.

First, in isolating the impact of certain contextual factors, this research points to the overriding impact of the individual professional context, (one's professional role), in terms of what and how these leaders know. In particular, it highlights the stage of role transition as a key influence, with early, interim and final stages of transition identified. As previously indicated in Section 7.3.1 this study has uncovered two 'critical pressure points' where 'knowledge absences' are most likely to arise: at the initial stages of take-up or 'entry into the leadership role, and at the final stages of preparing for the actual moment of 'exit'. These findings are particularly significant for management educators in terms of the design and delivery of executive education. Scope exists to tailor these programmes to ensure that aspiring and existing executives are aware of the challenges they will encounter at these pivotal stages in their careers and, to assist them to develop approaches to overcoming them. These challenges are elaborated upon in the paragraphs that follow:

At the intital stages of entering into a leadership role, the desire to appear knowlegeable, and the associated anxiety with not-knowing (while somewhat tolerable in action), reaches its peak in a social context where, in the absence of his/her usual supports, the leader feels over-exposed, thus finding it necessary to defend or mask their own knowledge absences. The idea that 'not-knowing' becomes 'stigmatised' (Section 7.3.1), speaks to the importance of instilling in current and future leaders an understanding that leadership effectiveness depends not only on *having* the appropriate knowledge, but also on being disposed to the existence of 'not-knowing'. For those in positions of authority, adopting this disposition is not easy. As previously alluded to (Chapter 2, Section 2.3) popularised images of leadership are developed around 'knowing', 'activity', 'performance', 'acheivement' and 'outcomes'. In this respect, the idea of 'not-knowing' goes contrary to everything we believe leadership to be.

To cultivate a leadership mindset that is comfortable with 'not-knowing' the field of leadership development needs to embrace learning from other fields. While many leadership development programmes now incorporate what was previously considered as self-development, for example, developing mindfulness, listening skills and reflection; this research suggests going beyond these. The field of psychoanalysis has much to offer the leadership field in this regard (Obhozer, 1996). In particular, this thesis has earlier

highlighted the recent import of Keat's 1970 concept of 'negative capability' (Bion, 1970) into the leadership domain. While much management development is about developing positive capabilities, in turbulent environments, 'negative capability', 'the ability to tolerate ambiguity and remain content with half knowledge' (Ward, 1963) appears an altogether more desirable and valuable ability. The findings from this research support this viewpoint. For many of these leaders the grandiose notions of omnipotence and omniscience that accompanied their appointment resulted in intolerable pressure and anxiety. Exposing our current and future leaders to the idea that learning comes from "standing on the edge of their knowledge and facing their ignorance" (French, Simpson and Harvey, 2009: 203) would go a long way to relieving some of this anxiety associated with not knowing, thus allowing potential and existing leaders to engage more fully with the task of knowing.

At the final stages of 'role exit' the findings from this research strongly suggest that incumbent leaders should prepare themselves for the intense feelings of isolation, marginalisation and loneliness that this phase will entail. Indeed, significant risks exist for the organisation and the individual who cannot effectively chart the path to role exit. As a central figure in any organisation the leader who cannot negotiate role exit may become a destructive force, a barrier to smooth handover and succession. If the exiting executive remains in another capacity, the tangential needs for involvement could create time-consuming interference with the new leadership. In extreme cases the individual experiencing loss of position and status may suffer deleterious repercussions to his or her health, an inability to cope with the loss and eventual withdrawal or death (Byrnes, 2010; Cram and Paton, 1993). In this respect, it is imperative that participating organisations, in conjunction with management educators must do more to address the psychological pressures that leaders face at this critical juncture in their professional lives. At the present time, the contribution of Kets de Vries (2006a, 2006b) is perhaps singular in addressing such issues.

While the research findings highlighted the role that reflection played in these leaders lives, and while there was some evidence of 'critical reflection' (Mezirow, 1981) in the second phase of the research, as they questioned their own assumptions and preconceptions; these leaders themselves did not afford much recognition to the role that reflection played in their knowledge development. In particular this research suggests a

greater need for leaders to be more reflective in terms of how context will shape their knowledge as they progress through the different stages of the leadership role. Indeed the lonely and isolated nature of the leadership role as alluded to more than once in the context of this research, the boundaries that exist between leaders and their followers and the dynamics that arise on entering and exiting a leadership position, suggests that leaders more than most others need to harness their reflective capacity. Previous research suggests this will not happen of its own accord, that reflection is hard work and needs to become a habit through practice (Brookfield, 2003). In this respect, this research, in line with previous studies (Reynolds, 1998), reinforces the need to build reflective practice into management education.

## 7.4 The Research Limitations

As is the case with all research, this study is not without its limitations. The research design features amongst these. As Quinn-Patton (2002) notes, 'There are no perfect research designs – there are always tradeoffs (Quinn-Patton, 2002: 223). The nature and size of the research sample, and the reliance on a single method of data collection, could be considered as limiting factors in this study.

On the nature of the research sample, while an initial attempt was made to obtain a cross-section of leaders from a variety of industries/sectors, an unwillingness to co-operate resulted in an absence of leaders from certain categories such as the political, educational and sporting arenas. Future research could replicate this study with expanded numbers across a broader range of industries, sectors and organistional types, thus allowing for similarities and differences across the different categories to be considered.

In terms of the overall sample size, while it might be argued that twelve participants makes it difficult to generalise or transfer the results of this research to other populations; in line with other qualitative studies, empirical generalisation was not the aim of this research. Instead, as originally described in Chapter 3, the research methodology, the author opted for a purposive (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and theoretical sample (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), wherein cases for study are iteratively selected because they are information rich, and illuminative of the pheneomenon of interest. In qualitative studies such as this one, such 'rich insight and thick description' (Geertz, 1973), are considered ample compensation for any perceived deficiency in numbers.

Reliance on a single method of data collection, (in this case the research interview), is often cited as a research limitation (Creswell, 2009). While triangulation of methods is considered as a means of cross-validating one's data (Denzin, 1978); the underlying assumption that one method automatically compensates for any weaknesses in the original method is not always the case (Jick, 1979). Furthermore, although this research relied solely on the research interview, the longitudinal nature of the study which entailed re-interviewing all of the original research participants, is a recognised means of increasing the validity of one's research findings (Saldana, 2003). Future studies might consider combining interviewing with other data collection methods; for instance, the use of 'solicited research diaries' (Bell, 1988), wherein informants produce an account at the specific request of the researcher, are seen to enhance qualitative inquiry (Elliot, 1993) and, have proved insightful in related studies of managerial learning (Hogan, 2010). In addition, the introduction of participant observation would provide for prolonged immersion in practice and greater sensitivity to context (Patton, 1990). While the researcher adopted the 'critical incident technique' (Flanagan, 1954) to examine incidents of not-knowing, greater use of this technique could prove insightful in exploring more sensistive issues such as the social stigmitisation of not knowing and the erosion of identity that is associated with exit, as discussed in the section that follows.

## 7.5 Directions for Future Research

As a thesis with a theoretical contribution to knowledge, there exists much scope for futher research. This section of the thesis highlights some potential directions that future explorations might take. For example:

Future studies could build on the exploratory nature of this study, taking the research focus to a greater level of refinement. For instance, drawing on the types of knowledge identified, (for example, explicit knowledge, judgement, emotional intelligence or wisdom), additional research could examine the function of these different types with respect to the different roles that leaders play (for example, figurehead, spokesperson, troubleshooter, coach or mentor).

A considerable opportunity exists to conduct empirical research into the concept of 'not-knowing', thus addressing Spender's call to expand the knowledge-management paradigm to embrace knowledge-absences (Spender 2008a, 2008b). While the literature is gathering momentum on this issue (Chia and Holt, 2008; Cooper, 2005; Czarniawska, 2003), empirical studies that specifcally focus on 'knowledge-absences' are not apparent. In this context, and in view of its relative novelty, it would be particularly insightful to explore 'the social stigmitisation of not-knowing' in a leadership context. In view of the sensitivity of this issue, the author advocates greater use of the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) in uncovering and exploring leader's experiences of such occassions.

Further scope also exists to empirically study the relationship between the stages of transition into and out of a leadership role, the nature of leader's personal 'knowledge', the process of 'knowing' it and the existence of knowledge absences. Research questions might include: What types of knowledge are reified or marginalised at the difference stages of role transition; and what are the related processes through which these are known? To what extent are knowledge absences recognised at each stage and how are these dealt with? The outcomes of this research would add to a variety of literatures, not least those pertaining to knowledge, role-transition and identity, and in turn create stronger linkages between them.

In view of the association uncovered between the 'voice metaphor' and the various stages of role transition, a metaphorical analysis of the stages of role transition would be insightful.

While the topic of 'role exit' has been the focus of a number of studies (Allen and van de Vliert, 1984; Blau, 1973; Byrnes, 2010; Fuchs Ebaugh, 1988; Stier 2007), considerable scope exists to conduct further research in this area. In particular, specific research into leader's personal experiences of role exit appears ripe for more indepth examination. Indeed, in view of the various benefits or 'side-bets' (Becker, 1960) that accompany the elevation to a leadership role, one would assume that the difficulties associated with disengagement and disidentification from that role are more acute. Yet, while the leadership literature provides evidence of a plethora of studies on 'becoming a leader' (Bennis, 1989; Benjamin and O'Reilly, 2011; Golding, 1986; Hill 1992; Kempster and

Stewart, 2010; Lafley, 2009; Leavy, 2013; Porter et al., 2004), there is a dearth of research at the 'unbecoming stage' where the rights, responsiblities and benefits associated with this position are stripped away[13].

In terms of research design, a longitudinal study would have much to offer in this context. While existing research on 'exit' is based on retrospective accounts, the findings from this research suggest that the period prior to exit is a time period that is fraught with assorted challenges, heightened emotions and self-reflection. Indeed, the knowledge that is required at this stage is different from that which was spoken of earlier, necessitating as it does a form of practice, rehearsal, or dummy-run. A more indepth study of leadership and role exit should begin at the pre-exit stage, examining leader's experiences of the process of exit as it unfolds; conducting follow-up fieldwork at different time intervals such as the actual point of exit and at extended time intervals post-exit. This approach would contribute much insight on what is currently known with respect to 'exit wisdom' (Byrnes, 2010).

The impact of role-exit on the leader's spouse was particularly evident in the case of the clerical leader in this study. While he was clear that 'only one of them could be the bishop', he recognised that in exiting his role, his wife lost the 'spillover-identity', status and social circle that his role provided. The author is not aware of any other research that has examined the 'spill-over identity' that is afforded to a 'significant other' by virtue of their partner's leadership role. In this respect, exploration of this concept would be constructive, particulary if a cross-section of leaders were selected.

## 7.6 The Author's Reflections on her Research Journey

In the words of Kierkegaard 'life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards' (Kierkegaard, 1812 - 1855). One of the questions I put to my research participants was, 'given the chance to go back in time, what would you do differently?' To pose that same question of myself at this point would be insightful. If I were to undertake this research again of course there are things I would do differently, is that not the case for all researchers? Yet, at this point in the process, to be honest, I would hope,

[13] While Byrnes's (2010) study focuses on CEO's experiences of exit, all of the participants were owner managers (which introduces another 'attachment' variable into the study) and the decision to exit was voluntary.

were I to begin again, that I would be just as fortuitous in the path that emerged. As stated in the research methodology, Chapter 3, this research originally began in the early 1990's. Carrying this PhD over many years I struggled to reconcile the varying pieces of 'advice' given to me: "The only good PhD is a finished PhD" or "It is better to travel than to arrive." My PhD experience was not smooth (I doubt many are), the route taken was not direct, with a number of false starts, a lot of stalling, and several breakdowns along the way; for the most part, I had no idea of where I was going, where I would end up, or if this journey would ever end. And yet, here I am, writing a conclusion, so it would appear that the end is nigh. If I do not regret the route I took, then I must have gained something. Indeed, having completed a thesis on knowledge/learning one might well ask, what did I learn? What do I know now that I did not know before? In some respects I believe my learning mirrors that which I understood to have changed in 'my leaders' overtime. In a similar way, I too, place greater value on my own knowledge and experience. I have learned, painfully, day after day, to stay a little longer with the endless confusion, gradually resisting the need to look to others to provide the answers. Not being overly confident in my own abilities and judgement, this form of self-reliance is not something I believe I ever possessed in abundance. Indeed there were numerous times in this journey when I latched onto some quick-fix solution in a despearate bid to feel I was making progress, temporarily alieviating some of the anxiety; only later to discard it, realising it was not the panacea I expected. I believe that tendancy to always look beyond myself for the solution has lessened; although it has not entirely dissappeared; and that is perhaps how it should be. Of course I will continue to seek the advice of others at certain times, there is however a greater realisation that inevitably I will come back to myself, I now understand what it means to taken ownership for one's research.

Anaïs Nin speaks of the courage it takes to write, with writing being 'exposure in the extreme' (Anaïs Nin, 1903 – 1977) . I have always identified strongly with these words. While I love to write there has always been a reluctance to expose that which I had written; not a very good trait in an academic, or a life that rests on 'publish or perish'. To take this PhD through to the final stages, for me, represents a case of extreme exposure. My hope is, that through this process, I will be less reluctant to share this part of me in the future.

Coming to the end of my journey, the importance of beginnings and endings comes to mind (Green, 1991 – 2012). I am certainly not the same person who started out on this

journey, just as many of ‘my leaders’ were not the same people when I had the priviledge to meet them the second time around. When I began this PhD I might have fitted the description ‘young free and single’. In some respects, this is no longer the case. Since beginning this research I have lost both my parents and my sister, I have become a mother of a now teenage daughter, a great-aunt ten times over, a mortgage holder and the owner of a high-maintainance labrador. All’s changed, changed utterly (W. B. Yeats, 1916). Amidst the great joys and deep sorrows of the past two decades, this PhD remained in the shadows until there came a time and space in which I believed I could devote the time to finish it. While undoubtedly there are professional reasons why one should undertake a PhD, to complete this piece of research after such a long time is for me a very personal goal. I do not think I could have continued if I did not truly believe that in doing so I would learn something of value, something more than that which is contained between these covers. Patrick Kavanagh’s poem ‘Ascetic,’ a life-long favourite of mine expresses this in ways that I cannot.

That in the end
I may find
Something not sold for a penny
In the slums of mind.

That I may break
With these hands
The bread of wisdom that grows
In other lands.

For this, for this
Do I wear
The rags of hunger and climb
The unending stair.
[Patrick Kavanagh, 1904 – 1967]

While this might be seen as a bit ‘over the top’, and while I expect such laudable sentiments are expressed in many PhD theses, I am content in the knowledge that, for me, this endeavour has been worthwhile. And so to the final words. Amidst the desperate need to be released from this commitment, there is a underlying reluctance to finish; right now I am finding it difficult to acknowledge this, not to mention daring to admit it to the many ‘others’ who are ‘in waiting’. Yet I am comforted by the feeling that this is not really the end, there will be another chapter, for me, this thesis has served its purpose in identifying a direction that I would like to take. To find the word(s) to conclude my epic journey is difficult, particularly for someone such as myself, who loves words, reading

them, recalling them, playing with them and creating with them. After some deliberation (I also love to deliberate), I have chosen the words of the american poet, Ralph, Waldo Emerson which at this very moment encapsulates much of what I am feeling, and which perhaps reflects the central message that I have learned from these leaders.

"The years teach much which the days never know."

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1808 – 1882)

That the last words of my reflection, and effectively this thesis, should end up as 'never know' are not lost on me, as I expect they will not be on the reader(s).

## 7.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ability of this research to address the original research questions. It has also outlined the overall research implications in terms of their contribution to theory and practice. The latter part of this chapter has provided suggestions for future research and has attempted to provide an open and honest reflection of the author's journey through the research process.

# APPENDIX 1

**INTERVIEW GUIDE: PHASE ONE**

Q1 To begin with, perhaps you could provide me with a little bit of background information on your own career to date and the role that you currently occupy in the organisation.

Q2 In your role as [insert title as appropriate] What do you need to know? What types of knowledge do you need to have?

Q3 How do you acquire this knowledge?

Q4 Has the knowledge that you need changed, or is it changing?

Q5 How do you keep up to speed with changes in what you need to know/how do you keep abreast? What or who do you rely on most in doing this?

Q6 How do you keep abreast of others' knowledge?

Q7 Do you feel there are pressures on you to know more than you do

Q8 Do you think others (for example, competitors), have more knowledge than you on particular issues?

Q9 Can you pinpoint areas that you don't know about, that you would like to know about?

Q10 Can you tell me about some incident or event where you did not have the knowledge that you needed?

Q11 Do you encounter any barriers /resistance in terms of your own knowledge development?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE: PHASE TWO**

Part A: Significant Events

Q1 What has been happening since we last met?

Perhaps you could recall one or two significant events that have occurred in the recent past or going further back to when we first met.

Part B: Significant Learning: Knowledge Gained

Q2 What did these events teach you? What knowledge have you gained?

Part C: Significant Others

Q3 In terms of others, are there particular people who have helped you to move forward since we last met? What knowledge have you gained from them?

Part D: With the Benefit of Hindsight

Q4 If you could go back in time to the beginning of your career, or to the time you took up this position, or to the time we first met (you specify), what would you do differently and why? What advice would you like to have been given and who would you liked that advice to have come from?

Part E: The Present

Q5 What is happening in your life at this present time? What do you need to know? What types of knowledge do you need to have?

How do you acquire this knowledge?

Is the knowledge that you need changed, or is it changing?

How do you keep up to speed with changes in what you need to know/how do you keep abreast? What or who do you rely on most in doing this?

Part F: The Future

Q6 If you could draw on all the knowledge you have gained over your career, what advice would you give to someone else starting out?

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# Leader's Reflections on Knowledge, Knowing and Not Knowing:
# An Analysis of Change Over Time

**Volume 2 of 2**

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# APPENDIX TWO

**PARTICIPANT A FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE A1**

***GREAT EXPECTATIONS: THE NAKED BISHOP***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **PERCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Legacy/Inheritance | *"If you have built up good relationships with people and communites there will always be a residue of that remaining when you go."*<br>*"I would hope that if I were to leave in the morning my successor would be able to enter into the community relationships that I had helped to ferment and formulate while I was here, so I don't think it's starting from the tabularazza each time."* |
| - that needs personalising | *"I think you leave behind you this residue of relationships, that you have built up, but the person coming in is a different person and while they inherit excellent relationships you've got to make them your own and you've got to develop them in your own way."* |
| Baggage | *"It's one of the pieces of baggage I carry with me when I came, the people that I know that I can turn to."* |
| - that can be divisive | *"Over the years I have seen baggage being totally divisive at parish level, as a new broom seeks to sweep clean the perceived archaic practices of the past."* |
| - that can dominate | *"There can be occasions when the baggage we accumulate en route comes to dominate our ministry in an obsessive manner. While bishops cannot be expected to jettison their baggage completely, neither must they so impose their personal predilections that people feel dragooned in ways that undermine the faith and practice that may have sustained them over the years. One way in which this is sometimes expressed is 'you can only lead from the centre'. What this means in effect is that a bishop more than most has to perform a diocesan balancing act. It may be inhibiting to natural instincts but that is the price that has to be paid.* |

| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
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| Experiential | *"No matter how well structured post-ordination training courses may be, there is no substitute for time spent in a parish with an experienced colleague. Even the valuable and varied experience brought by mature students requires to be honed to the needs of parochial life."* |
| - needs to be honed | *"Most people move out from the parochial setting, most of us have been in parish life, so I had a wide spread of background knowledge and information and experience. So in a sense with me it was an accumulation of information, church, constitutional type of work over the years."* |
| - armour | *"If you have a background experience, as I myself had, you are in a sense coming already reasonably well armed from an experiential point of view."* |
| - real knowing/living the life/knowing how others' tick | *"You can have what you would call book information about another church, I can read the history of Methodism or Presbyterinism, but unless I am actually living the life, worshipping with another denomination over a period of time I don't know how they tick. We're not all that good at doing that, it is much easier to make snap decisions rather than actually coming to grips with how other people think and worship and live their lives."* |
| - puts a face to the issue<br>- the human dimension | *"When one puts a face, especially a familiar face, to an issue or problem, and cease to debate it merely in abstract terms, then it assumes a different perspective. It doesn't necessarily resolve an issue but it can alter one's approach to it. Once they cease to be debating points or political footballs and take on a human dimension they assume a different priority and urgency."* |
| Technical | *"You have to be reasonably au fait with, whether you know it, you at least have to know where to go for it, is constitutional information. The constitution of the COI is a fairly technical document. Problems that may arise, concerning relationships or to do with authority and parochial life often relate back from a Bishop's point of view to the constitution, who has the righy to do what or to say what."* |

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| Experiential | *"I found that when I became a Bishop I was turning more and more, than when I was a rector to the constitution because in a sense it is the final court of appeal and therfore the Bishop who in a sense is also the final court of appeal has got to be pretty familiar with the contents and know what he can do and say."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Reading | *"In general one tries to keep abreast not just through reading books but magazines, every profession has them in-house magazines."* |
| Being Tested | *"Being tested by people asking you questions and just in the ordinary course of events."*<br>*"It might well be asked, 'But who assesses the bishop? In one sense it could be argued that that in any diocese there are as many assessors as there are clergy, not to mention critical laity."* |
| Being Answerable | *"In terms of accountability there is none other than the constitution, within whose framework the bishop exercises oversight."* |
| Having A Support Group<br>- community like a family | *"If there was an issue arose on which I felt I needed help or advice, I would sit down and think 'who is there that will be able to help me, because we are a small community, more like a family."* |
| - those with 'specific expertise | *"I think one depends to a greater extent or some extent on clergy who have a specific interest or a specific maybe expertise… not so much as a scriptwriter but I think you are relying on people who can give you the background information."*<br>*"A community, a resource/core group or nucleus – to work through the 'minefields' or when you need to go beyond the platitudes."* |
| - strength in depth | *"It is common practice nowadays for football managers to speak of strength in depth as a necessity for success. It is a concept with which I can emphasise as during my time in Cork we had a clerical team whose combined strengths were exceptional. This was of enormous comfort to me."* |

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| - comfort | *"I think you build up a core of people to whom you can turn and you can only do this over a period of time, it's not something you can do instantly."* |
| - built up gradually and unintentionally | *"I'm not sure that I ever deliberately set out to build them up..."* |
| - wife/family | *"It's my wife who would pick out relevant bits out of magazines."*<br>*'I'm not a computer buff, my wife is much more into the computer thing'* |
| The Competition | *"What other churches emphasise as important."* |
| **TRANSITION TO LEADERSHIP** | |
| Emotionally Unsettling<br>- loneliness | *"The nature of a bishop's work is essentially a lonely office. The consequence of the consecration service is to some degree reflected in words from John Betjeman's poem, 'On the investiture of the Prince of Wales'"*<br>'You knelt a boy and rose a man<br>And so your lonely life began.' |
| - isolation | *"In any discussion of Episcopal isolation and loneliness it is important to remember the family involved and in particular one's spouse. Our ministries can be so absurdly demanding that they can take us away from our families, and this can have the tragic effect of taking them away from God. A Bishop must be alert to the strains imposed on his own closest relationships. It can happen that what is developing before our eyes is veiled from our sight."* |
| Alters Knowledge Requirements<br>- infallability<br>- daunting | *"You move out of that sphere, where it's in a sense a much lower profile and the next day you find you're in a much higher profile position you don't suddenly acquire an infallability but there's an* |

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| | *expectation and that I think can be quite daunting."You try and not let it get to you because you are yourself yesterday and today, but I think in other peoples' mind there can be an expectation."* |
| - expectations | *"There is pressure insofar as there is an expectation in peoples' minds that somehow you know, or that you are a source of information. Also the expectation because you say it, because you're a bishop, that somehow or another it carries authority and that can be quite daunting."* |
| - boosts ego but demanding | *'You are aware of this expectation which in one sense is flattering but in another is despearately demanding."* |
| - encourages impression management | *"I remember in Theological college some lad coming to lectures .. and he quoted this Swiss proverb 'if the stove isn't hot no one will sit beside it'. You always have to give the impression that you know and that you are in control."* |
| **PRESSURE TO KNOW** | |
| Keep Up To Speed | *"It's hard hard to know you know – you never achieve a point where you say that's it I know it now"*<br>*"Nowdays there is a constant changing as new issues arise so it's quite a problem literally finding time to keep up."*<br>*"Keeping abreast versus getting lost in the detail – minutia."*<br>*'More and more, whether one likes it or not, one is going to have to become a bit familiar with this whole internet thing."* |
| Provide Instant Answers | *"People don't want to give you time now, everything is instant, there must be an instant response"*<br>*"Continually being asked to make comments, give instant soundbites."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Envious | *"Some people have an uncanny knowledge of the bible and that's something, if I was to envy anybody anything that's it…."* |

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| Inadequate<br>Scratching The Surface | *"There are so many areas where one feels inadequate when you hear an expert speak you think 'my goodness I am only scratching the surface you know."* |
| In Awe | *"I have sat at their feet [the experts] on occasions."* |
| Vunerable/Scared | *"being absolutely grilled' 'a real ding-dong."*<br>*"clinging like a leech to scripture, reason and tradition."*<br>*"Feeling hot and cold."* |
| Naked and Bereft | *'I felt very, very, naked and very kind of bereft because I suppose I simply wasn't prepared for what in fact took place."* |
| Tired/Weary | *"In one sense I am glad I am coming towards the end (retirement) rather than at the start."* |
| **COPING STRATEGIES** | |
| Be Yourself | *"You cope first of all by being yourself, I think you must be yourself, there's no point in trying to act a part and I would hope that I am the same person I was ten years agao. I think that's the basic thing because if you in any sense try to act as though you are on a pedestal when in fact you're not and never were, and that's not your nature, I think you die a thousand deaths, and so I would say try to be yourself and act within your own limitations."*<br>*"Being yourself today and yesterday'. 'I am who I am."*<br>*"I found that when I came here people might say to me, 'now your predecessor always…' and you say well hold on I am not my predecessor or my predecessors predecessor, I am who I am and therefore I have got to find my own feet."* |
| Recognise Your Limitations<br>Come Clean/Owning Up<br>Get Support | *"The clergy like everybody else can be jealous of their own position, sometimes might not want to admit they have blanks."*<br>*"You can't always be prepared. Its okay to rely on others who know more. It's a myth to think you must have it all in your own head."* |

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| Overcome Fears Of Public Perception | *"Sometimes rectors are reluctant to come to their Bishops with a problem, perhaps they are afraid that this will be viewed as a sign of weakness."* |
| Avoid Isolation | *"Turn to people, don't be afraid, it's not going to diminish you. Once rapport has been established there is the possiblity that latent concerns may emerge, concerns which in isolation can develop a cancerous like quality."* |
| Balance Speed With Accuracy | *"I think you have to be very, very, careful and I found that early on that was something I had to be very careful I didn't make snap comments. The result is maybe you sometimes appear to be rather dull but I don't know, I think at the end of the day it is your own safegaurd and it also gives a more accurate picture."* |
| Find Inner-Strength | *"It is this assurance of the call of God that helps to make life tolerable when at times the going gets tough."* |
| Seek Re-assurance In Role | *"85% of your time will be spent on mundane duties, for 10% of the time you will be on a high, 5% of the time you will experience the nearest thing to a living hell.' It is at the times of the 5% one clings to the consecration affirmation: I believe that God has called me."* |
| **CHALLENGES WRT KNOWING** | |
| Emphasis On Doing | *"As a church we tend to place a greater emphasis on the doing rather than the being of the person…in other words uless the person is actually seen to be doing something.. you know the activist type, that's where our emphasis tends to be and that of itself can often be a barrier to acutally the promotion of learning."* |
| - no time to recharge batteries | *You would gain experience certainly simply because you were there and involved but to actually step out of it, take time to recharge the batteries and recoup, I think we are not as good as we could be on that."* |

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| - lack of space | *"You need that space away from the doing' where there isn't the pressure of the doing so that you can actually spend time."* |
| - chasing your tail | *"Often people are chasing their tails and haven't got the time that simply that academia demands."* |
| A Culture That Discourages Self Promotion/Advancement | *"I am constantly trying to persuade people who have the ability to actually produce works – it's difficult, sometimes they are reticent, there is a kind of a suspicion of a person promoting themselves that they shouldn't be dong that. In the Church of Ireland they'd be saying'who does he think he is'"* |
| **CHANGING NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| From Packaged and Regurgitated<br><br>- questioning/searching<br>- owning/vibrant<br>- relevant | *"When I was coming through college, over 40 years ago now, there was a kind of packaged theology, the lectures that I received were the same as the ones that were delivered 20 years earlier. You got that as a package and you regurgitated it in your exams and that was that. You didn't ask questions, but now the development is quite amazing, the whole questioning, .. I think there is a greater searching, a greater owing of knowledge than there was in my day, it's much more vibrant and will eventually be a much more relevant view of knowledge."* |
| - prove yourself<br>- not taken for granted | *"In my days you accepted it because that was the package,.. now you have to prove yourself, you have to commend the faith, it's not something that people just take for granted."* |

**PARTICIPANT A SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE A2**

***'THE COOL BISHOP'***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **RETRENCHMENT** | *"I went through a very traumatic period on the whole question of the closure of churches in Cork at the time.. what happened was there was a commission set up in the Church of Ireland by the synod, the commision of church buildings, which was there to determine the number of churches that were needed in a dioscese to enable the church life to go ahead. When I cam to Cork they had just been invited into the diocese. What happened then was they came in and they made recommendations which were eventually accepted, naming 20 churches to be closed and others which were given a 3 year span to improve their maintainance."* |
| - trying to manage the collective image | *"And one of the things I did when I was there to try and counteract the negative thinking that was going on, I proposed that we have a massive rally of church people. So on a particular Sunday I said all churches in the diocese will close on that day and we will have this great rall. My argument was, apart altogether from the closure of churches and so on, that there were so many people who were worshiping in small communities that they needed a boost to realise that there was a larger whole, to give them a sense of belonging to something bigger."* |
| - dealing with various undercurrents: 'withdrawing/defeated'<br><br>- dominated by negativity | *"There were 20 churches closed and each church had its own problems in terms of persuading the people the value of this, because you didn't want to raise people's heckles just suggesting you were closing the church; what is this saying to everyone we are withdrawing or we are defeated, there were all kinds of nuances, not to mention the kind of fraternal infighting within parishes, which you find all over the place. One church in a group of parishes was closed another one wasn't you know, why was it closed, why were they kept open you know. So there was a terrific amount of undercurrents and overcurrents at that time so in a sense my ministry in Cork was dominated by this issue of closure of churches, so it was a very difficult time for everyone, including as I say the Bishop. And I often say to* |

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| | *people if you are closing a church if you want a sermon I can retail you a sermon because I have go twenty of them."* |
| - retrenchment not evangalism | *"The1988 Lambeth Conference ended up with a call for what was known as a decade of evangalism and expansion, and here were we in Cork entering into a decade of retrenchment."* |
| Mythical Power Of The Bishop<br>- the absolute power of commision<br>- paying lip service<br><br>- convenience or control<br>- forced acceptance<br>- invidious position<br>- under pressure<br><br>- on a hiding to nothing | *"The commission on church buildings were given absoulute power, the terms of the commision were such once they made their final decision that had to be implemented. And they thought that by using the phrases 'they were going to help the Bishop' 'implemented at the convenience of the Bishop', now it didn't mean that the Bishop could say No, it meant just at the convenience of the Bishop, which put the Bishop in a very difficult position. And I said 'what happens if the Bishop disagrees with the decisions' and I was told you have to accept it. In my opinion and I maintained it ever since, it put the Bishop in an absolutely invidious position, because in attempting 'to help the Bishop at his convenience' what in fact they were doing was putting the Bishop under pressure because if he closed one church and said we are closing that but we are not going to close this church …you were on a hiding to nothing…"* |
| - being held ultimately responsible<br>- hard for people to grasp I had no option<br>- a 'great belief' in the power of the bishop's word<br><br>- under orders | *"It was a very very fraught time, not least for the Bishop because ultimately he was the one who was held responsible, it was very hard for people to grasp the fact that he had no option. There was great belief that somehow or another the Bishop could say, close this one, leave this one open, in fact he couldn't. There was somehow a great belief that if I wanted to keep the church open that was all that had to be done, I could say it, in fact I couldn't because the legislation decreed that it should be closed. I remember asking another senior Bishop at the time what would he do given the circumstances and he looked at me and he said "I think I would say it is not convenient for the Bishop to close anything until he retires' you know" (laughs).* |
| - misapprehension of autonomy | *"To use Truman's phrase the buck doesn't stop. The buck never completely stopped because a Bishop is a Bishop working in a context and the context is that of the synod of the COI and the laws and the contributions which are drawn up by the synod which is the ultimate legislative body. So sometimes I feel there is a misapprehension of what the Bishop can do off his own bat, which is actually very little."* |

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| **THE COLLAPSE OF THE CHURCH** | |
| A Question of Human Sexuality | *"Well I suppose in a sense, just prior to my retirement there was the whole question at the Lambeth conference in 1998 which was dominated by the subject of human sexuality and out of that, following on from that, the Anglecian community generally has been convulsed I suppose, if that is not too strong a word, by this whole subject with camps I suppose roughly between the developing countries in Africa in particular and the developed countries of the West particularly the American church and that has in a sense dominated Anglecian thinking and the Anglecian mind over the last ten years. Ireland hasn't been affected to the same extent as some other places, particularly Canada, but nonetheless it has impinged to a great extent because one finds that Bishops are constantly being asked for their opinions you know about what is happening in other places. So that I think is not going to go away, how ultimately it will affect the community, because the Anglecian community is showing signs of of..schism really on this. In Ireland there is not the same devisive character here but nonetheless I think it could develop, I think it is a question of watch this* space." |
| Clerical Sexual Abuse<br>- those who wear the 'dog collar' guilty by association | *"The whole clerical abuse issue which has tragically affected the RC church, clegy in general tend to have I think suffered because of this. People who are, for want of a better term 'a dog collar' tend to be identified in some way, maybe not directly, but you get the feeling, I put it that way, it's more a feeling, that people are wondering when they see you."* |
| Apathy Towards Institutional Religion<br>- declining market<br>- the need to keep relevant | *"A key challenge is the current apathy displayed towards institutional religion reflected in the fall in church attendances. At Lambeth 1998 the Bishop of Colorado summarized it as akin to 'playing squash against a haystack'. A picturesque but potent analogy and one, which many a cleric in Ireland could identify with. However it is unlikely that this apathy will be banished unless the church is* |

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| - futile: 'playing squash against a haystack' | *perceived to be relevant to the world in so far as it is different from the world and challenging worldly assumptions, otherwise it will got on playing ecclesiastical squash against a secular haystack."* |
| - managing the intangible/'the subtlety of a lady's perfume | *"It has been said that the ethos of the Church of Ireland resembles the subtlety of a lady's perfume in that one is not really conscious of it when it is present but it is missed when absent."* |
| Managing Meanings/Perceptions<br>- novel and perplexing<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>- perception is everything | *"What does the Church of Ireland mean in today's world. So much depends on perception, and perception can be novel and even perplexing at times. Let me illustrate with one family incident. One of the very regular if not very profound features of each Lambeth Conference of Bishops is the taking of the group photograph. If it does nothing else, it gives an indication every ten years of the growth of the Anglican Communion. In 1998 we were dutifully instructed to appear in cassocks rather than choir robes, as had been the custom previously. The resulting technicolor photograph hangs on the stairway here. Some months ago our grandson, then three and a half was making his tortuous way down the stairs when his eyes suddenly caught the photograph and he let out a cry of great delight, 'Oh! Look at all the Barneys.' As you probably know Barney he is a much larger than life children's television character, amply proportioned and dressed in purple. For that three and a half year old the Episcopal leaders of the Anglican Communion were a pack of Barneys – that was his perception."* |
| **CLERIC WATCHING: OBSERVING THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A CLERIC** | |
| - being a guinea pig<br><br>- meeting expectations<br>- proving oneself<br><br><br>- watching the system of training<br>- the intricacies of selection | *"One interesting development, our older daughter, her husband who was involved in the financial end of things, he has had a late vocation to the ministry and has just entered the theological institute in Dublin in his mid-forties to train for full-time ministry. And that training actually, they are almost guinea pigs in so far as the whole system has been altered and now those going into training they have to have a masters degree really in theology validated through Dublin university .. so it's quite a high level of expectation and in order to qualify apart altogether from the vocational end, he had to do a foundation year of study to prove that he was capable of coping with the academic side of the training* |

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| | *over a three year period. That is something that I personally find very very exciting, from the point of view of him as an individual and also in terms of watching how the whole system of training works out, because sometimes people get a feeling that if you decide 'Oh I'd like to be a priest' that somehow you just go ahead, but in fact there is a whole selection process, quite an intricate selection process from the local level right through to the episcepol level, going through stages and steps before you actually can start the training and are accepted."* |
| **BEING A FAMILY MAN** | |
| - pleased but apprehensive<br><br><br><br><br>- the tensions of partnership | *"In our own case, our daughter, having grown up in a rectory, she always said the last thing she would ever do would be to marry a clergyman (laughs), now she didn't marry a clergyman but she is going to find herself married to one hopefully in three years time. So that is something that we are pleased about but also in a sense apprehensive about, because it is one thing for an individual to feel called to the ministry, it is another thing if he is married or she is married to make sure that their partner is totally behind them because if they are not it can cause all kinds of tensions."* |
| - family dynamics<br>- no man is an island | *"The fact that my son-in-law is going in training in the ministry has a I suppose an indirect effect on the whole family because you are hoping and praying that he is going to come through and that their relationship isn't going to be negatively affected because when he qualifies he in theory should be open to going whereever there is a need which means uprooting and that has an effect a knock on effect on their children. It does affect because it is a total change of relationship. I think that it teaches you that no man is an island all to himself, that things don't happen in isolation."* |
| The Role Of The Spouse<br>- supportive while knowing ones place<br>- only one is ordained<br><br>- obligations of confidentiality | *"Views differ on the role of the spouse. Obviously it must be a supportive one, otherwise tensions will arise within the house, but support must not spill over into aping the role of the cleric. The two members of the 'team' as it is sometimes referred to must recognise that only one is ordained, and ordination brings obligations of confidentiality. Nothing is more calculated to undermine the trust of parishioners than the feeling that matters spoken of in confidence are being discussed in the Rectory. Probably the most valuable piece of advice given to my wife by her rector before we were married was 'Always remember there are some things your husband will not be able to discuss with you.' There is* |

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| | *a certain romanticism in saying 'There will be no secrets between us,' but in a clerical or Episcopal household romanticism in that sense has certain limits."* |
| **RETIREMENT** | |
| Reduced Responsibility | *"Well, the change in role is that certainly you don't have the same responsibility."* |
| - taking a back seat | *"I see my role purely now as somebody who is available, within reason, to assist in the pastoral work of the diocesese, which is primarily servcing the liturgical life of the dioceses and also speaking if called upon at gatherings of the clergy and conducting prayer days and that and I have done a little bit of that since retiring."*<br>*"So I have always felt it is a limited role that one should play, I think if you retire, you retire."* |
| - a supportive role | *"I have always taken the line that there are so many excellent RC priests and particularly in our own context here, the Naas area, that I would do everything I can to support the RC clergy , personally in terms of where opportunity arises to be part of ecumenical gatherings and so on. I think that is terribly important that they need to be supported, they need to be affirmed in their ministry"* |
| Letting go | *"My bishop I feel he needs support at the present time because his wife has just died and I think that I can be a kind of a back-up to him in different ways."*<br>*"The last thing active clergy want to hear is a retired cleric saying how they should do things or how things were done in my day'. I would never presume to do that, I would maybe give some examples from my experience and let them draw their own conclusions, or it could go in one ear and out the other, depending on what they wanted."* |
| The Altered Role of The Spouse | |

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| - loss of respect<br>- becoming part of the crowd<br><br><br>- like a fish out of water | *"Well, I at a personal level, funny it didn't worry me as much as it worred Eileen, and her point was that for so many years, not least when she was a Bishop's wife, you are very much the centre of things and rightly or wrongly there is a certain amount of deference paid, that goes, you suddenly find that you are just kind of part of the crowd and you have to readjust to that and to some extent that is true of a cleric or Bishop aswell, but I think not to the same extent as a wife. Because the role of a wife, the clerical wife is support, and when the cleric retires there is not the same support needed so you can feel a bit like a fish out of water. I didn't worry on that score nearly as much as she did. Eilieen would say herself she found it very very difficult to adjust to retirement, although she says herself retirement is only in inverted commas because the kitchen sink doesn't dissapear you know."* |
| - moving out from parish life<br><br><br>- loosing ready made circle | *"It was the whole relationship of moving out from parish life where you have a circle, from episcipol life where you have a circle albeit a wider circle, into a situation where you don't have that kind of ready-made circle. Now she has a great capacity to make friends, but it took about two years as she would say herself before she began to feel when she would go out that someone would say 'Hello nice to see you' you know, that kind of thing."* |
| - starting all over again<br>- re-inventing the wheel | *"I did have to say it took me a while, I think I probably missed the activity I was involved in because of John really I suppose, I got to know so many people throughout the whole of the dioceses, you know, East and West, North and South they always made me feel very welcome I have to say and I missed that when we came here. You have to start all over again, almost like re-inventing the wheel, the shops they are not going to know me."* |
| Lack of Preparation<br><br>- similar to the beginning<br><br>- going full circle<br><br>- last few hours in active ministry | *"Within the Church of Ireland very little is done to prepare the person elected or appointed bishop for the work that lies ahead. It is though one is expected to don the mantle of episcopacy and assume almost infallible powers overnight. A short retreat and in at the deep in. As it was in the beginning so it was in the end. Apart from the constitutional requirement to inform the archbishop of the province of one's intention to retire on a specific date, there was absolutely no preparation for retirement, none at all, or for ones spouse."* |

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| - the bell to signify the omega and alpha<br>- divested of rights and privileges<br>- no longer responsible for well-being of others<br>- splendour of consecration/void | *"On the 31st December 1998, it was a cold winter's evening as my wife and I set out from A to travel to B where we had been invited to spend New Years Eve with the rector and his family. It was a thoughtful and appropriate gesture as this was my last few hours in the active ministry and also as bishop of the diocese. At that time there was a tradition in Bandon that the rector and parishioners would meet at the entrance to the Church on New Year's Eve to bid adieu to the old year and welcome in the new one. Nothing elaborate just a quiet waiting in the presence of God for the bell to signify the omega and alpha. I was very conscious that on this occasion the bell was tolling for me, and also for my wife. We would return home later that evening divested of the rights and privileges of office, and also no longer responsible for the well being of the diocese and its clergy. One could not help but contrast the setting on that New Year's Eve with the splendor and dignity of the consecration ceremony almost eleven years before. True there were much-valued liturgical and social farewells, but at the actual moment of 'departure' one felt there was an indefinable void.* |
| Lack of Preparation<br>- need to have some idea of how circumstances will alter<br><br><br>- engrossed in work<br>- difficult to cut off/let go feeling totally lost<br>- sharing our learning | *"Since then E and myself have spoken about this in one or two places, that has been taken in hand, there was a survey done about retired clergy about what they felt should have been done and so on, so there has been a thing set up now in the church a system that there is preparation for retirement for those that are intending to retire so that they would have some idea about how the circumstances would alter and how to react to these circumstances, because very very often clergy have become so engrossed in their own work, in their own world, that they find it difficut when they retire to completely cut off, they just feel totally lost, so that was very very important and I would like to think as a couple we had a small part to play in promoting that within the COI."* |
| - church is unusual in this regard | *"Friends in other professions express surprise at this as retirement preparation I think would be the norm now in most organisations."* |
| Freedom of Retirement<br>- broader circle of contacts<br>- beyond the eclesiastical<br>- learning to do nothing very well | *"Well, the nature of a cleric's life and the nature of a Bishop's life is that they tend to be more involved with the immediate eclesiastical circle. I find now I have a much greater opportunity to broaden that circle. I mentioned membership of a PROBIS group, "I asked when I joined first, the then president, I said 'well what do we do?' and he looked at me and smiled and said 'We do nothing but we do it very* |

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| - learning about others<br>others learning about you | *well.' So it is a very flexible thing, just meeting people, learning about peoples' backgrounds, or them learning about you. because if you become too kind of regimental it defeats the object of it.* |
| - treated just as John | *"I am an honoury member of the Golf club and I find that the people up there that I know, you are treated just as John you know, and that is a refreshing thing. So I feel a greater freedom almost in a sense to be yourself, now that is not to say when you are a bishop or a rector that you are not yourself it's just a slightly different emphasis."* |
| Less remote/distant<br>- more involved with people<br>- less boundaries | *"I always felt when you were a bishop or when you were a rector you had to be careful not to become too involved with other people because if for no other reason than if you had to make hard decisions you were at least that bit more removed. If you become too identified with people or individuals or particular people or groups it creates problems."* |
| Freedom of Retirement continued<br>Less cautious in what you say | *"When you are active as a cleric you tend to have to keep up with what's happening eclesiastically and you are involved in committees and so on you and you are doing work, you are doing preparation. The Bishop especially is finding he has to speak and preach at all kinds of diverse functions and services so you tend to have to spend a lot of time doing reseach on whatever you have to speak on, or whoever you have to speak about, and it is often short notice in that somebody dies, you have to speak at that, and also because you are speaking publically you have to be very careful because the press will pick up on something you say very very easily."* |
| Greater insight: less 'churchy reading' | *"It is different now, I find I have a much greater opportunity to broaden my reading, so that it is not just eclesiastical, it is not just of a churchy nature, for example, I am just after finishing Schindler's List. That is something I would have found very difficult to do, because it is quite a tome, so that kind of book one is able to you know get stuck into to it, to find time to do that."* |
| More time with spouse | *"We said when I retired we would try and do some things together that we maybe didn't have an opporutnity to do as I was very often out. So we decided there were three things that we would do. One was we would both join the choir, second we both joined the gym and the third thing was that we would both do the Irish Times Crossaire crossword."* |

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| | *"We felt that it was an opportunity for us to do things together I had spent the previous 45 plus years doing things on my own, going off on my own or E would be left or she would be doing her own thing or whatever. It was just an opportunity just to do things together. I think too you hear sometimes of couples when the husband retires beause he has been going out to the office everyday he is around he is in herway. But because in a sense my office was in the house I was there quite a lot of the time, same in the rectories, so that never bothered us to the same extent."* |
| Retirement Doesn't Change You<br>- still the spokesperson | *"On the question of child abuse, I find that with friends and talking to them, and you are very often put in the position of making a comment and because you are who you are somehow it's expected to be an informed comment you know, I find that one needs to as it were keep up with what's happening, with what's being said, whose saying what, because there can be a great deal of misinformation spread, mis-apprehensions, so although one is retired I don't think you can totally isolate yourself from what is happening in the sphere in which you were involved which in my case was about 50 years.* |
| Still Need to be Informed | *"One keeps up through various church papers starting with our own Church of Ireland Gazette and the Church Times there is a theological journal called Search (COI), I find one needs to just imbibe what is in these as they are dealing with these issues all the time. And also by talking to people, tryng to get their views and just weighing and if necessary just trying to give a more accurate picture."* |
| **LEARNING FROM OTHERS** | |
| - a great capacity to garner knowledge<br>- regurgitate it<br>- getting sound opinions | *"I think the Bishop's right-hand-person is always his archdeacon, and I had a very good archdeacon, a very very wise man, very knowledgeable man, there is not a person in the COI, clerical church of Ireland that he does not know, he is one of these people who seems to have a great capacity in garnering knowledge and being able to regurgitate it, he is a very fine historian aswell, and I often felt that I probably could have used him actually more than I did because I always got very very sound opinion from him."* |
| - a great reconciler<br>- great capacity to draw people together | *"I am not sure that I would pinpoint any one person that I have learned from. I suppose the primate at the time I retired was Archbishop M, not that I have had in a sense any direct contact with him, but looking at what he has done and is still doing since he retired, he has been a great reconciler and has* |

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| - capacity to find a common ground | *a great capacity to draw people together, and to come up with.., not necessarily solutions but a form of words that people can feel I think reasonably happy with and I find that his method of working, sometimes there are people who may feel he is he not direct enough in what he says but at the same tme I think sometimes if you are too direct you can antagonise people – he has a capacity to just find a common ground that people can agree on and then work from there*." |
| **ON REFLECTION/HINDSIGHT** | |
| -<br>- could have been more vocal<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>- be prepared to put yourself out there<br>- should have been braver<br>- sometimes too careful<br>- let issues pass me by<br>- could have been more critical | *"Yeah, I reflect to a certain extent, not a kind of deliberate reflection…*<br>*"What would I do differently… pause….. Sometimes I feel…occassionally through my ministry I wrote to the paper on issues, not at any great length, not very often, and I feel if I were to go back again maybe I might have done a little more of that. What I discovered was that when you write on a subject, I will give you one example, when the Pope visited Ireland, in 1979, it was promulagated as a pastoral visit, I think it was celebrating the visions at Knock. Anyhow, I wrote, I can't remember exactly the details, but I wrote being rather critcal of the reasons that were given for him coming to Ireland and I got quite a negative reaction from some people. It made me realise that when you write on a subject such as that you are never quite sure what the reaction is going to be be and where it is going to come from and you have to be prepared for things coming out of the woodwork and that made me a little chary about going down that road, and I think on reflection that was wrong of me. I should have been prepared to put my money where my mouth was. I think I should have been a little braver, I tend by my nature to be rather more….pause… more careful, rather than rushing in, but I think sometimes you can be too careful, and you can let issues pass where maybe criticism would have been in place. If I were going back I think I would be a little more critical at times."* |
| - should have asked for more advice<br>- made too many decisions in isolation | *"Well, I probably should have asked more advise from people, 'what do you think, should I do this, what will the reaction be, is it worth it? I think that perhaps I tended to make decisions on my own rather than using people whose opinion I would value, both clerical and lay."* |

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| - being an only child, tended to do things on my own<br>- the way I grew up<br>- should have tested things with others more | *"I think probably it is the nature of the beast, first of all being an only child myself, I think that I tended do things my way, or to make decisions on my own bat, because that's the way I grew up – I think in hindsight it would have been better all around if I had on occassioins tested the waters with other people."* |

**PARTICIPANT B FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE B1**

***THE DIFFICULT BUSINESS OF LEAVING THE TECHNOLOGY TO THE TECHNOCRATS***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Knowledge of the Business Environment | *"From my point of view the knowledge I need to have, an awful lot of it is outside the company. Basically what's happening in the states, what's happening in Europe, what changes are happening in the Information Technology revolution, what's becoming a new standard in engineering areas or in the area of electronic document management."* |
| Customer Requirements/Finance | *"Then on a day-to-day basis you need to know any customer problems, customer queries, any projects that are falling behind on time or resources… and obviously the finance, I do a lot of work on the financal side, the financial planning, projections, make sure our cash flow is adequate to meet the needs of the next quarter."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Reading | *"4 or 5 magazines that I would religiously read from cover to cover at weekends or evenings."*<br>*"I am a card carrying management bookaholic."* |
| The Internet | *"I would trawl the internet for new sites, changes in what's happening out there."* |

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| Formal Management Education | *"I did the MBA and the Diploma in Corporate Direction."* |
| Employees | *"You learn ways in which their [employees] approach is probably better than yours."* |
| Bringing in the 'Experts' | *"I have a very good auditor, and he has been good with regard to saying 'look in your accounting system and your financial planning system if you have these key indicators and they are saying X, Y and Z, well this indicates what you should be doing for the future… he's almost like a mentor really."* |
| The 'Community' | *"I would tend to use, talk to other people in a similar business, talk to them about the models that they use and watch very carefully and see the impact of different things that they use."*<br>*"We even share marketing and bright ideas that work for us, we would make sure they know, we would pass on the same information."* |
| Conversations | *"Something would spark my interest in that somebody woud say such and such a company have done scenario planning, whatever and I would think, well okay, what impact did that have?…That would be enough to get me interested."* |
| Observation<br><br>- what *not to* do<br><br>- what *to* do | *".. by observing their [suppliers] style I think you can pick up fairly quickly what works and what doesn't work."*<br>*"You learn an awful lot about how not to do something from the bosses that you've had..I was lucky in that I had some lousy bosses while I was coming out of college … which helped formulate for me, well that's something I would never say to someone who is working with me, or that's something I would never make somebody feel."*<br>*"I had one boss in particular who I used to say like if I ever become a boss I want to be like him."* |
| **TRANSITION TO LEADERSHIP** | |
| Alters Knowledge Requirements | *"My side has moved more into the organisation.. certainly I'm leaving the technology to the technocrats and that's very different from what I used to do before."* |

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| - needing to know less about more | *"Now I realise I don't need to know every about every single new engineering application, but I do need to know about every new management theory…"*<br>*"You don't have to know all the systems – you just have to know what's available."* |
| - a difficult transition | *"I'm still hung up when someone gives me a problem, I love the idea of sitting down at the computer and I find it hard to say 'oh well okay that's your problem, I have to fix something else."* |
| - dealing with it requires maturity | *"I used to feel quite threatened because I didn't know every single aspect … but now I feel a bit more comfortable saying…that's your decision, your responsibility.. That's something that changed in the past year. I don't feel now I have to take ownership of every single solitary decision about you know paper-clips."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Getting Caught Out | *"Not having a clue." "I didn't know, I was screaming for help."* |
| Feeling Inferior | *"Having come from an engineering degree and not having any management component in it, it was something I always felt I was missing out on, that there was some great system out there, and because I didn't have a business degree I didn't know what it was. So as a result I have everything that Charles Handy or Tom Peters ever wrote."* |
| Needing to Know More About Leadership | *"I would love to talk to someone who has a kind of vision or formulae for leading people"*<br>*"What I want is some visionary to come and tell me what's the best thing to do and how I get there to make the most money basically."*<br><br>*"If someone could give me information on how to lead I would appreciate that."* |
| **SELF DOUBT/SELF QUESTIONING** | *"I never met anyone who hasn't doubted their leadership skills or their ability to do the job."*<br><br>*"It's kind of reflected over and over again, about you know am I communicating this properly, have I got the right vision first of all… if that's the right vision am I sure everybody here understands it."* |

**PARTICIPANT B SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE B2**

***LOOSING MY CAPABILITY TO TALK THE TALK AND BELIEVING IN FAILURE***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **CHANGED IDENTITY** | |
| - loosing my ' techie' voice<br>- relying on others to talk<br><br><br><br>- listening to others talk | *"Its been far too long since I was a civil engineer, even though I graduated as one, and I love to hear, to listen to the civil engineers talk about the technology and what it can do now, but for sure my capability in terms of talking the technology has very much gone and its great to be able to rely on other people to be able to talk the message, and to be able to sit back. And seventeen years down the line listening to what architects can do now with the technology, listening to what the CAD engineers can do, what the pharmaceutical engineers can do its fascinating, but I know it at such a high level that it's great listening to the others talk about the detail and I appreciate it but I certainly don't know it anymore. So my role had changed and continues to change."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Adaptability | *"I suppose over the last ten years the biggest thing for me is that you have to learn to be just incredibly adaptable and every time somebody presents you with something like this you have to go "Well what am I going to do?' Instead of sitting there thinking, 'Oh my God this is terrible,' you go, 'right what's the best thing for me to do?"* |

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| - being a small cog<br><br><br><br><br>- deal with change | *"Well obviously quite a bit has changed, we had started with a knowledge management system primarily used for pharmaceutical companies, and that went well for us. But it's always amazingly interesting being a small cog in an enormous machine in the technology industry, so what happened was X bought the company Y but we then found that X's approach to the market is completely different from Y's and they were going to go direct with the software and the services so instead of us competing with them, which would be pointless, it would be like trying to compete with Microsoft, we negotiated with them and we sold the business to them. So then you are back to the original core of what the company was, that happened a couple of years ago, so we went "well what are we going to do now? And it's fantastic to be able to do things like that – where you go 'okay this is where we are going,' when all of a sudden because of the changes in the solar alignments, a big company makes a decision about buying another company and all of a sudden it completely changes the basis of how you run your business."* |
| - how to cope<br><br><br>- row-in | *"When you are a small company you are at the mercy of Global strategies from enormous companies like Autodesk, or EMC, or Documentim or whatever it is, but in particular for us from AutoDesk because they change direction quite often and we've been the distributor for 17 years and we do joke about it a little, we call it the office carousel, because they pretty much come up with the same ideas every three years because they rotate the management, and they go 'oh we'll do this' and of course we're thinking, oh my gosh they tried that in '93, in '96 and in '99 and it didn't work then and it still isn't going to work now, but you row-in there and you give them your business plan, and you kind of adapt around it, so adaptability."* |
| - lateral thinking | *"I have learned lateral thinking, it probably sounds very clichéd now, every time there is a problem there is an opportunity and that is absolutely the case."* |
| - threats may become options | *"My Grandfather used to say 'Just remember nothing is ever as good as it seems and nothing is ever as bad as it seems either. Engineers aren't known for their literary references, but let's say that 'it is the best of times it is the worst of times. It's really down to you."*<br>*"Now we have taken on board an Australian product which we are selling direct in the Republic and we have rights on in the UK, I probably wouldn't have looked at it because it did take a little bit of investment* |

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| | *in terms of time you know and getting experience of the market and stuff like that, and I probably wouldn't have done that if I had not had the cash available from the sale of Y, so you know it really is true with technology one door closes and about six open."*<br><br>*"Maybe the information revolution is similar to the industrial revolution, it does change how people work, it changes how we communicate, it changes how we store data on people, it changes our approach to things, it changes the way your kids communicate, but it doesn't replace anything, it just gives another option. You know people always said, 'here is the internet it's the end of letter writing,' and it isn't. I am always fascinated by the fact that whenever anything new comes up you have 'oh this is going to change the universe,' and it isn't. So all it's (technology) is doing is giving people more alternatives to do things. Like when we brought out our software first and we sort of launched it to a few people they said 'this is terrible its going to get rid of Quantity Surveyors, and when we started AutoCAD first they said there won't be anymore draughting people, and you can't get a good CAD draughtsmen for love nor money you know…. Because now what they can is add much more value to go the customer side, to the architectural side, to the construction side, so it's actually a very good thing as such. But it does fascinate me how you can get these huge big headlines about oh this is going to change the world this is the end of the world as we knew it, it's the end of nothing, its just another road."* |
| - don't over-react | *"And never, never overreact to something that looks like it's going to be a disaster because there is always a way of making it work for you."* |
| Never Give Up | *"I have a nine No's strategy. I keep asking until I get No nine times. And you must stay nice through the process asking 'now if you were in my position what would you do next?"* |
| - ride the repetitive cycles | *"You get phases when you think God this is just the same old same old, but what does surprise me constantly about business is that something else happens and the enthusiasm comes right back in again."* |
| Maintain A Personal Touch<br>- the human connection<br>- seek advice | *"I may have spent most of my career working with technology, and some people say my iPhone is never out of my hand. But there is one thing I have learned, and it's this. No amount of Facebook messaging can replace the human connection and no email asking for advice can replace the delight of the flashbulb moment of a 2a.m. brainstorming session. Keeping in touch personally and making yourself* |

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| | *available whenever possible is so important. You'll never find yourself short of people to turn to when you need advice. And you should never be afraid to ask for help."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Making Mistakes<br><br>- avoid witch-hunts | *"My approach to that is, it's never a mistake, I know it probably sounds very trite, but it's never a mistake, in the project team everyone is in there to make sure it works well, nobody is trying to deliver less than the customer expects or whatever, and for me those mistakes, I always make sure that the project team look to them and say 'look this is actually fantastic because we now know exactly what the customer wants and this time round we will deliver it. So when you do look back on it and I would always do my best to make sure that it wasn't a case of 'lets find out whose to blame for this' but just make sure we learn from this and on the next project you have to make sure that these items are really well covered and well documented."*<br>*"I have very few rules in business…but it's NOT … Never Make Mistakes. It's Never Make The Same Mistake Twice!! If you don't make any mistakes there's no fun."* |
| Failure | *"Now we are getting to something I'm quite passionate about, failure. Because I absolutely believe that to achieve you dreams you have to have great courage. And courage is not just doing something difficult to the best of your ability. Courage is doing something that seriously scares you, well outside your comfort zone. But if you're right the rewards will be great and if you're wrong you'll learn from it, grow and develop from it."* |
| - failure hones your instincts | *"I absolutely believe in failure, every time you take a risk you are honing your instincts."* |
| - playing too safe doesn't pay | *"Being honest, I firmly believe that if you have not had some failures in your business life then you're just not trying hard enough. And playing too safe never pays off"* |
| - analyse failure | *"Well I am a great believer in, when people talk about this sort of entrepreneurial spirit and they look at these awful books like the five traits of success or the seven steps to …and I always think dump them all and put them in a large bonfire and actually someone should write a book on the seven* |

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| - study failure<br><br>- de-demonise failure<br><br>- show forgiveness<br><br><br><br>Boredom<br><br>Staff | *characteristics of failed businesses. Because it's by analysing other peoples failure that you are going to learn more. Because I'm quite sure that if they say the seven traits are 'you must be consistent, and decisive and forward thinking', and I can think of several people who have disasters in business who were forward thinking and ambitious and all of this. So I think that by actually looking more closely at failure."*<br><br>*"I look at the different schemes and strategies and directions that we have gone in and I think okay well there is a huge flaw in that which is why it was slower to the market than we expected or we didn't make as much money as we expected, or we had to make serious changes in the middle to make sure we would make money and those to me would always be the more interesting things than studying successes."*<br><br>*"And also kind of de-demonising this whole thing about failure. I think in Irish industry they look at peoples' businesses that have failed and they go 'Oh my God that must be terrible, it must be awful' and that isn't the case. This is an entrepreneur who put his time and money into something and it didn't work for him, and it would be much more interesting to sit down and go 'okay, c'mon, lets think of every possible obstacle, why didn't it work, was it lack of vision, was it a lack of capability, was it a lack of capacity, was it a lack of funding, lack of market knowledge? And you go okay, if we had done this in a different way it may have succeeded. I always think by analysing anything that looks like being a closed opportunity.*<br><br>*"I am getting on my soap box here because I think it is one of the things that I really think is incredibly important…because there is the instinct, if you are in the US and you own a business and fail people are saying 'Oh what are you going to do next'. In Ireland if you have a failed business you are just shunned almost. I mean it often surprises me that there isn't a more forgiving nature with respect to failure in Irish industry.*<br>*"I get bored easily, I'm always dying to find the next best thing. I love listening to other peoples problems and trying to solve them."*<br>*"I've obviously learned a lot from the staff here as well because I think there are times when I have been inclined to be too willing to say 'Oh don't worry it'll be fine we will look after you whatever' and* |

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| | *something has gone on and has got worse and got worse and got worse and then by the time you actually put your foot down and go 'this can't go on anymore' they're are shocked."* |
| - beyond your own interpretations | *"So I think by a kind of evolutionary process because the products in AutoCAD across the board are getting more and more sophisticated, so instead of people just installing them like they used to before like Excel or whatever and using them away in their businesses, now they actually need a civil engineer to understand the ISD products the implementation has to be very careful so that we have got an awful lot more services going into the CAD side of things which we didn't have ten years ago. So we have to be very careful to use the lessons that we have learned in those areas; make sure to set the customer expectations correctly, make sure this project is meeting the user requirements that they know how much training is involved and you come back after a period of time to check okay are you happy are you using it properly is it performing as you expected etc."* |
| Experience<br>- battle scars<br>- growing your intelligene and experience organically | *"So how did we learn? I would say battle scars (laugh) you know going back down to project meetings and going 'well we did deliver you x number of.. and them saying, 'yeah but we wanted x and we wanted it to do more' and we go 'well where is that? And they say, from the order specification we would have thought that you understood that? So very carefully you write that down and say is this what you want, are you sure that this is what you want? And you get them to sign the changes. So basically it's like growing your intelligence and your experience in an organic way."* |
| - postmortums | *"We do a fair bit of debriefing, for instance with the 'Documentim' software, any project that would represent about 150,000 in services there would always be a big debrief afterwards in terms of how the project went, did we meet the customers expectations what we would differently if we were doing it now. Indeed in the time that we had Documentim, which was about ten years a little more by the time we were finished we were great, when we started we were very enthusiastic and very knowledgeable but our ability of that kind of project management I would say wasn't that fantastic."* |
| Other Leaders/Visionaries | *"But I still I love to listen to people who are kind of visionaries or entrepreneurs."* |
| Reading | *"I do as much reading as possible on, in terms of, I think I mentioned something on management strategy and stuff like that, and that I am still completely hooked on that, I read an awful lot, and I can* |

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| | *take from that, I love when people come up with a new theory that they say is going to revolutionise everything and that's fantastic because again I say yeah, yeah its another path or another mechanism."* |
| **ON REFLECTION** | |
| - Could Have Been Braver | *"I am a little disappointed that I wasn't a little braver in some areas and gone oh to hell with it and thrown the fire at it …and it would be interesting to see the results of that, so on one or two occasions I was a little more conservative than I wish I had been right now in terms of investment."* |
| - Sought More Advice/Support | *"I know one of the things I could have benefited from, especially as a working mum type of thing, when you are at work you are at work when you are home you are at home. One of the things men do quite successfully is they gather around them a kind of peer group of people in similar businesses or whatever and they <u>do</u> discuss issues that they have and I think they have sounding boards that they can bounce things off or whatever. I think I didn't seek out that either from a male or a female point of view, and I think that there are times when perhaps I should have done that, where I could have gone to somebody and said 'look what do you think, what does it sound like to you' and you know there were one or two times actually when I was thinking you know I really should call up to UCC and ask are there a group of people like that, where you could do that. You know a group to have non-judgmental discussions on ideas or finance or impacts of the market or even what people were thinking about, reforms or stuff like that. I would have benefited from that and I didn't do that. Time was a factor there, you know, I need to get to work, I need to get home, I think you are a little bit torn as you know with family it can be difficult enough but that would have been something of interest."* |
| - Paid More Attention To Detail | *"We went through a phase where our management financial results weren't coming to me as fast as I would have liked, so in terms of paying attention to detail I would have done a better job on that."* |
| - Moved Things Along Faster | *"I am a little disappointed that we haven't progressed a bit more … closing the UK office with the Documentim side of things I thought 'Oh sugar I had spent so long ensuring we could get off the island hopefully we will be there within another 14 or 15 months with an office for the Costex products in the UK."* |

**PARTICIPANT C FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE C1**

***FROM ENGINEER TO JACK-OF-ALL TRADES (WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF LEADERSHIP)***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Knowledge of the External Environment | *"Knowledge of the external environment would be I think the most important, anybody who would be running a business today like ours, a service industry who wouldn't be keeping in touch with the external environment would be daft."* |
| - Industry, customer/client | *"Where is the engineering design business going, where are our customers taking it, what are the customers of tomorrow going to be interested in?"* |
| - Market trends | *"I would be looking for trends out there, what is the market doing?"* |
| - Technology | *"There's two type of technology, there's the technology are customers are uisng in terms of automation systems and building services and so on, but then there's the technology we ourselves use."* |
| - The International scene | *"Decisions in the States would have a bigger effect now on us than any decision in Ireland"* |

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| - Knowledge of the Internal Environment<br>- What it is like to work for this company | *"The other knowledge then.. if we move away from the customers and the market and the whole technology back to the people side, 'what's it like for someone to be working for us out there in the coridoor?"* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| - Knowledge of technical trends flows into us | *".. the changing trends, the technical trends that knowledge comes at us in so many ways like the journals the magazines the clients."* |
| - Empathetic Knowledge of Employees Requires Bringing in an 'Outsider' | *"What's it like for someone to be working for us, regardless of what we say in our ISO registration on about appraisal and training. You could say 'sure that's easy, just go out and ask', but it isn't really you know. Me going out now to ask somebody what's it like to be working here, that's a kind of artificial situation, like will they be honest with me and say, 'it's great Pat', but is it you know. That's why we brought in an external consultant. So we are feeling the temperature at the moment of how people.. and he [the consultant] goes at it from an objective point of view, I don't think there is any reason why they wouldn't tell him exactly the truth …he's getting very honest and very gutsy reactions from people."* |
| Formal Education | *"Over the past twenty years I would have put a huge amount of time into project work, all my focus would have been on customers and their demands and getting projects out; I set out then a couple of years ago, not having received a days training in something like eighteen years, to undertake some formal study, so I am now doing the OU MBA programme and even though it is fairly mechanistic it has still forced me to stand outside myself, not so much outside myself but outside the company in a more objective manner and it has given me a filter, that's the best way I'd describe it. I run the company through these filters all the time, a filter on strategy, a filter on finance, a filter on HR or culture. And I say 'what are we doing well and what are we doing not so well. So that is how issues are being thrown up. In a way it has given me a vocabulary I didn't have before and a lot of people say if you don't have a vocabulary you can't think it out. And it allows me to be objective because I could look out the window there and say everyone is happy, they were all happy ten years ago anyhow, but it has forced me I suppose to get closer to change, the concept of continuous change."* |
| **TRANSITION TO LEADERSHIP** | |

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| Alters Identity | *"I often say, I used to be an engineer, I mean my job now is such that it's a long time since I was into the guts of the actual design process, so when I say I don't need to know it, what I mean is that somebody here is keeping an eye on it"* |
| - From specialist to generalist or 'jack of all trades' | *"I suppose it's almost, I was a specialist and I suppose it's more important now that I be a kind of Jack-of-all-Trades and yet at the same time I have to give a certain amount of leadership"*<br>*"You almost have to stand up there and pretend you know <u>the</u> way and it isn't like that."* |
| Alters Role<br>- playing a supplemtary role<br>- doing cameos | *"We are very lucky we have a whole team of people who are very good at the whole sales and marketing and I'd only be duplicating what they do. Now I supplement them whenever they want me, if they tell me appear at a presentation to a customer next week, I'll appear".* |
| Alters What Can Be Controlled<br>- control of the agenda | *"Ultimately one has to take responsibility for getting issues onto agendas…"*<br>*"In a way the control I have at the moment is I can control the agenda, the biggest thing for me at the moment is to make decisions as to what goes on the agenda. It's trying to come up with the big issue for the year, the month or the quarter. If can get that right there are lots of people around who will direct their attention at it then."*<br><br>*"I see my role as trying to bring up issues, probably other people will solve the problems."* |
| Creates Pressure<br>- to keep up/to keep on top | *"One of the pressures at the moment I suppose is just trying to keep up, so much knowledge comes at one you know, it comes out of the floor… while I am doing this the e-mails are clocking up, so like one of the problems is almost.. in fact at the moment I'm almost ignroing paperwork."* |
| - to update knowledge | *"My role has changed dramatically in the last two and a half years, instead of managing the Cork office I actually have to manage the two offices now and they are like two companies and I felt I just had to update my knowledge."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |

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| I Am Comfortable with the Fact that Others Know More Than I Do | *"I've always been of the opinion that just because you give somebody the title of manager you don't make them a manager, I've always had this contention here that we take very good engineers and we give them the title of manager, what have we done with them, very often we loose a good engineer but we don't necessarily get a good manager."*<br>*"I'd be comforted more by the fact that there's quite a few people who know a hell of a lot more than I do and if they are tuned into it and if I trust them I am reasonably happy"*<br>*"In a way it's far better if each one of them knows more about it than I do, that wouldn't bother me in the slightest. The other people at the meeting will probably know infinitely more than I will about the topics and that's how it should be. I can't be the IT expert, the HR expert, the Finance expert and the Sales and Marketing expert"* |
| **CHALLENGES** | |
| Capturing Individual Knowledge | *"We're not a good learning organisation, we reinvent the wheel all the time, one of the reasons for that is the shifting matrix, if somebody picks up knowledge on a project, that person will move of necessity to a different project next time around… they are accumulating a huge amount of knowledge on an individual basis but how do you capture all that. And the next guy that has to come along, and say he has to design a system, how does he knew the guy in the Dublin office designed that on a particular project six months ago, or he could even be doing it above there at the moment. That's one of our biggest challenges, we are not a learning organisation even though we learn a lot."* |
| Achieving A Balance<br>-between internal and external demands | *"A large amount of my focus is internal rather than external. Because we are a service we can spend every day busy solving customer problems but we could end up with dramatic problems ourselves. For example, if we don't develop our internal HR systems we will have engineers doing superb technical work, they could get all the praise in the world for designing the best system in a customers premises but they'll go home at night saying 'where am I going in this company."* |
| -between operational and strategic issues | *"There are real issues on the ground to be dealt with but there is also wider strategic issues to be dealt with. I could lock my door here and never see anybody and have a very tidy office, I'd be less concerned now about paperwork, obviously there is very important paperwork to be processed but it's hard to know what you should spend your time on… it's hard to know where to devote your time in my position at the moment and that's the biggest difficulty."* |

**PARTICIPANT C SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE C2**

***LEADERSHIP AS MAKING IMPACT, DISLOCATION NOT STEADY PROCESS AND DOING WILD THINGS***

| THEMES/SUB THEMES | EXEMPLARS |
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| **THE CHANGED NATURE OF THE BUSINESS** | *"In 2005, you could say 90% of our business was in Ireland, 10% was outside of Ireland in two locations, about 5% in the UK and about 5% in Poland. So we were essentially an Irish company with the vast bulk of our business in Ireland and quite Ireland-centric. The business in Ireland wasn't sustainable,there was a big slow down in large capital investment projects that were at the core of our business, bio-pharmacuetical plants, semi-conductor plants, food plants, we could see that type of mobile foreign direct investment was going to different parts of the world, in particualr it was going to Asia. and we had to make a decision what to do and basically it was wherever our customers, our long-standing customers that we worked for in Ireland, wherever they were going we were going to be there with them. Up until then we only asked them 'what are you doing in Ireland', our question now became 'what are you doing globally'? We began to build up a picture of where all this foreign direct investment was going and we set ourselves in Singapore, opened an office there, then we took a 50%* |

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| | *stake in an Indian company, so we have an office in Bangalore, and believe it or not, just last week we applied for and got our licence to operate as an independent entity in China. So that is the biggest change, right now, I suspect 30% of our business will come from Ireland and 70% from outside of Ireland. Now that is a massive change in five years."* |
| A Changed Organisational Culture | *"We changed the culture from beng a totally Ireland-centric culture to having a more diverse culture. That involved getting the management and everyone that had grown up on a diet of local projects to change their thinking to a more expansive international way"* |
| **TRANSITION TO LEADERSHIP** | |
| - stressful<br><br>- others see you differently/you see them differently<br>- coming in as an outsider<br><br>- self questioning/self doubt | *"Those first four years of being the Chief Executive were definitely the toughest four years of my entire career – much more difficult than the last four years. Because you are wondering are you up to the job, the people who were your peers are now looking at you in a different light, and you have to look at them in a different light. So that brings a personal pressure. I was taking over from the founder of the company and that is a critical period in the life of any company, the first transition from an owner-founder to somebody else. So that period of great stress and kind of personal doubt, can I do it?, will I do it?, can I make it?, was in those first four years."* |
| **CHALLENGES OF CEO ROLE** | |
| Rejeuveniating The Team | *"The first four years there wasn't much excitement about the pressure and the stress, there was a huge senior executive transition so we hit this period between 1999 and maybe 2004 when there was a huge number of retirements, particularly of executive directors, and what I had to do, I guess it is like rejeuveniating a football team, and everybody is saying 'God weren't they great players you know' and you have all these young lads coming on the team and will they ever shape up you know."* |
| Changing the Company Culture | *"The last four years have put a different pressure, in fact the last four years have been extremely exciting, pushing the company overseas, visiting the International markets. That's been stressful just from the point of view of having to travel you know, go there, go there, but at the same time there was an excitement about the pressure these last four years. In the last four years, my world has changed from running what was essentially an Irish company with all its work in Ireland, to an International company, with 25 offices. I think we work, at any single point in the day we are in thirty plus countries* |

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| | *and with an office in San Jose behind Ireland and an office in Singapore, 8 hours ahead of Ireland, we are now working 24 hours a day. So that would sum our new world and the biggest change – it is now a 24 hour business."* |
| **EXITING THE CEO ROLE** | |
| - shedding things<br>- easy transition<br>- get to do what I enjoy best | *"I am standing down as CEO in July now, and my sucessessor has been selected but I am staying on in the company as a full-time director, I will have been eleven years in the job. I am looking forward to steppping down because as I said to you I have shed things in the past year, year and a half, I'm actually going to find it quite an easy transition and I am going to be focused on our international development the thing that switches me on the thing I like doing best."* |
| Negative Aspects<br><br>- learning to let go<br><br><br>- avoiding temptation to jump in<br><br>- having to remain silent<br>- learning not to take criticism personally | *"On the other hand of course I am not looking forward to stepping down. If you are in a position like this for… I am into my eleventh year, there is letting go. But I have gone to a few sessions recently now, for instance the first big test for me was the interviews for my position. The non-executives inteviewed thirteen people for my position and each one came in and presented their vision of the future, and naturally as part of their vision they were saying some of the things that weren't working and I was sitting there and I was tempted to jump in as I would at board meetings but I stayed silent through everyone of the thirteen. And everybody is amazed that I actually was silent for twenty six hours and that was part of my letting go."*<br>*"You know, these guys are trying to show their vision for the future and of course they are going to look back, of course they are going to say certain things aren't going well, don't take it personally, they are being interviewed for a job and they are only right to point out some of the things that aren't working at the moment and how they might change it, but don't take it personally, listen, and it was great."* |
| - staying quite<br>- learning it's no longer all about me<br>- practicing letting go | *"My sucessor organised a two day away strategy day and I sat through two whole days and apart from making positive supportive comments on my colleagues, (even though I could have kicked them under the table), I stayed quite for two days, I could have challenged them every five minutes on something they said, what's the point? Then the whole two days would have been* |
| - a time to hand-over | *"I have decided to step down because I am all of 63 going on 64, so I think it is very important and I do think it is part of leadership aswell, when I look at your man in Egypt now, up there at 82 or something, sure that is a nonsense, that anybody would be trying to.. he is being forced out at 80. So* |

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| | *what you have to say is, when is the right time to hand over to a sucessor, the worse thing is leaving it too late. So I will be eleven years in the job come May of this year, I will have past my 64th birthday, now I think that is the time to hand over."* |
| - aware of your own mortality | *"Aswell as that age, if you are ten or twelve years older you are into your sixties, you have a different view on life aswell, your own mortality all that kind of stuff is all inside you. You know there is a difference in perspective and I think that is why some of these despots want to stay on and on and on and on and on, they have been ruling countries for thirty and forty years and you can see it is not good for a country, to have a leader in place this long, nor is it good for a company."* |
| - an orderly handover | *"My retirement date is my 65th birthday, my standing down date, we decided about 3 years ago and my job, which was very liberating, my job was not to select my sucessor, (it was the non-executive directors who did that), my job was to get as many of the executive directors into a position that they could take over from me, give each of them part of the business to run with full accountability and responsibility."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Think Ahead<br><br>- plan for succession<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Don't Plan Too Rigidly | *"The single biggest thing I ever learnt was always trying to be three or four years ahead. Now you could say that is an impossible task but it is not really. You can't really influence the external environment, but there is an awful lot you can do in the internal environment; changing attitudes, changing the focus of the company and above all always trying to bring through the next generation of senior executives, who is coming through, who is there today that is going to be in the leadership of tomorrow and you have got to keep that rolling ahead three or four years. And it is the first thing I said to my sucessor, we have a couple of retirements near and he is looking at the organisation chart for the middle of the year and he is grappling now, but I have said to him 'as well as looking at that try and look at the one for three years time or four years time, because you will have a couple of retirements and how are you going to fill those slots, what are you going to have to do now to get people ready?'* |

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| - the future is a random walk | *"I have warned my successor, something will happen in the next five years that none of us can predict, we can have all the strategic plans in the world but something will happen that we can't plan for. The future is never a straight line extrapoliation of the past, it's a very random walk. I am a great believer in having strategic plans, but I am a great believer in deviating from them when the need arises, what is called emergent strategy is even more important than rigid startegy. Sure have the wide avenue that you are going to go down certainly don't have a narrow path that you are stuck with. Those would be some of my personal learnings things that I have had to learn along the way."* |
| Leadership is Making Impact<br>- management is about process<br>- leadership is about dislocation<br><br>- not steady process<br>- having vision<br>- doing 'wild things'<br>- taking on the 'no hopers' | *"When people say to me how do you define leadership, to me it's 'Making Impact.' For me, there is a huge difference between management and leadership. Management is kind of process, everything is working away, in fact leadership is quite different, it's almost like dislocation, not steady process. In an engineering firm like this, we would have a lot of people who are very good managers, and as project managers we are very good at process, steady process, that is how you build, that is how projects get done. But to run a business I think you also particularly need to have a vision of the future, you don't do that through process, you do wild things, I was the first person to go to China you know. I take great delight in hearing about what we call 'no hopers' here, projects that people say, ah we shouldn't go after that, I say, I'll go after it if only to"* |
| - leadership is about making your own mark/being yourself | *"But one thing I said to myself the day I took over from my predecessor, and I have said this publically, I set out not to be my predecessor Mark 2, but to be Joe Blogs Mark 1. And I have said that to my sucessor, 'Make sure you don't become or try to become Joe Blogs Mark 2, be 'John Murphy' Mark 1. Because I think that to me is the most important thing."*<br>*And I would just hope and others will have to be the judge, that somewhere along the way, I made impact. I would hate people to say about me, he was a great manager, because I don't regard myself as a great manager and I don't think great management is what is needed in running a company particularly through a period of rapid change like we have now."* |
| - leadership is playing to your strengths | *"I am a firm believer in playing to your strengths, and don't go out trying to beef up your weaknesses, get other people to do that. I mean I think I am reasonably good at the external environment, dealing with customers, marketing, business development, I can walk into any environment cold, it doesn't* |

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| | *phase me. I hate slaving through spreadsheets and figures, the good thing is we have a finance officer that is second to none, we have a couple of other directors, who actually enjoy that kind of stuff, but you couldn't let them out, you couldn't say 'go off to China now and win a job.' The most important thing I think is recognising ones strengths and then compensating, saying to yourself, look I have two or three strengths, I either love being out there dealing with the exteranl environment, or I hate it, I love being in here trawling over page after page of spreadsheet or I don't like it and I think finding that and admitting that early on, that to me is what I think leadership is about. "* |
| A Contingency Style is Best<br>- shaping your to suit the context<br>- learning as a follower | *"It is not just strengths, the way you do your strengths is important. What is your style? My predecessor who hired me when I came back from the US in the mid 70's, he was owner-founder, he had a completely different style to me, I began to appreciate style of management. His would have been pretty dictatorial, his way or the high way. The only reason I was able to work with him from 1975 through to 2000 was I probably adopted a different style. If I had been the same style as his we would probably have parted. So I think I shaped my… I think what I probably learned about myself is that outwardly I wouldn't be as rigid a personality as my predecessor, I probably shaped my style to accommodate his particular style."* |
| - recognising and accepting what you are dealing with<br><br>- persuastive not dictat - 'allilgn stars'<br><br>- unity of direction more important than route | *"In a professional services firm like this all your senior people are 'stars', they won't do what you tell them, the best thing you can do is allign them because they have a professional pride in what they do, or they are managing a particular part of the business, a speciality, they feel they know best how to manage themselves but at the end of the day they all realise we have a business to run so the most important thing is not so much micromanaging any of the senior people, but again going back to that broad strategy, instead of having 'that is what we are going to do and you have got to conform to that,' having a reasonably broad strategy and letting guys…Once they are all roughly heading in that same direction at roughly the same pace it doesn't really matter what circuitous route they are taking along the way."* |

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| Leading by Example is Important | *"I think you have to do a lot of leading by example, they have to see, it doesn't have to be dramatically successful, but if it is reasonably sucessful you can build on that and you are allilgning people."* |
| Leadership Means Making A Decision | *"It is not that you are always going to get it right. My predecessor had a great saying, 'sometimes right, sometimes wrong, but never in doubt.' And he would admit that 50% of the decisions he made were right and 50% were wrong but it didn't matter, he made a decision. That is another side of leadership, make the decsion, of course it should be an informed decision, I am not talking about willy-nilly decisions, but when you have a reasonable amount of information and you have a good gut feel."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Formal Management Education<br><br><br>- do what suits | *"I went back and did an MBA at 45, I did the open university MBA. I did it the scenic route, the position I was holding in the company I couldn't take every Saturday off and attend college but that didn't bother me, you reach a stage when you want to do something that suits, so I did it on airplanes and airports, just brought reading material around with me all the time and luckily it was the time before blackberries and Ipads and yes I had a mobile phone but very few people did and if you were travelling you had plently of time to travel and you weren't interrupted, so I did a huge amount of course work in hotels at night when I was away on Business."* |
| - a language<br>- the vocabulary of strategy<br>- facilitate thinking/conceptualisation<br><br><br><br>- thoughts flood in through words<br><br>- words and concepts to think strategically<br>- engineers gravitate towards figures | *"I was very lucky that the very first module that I did was strategy was just the time when we were beginning to do strategic planning. So what it did for me, it is like mathematics is the language of science, you can only really understand science if you understand mathematics, every discipline has a language or vocabulary, particualrly doing that first one on strategic management it gave me the vocabulary of strategy, because we think in words well then if you have a vocabulary you can conceptualise, how can you think about something if you don't know the language, for instance, go off and think about Byzantine art, how can you think about it, okay 'I was in a church once in Greece and I saw a picture and I think that …' you cannot, you cannot think without a vocabularly, but imagine if you had a masters degree in Byzanthine art, then the thoughts would be flooding into your head through the words, so what doing that course on strategy did for me it gave me the vocabulary, the words and concepts that allowed me to think strategically."* |

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| - moving out of one's comfort zone | *So I was extremely lucky, because engineers, the first thing they do is mathematics and they learn all the physical and engineering concepts, then most engineers gravitate towards doing something in accounting and they are very good at figures and it is all heading in the same direction. So, I often say that you have to have the vocabulary of a particular discipline or subject for you to even think about it, because we do think in words and concepts and pictures of course, but there is no point in having pictures in your head if you can't figure them out. So that is what it did for me, a vocabulary."* |
| - continued professional development<br>- age not an issue | *"I haven't ruled out now doing a course in Harvard, it is one of the things I may do, I am very keen, it is an experience I would like to have, and it doesn't bother me when I have it, so I haven't ruled it, it is there as kind of a little perk for myself, I might do an advanced management course in Harvard and you might say what would an old fart like me want going to Harvard?"* |
| The Role of Others<br>- 'true' chairman/ see big picture<br>- proactively supportive<br>- prime move behind sucession process<br>- set the tone<br>- set great example | *"In business I would say I learned most from our chairman, I think I would have learned an awful lot from him. He was the true chairman, he was always looking at the big picture and he was very supportive, not just reactively supportive, but proactively supportive of our moves to push the business overseas. And he was also the prime mover behind the whole succession process and the way it was handled, he kind of set the tone of what the chairman of PM group the role that person should play and I thought he set a great example."* |
| - thinking ahead<br>- not taking no for an answer | *"He (our chairman) was always trying to get me to think three years ahead. Whenever I showed him the organisation chart of today or next month he would say to me 'well show me the one for three years time aswell' and I would say 'sure I can't do that.' and he would say 'Try'* |
| **ON REFLECTION/WITH HINDSIGHT** | |
| - agonised too much<br><br>- doubt | *"If I could go back in time there are a few things I would have done differently, I think I was agonising over the international expansion, and it was part of that early period you agonise over are you making the right decision? are you taking the company in the right direction, I am just sorry I didn't start it earlier. Looking back I would have started to shift the company internationally at a faster pace."* |

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| - lack of confidence<br>- not trusting gut feel | *"I think there was a bit of doubt and not having sufficient confidence in my own personal gut feel and I am a great believer in gut feel, as well as formal strategic management, scenario plannning, all the stuff that we do, there is a lot to said too for your gut feel."* |
| - don't dwell on it/don't blame myself<br>- did what I could | *"But I don't beat myself up over it because looking back now, now it was not as if I was sitting around doing nothing I had a lot of other things to engage with and there is only so much which you can do at any one time."* |
| **ADVICE THAT MAY HAVE HELPED** | |
| Move Faster<br><br>- the progression from engineer to manager to leader | *"If I could have gotten some advice starting out it would probably have been 'move things along at faster pace.' You see all the process stuff we do, the work we do is good work, we do it well, we manage our projects well, but you could become very inward looking in an engineering firm, there is so much going on, as engineers you can get drawn into the detail of projects, its to stay above that, it's kind of like the progression from engineer to manager to leader, when do you stop being an engineer and become a good manager and when do you stop becoming a manager and learn how to become a good leader it's that progression. That is the advice I would give my sucessor, to move the company along at pace and probably I was too collegiate in the earlier days, probably I could have prodded and pushed things along a bit faster, because I probably in my head bought in too much to the collegiate partnership way of thinking, and we all have to."* |
| - don't get drawn into the detail | *"Keeping the focus on the future and trying to think out and not to be totally at the mercy of the external environment. Like I do a huge amount of reading, I read three newspapers everyday, when I say I read them I scan, scan, scan, mountains of stuff, two or three business magazines a week, just going to conferences, trying to pick up what are the early signals of the kind of new waves, trying to anticipate and to be ahead of your competition."* |

**PARTICIPANT D FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE D1**

***RUNNING AN OPERA HOUSE WHILE NOT KNOWING MUCH ABOUT OPERA***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **KNOWLEDGE NEEDED** | *"I talk in terms of the triple A's – Academic, Administrative and Artistic"* |

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| Academic<br><br>- not called upon too often but there | *"On the one level, I come from an academic tradition which would be say from TS Elliot and the idea of tradition, I mean I am meant to know the seamless continuity of drama from Greek times, the plays, the tragedies, through the Renaissance times, through the development of European theatre. It may not be something I call upon too often, but it's there and that's just one particular scene. Then I think in this century, things like film have just grown, so you have to be aware where so many disciplines have grown out of and where they're going. I think that at this stage most people in my position are 3rd level graduates, it's not essential but most of them increasingly are, you know there is a broader sense of cultural history that you have to bring to the job, and most of them are also trained in better management systems and arts administration."* |
| Management/Administration | *"The emphasis in my job is on programming, but you end up with everything, from Personnel through all areas, it's a Chief Executive position – you end up with everything."*<br>*"In finance then, I have a good grasp of the figures, I'm not a person who's figure blind at all."* |
| Artistic | *"You need I suppose an old combination to run a place like the Opera house… I am drawing on for a start my knowledge of straight theatre. I'd also have acquired increasing knowledge over the years in the performing arts of Opera, Dance and forms of popular entertainment."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Judgement<br>- ability to call risks | *"Knowledge is very important, but then after knowledge comes judgment, you've got to make decisions, call the risks, so I suppose it's best informed by a good knowledge of your subject but it's no guarantee you are going to be right more than half the time."*<br>*We're very much programme driven so that's the first thing, that's where I have to feel very strong, you have to be somebody who believes in their own judgment even though you know you are wrong half the time."* |
| - abilty to interpret<br>- respond to instincts | *"Artistic - there's a strong idealism, you have a vision, you feel that you're good maybe in evaluating, interpreting and responding to your own instincts."* |
| - ability to think holistically | *"I have a strong sense of how I want to mix my hand with some of the programming, this is what would be called 'the halo effect' to my programming, this is deserving, this is intellectually or artistically* |

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| | *stimulating but cannot survive in a popular market, this has the potential to draw from a wide audience and be perceived to be worth the money that's put into it."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Learning by Doing | *"Almost all administrative experience or organizational ability was innate and was just brought out through the challenges in hand - something acquired through a desire to do things."* |
| Experience/Instinct | *"I wouldn't have any training in Marketing but again I would have a very strong instinct for trying to research and analyse what the market wants."* |
| Colleagues | *"Most of what I know comes through the British theatre manager and his associates, so I relate very well to a number of colleagues and peers and agents that I have met on the circuit.* |
| Contacts | *"There would be a few theatres that have the same facilities in stage and the same financial potential and so I try to convene them every couple of months in a very casual way, pick their brains."* |
| Conferences | *Conferences have helped a little bit, we are not very representative of other organizations, we're not very good conference people, we don't have enough funding or enough time to get around."* |
| Reading<br><br>- not always at source | *"Information flows, there are some magazines out there, 'International Arts Manager' and all the rest you know, if you want to keep up with what other people are doing you do it through those."*<br>*"I would have read an awful lot, I'm reading less. Pressure of work. There's two of us, two jobs, two children, too little time. The danger is I think at a certain age you're reading the reviews rather than always getting to the source."* |
| Being a Customer | *"You're a customer yourself, I mean I'm reading magazines, I'm watching television, I'm going to films of my choice. I'm fortunately in a job where on expenses I can go to the best entertainment that's out there, in theatres, in opera houses, clubs, dance schools. So it's my job to go with it and see where other people are going and to read their responses as well as to feel the responses myself."* |

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| **TRANSITION TO LEADERSHIP** | |
| - dealing with more mundane issues | *"I'd say the toughest area to acquire knowledge and work as a CEO has been personnel. I think that's something you're not prepared for at all in my kind of background, in a mixture of academic/intellectual or artistic life. You find through college years and the first years of a career, late 20's early 30's that you're working with highly motivated people alongside you, they could be directing plays, designing plays, acting in plays, you're very project oriented, solving problems in a heuristic way, always finding what the problem is, that's what cracking the play (whether its about Wilde, O'Casey or Busessco) is about and you'd always be working with fairly intelligent, intense and highly motivated people. When you come into a building based activity like an Opera house you are not working with people who are as intensely motivated; I mean theatres are like bards or fairgrounds, or circuses, somebody has got to sweep up the sawdust from the spit, from the beer, it's not an environment in which you're talking about training or re-training people."* |
| - finding deficiencies in knowledge | *I suppose that is what I've had to try and acquire is a better handle on dealing with people [casual staff] who are in fairly mundane, humdrum jobs which don't offer then great hopes for advancement. That would be the biggest deficiency in knowledge in my character that I've encountered to date."* |
| - feeling inadequate/self doubt | *"I am constantly up against my own inadequacy, people are surprised that you are in charge of an organization, surely there is someone better out there. Am I here by the Peter principle or what?"* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| No Formal Business Education | *"Business would be an area that I don't know enough about. I think it's a systematic analysis of a great amount of information that's collected. I've only got my partial picture and my impressionistic and opinionated individual approach, but I think you can surely rationalize an awful lot."* |
| - feeling threatened | *"I have an academic background that's principally in English literature and there would be no formal business training whatsoever. I think I read "The Empty Raincoat" last summer and that's the only business book I ever read, so there's no formal background."* |

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| | *"I remember to some extent feeling put out and a little off my game when I first ran into the kind of jargon that some business people will use and they use it partly just to impress their little bit of knowledge in getting past or around you."* |
| Information Technology | *"My knowledge of computers would be fairly limited, I've used them a lot, I don't know how they work, it is that they work is the wonder."* |
| Certain Art Forms<br><br>- feeling vunerable | *"I do feel quite at sea with Opera, I am not strong in a musical sense and I might be analyzing it more in terms of its dramatic line and its production values, but you know even if its dressed up beautifully, if it's badly sung it's not going to go down well."*<br>*There would be some occasions where I, my role would be to be in a darkened auditorium looking at work and estimating its worth – can I translate it into a reasonable risk."* |
| **PRESSURE TO KNOW MORE** | |
| About Business<br><br>- not trained to turn a discipline into a business<br><br>- impossible to fill gap | *"I think there's a huge pressure on us to know more about business than we used to know. I think it's there both for lawyers, doctors, for English literature graduates, because there's a recognition that we're only trained in a particular discipline and we're not actually prepared and trained for the commercial reality of turning a discipline into a business. So, yes, I am conscious in an ideal world we would be taking off to do one of the courses, I mean I enquire about them every year, will I do an MBA, a Postgraduate Diploma in Management and Marketing, is it impossible and the answer every year is Yes I'm afraid. Partly because my work is already so night-oriented that part-time study is just going to kill off all contact with children and domestic life."* |
| In Artistic Domain | *"I constantly feel under pressure to educate myself better outside of just business school and personnel which I mentioned, but even within artistic disciplines where I would feel vulnerable. I run an opera house that has actually lost all contact with opera… I feel I don't know much about Opera because for my generation Opera had disappeared. It's a tradition that I'd like to be better acquainted with. Other forms like ballet and all the rest you feel you've got quite a shallow appreciation of them. I mean it's the old story, I know what I like but I wouldn't always be able to analyse why its good in an area like ballet or opera."* |
| **NEEDING SUPPORT** | |

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| - to translate ideas to a business plan | *"Without a sympathetic account and a financial controller who trusted my central ideas – which would be quite entrepreneurial, I couldn't translate them into a business plan, my narrative would be going one way and my figures the other."* |
| - to bounce ideas off | *"I need somebody to bounce ideas off, I don't need somebody to take them apart and shred them, they need to be tested."* |
| - an ear/to be my guide/be with me | *"I very much feel I need someone with a better ear and a better appreciation of music and Opera to be my guide, to be with me and I won't make decisions without specialized advice."* |
| **CHALLENGES** | |
| Keeping Up With Change<br><br><br><br>- tuning into your society<br>- feeding into where culture is going<br>- reading the Zeitgeist | *"Technically, theatres are changing, that's fine, we can keep up with that, you know intelligent lighting systems are constantly changing and the computer life of every lighting board and sound system we buy is short, but still and all that's a fairly limited range of change and experimentation from ancient old lime light in a Victorian theatre to an intelligent lightning system in our theatre, it's still just a lighting effect. What is changing? I think you have to be very tuned into your society and where each generation is coming from… you have to be able to read where the whole culture is going – the Zeitgeist, what it is that people want… it's the times and the people around you that are changing and you are trying to feed into it".* |
| Encouraging Knowledge Sharing<br>- getting beyond the egos | *"Places like the Abbey [theatre] would have three million worth of funding, they would be highly egocentric, they would be lead by individuals who would see themselves as performing on a world stage (relating to London and Broadway) than the rest of their own country. While they are leading National institutions they are by and large pioneering personal careers abroad, they deliver little or nothing to the regions. It's very funny at the moment I am trying to deal with the Abbey and I can't get anywhere with them, they haven't visited the opera house in three years, very difficult to persuade them to bring their product down here even though we are absolutely the right theatre for them, but they're terribly afraid of failing to get full houses and loosing face. On the other hand, I'm dealing with the Royal National Theatre London, and they are giving us a product which our own National Theatre can't [won't] give us, so it's kind of fun."* |

**PARTICIPANT D SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE D2**

***ON BECOMING A FOX: GETTING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LESS AND LESS***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **ACCEPTANCE OF ROLE** | |
| - not the flamboyant director<br><br>- creating conditions for artisitc endeavour<br>- the old man/the elder lemon<br>- growing old gracefully | *"I suppose over the years also I accepted, in a way, which wasn't there when I went in at the start, that I wasn't going to be a flamboyant director – I wasn't going to have the baton, I wasn't going to be in rehearsal room, I wasn't going to be surrounded by a working opera company, or drama company or dance company – it is just too much pressure. Instead I kind of worked to make sure that the artistic people got as much freedom and resources that I could make available right – so we bring financial, marketing, strategic, political thinking to their mix, you know if they did their job very well we all benefited, so I created the conditions for it - that kind of jump in productivity that happened. It meant sort of saying, you know I put my academic hat off, but I also had to put my artistic hat to one side. And suddenly now I am the old man, I am the elder lemon in the company – you better just grow old gracefully and accept that is your role I think you know."* |
| - artistic and academic trainer wheels<br>- accept you are the chief executive and don't complain | *"I think that [putting my artistic and academic to one side] was part of the recognition I couldn't do everything. And if I had left I suppose the opera house it would have been to pursue either the academic or the artistic. But I suppose they are like little trainers wheels on each side of me at the moment, they keep me balanced. But I tried it on as manager and as a producer and I decided that's my role, it's a chief executive role so why complain."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE HAS CHANGED** | |
| - greater depth and focus | *"Well I think I got to know more and more about less and less, I would think that there has been a narrowing of focus – I've learnt a lot more about what I do because I am in the same group as I was when talking to you last. So I learnt a lot about what I was doing, but it wasn't a broadening of areas of interest I think it was a deepening."* |
| - moving further and further away from professional background | *"I have a bit of an academic background which gives me a little credibility with my local councilors and others on my board. I mean for example academic interests would be further and further behind me, whereas they might have felt closer ten years ago, because I don't really have the time or the incentive to be engaged in any academic reading or writing or very little contact between town and* |

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| | *gown, you know. I would have come through University in Trinity, Canada and Cork and it seems further and further behind, I mean I have good friends still in college but there is a sense that our pursuits are very different."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| - Self-knowledge | *"Well I have learnt an awful lot about myself, not in a self obsessed or narcissistic way but I have learnt to recognise my own strengths and weaknesses."* |
| - Knowledge Of People<br><br>- the drama of people | *"So, I suppose I keep learning more about people, which is not far from what is the real subject matter of my profession. I mean I am interested in producing something like King Lear – I am interested in the drama of people and the psychology of people and literature is a study of that elevated to a level that is way above the mundane, but still the universal truths that something like Lear would have is something that I could identify with closely from dealing with some older members of our community."* |
| - how to be more political and personable<br><br>- how to bring about consensus | *I have learnt how to deal with people, through both good and bad experiences – I would be a lot more political as well as a lot more personable from a slightly more driven younger man, I would have been a bit more driven a bit more dogmatic – a bit more difficult for my staff to relate to. I think I was more inclined to do everything by conviction and less by consensus. I still work from my convictions but I try to manipulate a consensus, so that's a change in approach, I think."* |
| how to concede<br><br>- how to get my own way<br>- how to lean on others<br><br>- deal with resistance<br>- deal with change<br><br><br>- how to adapt my style of leadership<br>- had to rattle the cage a bit stronger as a younger man | *"I think probably work in the same way trying to reach key strategic decisions but I try also to work to allow more to the group of people I am working with, to allow more to the staff I am working with."*<br>*"So what did I learn? I learnt how to eventually get my way and to plan with smart young rising professionals, picking people younger than me, for example, while always encouraging IT development. I am not leading the 3rd generation office in the opera house that is for somebody younger to do. So I suppose I learned how to deal with an older aging board, full of politicians and old fashioned merchant princes – they are still there for me, how to deal with staff, how to deal with change."*<br>*"I think I still have the same convictions I've just changed the way in which I try to achieve my goals. The others were very suitable for when I came in as a young manager against an older staff that had a huge resistance to change, I had to rattle the cage a bit stronger, now I have a chance to recruit the staff around me and persuade everyone to agree in a consensual way to my convictions."* |

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| - driven, determined and un-compromising<br>- had to root out a lot as young man<br>- the new brush<br>- sweep out and clamp down<br>How To Survive | *"It also changed to suit the generation of people I was dealing with. If I hadn't been so driven and so determined and so uncomprimising earlier on I would have settled for bad practice, lower standards you know. I had a lot to root out when I went in, I was the new brush, so for the first five or seven years it was about being the new brush and sweeping out a lot of old practices, standing up to the unions and petty theiving and all the other stuff that goes on in a big institution, clamping down on the waste and everything."*<br><br>*"I suppose the major event is that I have managed to stay in the same job, I mean I am eighteen years in the job this weekend, and it was a job I went into where there had been 5 managers in the previous ten years. I wasn't sure I would every stay in it, but I have found it challenging and I have found it satisfying. I am surprised that I have stayed so long or that they have put up with me so long, so a bit of mutual tolerance has developed."* |
| How To Keep Motivated<br><br>- keep focused<br>- over-come self-doubt<br><br>- find some light at end of tunnel | *"Every now and then, normally I found having achieved some objective that could be three years in the planning or the process of putting it in place and then it would be there, I suppose on the other side of achievement there is a period of slump, you hit what you aim for, you seem to go into free-fold, you loose direction, you wonder if you are any good really, you doubt yourself, you loose your compass points. But normally I have managed to find new goals, new motivation and move onwards."*<br>*"Well sometimes it can be that you just need rest and reflection and you need to have some particular target. In running a building for example you despair very often about having adequate funds to meet its continuous maintenance, once you felt you are able to bring in those funds and to achieve your goals then you got motivated then. Yeah, you know, I find that the economy moves in cycles and that strategy in the Arts sector will move in cycles, but I always believe that it is fundamentally personality driven, that it is less philosophy than personality. So there will be a change over in people and power, people in politics, people in the arts council, people in the local authority, you know who've got a fund or a shaft of light, golden ray of hope and you head for it in the dark distance hoping things will work out well."* |

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| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Experience<br>- crashed and burned<br>- stressed out and burnt out<br>- threw in towel and went fishing | *"I learnt from hard experience – when I went into the job it was a very difficult situation, we were on the brink of insolvency, ready for closure and there was an extremely difficult board of directors who met about 36 times a year – I was the youngest person in the building, I went in at 35 and I was the youngest, all the staff were in their 50's and 60's. In ten years what's happened is, I mean I crashed and burned certainly got stressed out and burned out on at least two occasions in the early 90's, just threw in the towel, didn't want to go into work, so just stepped out – went fishing you know."* |
| - repetition | *"I think it's experiential rather than academic, I mean when you produce pantomime every year it is not exactly testing your intellectual boundaries."* |
| - bitter experience and frustration | *"A lot of my learning just came out of hard and bitter experience and being purely frustrated."* |
| Staff<br>- particularly women<br>- no male egos<br>- sympathetic relationships | *"I suppose I have learnt an awful lot from the people I recruited and I talked about in the financial and marketing areas, they were usually but not always, but usually they were women, and I had very good communication with them and they had a specialist area that is not my own but we would manage to shape our programming and our business planning and our development on a very good dialogue. Maybe it was good that there were no male egos competing or something, but we had a very sympathetic relationship and I was very happy that all of them stayed five years, usually children and other things took them out of the workplace."* |
| Board of Directors | *"I have learnt a lot from my board, even though they are a mixed bag of individuals and none of them are any more perfect than myself but I still learnt a lot. You know you would have some big hitters on the board, politicians, social and economic figures, so you couldn't but learn."* |
| Family<br>- children drew out something<br>- tested preconceptions<br>- traumatic learning<br>- transfer learning to work<br><br>- living through changes in children's | *"So I have always learnt a lot from women, including my wife."*<br>*"I am mad about my kids and I give them loads of time and I think all of their phases of development were fascinating and each of them drew out something different in me, kids are fascinating as you know, they test all your old preconceptions about life and yourself and your philosophy, so that has been has great and it hasn't always been entirely easy. I had a young boy who was bullied and I had to get him out of a bad school, he was stuck in a school in a group for a year or two, so I found that very interesting and very traumatic in its own way. Something of that would have transferred to work,* |

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| lives<br>- dealing with immaturity<br>- dealing with expectations | *in work I was bringing in health and safety policies on bullying and intimidation in the work place; and it made me fairly sensitive as to how it should be approached."*<br>*"I mean ten years, we were talking about children earlier, I think ten years is a time of huge change in family life as well I think if you are living with kids who have grown from 5 to 15, 6 to 16, right, you become very used to dealing with change, with people, with immaturity in other people, suddenly you are expected by everyone to be the mature, stable person, slow to…I mean I would have been more impulsive when I was young, more up for confrontation, less willing to comprise…."* |
| Professional Contacts | *"The way in which I try to work a great deal is out of establishing long-term alliances, partnerships with companies, producing companies, promoters. There are some people you can't learn anything from because basically you have a relationship which is always about win loose and they are trying to rip off as much money as they can or take as much money as they can out of the relationship and get out, but there are a lot of people that you can fashion a completely different class of a working relationship with. Whether it's a rock and roll promoter, or whether it's an artistic director."* |
| Occasional formal education | *"There has been little formal learning, I have no business degree, I have only studied literature in my life. But in the last while I have tried to put myself through various small training one-day, two-day courses, courses on everything from leadership… and to do the same for the people around me."* |
| **ON REFLECTION/HINDSIGHT** | |
| - couldn't have done things much differently<br><br>- constraints of context<br>- did things not proud of | *"Sure we would all be better people if we could re-live the last ten years I mean I would drink less, I would never loose my temper, I would have perfect children. Well considering, by and large, the information available to me, and my interpretation of that information, I couldn't see that things could have been shaped greatly differently, unless I left the place all right. I mean even if you are a chief executive you are not a solo operator, you can only work within a particular context. And I think the opera house is where the politics of art meet the art of politics. It is an interesting one. And considering the levels of funding, the levels of growth, the levels of development in the city, I couldn't have done much more."* |
| - loosing our purpose | *"I look back and I recognise that at one stage the theatre took off on a huge rip exploiting its licence for late night activity. That is one development I look back with a little ambivalence, it was a huge source of cash, and we were forced into that market I would argue because the arts council started to starve the venue sector of revenue funding. We were growing the business, but we were getting less* |

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| | *recognition for the growth and we were being pushed towards sustainability and independence from the arts council. And you know through taking on that challenge we developed a string of late night activity. It was a fairly interesting, it was the e-generation – there was a lot of drink and music and drugs – and I wouldn't be against drink, music or drugs by the way but I was up closer to it, you know I never thought I was going into that business – I didn't want to become dependant on a night club who seeks to run an opera house and for a while we were a giant pub with an opera house attached."* |
| - doing things out of necessity – though morally ambivalent<br>- the question of balance<br><br><br><br><br><br>- pursuing line of least resistance<br><br><br><br>- pretending to be what we were not<br>- perception versus reality<br>- rhetoric and reality<br>- feeling hunted<br>- seeking safety<br>- examining ones conscience | *"I didn't mind getting around the existing legislation and that we ran a late night speak-easy honky-tonk bar, which was what it was called, and there was a great flood of cash from it which helped us through phases of our capital expenditure when other income was closed off, but it did become ambivalent when it became just too much. You know and I began to realise that you know kids were drinking too much. Anyway it was out of necessity that we did a lot of that and eventually that had to go, but yeah that was morally ambivalent."*<br>*"The question of balance between the commercial activities and the cultural activities is a very big issue in a house like the opera house. Yes we could have re-balanced it, and we are in the process of re-balancing it at the moment. But by and large I think the board and funding bodies find that they want to pursue the line of least resistance. If there is easy money to be made in a commercial activity of this shape you know take it up, do it and they will only turn towards the more demanding areas of education, outreach, consideration of issues like artistic quality, development of art form, assisting professional development of young artists; they will only look at those if the easy lines of revenue begins to falter or fail. So that's a tension and a balance. Yes, it could have been refocused years ago but the board chose not to do it. At one point I said to them [the board] 'here we are posing as a municipal opera house pretending to be interested in the higher cultural life alright, truth is we are making all our money out of late night activity as a club.' There is a huge gap between how we are presenting ourselves and what the reality is. The perception and the reality are, the rhetoric and the reality are miles apart. The only way we can get out of this is to re-configure our activities, talk to our stakeholders, get revenue funding into the place, you know what we are making on drink… but of course they didn't really want to engage with that conversation four years ago. But I think they are engaging now because the cash flow from the nightclub has closed down and also there is a bigger competitor talking about coming into the market s. in. So it's the old story there is nothing like a* |

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| | *predator to get all the sheep to huddle together. So they spotted the long-term problem, so they are going back examining their conscience."* |

**PARTICIPANT E FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE E1**

***KNOWLEDGE IS VALUABLE, ACTION IS INVALUABLE***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Environmental Knowledge<br>-markets, customers, competitors | *"I would say, if you were to ask me 'what is the single biggest and most important piece of information we get in the business to force us and to help us make decisions?' it is market information." I would say the uppermost thing in my mind would be market information, information about what competitors are doing, information about what's growing, what's declining and so on, that's the critical part, brands are the lifeblood and the more information we have on our brands and on our competitors brands the more we can think readily and more forcibly make decisions in terms of moving us forward."* |
| - minding your own business | *"Sometimes you can get caught up hugely in what your competitors are doing, I prefer to look at our strengths and what we are doing in the marketplace and then obviously take cognisance of what the competitors are doing, but really focus in on your own strengths, and your own brands and do what's right for your business at the end of the day rather than getting too caught up with the competitors." "If I was to spend all my time thinking and worrying about our main competitor in the marketplace I don't think I'd ever get out of bed in the morning because they are so big and powerful you know. So I don't spend a huge amount of time thinking about them."* |
| - legislation | *"There are many pieces of information that are needed, for me as MD, go to the personnel front, employment law, recruitment law, this whole area of pay rates is critically important, that's a hugely important part of the business because it's very important for us that we are remunerating people properly… a third key piece of information that we need to keep very much up to speed on is* |

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| | *information technology… we place a huge amount of importance on information technology within the business."* |
| **LEADERSHIP MEANS DISPENSING WITH THE DETAIL** | *"People at management level, at senior management level or leadership level try to know everything that's going on and access as much information as possible, but then they have too much, it's like information overload and they don't know what to do with it."*<br>*"For me I like to know what's going on throughout the business in all areas, not in huge detail but generally."*<br>*"I don't go out of my way to know and understand and gain access to more information than I already have."* |
| **KNOWING IS A RECIPROCAL PROCESS** | |
| Communicate For Feedback | *"I firmly believe the more communication that you have within the business the better. Communicating the results of the company, how the company is doing, continually to everyone in the business. The more of an open culture you create within a company the more information you get back and the more feedback you get back."* |
| Sharing Knowledge Does Not Equate With Giving Away Power | *"Traditionally managing directors or senior managers would access all the information and have all the information but for whatever reason didn't share it, maybe that created a little bit of power among a function head or a leader."*<br>*"Often there is a reluctance to communicate how the business is doing on the basis if you tell them how profitable you are the staff will say 'Oh well this business is making a lot of money so pay us more'. I actually find the reverse, if people know what's happening, if they know where the ship is going, then they'll help you in getting there at a quicker pace."* |

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| **ACTIONING KNOWLEDGE TAKES PRIORITY OVER ACCESSING IT** | *"The main thing really is not so much getting access and getting all this information, it is doing something with that information afterwards. Knowledge is valuable, action is invaluable and I think that is the key thing, the key mistake made by most companies."*<br>*"To be able to make decisions based on that [knowledge] is a key part of my job."*<br>*"The biggest thing for me is to try and force more of a decision-making culture in this company in terms of using the information that we have."*<br>*"I think the key thing is using the information, making a decision and carrying out that decision and following it through."* |

**PARTICIPANT E SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE E2**

***I'VE STUFFED UP SO MANY TIMES IN THIS COMPANY, BUT YOU LEARN FROM THAT***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION**<br>Market Dynamics | *"The market dynamics and the changes happening in the market place are just huge. There is big move from the on-trade, pubs and hotels, to what we would call the off-trade, the multiples and the independent off licenses.*<br>*"People are moving away from beer to wine and white spirits as well and that's created its own pressure on the beer market."*<br>*"There is a seismic shift going on there, there was a time when the pub was like the only social outlet for people, now people have lots and lots of things to do and they are doing them."*<br>*"Home consumption has been going through the roof in the last three to five years, people have invested in their homes, what we call cocooning, they put in the wide screen televisions and they are now happy to stay at home with their families to bring in friends, rather than almost discommoding themselves and going out to the pub, which is just very new for Ireland, it's a new type of Ireland."* |
| Regulation | *"There has been a lot of regulatory stuff around the pub as well – the smoking ban about three years ago, the introduction of the groceries order, which allows retailers now to sell below cost – that came in last year, and more legislation on the introduction of random breath testing which has really created a lot of problems for pubs and a lot of them are closing and the good ones are trying to reinvent* |

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| | *themselves, turn themselves into venues that are less about alcohol and more about entertainment and food and that's a big conundrum. So this industry is not one that is standing still."* |
| Industry Structure/Competition | *"Over the last few years as well there has been is more consolidation in the industry, in fact my own company now is kind of in-play as they say, it is the subject of takeover bid which could have very serious consequences, what it means for us is that potentially someone else could own this business in six months time. What brings that more into play is more Globalisation and Internationalisation, because with a whim if the parent company gets into the hands of a rival it could lead to the closure of this business so that is unfortunately the sad reality of working in a global business you can have great pluses but you can have great minuses."* |
| **CHANGING BUSINESS PRACTICES** | |
| Faster and leaner | *"What has helped, for our business is being fast, being swift, being mean being lean. If you go back ten years the brewing industry was a very rich industry, you had layers upon layers now you have to be very quick and if you are not fleet afoot you are unlikely to progress and move forward."* |
| More Informal | *"The way we do business is much more informal, if you came in here ten years ago and you met my team we would all have suits, today suits are gone from the business completely we just don't wear them anymore unless when the bankers come in or whatever. So that makes a statement in itself, it's become informal."* |
| Real-Time Communication | *"The internet and the web have become hugely important it's like real-time instant communication in our business."* |
| Formality of Procedures | *"I suppose we have got much more formal about performance reviews, we would have formal performance reviews every six months now, that was probably unheard of ten years ago."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| The Importance of People | *"Well for me, I'm not sure I've learnt it but it would always be part of the way I do business, maybe it just has reinforced it to me, but really you really can't do anything without having a highly motivated group of people around you. So the people dimension is just hugely important in any organisation. You* |

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| | *can have all the strategies in the world, you can have all the IT in the world and they will take you so far but the real ace card in any business is its people and that is what I would say."* |
| - putting people centre stage | *"True leaders put people centre stage."* |
| - surrounding yourself with good people | *"Good leaders are aware of their own deficiency, having a good team around you will guide you. You need to know your weaknesses and have the best possible people around you. You should look out for the bright sparks, promote them, give them responsibility."* |
| - create excitement about the future | *"A leader needs to step away, look at the future, paint a picture, create excitement. People are bringing their exhausted minds to work. 38,000 companies are on the brink of collapse, there is a crisis of confidence, so much has been exposed, it makes a mockery of the lessons we have learned about CSR, ethics etc. If we could only harness the sense of celebration and fun we see in Croke park and bring it into business."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Activities Outside The Business<br>- fly the company flag<br>- keep thinking fresh<br><br>- bring a different dynamic from outside your business | *"You need to get involved in something outside of your own business, something you are passionate about on the side. Over the years I have always got involved in things outside of this company, for instance I am on the board of the Chamber of Commerce, I am very involved in PLATO which is an organisation dedicated to the support of small to medium sized enterprises, and I am also involved in IBEC at National level. I suppose I have deliberately got involved in these things because I think (a) it helps fly the company flag and (b) it keeps my thinking fresh and I think that is very important – a lot of business people see their role as Chief Executive of the Business and then they go home to their family and they play golf. I just couldn't do that; I think it is wrong, I think you learn an awful lot by interacting with people that you can bring back to your own business. So my involvement with the Board of the Chamber of Commerce is my first experience of being involved with a board outside of my business, that has just been fantastic, and also interacting with business directors so that dynamic is very interesting."* |

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| Formal Education<br>- take stock and dip in<br>- self-questioning<br><br>- think about the future not the past | *"I suppose its 20 years since I did formal studying and reading and so on and I am doing the Masters in Executive Leadership through the University of Ulster and its very refreshing, very stimulating – reading a lot of things I have maybe come across snippets of in the last ten years. Books like, "The Good to the Great", Leading the Revolution by Gary Hamel, some really good stuff that certainly helps me as I manage this business and just helps me to take stock and dip in and see if I think I am doing things right and if I can do things better for the future."* |
| - reinforce my own thinking<br>- get beyond fire-fighting | *"Well I am at the early stages of this Master's in Leadership, but the early stages have got me to think more about the future than the past. Again I am not bad at that kind of stuff but it just helps to reinforce maybe some of my own thinking – you know sometimes there is too much fire-fighting there is too much day-to-day stuff."* |
| Learning from Colleagues | *"Whom have I learned from? I am learning everyday from the people around the table here. I sit on a board that looks after the UK business as well which has been very, very useful and it has been a new dynamic for me as well."* |
| - role-models<br><br>- visionary and inspirational/not good on nuts and bolts | *"Whom do I learn most from? It's combination of everyone; again I think I am learning everyday. In the parent company, there are certain people there I really admire, there are certain people there I wouldn't have them sitting around this table but there are people who stand out the chairman of the company, he has been visionary and inspirational and so on he has taken the business from strength to strength. In the space of about twelve years, singularly he has done Trojan work, very calm sociable visionary not good on the nuts and bolts but set himself a goal to make the business much bigger and that is what he has done."* |
| Making Mistakes | *"You are constantly learning constantly refining. I've shagged up so many time in this company, but you learn from that, everyone is continually learning."* |
| Learning By Doing | *"Most learning is done in the trenches. The way I see it is I am learning everyday, it is an ongoing process, doing new things, meeting new people. The day you stop learning is the day you might as well give up you know, that is what business is all about."* |

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| Learning From Children | *"I have come to the conclusion, its hard to capture all that and say one man or one person has helped me to learn, it's really a bit like when you go to school, and 'What did you learn last week or what did you learn today?' you know. You learn a little bit from everything, I have a teenage son now and he is studying all these subjects and knows that he is going to drop many of the subjects after the junior cert and he is probably struggling to understand why am I learning history when I hate history and am going to drop it next year and why am I wasting my time? But actually by learning and by taking these subjects to a certain stage he is learning unconsciously almost and as he goes on and does his leaving cert. and hopefully college and that, and it is the same way for me, you are exposing yourself to things and people and sub-consciously learning stuff as well I think that will help you know."* |
| **ON REFLECTION/WITH HINDSIGHT** | |
| - should have made space to my follow goals<br>- won't beat myself up over what might have been | *"So what would I do differently? I suppose for me I would love to own this business and I would probably have tried to buy it from the parent company or work some sort of arrangement that I could buy it you know. The business was a family business up to the 1960's, it was probably one of the first businesses in Cork that became international it was bought by a Canadian company in 1962 the year I was born, and right to this day it has been a subsidiary of an International Company. I would love, if I could, some day to bring this business back to private ownership again and I probably should have done more to make space to do that over the past ten years, that said it would have been very hard, that might have been impossible but right now 20 years in the business I would love to own the business and in the future if I can make that happen that will be a very big objective of mine – but equally if it doesn't you know, so be it."* |

**PARTICIPANT F FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE F1**

***THE CHANGED NATURE OF MUSEUMS: FROM ATTICS TO LABORATORIES AND INDUSTRIAL SPACES OF ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION***

***From Roofing to the philosophic basis of artistic works - Knowing is being able to hack the conversation***
***KNOWLEDGE IS VALUABLE, ACTION IS INVALUABLE***

| THEMES/SUB THEMES | EXEMPLAR |
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| **A CHANGED MUSEUM CONCEPT** | |
| An Economic Purpose | *"Museums are used strategically now I think internationally by government, it differs from the original concept where they were set up to maintain and cherish aspects of the past with no precise function beyond that, a sort of attic into which things were put if they were considered to be of any value or interest. Nowadays museums are used in much the same way as bridges have been used…for economic development."*<br><br>*"I think previously museums were regarded as a burden, a slight aberration, places of curiosity, places to resort to on wet Sunday afternoons. Now they are seen as major contributors to the economic vitality of cities and even remote areas you know."* |
| A Broader Notion of Value | *"The definition of what is value and interest has changed also, nowadays what's considered to be of interest can be anything, what was often thrown out in previous years, like ephemera, you have museums of ephemera, printed hand bills, posters, bus tickets, that sort of thing and they can be quite extraordinary, popular culture and general life culture in the widest possible sense."* |
| Less Passive More Active continued - more spontaneous/more energetic | *"The Western concept of a museum is something very static rooted in a building in a specific urban location. Museums today are fundamentally different concepts. The new concept of the museum has* |

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| - more questioning<br>- less institutionalised<br><br>- less of a repository or storehouse<br>- fluid/experimentation and interaction<br>- flux | *become very much influenced by the question, why, like why are we doing this or why is this being done? That notion of a museum as an institution, in theory that would be the case, in reality there would be far more questioning and far more emphasis on outreach community education and treating the institution less as a repository, a storehouse, a display area for a very set pattern and much more as a fluid place, a place of experimentation and interaction, all sorts of innovative and interesting things that are not necessarily to do with rows of paintings on a wall or sculptures lining galleries on plinths with labels on them, so again you are back to this state of flux."* |
| - an industrial space | *"In many cases contemporary artists really just like industrial spaces. The Sache collection in St. John's Wood it's in a converted paint factory, it's a clear industrial 19th century building with skylights and it serves its purpose as a museum admirably."* |
| **AN ALTERED KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENT** | |
| To Reflect New Museum Space<br><br><br><br>- not knowing | *"We are building a new extension to this museum here and the planning of that extension involves a whole level of knowledge of what's going to happen in the museum world in the future, we call it a temporary exhibitions gallery. When cities go to build museum extensions they very often get locked into a very bureaucratic framework and they end up getting something that is inflexible and somewhat of a white elephant. In talking to the architects they'd say well what kind of art are you going to display in this new space and I'd say literally I don't know because you could have somebody doing a performance piece or you could literally have somebody having half a ton of ice melting in the middle of the floor."* |
| Museum Managerialism | *"Ten years ago there was no training course that you could attend in Ireland that would train you to work in a Museum. Now there are across the country Arts and Heritage Management Courses everywhere. Books, such as Museums Yesterday and Today, ethics, governance, legal concerns, you wouldn't read the full thing but these are very important, a primary source of contemporary thinking."* |

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| - drawing less and less on specialist education | *"I did an M.Lit in 19th Century Art at Trinity and to a degree I've certainly found that knowledge gained during those years of study to be more or less indispensable. In my day-to-day work I would use that knowledge very rarely. I'd use it in the preparation of catalogues and in the writing of essays but in the day to day work today I'm far more concerned with issues such as trying to figure out how computers work or how to get a printer working or how to get an internet link, how to use e-mail."* |
| - dealing much more with the nuts and bolts of the day to day operations | *"Issues which would be far more important and germane is knowing that the transport company that you ring up is able to do the job, that they are going to arrive and collect the work and handle it in a proper manner and not tramp their muddy boots all over somebody's carpet so that you end up with somebody who is happy to lend the work".* |
| - mundane matters | *"I don't think Arts admin. Courses should necessarily teach people how to type, but that's the thing that is going to make their productivity double or triple."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED** | |
| Wide Ranging<br>- building<br>- exhibition and installation<br>- museum theory<br>- international exhibitions – trails and tribulations | *"Aspects of buildings, buildings management, and then through to techniques of exhibition, installation and presentation and then the more theoretical end of Art History and Art theory and then through to knowledge of contemporary museum theory and management issues internationally. I mean the organization of international touring exhibitions is very fraught with all sorts of incidents, extraordinary incidents traversing politics and all sorts of areas. Recently at the Corbin, in Washington there was an exhibition of Faberge eggs and when the trucks went to leave the Corbin to go to the next venue cars from the Russian embassy came and blocked the driveway, to stop the trucks from moving, the Russian government wanted them back you see. It was a like a scene from a Russian spy movie. But that's an extreme story if you like of the trials of international lending and borrowing."* |
| - roofing | *"It really extends from the issues such as what type of roofing you'd use on an Art Gallery right through to what's the philosophical basis on which an artist, the philosophical issues that would drive his work."* |

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| - philosophical basis of art work<br><br>- knowledge of context<br><br>- windows to other worlds<br><br><br><br>- sociology and psychology<br>- the theory of the theory | *"The whole emphasis on Art history in recent years has been investigating not just the Art work itself but the context within which the art work is created. Nowadays Art history is just like a series of windows really into other world. There's been a whole sort of series of attacks on that classic western cannon, 'from the Caves to Cezanne'. In 99% of Art history departments this has been put aside in favour of more diverse and more theoretically based and more analytical approaches. You know, not saying who are the main painters in Italy between 1400 and 1450 but the emphasis is on saying 'What was happening on a word-wide basis around those years and why has it been the case that artists in Italy have been so highly regarded when artists in Turkey or Armenia at the same time have been so disregarded. Knowledge of sociology, knowledge of psychology can be a great advantage today in dealing with art. It's not the theory, but the theory of the theory that's become the most interesting part of Art history today."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Skills Based<br><br>- being tested rigorously<br><br>- grappling<br><br><br><br>- dispiriting | *"I have found that computers has been the area in which our knowledge or limitation of knowledge has been tested most severely, it doesn't work it just goes right down, you can't fudge it, you can't bluff it, that would be an area where we are tested in a rigorous, sort of scientific sort of way. That would be an area where my own knowledge is… you can get the manual, you can read through the manual and do all that but my own experience has been I have run up against a problem and grappled with it for an hour and then sit down go to the manual and find that in about 15 minutes you've actually got it sorted out. But those are hours wasted to me and there have been hours I tell you wasted here in trying to network computers and build up databases that were incompatible and I found that sort of flux in the computer world to be the most dispiriting in terms of knowledge gaps."* |
| Not Necessary To Know Detail<br>- knowing nothing in some artistic domains<br><br><br>- chapter headings sufficient | *"There are areas I know virtually nothing about, Islamic art for instance, I know nothing about it. If I walk into a museum to an Islamic exhibition I am just like a tourist, I'm simply seeing what I see and learning from what I see and after that it's a question of how good the labels are and so on. If we were to present such an exhibition here, a lone exhibition here of Islamic manuscripts, it wouldn't be necessary for me to know the detailed history of the development of the Koran, one gets the headlines, the chapter headings, and as long as you are able to make a reasonably competent fist of introducing it* |

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| - make reasonable fist<br>- not life or death matter<br><br>- not dealing in specalisms | *and explaining it and putting together a good presentation that's about it. I suppose in that way the museum world differs radically from rocket science where if you get it wrong, it blows up you know."*<br><br>*"In this gallery you're dealing pretty much with 18th, 19th British and Irish art, and the main skills that one needs in that area are that one has a fairly good command of English and some academic skills with access to libraries and printed information, plenty of books of references. One is not dealing with a museum where there happens to be an amazing collection of Chinese snuff bottles or something like that."* |
| Not Necessary To Know Detail<br>- beyond the obtuse and arcane | *"By and large museum professionals don't tend to quiz one another overly about specialist areas, because I think they understand that these can often be the most obtuse and arcane areas of knowledge. The director of the Ranks museum, some years ago, he came and talked on the ink blot drawings of Victor Hugo, these little marginalia drawings, these little ink blot sketches. So I think once you're able to make a reasonable amount of sense, in the museum world what tends to drive things much more is a sense of financial liquidity and stability. That tends to be much more important than areas of specific knowledge; the confidence that lenders have knowing that a museum is well run and the confidence that borrowers have in knowing that the people from whom they're borrowing will still be in business when it comes to taking this loan."* |
| Not Tested To Same Extent<br>- a less demanding cultural context | *"The concept of a museum is quite localised, it's a very specific thing this notion of a museum. Society here is more integrated and so museums serve a less symbolic function that they serve for instance in New Haven where they are very visible and important markers that people can relate to because of the corresponding social disintegration that they see around them. So they tend to cling to these institutions in the states or in Britain because of social pressures there that don't exist here. We're not tested to the same extent here; as we would be if we were operating this institution in, for example, say in New Haven. We would be tested there far more rigorously by people who are demanding service, demanding a certain function."* |

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| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Do It Yourself | *"A lot of knowledge management is DIY, like our cataloguing system, the collection here of about 2,000 works of art had not been catalogued ten years ago. We literally did not know what we owned and what was on loan to us, and it took years to unravel those grey areas."* |
| Reading | *"I spend about an hour each day reading, and that's fortuitous as I get the train in and the train home and that's thirty minutes each way. I'd keep up to speed by reading the Art newspaper, or 'Art in America' or 'Flash Art'. We subscribe to about three magazines and I am just about able to keep up with those."* |
| Professional Contacts | *"Membership you know, the usual professional associations, membership of the association of Irish Art historians, the American association of museums, one gets newsletters coming in every two or three days and they keep us fairly well informed about developments and thinking."* |

**PARTICIPANT F SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE F2**

***BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR - FROM THE GOLDEN DAWN TO A STATE OF LIMBO***
***Covering The Cracks With String and Selotape Solutions***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **TRANSFORMATION/TRANSITION** | |
| Painful | *"Well the Gallery has gone through a process of intense transformation really in the past ten years and in the year 2005, during Cork's year as Cultural Capital, the government made a decision that the Crawford Art Gallery was to become a National Cultural Institution and that we would be transferred to the Department of Arts Sports and Tourism and this would really be the first national cultural institution to be outside Dublin. It's been a particularly painful transition for many people in the gallery, it's not settled yet."* |
| Uncertain<br>- speculating<br><br>- limbo<br>- lacking personal and organisational direction | *"The gallery at the moment is in a limbo situation."*<br>*"There is talk that the Crawford Gallery would amalgamate with the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) and the National Gallery of Ireland and that was the great amalgamation of three national cultural instititutions. That attracted a good deal of public commentary and reaction and there were certainly identified advantages in it for the Crawford Art Gallery, however in more recent weeks it has been suggested that IMMA would not form part of that amalgamation. Now it remains for that be translated into a government decision and then to be translated into the necessary legislation. So again we are in a limbo as regards the amalgamation and its exact proposal,*<br>*"I would be able to tell you more in a year's time, at the moment I am in limbo, so I don't know where I am going, I don't know where the gallery is going."* |
| - close to collapse/struggling | *"Floundering is probably a very negative term to us because the public don't see us floundering, the public see good programme, well run, they see good activity here, by and large the gallery is* |

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| - private hell | *looking well, the building is looking well, presented well in terms of its output, but behind the scenes sometimes I just see how close we come to almost collapse."* |
| **TRANSFORMATION/TRANSITION** | |
| Managing the Unmanageable<br>- stress<br>- no recourse | *"So the board recognised that the conditions of work in the gallery are no longer as ammenable as they certainly had been, by and large. So the consequent stress that employees had been put under has been quite considerable at many levels. And with no recourse then to HR within the organisation, while we have the distant authority of the department of Arts, Sports and Tourism we have the more immediate authority of the board, it is clear to any outside observer that the current structure, the management structure of the Gallery is not satisfactory."* |
| - unsustainable position<br><br>- desperation | *"I know that the current position, and everybody knows it, the board acknowledges it, external management people have acknowledged it, that the present position is unsustainable and there is a much stronger resource here needed desperately quickly in terms of staff, management and helping staff, working with them, individually, collectively, training, professional development, empowerment, clarification about roles and so on as everybody is trying to do everything now."* |
| - derisory resources<br><br>- unrealistic expectations | *"The level of resources that we have that .. they are kind of in international terms derisory, if we were a local arts centre it would be a different matter. If we were a local arts centre if we had a skeleton staff there wouldn't be a great problem. But we are being expected to perform at National Cultural Institution level but how can you do that when you have the same staff and structure as a local art gallery, it just doesn't add up."* |
| Notoriety<br><br>- raising questions and envy<br><br><br><br>- disturbing the status quo | *"Over the past four years the VEC has ceded all responsibilty regarding the Crawford Art Gallery, apart from still being the legal owners of the property so we are no longer in a position to avail of their resources. The core staff of attendants and caretakers of me and the exhibitions officer and educations officer, we have been effectively left fending for ourselves to an extent, without the HR support and backup that was very much part and parcel of the VEC's administration of the Gallery."* |

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| | *"And I can tell you there were plenty of people and organisations who got on the telephone very quicklty after that decision [to make the gallery a National Cultural Institution] was announced and said 'How did you do that? We want to do that too!' From all over the country telephone calls came from board members and chairmen of various boards, of music organisations, visual arts organisations, saying 'How did you do that, how did the Crawford manage to get itself designated?'*<br>*So the Crawford Gallery was a late arrival to that group and we weren't looked upon with any great.. the other National Cultural Institutions were unsetteled to see the sudden arrival of the Crawford Art Gallery as a National Cultural Institution. But while they have been extremely friendly and positive, at meetings at the same time the question must arise in their minds, Well if it's the Crawford now, what's the next one going to be?"* |
| Self-Interest Versus Best Interest<br><br>- seeking clarity of responsibility<br><br>- loosing autonomy<br><br><br>- bereft of help and support<br><br><br>- not a long-term solution | *"Well, what I am looking for myself may not now be in the best interests of the Gallery. If I was to be transferred tommorrow to being an employee of the National Gallery of Ireland, with the consequent conditions of employment and definition of responsibilities and clarity of responsibility, I personally would probably welcome that. If you were to say would that be good for the Gallery, it probably wouldn't be, because with that would go that autonomy of the Crawford which of itself has been of such importance in gaining the attention and support of the Government."*<br>*"I would probably at this point in overall terms, welcome the amalgamation because after a period of four years of being really bereft of the help, support and infrastructure of the city of Cork VEC and attempting to more or less flounder along as an independent institution but with no professional admin staff here, outsourcing our financial management to a firm of accountants and attempting to keep the gallery going using temps from a recruitment agency, it is clearly destined not to be a long-term solution for any National Cultural Institution."* |
| Self-Interest Versus Best Interest<br>- seeking solace and support<br><br><br>- coming under someone's wing | *"The attempted course of rescue now is to amalgamate the Crawford with the National Gallery of Ireland. That will give me considerable personal solace and support if it comes about, but in terms of the Crawford in five years time, mounting an exhibition such as we mounted here with the Daniel McCleese collection, if we do come under the wing of the National Gallery I'd say that we wouldn't be doing this. I would say that in five years time if we come under the wing of the* |

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| - becoming a recipient<br><br>- loosing our identity<br><br><br><br><br><br>- loosing artistic independence<br><br>- narrowing of focus | *National Gallery we would be doing exhibitions which would probably be sent to us by the National Gallery."*<br>*"Ten years after the amalgamation with the National Gallery would artists in Cork look to the Crawford in the same way? Would some of our key institutes look to the Crawford in the same way? Probably not. Maybe so, I don't want to be so categorical but there is nothing to suggest in the National Gallery's own component constitution, mandate or mission or method of working that in ten years time if we were part of the National Gallery that we would be able to help the Backwater group or that we would even have been able to spearhead this initiative. This thing came from the ground up, not from the top down and it is a perfect example of what can happen when you have a good autonomous cultural institution, not an outstation of your capital city based one, so we will see, come back in a year's time."*<br>*"The National Gallery collection only goes back to about 1950, if we amalgamate with the National gallery where does that leave half of our art collection which dates from 1950 up to the present? The crawford has had a mandate for 200 years to engage with and promote contemporary art practice. If we come under the artistic direction of the National Gallery what happens, they don't have contemporary art or any recent art in their collection. And through a gradual process, it might not be immediate, but you know come back in ten years and look at when is happening and being planned, and I would say if we are under the full management of the National Gallery in terms of programming and autonomy and artistic independence we would be much more focused on just on the historic exhibitions and not even originating so many of them."* |
| Economic Sense/Artistic Contribution<br>- becoming an outstation<br><br><br>- being told what to do<br>- in the spirit of cost savings | *"To an external observer they would say it would make economic and efficient use of taxpayers money for exhibitions to be generated at the National Gallery of Ireland and then toured out to the Crawford Gallery, probably in scaled down versions. But in terms of the contribution then made by the Crawford Art Gallery as an institution with its own historic base in Cork since 1819 when you take all that heritage and then you say the Crawford might become an outstation of the National Gallery of Ireland, you would be looking at it probably as not the best kind of chapter of the Crawford Art Gallery's long history."* |

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| Loosing Our Core Competencies<br><br><br>- a space for play and experimentation<br>- vitality<br><br>- responding in different time frames<br><br>- a laboratory for trying out | *"If we came under the National Gallery's management and artistic direction we would be told what to do you know. They would say 'We think we think we should do the Petrie exhibition and we will send you something else, we are going to present this exhibition and we think it would be … because the cost-benefit analysis would show that if an exhibition was shown in two venues there is a consequent saving on costs you know."*<br><br>*"So if you said what would be a sucessful outcome of all of this, well if the Crawford gallery was given the resources to research, to formulate, to gather together the information to assemble and plan exhibitions that were shown in Cork but more importantly then to trade internationally, I think that would be a far more effective model, because you know there is space here for play, for research for experimentation, you can have more of a laboratory condition here which you cannot have in the National Gallery. A lot of the Crawford's vitality has been we are able to respond in different time frames, we are able to access private and public collections and we are able to serve as a laboratory for just trying combinations, combining contemporary and historic art things like that. So I can see all of that slowly coming to an end if we amalgamate without very clear or very well engineered legislation that guides our memorandum that guides the amalgamation."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| How To Cope<br>- patching up and parking<br><br><br>- getting by | *"You deal with it [lack of resources/uncertainty], you adopt string and sellotape solutions, or you know also parking a lot of work that should be done and it isn't being done. Now we are tackling issues quite well in terms of storage, cataloging things like that are moving ahead. But they are moving ahead by dint of outsourcing some of these services, photography, conservation work all of those things. So we are getting by on that level, and we can get by on the simple day-to-day management."* |
| Things Are Not Always As Presented | *"The chinese proverb that isn't a chinese proverb because, 'be careful what you wish for in case you get it', it's not a chinese proverb as I understand, it's a sort of invented one, because if you had come in 2004 when the news came through, there was a golden dawn for the Crawford Art Gallery* |

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| - the golden dawn doesn't always materialise<br>- goodwill is insufficient in affecting change | *then, no doubt about it, everybody was excited, everybody was delighted, this was the <u>best</u> thing that could have happened for the Crawford Art Gallery. However after about a year it became evident that there wasn't really .. while a good amount of goodwill had been put into the decision, a lot of thinking had not been put into how to effect the change, the transformation."* |
| **ON REFLECTION/WITH HINDSIGHT** | |
| Certain Inevitabilities<br><br>- museums have their own lifeblood | *"I don't think I could have done anything differently, … Possibly not, possibly not… pause… I'm not sure. When I talk about it sounds like a Greek tragedy where the players are pre-destined to go through their sort of cycles of life without choice in the matter, which seems at variances with Western Civilisation… but the longer you work in art museums you know moving in and out of the National Gallery and different institutions, the more you begin to see that these institutions have their own life blood and they fit within society in a way that is determined by society, which often doesn't correlate quickly or easily or perfectly with strategic development plans or sort of abstract analysis."* |
| Unfinished Business<br><br>- there is still hope | *"If I could go back in time to the beginning of this period, would I ask for it to be different? No, because you see the game isn't over yet, there is still a lot to play for, we are under the public service staff embargo which is very strict, if they relented on that and if we were just able to get one or two people in here, good people the whole structure could suddenly be transformed. In terms of my role what I am trying to do at the moment isn't sustainable in the long-term."* |
| **WHAT MIGHT HAVE HELPED** | |
| Management Knowledge | *"Management training would have helped, because of taking on this sort of combined role of HR management, day to day and policy.. management training is probably quite important, simply knowing how to manage situations that arise from time to time in the workplace without doing so just on the basis of intuition or well-meaning but ill advised .. yes management training would be* |

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| - as opposed to well meaning but ill advised intuition<br><br>- as opposed to doing our best and making it up as we go along | *very important .. some professional training, maybe on-the-job training there is no process of professional training for really any of the staff here. So when we are doing exhibitions or education you know we are effectively trying to do our best and making it up as we go along, and so far so good but the cracks are too deep now for it to be sustainable."* |

**PARTICIPANT G FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE G1**

***THE PRIMA DONA WITH A TEAM APPROACH***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Environmental/Local Geography | *"I must know the county and the environment in which this place operates, how it knits - and that's rather difficult in County Cork which is a very large county, a tenth of the land of the ROI, about three counties, 3,000 square miles, and a tenth of the population aswell, almost 300,000 people and it has between 7 and 15% of the public roads and one fifth of the coastline. That gives you an idea of the scope and I have to be knowledgeable of that."* |
| Operational | *"A knowledge of the fundamental operations of the local authority - I suppose a general knowledge of business."* |
| Legal<br><br><br>- not detail | *"You have to have a thorough knowledge of local government law in practice, if members want to do something it either fits with the law or it doesn't, it's my job to advise them and if they go wrong I'm culpable."* |

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| | *"You have to have a knowledge of the law because local government is a statutory authority… and the various pieces of legislation that are interrelated, so you have to know them, you don't have to know the detail of them.* |
| Financial | *"And maybe to have an appreciation of the financial –because I deal with finance and putting the financial package of this company together, so I try and get some flexible funds into it or some discretionary funds which I can use subsequently to prise down…* |
| How To Deal With People | *"I've a board of directors of 48 member, so I have to have a knowledge of meetings and how do handle them. Now 48 members of diverse backgrounds, diverse knowledge base, diverse political persuasions. Trying to get them all to think strategically for County Cork into the future when they are part-time, with all due repects to them is an extremely difficult task but that's my job."* |
| **GOING BEYOND THE DETAIL** | |
| Not Wanting To Know Everything<br><br>- knowing what is significant<br>- knowing what will 'pinch' | *"My factory floor is 3,000 square miles, I want to know whats going on in the factory, I don't want to know the detail of everything that's going on but I want to know the signifcant things that are going to pinch the community or pinch an individual, or pinch the media because want to know anyway what kind of organisation this is."* |
| - cutting your cloth according to your meaure | *"There is a limited amount of time, you can't actually go to the ninth or tenth degree about the colour of fellas windows, or the colours of the walls in the house or something, when in actual fact all we want to know is is the house breaking the skyline. In other words cut your cloth according to your measure."* |
| - not being fully conversant<br>- being half-way up there<br>- those underneath know the detail | *"I wouldn't be fully conversant with all the rules and regulations affecting planning but I would have to get half-way up where I am having a thorough knowledge of them. So I'd have a good background in it and at the same time if I'm reading new legislation or that, I'll assume that people underneath me, and I'll tell them I'm making that assumption, will know the detail of running it."* |

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| Achieving A Balance<br>- the ordinary job and the job of vision | *"So, there is an ordinary job to be done which is straightforward, same as any business and then there's the one of vision 'where we are going, or what are we at or what are we doing? The reality is that you must run the job while you're doing all the thinking and planning, the job isn't stopping like you must keep it going at break neck speed but you must also own it."*<br>*"While I deal with the core activities of the County Council and do the fundamental job – what was it said, do the ordinary things extraordinarily well, by the ordinary I mean the ordinary legal duties.. I think more than that, a local authority, a county council, people expect leadership from it, they expect support from it".* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Experience<br><br>- prising things open<br><br>- building up autopilot<br><br>- remembering | *"I'm in this position a fair length of time and I suppose I'm doing a lot on autopilot with regard to the knowledge base you are talking about and so it's hard to sort of bring it back and make it crystal clear."*<br>*"Experience I suppose comes very much into what I am talking about and the comfort or the confidence of experience of having done it elsewhere and being able to apply that here and see how you prise things open."*<br>*"You learn by experience, if there is something new or novel that has worked you go away and have a look at it and see is there relevance in it, it's amazing many things I would be doing now, 10 or 15 years ago I would not have seen the relevance of, but you are all the time building up this autopilot thing I was talking about, you're all the time building up this resource and you say, Yeah I remember now I saw something, I might have seen it ten years ago and thought that's nice but it wouldn't' work for us and all of a sudden you see some use for it and you say God… you know."* |
| Social Interaction<br>- casual<br><br>- covert | *"I go out sometimes on social occasions just to find out what the general public think of the county council. Like I was coming down the hill in Kilcrohane last year and a lady stopped me to give a man a lift and without actually knowing who I was we had a good discussion, a good debat. I use those opportunities to try and find out from people, particularly without identifying myself, 'what are the problems in this area what are the things that are causing ye problems and what are the County* |

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| - uncovering relevance<br>- what the public are saying | *Council doing about it.' So I use it as a kind of touchdown, try and find out about the organisation, how relevant it is. Then when I talk to our own people invaribly I'll be told how great we are or whatever and I'll say well that's not what people are telling me."* |
| - unstructured knowing<br>- people talk off the record<br>- building up a cadre of information/bank of knowledge | *"I spend a lot of my time meeting people and talking to people and even in an unstructured way getting involved in social occassions where people may talk off record to me about whether this organisation is relevant or not, so that's all building up a kind of cadre of information a bank of knowledge."* |
| Colleagues<br>- brainstorming<br>- putting your own stamp on it<br>- understanding needs of an area | *"What I mean by knowledgeable is, it's one thing to know the detail and just follow along with it religiously or slavishly, it's another thing to come back and do a bit of brainstorming with your colleagues and see are there ways in which we can prise open the cask of central government. You know what I'm talking about, there's a straightforward way of doing any job and a way of putting your stamp on it and part of the way of putting your stamp on it is to understand the needs of an area."* |
| - I must know, so I must be told | *"I am prepared, I have never said 'I've no comment no matter how controversial it is, so I must then know if I am going to talk about something so I have a message around this place if there is anyting controversial or likely to be controversial I'm to be told the background to it so that if I am asked by the media I can answer it and I don't want to say I'll ring you back or I'll check it or whatever."* |
| - all the key people ring me up | *I have a situation where all the key people in this organisation ring me up and say 'by the way there was a problem, someone was killed on the road, there was a skid,' and I want to know was the road deficient or was the car deficient, were we responsible, if we are why, what are we doing about it, to know the background to it so that I can actually acknowledge mistakes, if there are mistakes make steps to put them right whatever."* |
| - I want to know so that I can acknowledge mistakes/put things right | |
| Networking<br>- close<br>- shaping my thoughts | *"I would have a very good relationship with the business community, like I'd be close, part of the people, part of the networking, I would be dealing with the key people in the Chamber of Commerce, the President of the University, the key people in the IDA, they would be the outside influences that I would be meeting with regularly shaping my thoughts."* |
| - pointers that are debatable not received | *"I've hired a firm with an outside expertise of business but an inside knowledge of public adminstration, would you look at my planning department would you interview everybody involved. I* |

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| - bouncing ideas | *said what I want is some pointers, I'll debate them with the staff, I'm not going to take your solutions, I'll debate the solutions with my staff."*<br>*"To take this and bounce if off someone and say like okay, this is what I am doing, but if you were doing it what's the scene internationally, what's happening in terms of office development, who are the designers what's the new thinking coming into it and take that on board. We might throw it out but at least have a brain-storming session".* |
| Reading<br>- a sickness<br>- being selective/chewing it around<br><br><br>- reliance on others to clue me in | *"If they saw me reading here they would think I was sickening for something. I suppose management, I used one time read Drucker and Peters, whatever his name is. Okay, you take them on, and you chew it around. You look at others and you say okay, I'll take that point and I'll drop the other, I do things one way, others do it another way…"*<br><br>*"I've to read an enormous amount but I try in so far as I can to scatter them around the place, because I wouldn't have the time if I'm to be proactive in dealing with people I can't be doing the research and stuff. I have a very good team and I'd say to people give me a page you know.. just clue me in on the key points, make them out and hand them to me."* |
| Blended Learning<br>- formal education<br><br><br>- learning by doing<br>- reflection – cold thinking time | *"There are a couple of fundamentals, you have to go to University, you have to go to the IPA, you have to go on different courses, you have to have a kind of update or be kept up to date, so that's just background knowledge; you'll learn a certain amount, you're exposing yourself to thinking, so people must do that, but you must manage it, you can't be all the time away, you have to draw proportion on how much time you actually do doing the job, how much time do you do learning how others do a similar situation and how much time do you get off to, kind of cold time for thinking and putting it all together, pointing yourself in the right direction."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| - if not knowledgeable buy expertise<br>- we don't know it all | *"If I don't know things I'll find out about them or I will put someone onto it."*<br>*"If we don't know something or if there's some new thing we'll get someone to wise us up on it."*<br>*"I always say if there is somebody here who isn't knowledgeable about it we'll buy in expertise, rather than have the idea we know it all, and we don't know it all, we buy in expertise."* |

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| **IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE** | |
| As Figure Head | *"I spend a lot of my time out out beyond, 30, 40, 50 miles out beyond the city, out into places like Kischeim. If you go to Kischeim and ask them what they think of the county manager they'll tell you up to 3 or 4 years ago when I came here, they never saw a county manager or they never heard of him, they never know what he looked like."*<br>*"I try to get out to the periphery of the county more, there's no difficulty around the city here… but people in remote communities would tend to think that the County Council are very centralised.. so I tend to go out from that."* |
| As Spokesperson/Gatekeeper | *"Like if I'm invited to go to Cape Clear Island to be the guest of honour on Lifeboat day, I don't just go out and say we're all nice guys and it's a nice day and let's have a drink and go away happy; I'll try and see what message can I impart to the people of Cape to give them confidence, but what message can I also impart through the reporting of that to my own staff to say this is the way you should be focused you know."* |
| As Defender | *"I need to get up and answer those charges against the County Council without being arrogant about it – so I do a lot of radio interviews and television interviews, I don't want to do them, it's the last thing I want to do apart from being in here, I don't like being in here, I prefer to be out and about meeting people, but I do get out of here as much as I can."* |
| **LEADERSHIP STYLE** | |
| Directive<br>- the prima dona | *"I'm the bridge, I'm in charge, I'm the boss of this organisation, there's only room for one Prima Donna and that's me, so I've got to take all those decisions and then lead this team of 2,400 people of various disciplines and professions, lead them to deliver that policy."* |
| - non-compromising | *"Someone must make a decision, I would go out of my way to say I don't compromise. Like the decision is not going to be, as the fella says, 'what's a camel? A horse put together by a committee.'* |

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| | *No, we'll have camels and we'll have horses and I'll make decisions on that, but at the same time I'll take people on board with me and try insofar as I can to go down a road in which everyone feels they are participating. But if I don't agree with it or believe in it I'm not going to say it was a majority decision, it's a majority decision provided I go along with it."* |
| Participative | *"I have a team approach, I don't believe I am alone. Although I did say there's only room for one prima donna, at the same time I'm saying I believe in a team approach. I believe in two things, one to give guidance to the team, first of all to get down to them what my philosophy is, what I want done in this organisation. The other side of it is to give people an opportunity of contributing, to get opinions always on that but then to make a decision."*<br>*"Before I go to Council suggesting things or before I come back from Council, I talk to people, I get their view and ideas and shape them out and run the show."*<br>*"I wouldn't get any mileage out of giving people something and them saying oh god, you know, the fella rides in on his white horse and solves all our problems and rides out again. No. I am always saying I will come in alright but you don't put the monkey on my back, you keep the monkey on your own back, you feed him yourself but I will give you some food to feed the monkey you know". I was working out a deal for a community group this morning that would do two things, one it would help them, it wouldn't make life easy for them. What I have to try and determine is what is the figure that will enable them to do it and stretch their necks, rather than what is the figure that will make life soft for them and then they get lazy, and that's very easily said, but that's what it is really all about."* |
| Change orientated<br>an open mind | *"I make a virtue of being a change merchant. This was a consevative organisation, it was an incestuous organisation, most of the people here would never have left Cork County Council, they would think the sun moon and stars shines out of this building and that the people of Cork ought to be eternally grateful down on their knees saying prayers, without ever asking the people of Cork what they thought or without ever opening their minds to say maybe there is a different way of doing things."* |
| Questioning | *"I'll look at the nuances or the changes, the kind of differences, "Why was the law introduced", "What are we talking about? so that this organisation can move down that road and not kind of be behaving* |

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| | *in a legislative fashion which is a little out of date – or if we can't go down that road and the legislation isn't achieving that to be able to put a position paper to the minister suggesting he ammend it to achieve that."* |
| Unique | *"I don't necessarily decide to model myself on others in fact in many ways I would kind of strike out, I don't follow paths, I strike out and blaze a trail if I can, because everybody does the ordinary things well, you need to do the ordinary things extraordinary well."* |
| **LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY** | |
| Emphasise Action/Risk Taking | *"I have a number of characteristics of management that I have. I've three main fundamental things and that's a bias for action. We are always talking about big bodies that move slowly, I take a chance and that has been said by a member of the Council, 'we have a manager who will take a chance, he doesn't double-check, treble check and have a belt and braces before he does something.' I'll take a chance, in other words get the ship out before the tide goes out. There's no point in having the ship all painted, all done up, all the packages are parcelled and done up and the tides gone out so you've missed the boat. You get the show on the road and you can point it in the right direction aftert that when you are at sea. So I am always saying get going, do something, make a start, like just cross the barrier, pull the plug out of the bottle and get going. Not foolishly like, but we're 75% 85% sure and let's get that right as we go along."* |
| - be proactive | *"If someone has a problem you got to sit em down and talk to them, explain why you can or can't do it, if you can't explain, don't just leave it all hang there to fester, get proactive rather than waiting for things to come to you."* |
| Encourage Creativity | *"What I feel, as a planning authority one of the fundamental things we must address is rural decline, one of the things is to give people confidence, then they'll develop enterprise and therefore there will* |

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| | *be opportunties. So a fundamental strategy underpinning our development plan is that, so what that means then is to put flesh on that, do something about it not have it just as a structured plan."*<br><br>*"And then innovation, anybody in this organisation who is innovative they know I will support them."* |
| Leave Something Behind<br>- ensure continued relevance<br>- make a mark/leave a footprint | *"My whole raison d'etre is to leave a footprint, to do something to make sure this organisation is relevant. What will I leave behind? I have no doubt that the core activities of this organisation will be run extremely well, that the financial base on which this organisation works will be extremely sound. I think the people coming in here will find the County Hall more open, it won't be the closed thing it was. "We are here to serve" that notice is very deliberate and it's intended more for the staff than the public when they come through the door. We are here to serve you not to tell you what's good for you. I think the communites in the periphery of the county will feel loved and I think that is going to happen you know in five short years when I move on."* |
| Create Space For Sucession<br><br>- lend experience/knowledge to lift things a bit | *"When I move on a certain amount of knowledge will go with me, you can't decant all your facts, I'd say an awful lot of people around here don't want it anyway, I think it's good that change comes at the top and that someone will come after."*<br><br>*"People here have their own ability and their own experience, and their own contribution to this organisation. What I can do is just give them my experience and my knowledge and lift it a bit and leave something with them."* |
| **LEADERSHIP: DOING THE MUNDANE/TAKING THE BLAME** | *"This is a boring job, this is a dreadfully boring job, looking after roads and housing and sanitary and sewage and water, sure Jaysus you'd tear your hair out because all the people are complaining, no matter what you do. Invariably, If the tap runs for 364 days out of the year, nobody gives a curse or a hoot if its coming out of a hole in the wall it was God sent it down, but as soon as it stops it's 'Where's the Council' and I'm not lying if it doesn't work the 365th it's the council's fault you know."* |
| - the public find fault | *"If people are in trouble the first thing they will think of is 'who has landed us in this mess, in other words who hasn't rescued us, or who hasn't seen that the situation is such that we're not in this mess.* |

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| - the public look to be rescued<br>- the public love and hate you | *I think that's a great.. it's kind of hating those you love, hating those who do nice things for you, it's an Irish juxtaposition."*<br>*"It's my job to advise them [members of the local council] and if they go wrong I'm culpable."* |
| - being the fairy-godmother | *"The Council is there like the fairy Godmother looking after everyone and nobody thinking about it until something goes wrong."* |
| **SELF-DOUBT** | |
| Feeling Stretched<br><br>Self-Questioning | *"I would say this job stretches me to the absolute limit of my ability, time-wise, mental-wise and other wise and that's what makes it so satisfying. But I get nervious at times.. always wondering aswell you know, am I doing the right thing, should I be doing it differently, I mean someone else will do it differently, who is doing it right? You don't know."* |
| Seeking Validation | *"One of my consolations in this is I have to have kind of checkpoints now and again and recently Cork County Council passed an unanimous vote, unanimous of the 48 members, asking me to remain on as County Manager. So I must be doing something right, I know I am not doing everything right but I must be doing something right."* |

**PARTICIPANT G SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE G2**

***THE LEADER AS HIRED HAND, PAID SERVANT AND GALLOW GLASS***
***You earn the shilling, you do the fight***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **A CHANGED ENVIRONMENT** | |
| Local Government Reform<br>- missed opportunity<br><br>- balancing day-to-day and strategic<br>- the immediate drivesout desirable | *"The main event that has happened since we last met was the arrival of better local government and the opportunity which it presented for local government reform and the missed opportunity it presented in the sense that the directors of service, or the key advisors to it, were placed too high. The consequence of that was that they were dealing with day-to-day administration of a service as well as strategic policy and you can't do both, and the one that suffers is the strategic policy because you are drawn into the day-to-day and the immediate drives out the desirable."* |
| - centralisation and lack of consultation | *"I feel that at local government, in my time, if there was a fault with it, or a criticism I had, it was that all the main policy issues were dealt with by the department even the very structure of 'better local government', was done by the deparment without any consultation to local government; in other words it was presented by the deparment saying this is it, and that is really 'Big Brother' and I am just saying that very issue itself shows a lack of strategic thinking by the department. I thought when it came out first it was a slimmed down version, but it got diluted and you end up then with a shit load of directors* |

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| - a dilution of strategic thinking | *at county manager level, they are too high, they have to be involved in day to day administration, that dilutes their strategic thinking. A better system would have been to put a mid-management person in to support the chairman of strategic policy, it would have been a way of getting thought out improvements through the system up from the ground that could be endowed by the department rather than having it all one-sided."* |
| - genuine ignorance<br><br>- tarnishs everyone<br><br>- cowardly handling of misbehaviour | *"The second big thing that has happened was the whole issue of planning and corruption, I just think this was really unfortunate, it was an unfortunate change, because I genuinely, when that came out, I genuinely didn't think there was any official involved. Now the thing that irritated me about that whole issue afterwards, I was on the minister's advisory committee, and I was saying to one of the directors, like I am saying to you now, how surprised I was and it was the last thing I would have stood by, and he said to me 'Sure we knew that, we knew that your man … and I said 'Wait a minute now, that makes it worse, if you knew we are all tarnished now and we are only wasting our time trying to say we are not'. For the slightest thing you should have had him fired, full stop end of story no question about it. I said I am absolutely flabbergasted. I just felt that if there was fraud or corruption, you just don't tolerate that for a minute, you just investigate it immediately. So the handling of that kind of misbehaviour – it was cowardly."* |
| - zero tollerance versus shying away from difficult decisions<br><br>- protecting the wrongdoer | *"In my 42 years in local government, and I suppose 35 of those are at a kind of a senior level, top management, I caused, I use the word fired just for ease, five people, it was all in connection with money, I just wouldn't tolerate corruption, I wouldn't tolerate people getting their own money, I am trying to be polite about it, and confusing it with the council's money and that's why that irritates me, because there was a way of dealing with it which was shyed away from, whether the courts, everyone is afraid of the courts. I won't go down that line, but I just feel, the behaviour of the courts, the wrong-doer is given 75% protection. There will have to be a change in the legal system because we are kind of leaning over board to protect the wrong-doer to the extent that the courts almost abandon the wronged. In one case I dismissed a person for stealing diesel for his boat from the fire-service, I had an enquiry into my actions, I was nearly dismissed because I denied him the principles of natural justice, I shouldn't have dealt with it in that way, I should have written to him and said I have evidence of this. I am just saying it is one of the difficulties and that went back into the courts and this tribunal* |

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| | *found he had been unfairly dismissed, he was stealing stuff but he was unfairly dismissed, apparantly that's the law, I don't know, it didn't make sense to me, I had a job to do and I was getting on with it and I was absolutely intolerant of such wrondoing and had I done it I would have expected to be treated the same."* |
| - desire to get credit gets in way of progress<br><br>- big boys versus small boys | *"The point I am making is, why this co-operation with the community isn't embraced, and the classic example of it is was when we were doing road improvement works in North Cork,and it is really county council work and the council give some help towards it and when they want a plaque up they want 'Cork County Council helped by IRD Duhallow', and I said wait a while lads, wait a while, Jaysus if Cork County Council needs help from IRD Duhallow there is something wrong with it. You should have IRD Duhallow with the support of Cork County Council. You are then going to get maximum thanks and you are going to get it through the organsation. Whereas if you put the County Council up first you are not going to get local contributions because they will say ah sure feck it that is the Council's job you know. Could you not just somehow just tone down your desire to get thanks and your desire to get praise, And I said could you not kind of acknowledge that it is this crowds idea, and say we will support you, get your plaque up, get your name second, not first. I said, what you do if you put your name first you are going to allienate people. I said ye are big boys we are small boys. I am just saying it is that attitude that can't see that once the thing is done for the benefit of the community, they can't see that the end product is what's important, not who gets credit for it."* |
| **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**<br>Bureaucracy destroying volunteerism<br><br>- lack of recognition and disrespect | *"Jaysus they sent out fellows to audit the accounts and you would imagine it was the central bank you were running … when the last auditors report was presented one of the accountants just reared up and she said 'For the love and honour of God what is all this about, this is a waste of resources getting down to this nitty gritty getting this to be signed and that to be signed'. The point I am making is there is not a proper recognition of volunteers, it is an absolute disrespect for the efforts of those involved in it, you are a criminal before you… we are only talking buttons, buttons and bows. I was always irritated, or always tried to keep a balance between the possibility of fraud and the cost of insuring it could happen, and there was no point spending £50,000 to prevent £1000 going astray, and this is a classic example of that, , I had to pinch my tongue and say for Christ's Sake we will find the money* |

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| - balance cost of fraud with cost of detection<br><br>- out of touch with reality | *somewhere, we will go and ask a couple of business people, you are only giving us 8% of our budget and Jaysus you have more rules and regulations you can actually use a sledgehammer to crack a nut and that is what is happening a lot and it comes back to people at the centre who are out of touch with the reality on the ground."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Too Many Chiefs | *"I feel as a consequence of the programme for better local governmet there is serious overstaffing, I think you have too many directors of services, there are too many chiefs and not enough indians to put it blunty. I had a situation here where a person I worked very closely with was going for a staff officer post. She asked me would I mark her card and give her some advice. So when she got the job I said congratulations, you are on your way, and she said, What are you talking about I was only 51st,' I said 'Pardon,' she said 'I was 51st on the panel, but you got the job, 'that's right' .. how many staff officers? – New staff officers there were 55. So I said Mary, for god's sake that is one example now of how wrong the system is, you now are after getting a fabulous promotion and it means nothing, because you are two a penny… I said I left here in 1963, threw up everything and went to Galway to become a staff officer, they were that precious at the time. You didn't even to shift your ass off the chair and you got it, and I could say that like, and that wasn't being vulgar. I am only just saying there is something wrong somewhere."* |
| The Impact Of Diluting Controls<br><br>- draining the service of its values | *"Regarding the corruption, corruption spreads, I was giving a paper at the regional authorities conference and the chairman of it was having lunch with me and he said you are retired and I said yes and he said was it before or after the case of... And I said be careful bi curamach, I deeply resent any association. I said unfortuantely that is what it has done it has tarred everybody else. I just think it was very sad, it was very sad that the people who were involved in that couldn't see that they were really damaging a service that they had spent their life building up. Because for my part, I was pinching myself really, because there was never a question or a hint of wrongdoing, you wouldn't dream of it, I don't know, one of the things that kind of puzzles me is this business of unvouched expenses – it is coming out now. When I see here this regime that has come out now, they get 50,000 unvouched or 25,000 unvouched, there should be no such thing as unvouched expenses. I don't know* |

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| - system has been loosened so much<br>- no longer know right from wrong<br><br>- not intrinsic value of wrongdoing but act itself | *where down along the line that has changed, the thing has been diluted. But that seeps its way back through the system, we have reached a stage where the system has been loosened so much that it is hard to know right from wrong."* |
| - loosing confidence and trust | *"It is not the amount it's what it can lead to, you start small and things grow, my answer is you cut it off, because what you are doing you are loosing your confidence, I loose my confidence in someone, my good opinion of them, and therefore you can't trust them, it's not the intrinsic value, it's the nature of the decision that led up to it and I think in the public service more than anywhere else that was terribly important."* |
| The Importance of Volunteerism<br>- appreciate and value people's efforts | *"My involvement with the community has thought me to appreciate volunteers more and the contribution they can make to a better Ireland."* |
| The Importance Of Leadership<br>- the leader carries the soul of organisation | *"I think the leader of an organisation carries the soul of the organisation, it is more than management, the leader must be hardworking, must be dynamic, must be extremely fair, but more than all those must carry the soul of the organisation, so if there is criticism must come out publically and acknowledge it, and change it, or defend it. Someone said to me one day when I was introduced, you are the Telefis Eirinn County Manager or you are the Morning Ireland County Manager, because I couldn't refuse the challenge, I would come up with something, not for the glory of it of it really, but I think the staff are entitled to know you are there, you are about and you are around and you are a figurehead, not in any proud way now, but in a leadership role. And I don't see that much now, I don't see county managers doing that now."* |
| - staff are entitled to know you are around/genuine figurehead | *"I just felt as a County Manager it was my job and I had kind of 'Keep Wexford Beautiful' I used to get a team to go around to schools, and run competitions and that kind of thing and people said how do* |

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| - the public are entitled to know<br><br>- do your leadership duty | *you get time to do this, and I said I can't afford not to, these people are the future citizens of Wexford and they are entitled to know. I just think they [leaders] they carry more than the business they carry the soul of the organisation, he is the hired head, the gallow glass, the paid servant, and he should be seen and he should be there and he should be occupying a leadership role and he should make himself available, so that's it, you take the shilling and you have to fight."* |
| The Importance Of Integrity<br><br>- upholding one's reputation<br>- playing fair<br><br>- earning one's stripes | *"Before I left I was trying to put a position paper to the department on the system of promotions and I was very offended when some of the people in the department said 'You are obviously trying to look after your friends before you retire.' I said 'How dare you' 'I have a reputation in local government and I am not going to discard it now on the eve of retirement, I have a great belief in local government and actually there will be no promotions, they will all have to go and be assessed, there will be no fellow fixed up, because I wasn't fixed up, and that's not vindictive, I just feel for everyones' sake you just have to do it and you just have to earn your stripes."* |
| - be able to stand over decisions<br><br>- treat all equally<br><br><br>- remove biases/grudges<br><br><br><br>- don't be vindictive | *"The public service had to have a tremendous ethic, I always said to people, if someone comes in looking for a service if they are entitled to it, give it to them, if they are not entitled to it it doesn't matter who canvases for them, if they are not entitled to it don't give it to them and then that's fair. And if someone comes in and you realise by what they are saying that they are entitled to something and they don't know it, you tell them, you get them to apply and you give it to them and then you can stand over that. I can put my hand on my heart, particulary in planning, and I made it so, if I was ever brought before an enquiry I could put my hand on my heart and say No, I never, for friend or foe I treated all equally. There was a big row about something down in Wexford, and I had an issue with farmers rates at the time, I totally disagreed with them, and the IFA, the big shots in the IFA were developing a quarry, and when they came into me and I said No, they said you're still carrying a grudge against us for the farmer's rates, I said I disagree with ye, and I still disagree with ye, and I think ye were wrong, and I think ye won the battle but ye lost the war, and it's costing ye more now in* |

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| | *accountants fees to prove ye are not liable for rates than it was to pay rates. But I said if you can find one example with any of your colleagues where I treated them wrong or vindictivly, I will resign, because I shouldn't be here. I might jump up and down the streets, and I would do it all over again if it had to be done, but I won't be vindictive, I won't deny you anything you are entitled to."* |
| **ON REFLECTION/HINDSIGHT** | |
| I Can Sleep At Night: I Did My Best<br><br>Sticking Too Rigidly To Rules<br>- how did that reflect on me? | *"It's not said in any proud way, but I can lie comfortably in bed at night and say I did my best, except there were we'll say a couple of incidences where I feel I may have been just too dictatorial, and kind of said No and maybe I should have… I always remember I wasn't long working in the county council, I was working in the rate section, and there was a religious organisation that ran a farm and the fellow in charge of the farm had been a teacher of mine and he came in with an application for doing work on the farm and he was late.. the form should have been in on the 1st October and it was the middle of October and I threw it out. Now he had been given an appointment, he had made an effort, and it didn't matter a damn whether it was in on the 1st or the 5th of October it didn't matter but I went strictly according to the rules. I often thought afterwards what did he think of me and is that what he educated me for, I cringe when I think of it you know. I have seen incidences afterwards where date stamps were changed – now I never did that you know, but it just caused me to think that everything wasn't working and therefore your man might have been wronged you know."* |
| Being Overly Pre-occupied<br>- being rough<br>- tried to make amends | *"I could have been pre-occupied with the whole dealings and not given people time, or I could have been rough with people, for example in a deptuation, if I didn't agree with what you were looking for I told you and then maybe if you handled your case too .. I could get rough… There was a case one time, I tried to correct it, I helped some people down in Crosshaven, there was a Dublin guy who was in charge of a group and he sought a meeting with me a month afterwards looking for some ridiculous amount of money to put a causeway across boats and all that sort of thing and at the time I was bursting my backside trying to get money to repair cobbles out in West Cork or someplace and he came up with this proposal and I said out, 'forget about it', and he said 'if you don't give these people what they are looking for I am going to go back to Dublin' and I said 'I don't give a damn whether you go back to Dublin or not, I am saying to you and I can write it up on the wall in big letters they are not* |

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| | *going to do it, they are not entitled to it and they are not going to get it and it is a stupid idea and there are far more important priorities,' and I left. I had to ring him afterwards and apologise and I said 'I will stick with my decision but I just think I could have been more kind to you in the presence of your community that you were in representing you know."* |
| Neglected My Family<br><br>- they took notice<br>- don't get involved in defending me<br><br>- becoming personally associated with the decisions you made<br>- reflected good and bad | *"The only big one I regret much and it is all tied up with this is, I probably neglected my family more than I ever neglected my job. I always remember I was dropping my daughter down to music one friday evening, she was only 8 or 9 and the Wexford People was out and there was an article about me and Kimore Quay and giving planning permission for houses, people walking down the main street and they could see the salty islands and I took the view away by giving planning permission for houses and all that.. and I said if you want the view buy the thing. I mean the fellow with a the site is entitled to as much and all that, but anyway there was a big thing, showing the salt islands and your man is destroying them and Jane was very quite and she said to me 'It's terrible Dad' and I said 'What's terrible?, 'What they are saying about you,' and I said 'Who is saying what about me?, and she said 'What they are saying in the paper about you' and you know this is the thing that got to me, she said 'You are away at night, and you are doing this and the other thing and you are away from us and it's not being appreciated,' and I thought out of the mouth of babes, and that was an indication that they took notice of it you know and I had to say to them all, 'If I am criticised ignore it, or if someone says something to you say jealousy will get you nowhere, don't get involved in defending me because you are too small for that and you are too young for that, and don't get hurt, just laugh it off."*<br>*"But it was kind of demanding on family and I presume their buddies in school would raise things from time to time. because my son Conor said to me one day, 'A fellow sitting alongside me in school his father says his prayers for you, he says you are after changing zoning and so on,' but he said 'before you get too complacent his cousin across the way would cut your f'n throat …I am just saying in local government you were kind of personally associated with decisions and that reflected on people good and bad in a way. I am just saying, it took a lot of my time and I think that was something that the children suffered as a result of even though the don't hold it against me."* |

**PARTICIPANT H FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE H1**

***THERE'S STATISTICS, THERE'S INFORMATION AND THERE'S KNOWLEDGE***

| THEMES/SUB THEMES | EXEMPLAR |
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| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | *"Statistics and information is absolutely vital for us. We have to know the number of people who would be availing of our services or who would want to avail of our services and the type of services they would need."*<br><br>*"When a person comes to us we will have to be able to slot them into whether they are going to be in the independant group, the semi-independent group or dependant group." The information comes to us through the assessment team, we would have a case conference and we would try and determine between a number of professional people as to where the person is acually going to slot in if you like."*<br><br>*"We have to try and determine the dependancy level of the people and what their needs and their staffing ratios are going to be because that's how we would begin to build our budgets; In going to the* |

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| | *Deparment of Health we have to be able to say 'look, as we have assessed the situation, these are the kind of people we have, this is the type of service they are going to need, and on that basis be able to justify our budgets."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE HAS CHANGED** | |
| Internationalisation<br><br>- customise to context | *"The knowledge that we need to have has changed, we need to know what's happening internationally in the whole area of people with learning disabilities, you see all that is going to have a big bearing on us in the future."*<br>*"Well I think that what we would want to do is not to universally accept everything they are doing there because some of the things they are doing there [in America] are good and some of the things they are doing are not so good. I think rather than slavishly following what they are doing we should be able to pick and choose because we are a number of years behind them."* |
| Availabilty/Accuracy | *"Up to now I suppose we would have been lacking in the provision of accurate figures and statistics, knowing the number of people actually within a catchment area who had a mental handicap and the type of service s they would need. The Health Board now have a register of all people with learning disabilities within their own catchment area so that is a big step forward."* |
| Greater Formalisation | *"I mean before the planning was more or less laisez faire but now it's much more developed."*<br>*"We all have to sit down in the month of September and plan our budgets for the next year. Each head of deparment has to give in their service needs for the next twelve months and then we prepare our budget for the next year on that basis. That has only developed in the last number of years whereas before it was a much more haphazard type of situation whereas now everything has to be formulated and planned."* |
| - more regulation | *"We would have some funding under the ESF and they have very stringent rules and they have laid down criteria… and that's another thing that has changed in the last number of years and we have to gear ourselves for that."* |

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| Rising Standards | *"Things that were taken for granted a decade ago are no longer acceptable now and the standards are raising which is a great thing and we all have to be abreast of what is happening so our own standards are not going to fail."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Reading | *"One of the ways I keep up to speed is by reading and getting literature as one says and publications from various places."* |
| Networking | *"By going to seminars oneself or by getting representatives of the organisation to go there and report back to us what they are actually talking about, what the trends seem to be so that we are all reasonably kept abreast."* |
| The 'Community' | *"We are not then necessarily the authors of our own destiny as of now, because in the last number of years we co-ordinate with other service providers and with the Health Boards. Learning processes must be easily transferred from school to house/home whatever. For example, schools, in domestic economy they liase with our people in the houses, with our house parents, so that we can synchronise the types of cookers and things that we have in the schools, that they would be familiar with in the schools then they would also have these in the houses, so that type of consultation is absolutely vital. to make sure everybody is aware of what is happening. In teaching for example, I would meet the principal teachers on a regular basis, so that is vital for us that we would know what is happening in the field of education, the trends that are happening, the curriculum."* |
| Formal Education/Expert Advice | *"We would have internal training, we would also source external training by getting people to attend conferences appropriate to their professions, and if we want to bring in consultants we bring them in; and that's absolutely critical that this kind of situation is going on and is continued because otherwise people become a bit stagnant and staff can get instituionalised."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | *"I don't think I ever found myself in that situation [where I lacked knowledge], because we would have a reasonable resource here and a number of key personnel and between us all I think we would be able to muster up the kind of knowledge that we would need."* |

**PARTICIPANT H SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE H2**

***KNOWING AS LANGUAGE***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **A CHANGED ENVIRONMENT** | |
| Centralised Decision-Making<br><br>- knowledge more remote | *"One of the significant things that happened was the changing from local responsibility to central responsibility, now trying to get somebody to make funding decisions is fairly difficult from an administrative point of view. Before you had local administration and you knew who they were and you knew how they thought practically, now it is a different situation, now it is very centralised, very centralised."* |
| Towards Greater Inclusivity<br><br>- lip service only | *"The other signficant thing then that has happened is this whole business of inclusion, and especially in the line of education, you know they are talking about inclusive education, and whereas the government suscribes to inclusion and inclusive education, the facilities that they are putting into the* |

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| | *regular schools for inclusive education is minimal to be honest with you and it is not in my view working satisfactorily."* |
| More Complication Legislation<br>- client advocacy or client control<br>- playing by the rules<br><br><br>- being in a no-win situation<br>- being careful or careless | *"And then you have the question of making people wards of court and you couldn't do a damn thing unless you got permission from the wards of court, we have a number of people who are wards of court because their parents are dead and they wouldn't be able to manage their own affairs."*<br>*"If you have a person in a house with you for example, where you have 3 or 4 people together and they say to you at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning 'I want to go home', if you say you can't go you could be accused of detaining them or imprisioning them or some damn thing (Laughs) so you have to be frightful careful. And if you left them off and something happened you could be accused of negligence why the hell did you let someone off. You can't win (Laughs).* |
| More Complication Legislation<br>- control/fear of litigation<br>- took more chances in the past | *"In my day we used to talk about 'the dignity of risk'- one should be able to realise that they are able to make decisions for themselves and afford them that opportunity. Whether the dignity of risk has changed now or not I don't know I think it has, …We all took chances before and we were lucky that they worked out the way we wanted them to. But now if somebody says to you at 3 or 4 O'Clock in the morning, you have a person inside in a house, if they tell you they want to go home or they want to go somewhere else, some people would tell you you should be able to let them off, let them off, let them; do their own thing, if they are adults they are responsible, on the other hand if they have diminshed intellectual ability you could get another employer that would harbour the opposite direction. What do you do, it's a difficult one." (Laughs)* |
| - legal capacity<br>- controlling the controllers | *"And then you see you, have this whole question of legal capacity, and we spoke about advocacy but who is going to regulate the advocates, it's grand the self-advocate is fine, but if you have an advocate appointed to a person or if you are a parent, who is going to make the decision .. if you have a child , not a child, the child is okay, but if you have an adult for example, that has an intellectual disability, they go into hospital, and surgical intervention might be required, who is going to give permission.* |

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| - the difficulties of advancement | *"I remember people, at one stage when we had people working in our shelter and workshop and they would get paid in cash and they would be going home, and sure some people used to take the flipping money off them. But again we have changed, these people now have their money paid into the bank and some of them can manage their own account with a bit of help.*<br>*"Before they would have nothing, the state didn't give them anything at all, but now at least they are getting something, whether they can manage it or not is another thing if they can't manage it who manages it for them? Can they make wills and all sorts of things? So these are all of the ethical issues that are arising now that didn't arise before. It's great that they all get a bit of money at least, now but it brings other issues to the fore."* |
| Greater Parental Involvement<br><br>- putting the child away<br><br>- team involvement | *"Things changed and evolved and parents became more involved in their child's care. At one stage, very early on, especially if a child had a very severe, profound intellectual disability there was a thing, 'Look they should be put away'. I put that now in its mildest sense. But now that is not the case, because parents want to be involved number one, and they are encouraged to be involved number two. So it is a team involvement if you like between the service provider and the parents and that is the other significant change as I say. Sure some people were left in residential homes, I know one particular person, as a young child he came into us on a Friday evening pause…and 40 years later we have never seen his parents, they went to America and one of his sisters made contact with us, she never knew that she had a brother until one or other of the parents died. And he is still with us." [Long pause.] So that was the sociey then as the one says, but now that wouldn't happen, I hope it wouldn't happen. They were the times that were in it."* |
| Greater Public Acceptance | *"I must say people are much more accepting now. Going back to the very early days when children were going home from our schools on a Friday there were a number of children got on a bus down in Parnell place to go home and some of the people who were on the bus got off and wouldn't go on the same bus as them, that's a fact. But there are hundreds of them going home everday now and they are down around the bus office in the evenings and they are all taken for granted… you know, so from that* |

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| | *point of view things have changed alright dramatically. People are much more accepting, much more educated, more aware. Yes much more aware."* |
| The Role Of The Community<br><br>- unsupportive/helpful<br><br>- supporting | *"Again some people will tell you that people with intellectual disabilities], should be in their own community but, but how can the community get involved if they are not communicating with them or whatever. People still tell me they shouldn't be in the community. But I don't see the community making friends with them either. If they are going to school sometimes the children can be very hurtful to them, in that if they have a disability some of them mock them etc. But, on the other hand, sometimes they can be extremely helpful to them. I remember one case down in Skibbereen, where we had a young fellow going home on the bus and some of the school children used to be mocking him and some of the others ganged up and said 'look he is as good as us', so you know the peer pressure put paid to that."*<br>*"The other thing then, talking about the community is the involvement that has opened up with respects to things such as the speakers clubs, art, music, drama things like that. The whole business of the special olympics has made a very significant change to peoples lives people are getting involved in all sorts of things they wouldn't have dreamed of a few years ago."* |
| **ON BEING AN EX.** | |
| Continued/Different Involvement | *"I would still be involved, at the moment, I am chairperson of the board of management in a special school, I would meet with my sucessor quite frequently and some others in administration there and being invovled on some of the sub-committees of the board we would meet fairly frequently anyway. I happen to be the chairperson of their self-advocacy committee. I suppose what we are trying to achieve there is to get people with an intellectual disability to if you like to be able to speak up for themselves, express their demands at a local level, at service provider level, with local councils or then up along to their TD's. And then I am involved in the International scene I happen to be on the board of Inclusion Europe, Inclusion Europe is a board of people, of persons with an intellectual disability and some people with a physical disability aswell. It keeps me going anyway."* |

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| - hard to let go of old habits<br>- leaving most of it to chief executive | *" I suppose over the years I would always have had a lot of invovlement with parents and I still like to keep in touch with parents. There is a lot of invovlement to be honest with you maybe a lot of it is my own fault I might not have to do it but I do; but a lot of it now is left to the Chief Executive"* |
| - not responsible or culpable | *"Well it would be very different because then I had responsibility now I don't have that kind of responsiblity – it's a lot of easier to talk to others about this and that, they don't have to take my advice, they can do their own thing and if it goes wrong well I can say I told you so."* |
| Keeping Up To Speed<br><br>- old fashioned<br><br>- reliance on others to monitor | *"Well I suppose the only way you can keep up is by reading up on things. I am not a great person now for the internet to be honest with you, I am still old fashioned and I prefer the document that I can pick up a few times, read and put it down and come back to it again and mark where I was. One of the girls in the office she monitors my emails and she gives me the signficant ones so that is how I do that."* |
| - international contacts<br><br><br><br><br>- changing our minds or telling us what we were doing right or wrong | *"I suppose our involvement with the international organisations certainly would have opened our eyes to what is happening elsewhere or what is not happening elsewhere as the case may be. Meeting people, especially from the Scandanavian countries, has always been an influence on us, they were always kind of ahead of the possey on certain things, we would have considered them to be leaders in the whole business of inclusion. We would have certainly learned a lot from those people in meetings and in visiting and in they coming to visit us, they certainly would have been very influential in either changing our minds or telling us that we were doing the right thing, to continue with it, whatever way."* |
| **LANGUAGE AND LABELLING** | *"If you go back to the very early days the language was appalling. I'll tell you a true story, up in the office in Montenotte one day, it was quite a number of years ago, two parents came into me and we were talking and I asked them what their problem was and they told me they had a 'mongrel' child. I kind of blinked my eyes and I said 'Are you sure? And they said Yeah and I said 'Are you sure you weren't told it was a mongol child' and they said 'Oh yes that was what we were told.' But you see the mongol is gone out for years, but these are the terminologies that were being used. And there was* |

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| Bad Language/Miscommuncation | *worse than that being used. But at least that has changed, some of the terminologies now, maybe they are not that acceptable either, they are a big improvement on what was there to be honest with you. I mean Down Syndrome now is quite acceptable terminology but before these people were called mongols. I would always be very sensitive in those kind of situations to be honest with you."* |
| Disability By Degrees<br><br>- exclusion | *"Then the other big big change that came about if you can recall there were a number of court cases, one was was a child who had Reyes syndrome and as a result of that he developed brain damage. But because of his severe brain damage, the deparments's ruling at the time was that people with a profound intellectual disability weren't to be admitted to schools. He wasn't admitted to the school and his mother brought a case against the department and the state and who ever else, and she won her case. And children then, people with profound intellectual disability were entitled to schooling the same as everybody else. The department of education had to change their minds and provide education for them and it is a signficiant thing, people with a mild intellectual disabilty the teacher pupil ratio is 12:1, for people with a moderate it is 8:1, whereas for people with a profound disabilty it is 6:1."* |
| **ON REFLECTION/ HINDSIGHT** | *"Well I suppose hindsight is a great thing, we could all learn from that, going back to the very early stages, I joined this organisation in 1965 and at that time the facilities here were extremely poor for people, at that time they were known as people with a mental handicap, the facilities were terrible to be honest with you. At that time going back to the 60's the early 70's we built facilities for them and we made them too big to be honest with you where they were for about 40 people, that would be one of the things now we wouldn't do today we would have them in smaller facilities but that was then and the standards then were not what they are today, thank god that the standards have improved. As I say that would be one of the things we wouldn't have done, but we did it; but we have most of them closed to be honest with you, we have built houses now where we would have 6 or 7 people in each house."*<br>*"Again going back to the very early days, we had schools for the mild and the moderate handicapped people and the most of them were in residence, and we closed down all those and most of them nowwould be attending on a day basis and that is a significant development aswell. They are being bussed in from various places. As I say they are the things that we have improved."* |

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| | *"We don't get disheartened, but you keep at it and say well look maybe somebody else more enlightened might come along and hear us, and it is happening you know, but it is very slow."* |

**PARTICIPANT I FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE I1**

***KNOWLEDGE IS HAVING A NOSE FOR BULLSHIT***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **KNOWLEDGE/KNOWLEDGEABILITY** | |
| A Skill You Perfect | *"Having a nose for bullshit."*<br>*"Negotiating the Roundabouts."* |

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| A Reservoir/Fountain Of Folklore<br><br>- tacit<br><br>- difficult to unlock for competitors<br><br>Shadowing Someone Who Knows<br>- picking up bits and pieces | *"It's stored in folklore, all in folklore, that's why we'd be down now talking to this guy that I was telling you about 'the roundabout', the guy whose really in the way, he's a huge reservoir of knowledge, he doesn't know it, but all you've got to do is aks him the right questions and you'll get the answer, he doesn't know he is giving me a very important answer, he just happens to know, he doesn't even know what he knows, he doesn't know if its of any value, but he's vastly experienced and very shrewd about judging people… but he's a huge resevoir, a fountain of knowledge, not good to our competitors because they wouldn't know how to unlock it, but we can go down and unlock that any time we want, that's just one of the resevoirs that are lying out there, rafting out there."*<br>*"My father would have been folklore, our accountant here who spent a lot of time with my father, spent a long time in his shadow just picking up bits and pieces around after him. He would have an awful lot of folklore."* |
| Judgement/Cuteness | *"He* [my father] *would be cute enough to know when to cut the price, to go for the business, that judgement call, that little call that you have to make, when to buy out your competitor, when not to."* |
| Common Sense<br>- eliminating bad thoughts/habits | *"It's all about common sense, it's not about developing flows of information, if anything it's about eliminating wrong flows of information, about eliminating bad thoughts, about eliminating 'it was always done that way' and yet clinging on to the good stuff that you have and the connections that you have with your customers and your suppliers."* |
| Customer Asides/Subtleties/Gossip<br>- tittle data | *"That's knowledge, that's all tittle-tattle data-based knowledge, and that's the kind of knowledge that can loose you business if it slips down through the cracks in the floorboards."* |
| A Repetitive Cycle Of Experience | *"Everything repeats you know, all your customer get fed up of business eventually and they let you down and they go broke and they get you for 10,000, well that might be 20,000 today, but it could have been 5,000 20 years ago, 2,000 in the 1950's but it's the same thing, it's a constant repeating process, its virtually uncollectable when it happens that's why you need a resevoir of experience to anticipate it."*<br>*"I'm almost twenty years, nineteen years in this game now and I often wonder have I nineteen years experience or one year's experience repeated nineteen times."* |

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| **KNOWLEDGE PRIOIRITISED** | |
| Knowledge Of The Marketplace<br>- competitiors<br><br>- customer subtleties<br>- tittle-tattle | *"The knowledge that we need is our competitors stocks, our competitors buying prices"*<br>*"If there is a currency element involved, what are our competitors buying at?"*<br>*"A database on a customer of prices and peformance and washouts"*<br>*"You've got to think about all the relativites, who this guy is, all about him. If you don't know all about your customer' little subtleties, about the wife's name, the mother-in-law, the daughters 21st, that kind of stuff, we've a little memo system and it does that…."* |
| Knowledge Of Operations<br><br><br>- communications system | *"We could be in a treehouse .. you don't need buildings, we don't don't need carpets, we don't need desks because people never get to see them.. so a lot of what is going on today, they say we need this and that, in fact you'd be amazed how little you actually do need, you need almost nothing, but what you do need is a very, very good communication system and an understanding, and the closer you keep your head office activites to the operations the better because then you need less people to tell you about what's happening."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Informal Networking<br>- swapping yarns<br>- stuff of no consequence to them | *"I swap yarns with people and networking more than anything else." "I am constantly stunned by the small things people say, utterances they make, 'course we won't see him any more', real small stuff that's of no consequence to them, but to me is very important."* |
| Getting Out Of The Office<br>- out in the fields digging things up | *"People ring me now and say 'you're never in the office, I'm never in the office anymore, I learn nothing in the office, you need to be out and about now all the time that's where you need to be and that's where you learn things, you learn nothing in here because nothing will flow to* |

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| | *you, you have to be out in the fields, dig it up yourself or talk to people who have already done some of the work."* |
| Customers<br><br>- working with customers<br><br><br>- gossip/customer asides | *"You can learn from the customers, your big customers, I went up to the sugar company in Carlow which I always thought was a rather snoozy state company, we had a problem with a product that we supplied and we got together and tried to solve it."*<br>"Customers *say the most important things in asides. You learn a hell of a lot about your competitors from your customers, 'oh so and so retired now, he took early retirement, there's a new policy in that outfit' and you listen away and you find out about their personnell policy which is directly applicable to you, and you find out all this by mistake and he doesn't even realise he's telling you the personnel policy."* |
| Playing Around/Fiddling About | *"Most of my learning about data processing has been through owning a computer at home and playing with it, … trying to learn and trying to keep up to date, your best way is just fiddling around yourself at a computer at home."* |
| Benchmarking | *"If you do one thing, if you do nothing else you measure things and you benchmark and try go out and find out what the other guy is doing and you line up against him – you keep benchmarking you keep measuring … and then you try to improve on that and if you don't improve you're standing still, you're going backwards because the new guys coming into the game without your raft of overheads and hassle and bad thoughts might do loads of things wrong but he might actually get the surface element of it right. One of our competitors in Dublin who we don't directly compete with has spent a lot of money getting consultants to build a system and in corresponding with their guys on the ground we know what they are doing wrong and then through our official visits we learnt a bit more about what they'd done wrong and through that we evolved certainly what wouldn't work and we'd be able to evolve then what would work."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE IS CHANGING** | |
| Knowledge Becomes Redundant | *"Things are changing so fast, we have nothing that is of any permanence at all except our location and our machinery and stuff like that, but everything else is constantly evolving and that's the reality."* |

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| - end up doing what you are told | *"All our skills that we have evolved down through the years of sourcing and bagging and supplying the product in the right weights and right everything has changed completely from being product led to being market led. We are now doing what we are told instead of telling people what to do which for us was a huge reversal of opinion. I mean it was very easy for me to do but for the whole organisation it was extremely difficult."* |
| Perceived Wisdoms Are Changing | *"They say small is all, the say big is everything, they are constantly changing things around you know."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT** | |
| Control<br><br><br><br>- safeguard<br>- give it out economically | *"All my thoughts when I knew you were coming were given to the control of knowledge and how that knowledge seeps down through the organisation."*<br>*"Knowledge is a very valuable commodity.. we have a whole load of knowledge here and we're very careful what we let percolate through the organisation"*<br>*"The problem with knowledge all the time in any organisation must be learning as much as you can without.. giving out as little as possible or giving it out as economically as possible to those who you think need it". "And yet you'll see organisations that ruthlessly delegate all the way down right onto the ground, pile guys with stuff, information and resources way beyond their abilities and some struggle and survive and some can't handle it."* |
| Communication | *"We found the greatest move for knowledge was one of those things, we don't communicate in writing anymore, we communicate with those things, mobile phones. There's a security problem there, but that's how we communicate."* |
| Remembering | *"I'm amazed how outfits continually forget, they forget all the mistakes they've made and keep making the same mistakes again, they don't have a backdrop of knowledge at all. If you maintain a backdrop of knowledge, like we have, a constant reservoir of knowledge all the way back, I do it through my father going way back to the 1940's, but maybe that makes us stick in the muds, I don't know. Maybe we are going too close to the pack. Maybe you've to keep on making all these mistakes over and over and over again, maybe that's what success is, I really have not idea, I'm constantly scratching my head saying jeekers you know…"* |

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| Staying Close Not Remote | *"All of us are becoming more rarefied, kind of stratified and the further you are up in the clouds the less you can see and the more remote you become, and the problem with learning is trying to grow a business withoug going remote and it's very difficult because as soon as you grow you can loose track… and that's what we are doing."* |

**PARTICIPANT I SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE I2**

***GOING BACK TO THE KITCHEN TABLE YOU GREW UP AT TO FIND OUT WHAT IS NORMAL***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **A CHANGED ENVIRONMENT** | *"My life has been turned upside down since I met you last. There have been big changes, big changes. We were a 3rd generation family business. I don't know if I said this to you, but when I met you last we* |

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| - sailing off a cliff<br><br><br>- struggling to survive | *were sailing off a cliff. We were involved in a bidding war to try and take over a competitor but it was a blessing in disguise that never happened. The industry was in decline, lifestyles were changing, people weren't lighting coal fires anymore, we were up against an aggressive marketing campaign by the gas company. It was very hard to keep going, we were loosing the urban market, it was very hard to compete, to put our cost base in line with the big players."* |
| **A CHANGED ROLE**<br>- failure in my father's eyes<br><br>- ending up out on my ass<br>- finding myself unemployable<br>- being an non-conformist | *"I sold the coal company, my dad who was 73 at the time retired, he was very disenchanted, thought that this was an admission of failure, this was a company he had taken on from his father and We sold out to a big competitor in 1999. So I ended up out on my ass. I went on a few career assessments, I was 40 at the time and they told me I was unemployable because of my experience I would be regarded as a threat in an organisation. They said I gave off a non-conformist vibe – that is the best way I can put it."* |
| - formal education to bridge gap<br>- scratching around for opportunities | *"So I did the project management course in 98 – 99 and I said I have to get back into business again, I can't afford to retire, so I scratched around looking for a business and because I was so badly burned with changing staff and so on, I decided to get into a service business, the coal business was a very difficult business to run, so I went into a rather unusual business, file and document storage and scanning and shredding and I founded this company, did up an old premise that we had and I started that in 2001 and that business is growing great and I have eleven staff now and we have a grand selection of clients, multinationals, big companies. And then at the same time we had some capital left in the company so I decided to buy out the leases on the various bits of land we had. I was possessed of this vision I had this property here and I developed it and I built this."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Knowing When Enough is Enough<br>- overcoming one's ego | *"Well I would think that the biggest problem anyone has in business today is their own ego, that is their biggest problem, themselves, they overtrain, they hire too many people, they surround themselves with too many staff. This time three years ago, I found myself inside in this office, I had a private secretary nextdoor, I don't know what she did, I have no idea. But I was going to meetings all the time and I always had to take minutes, I was always meeting builders and I had spent the bones of 200,000* |

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| - learning to cop on<br><br>- learning when to shout stop | *on an extension to this building with a linked walkway and it was all go and I got up the 1st January 2008 and I said 'Jaysus Dave, you'd want to cop on here boy you are going to build another building and the lights are going to be off and you are going to pull yourself under and go bankrupt if you don't stop if it isn't already too late.' The way I looked at it I said okay I have two or three hundred grand spent on that, I have the planning the planning is still valid but I had to say Stop."* |
| Parents Were Right All Along<br><br>- the importance of core values that stick | *"What all of this had taught me is how right your parents were when the told you to cop on when you were 22, go get your hair cut and go out and get a job. I keep saying that to my kids who are that age now and they half listen. But really those core values will stick to you for the whole of your life. Because people will always want to lend money to you when there is loads of money around and people will always want it back off you when it goes scarce and it always goes scarce. There will be a time of plenty again, which seems far-fetched right now but five years ago a time of scarcity seemed far fetched.* |
| People Are Illequipped To Deal With Change<br>- success and failure | *"I think God doesn't provide us with the skills to deal with either failure or success and I know that lotto winners most of them are broke five years after they win because they don't have the skill set and they give it all away and everyone argues and they change their lives and they find it just doesn't suit them so they would be better off if they won nothing. That is a very mealy-mouthed thing to say now, but it is the truth. We are very ill prepared to deal with change. I know because I have been through lorry loads of change and I have to learn how to deal with it and re-invent myself more than once and it has been very difficult."* |
| Don't Deal In Short-Terminism | *"I have to say one of the things I learnt early on in life was the value of an annuity income. And I don't think an annuity income is valued by anyone today. What is an annuity income you are going to ask me. An annuity income is repeat business and to get repeat business you have to be a better service provider than your competitors and you have to constantly attending to that no matter what. If you want your business to last in other words you can't deal in short-termism. You can't be milking things because if you do that you will end up with nothing, you will have no business. So you have to have* |

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| - core values/core competences<br>- know what is important | *core values and you have to have core competencies and you have to say there are certain things I will outsource but I am not going to outsource other things, in other words you won't outsource being here dealing with people's grievances, you will always be approachable and you will never be defensive."* |
| How To Cope With Change<br>- going back to your roots<br>- getting a sense of normality<br>- back to the kitchen table | *"You learn [to cope with change] by going back to the kitchen table you grew up at and you find out what is normal. What is normal? And when I am hiring someone I want to find out about their kitchen table, what is their normal and is it too far away from my normal. The closer it is to my normal the more inclined I am to hire them. Whatever skill-sets they have how ever many rings they have in their noses, that's kind of irrelevant really, what's their idea of normal, do you know what I mean? And I don't know what normal is."* |
| - remember the past<br>- cry halt when necessary<br><br><br><br>- you cannot trade on recklessly | *"I am young enough to remember all of these things happening in the 1980's and 1980's so I could read the tea leaves very quickly So when I saw the kind of things that were going on I cried halt in Jan 2009 and I said this has got to stop right now or the place will go bust. And I basically went back to the knitting myself and instead of going to meetings and talking and telling fellows how great I was I had to cop on. And if more of us had copped on too there might be more of us here now to talk about it. But you cannot, I saw it in the coal trade you cannot trade on recklessly hoping that things will come right, thinking something will show up the economy will turn, it's not the economy's faut, it's your fault for being reckless."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Experience | *"All the experiences that I had in the coal trade really stood to me."* |
| Friends | *"I have learnt most from my friends, I have a very tight network of people and we talk to each other twice a day and we can hang on each other and then continue the phone conversation later on without* |

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| | *insulting anyone or without insulting each other. My innnermost business secrets they would be familiar with and I would be familiar with theirs and we are always teasing things out."*<br>*"The friends that I have they are all involved in businesses different to my own, they have been a great resource to me and I know I have been a great resource to them. Because when you are running a business it is a very lonely place you don't really have friends you have colleagues."* |
| Family/My Father | *"My father said jeepers Dave the Irish want America at home and then he came to me again and he said you know we have America at home. He said that won't stack up and then he came along and he said I told you so he is 85 now. But he wasn't the only one who said that. But anyone who had spoke out was sounded like a naysayer."* |
| Religion/Philosophy | *"I am not a spiritual person, I have explored religion a few time nad I have found it counterintuitive to me as I think I know more than them, imagine, 2,000 years old, me 40 I know more than them. There is a problem there so I had to find other ways of finding the resources to deal with the pressures you have."* |
| Reading | *"A big influence in my life was a small little book called the little book of calm, I keep that in my car, I open a page of it every so often, I used to open it once a day, now I might only open it once a week, but it will tell you an awful lot about how to stay away from things. Another book which has had a huge influence on me is a much misunderstood genteleman from medievel Italy, Nicolli Macheavilli, greatly misunderstood, because Macheavilli is constantly quoted as how to stay in power –Macheavill is mostly about what not to do, how not to treat your people, how to be decent. Macheavilli on change is just absoutely incredible, he has a theory about implementing a new system of change he basically said those who stand to gain from change will currently be outside the order of things and will not be able to help the situation and those who stand to loose from change will currently be in the various chains of commands and will see nothing of certainty in the change only uncertainty and will conspire to work against it no matter what. And if that doesn't sum it up I don't know what sums it up, And it says it all there, exactly what is going to go wrong and why, so unless you have ownership by the people in the middle it aint gonna happen. He talks about fellows who have a big fancy fortress and they can see out* |

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| | *a siege, and he explains all fellows in fortresses they all lost, the only people who survived were those who never spent any time at work without the people. So don't spend your time in a castle, and here I am in a fancy castle here now. Get out be amongst your people, your staff, your clients your customers, so it is quite interesting, there are people who will conspire against you if they don't trust you and they are not going to trust you if you are the big chief and inaccesible."* |
| **ON REFLECTION** | *"If I had time I would spend more time philosophing I think and studying philosophy and studying the ebb and flow of society the ebb and flow of life and what makes people really happy and what makes people really unhappy."*<br><br>*"Can a business survive it to the fourth generation, I am the third generation, what do they say, 'find it, make it, break it', I am the break it. I am still here and I sold the business and started another business. My eldest son is an aminator, the other is an architect, the other a lawyer. It is accepted that it will just be divided and why should I be concerned about this anyway, because it is all ego you know. This is all ego, controlling things beyond the grave."*<br><br>*"I often thought about emigrating, particularly when I was out of work, will I go off to Spain or somewhere but I lack enormous quantities of self-discipline, I am very weak, like saint Agustine, befor the reformation you know, I give into all sorts of temptations, so I am better off at work, here where it is raining and where you have to go into work to stay warm, not like out in Spain where you have to stop work because it is too hot. I would be a mess, an alcoholic, a mess, nobody would like me, I would turn into an awful eejit, maybe I am one now, but at least I am concious that I am not supposed to be."* |
| **WITH HINDSIGHT** | *"Never ever get involved in any business with family members, do not go into business with a family member, because even if everything works out it still doesn't. And you will always get informal approaches through the back door, and you will try and run a meritocracy in your place of work where everyone is promoted on merit no matter how long they have been there and their unique relationship with the boss or whatever, and you will find if you have a family member in the middle of all that they* |

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| | *will send out vibrations that somehow or another they cannot be fired or whatever. I know because I worked in my fathers family business and I found it very difficult to walk in, I thought I had to work twice as hard but that was me, most family members feel they have to work half as hard, so they work four times less than I do, because they felt they are entitled to be there. So stay away from family members. If you want to get a family member a job ring up some fellow and get him a job but don't hire him. I don't think there should be such a thing as a family business and I speak as a third generatin family business member. Family businesses are designed to fail. Family businesses are doomed, unless one fellow can get in charge and get enough income to buy back all the shares from the others or if they give it to him for a stipend or else they all get out and they hire a professional manager, unless it is actually skilled based business like artisan cheesemaking, a true vocation."*<br><br>*"The reality that you have to accept that your family is truly your wife and your children and not your brothers and sisters. There comes a time when you have to accept that that is a fact and there comes a time you have to differentiate between one family and the other and even if you haven't moved on they have, they have husbands, wifes and their own children. Okay you can rally around, but family can create all sorts of exalted expectations."* |

**PARTICIPANT J FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE J1**

***EVERYTHING STOPS FOR TEA***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
|---|---|
| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Craft Knowledge | *"I think we make too much of a fetish of accountants and accountants have their place which is one step down the ladder not at the top, there are too many leaders in industry who have come up through the accountancy profession. You see very few people now who are running a business because they have made something or invented something you know. But I think that is probably the best kind of business, you know where you have somebody with an idea, an inventor."* |
| - distinctive competence<br>- nuts and bolts<br>- my technical side | *"If you ask me what special knowledge I had that took me outside the other directors that were in the place, I had a very good knoweldge of the nuts and bolts of the trade."*<br>*"I think my technical side is probably as strong as ever".* |
| Formal Education<br><br>- provides credibility and milestones of achievement | *"I came through UCC in 1952 with a full degree in chemistry and physics and I utilised that.."*<br>*"Most of the people I dealt with, who came in here in the last forty years, they went through a vocational type training – there were times for printers, times for journalists, they advanced by trade union rules and by training and they got an increment. There is no longer such a thing as a printer's apprentice anymore, they go away and they are modularly trained. Now we have a whole influx of young people coming into this place, part-timers, contract personnel, and there is no formal training, they have escaped what I call the very, very credible structures of in-company training where they knew whether they were advanced, not greatly advanced or somewhat advanced. That I think is missing very badly in our trade at the moment."* |
| Environmental Knowledge/Ambient Economic Conditions | *"You know leadership has nothing to do with knowing your job, well it has something to do with knowing your job but more importantly it is to do with the realisation of the conditions which we live in…Leaders above all else have to be as aware of those conditions that are existing outside their business."* |

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| **KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED** | |
| Labour Relations | *"I was very strong aswell on labour relations…I spent thirty years setting up labour relations here and it is probably the part of the job which has maximum responsibility and maximum enjoyment. It was very hard work, it was anxious work but when you got good agreements the results were very important."* |
| Finance | *"I had attained some financial expertise, expertise is too strong a word (laughs), I had ascertained to understand finance so I knew when things were going wrong."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Openness to Change | *"I think in the final analysis you have got to have faith in your product, but you can't be starry eyed about it, you can't shut your eyes and say the product is gorgeous and we won't change it, it's sacred. You have got to change your product. The big thing between the end of my commerical career and the begging of my commercial career is the changes at the beginning of my commerical career were very small."* |
| Avoid Short-termism | *"There are very few five generation companies like us around, if you are there for the short-haul that's one thing, but if you are there for the long haul you have got to be prepared to be responsible on profits. The 80's weren't great but we did a lot of investment in the 80's. We never stopped investing though we weren't getting much return, and that takes leadership."* |
| Communicate | *"If you are talking about leadership, the leadership in that was to recognise it and tackle it and to ensure that the departments and trade-unions saw there was only one…unless something was done, only one end to it and that was shutdown."* |
| Know When Retreat | *"Sometimes it's better to know when to retreat than to go ahead."* |

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| **KNOWLEDGE SHAPERS** | |
| History<br><br>- learning ingenuity through shortages | *"When I graduated it was still fairly close to the 2nd World War and it was a question of not so much being able to sell things as being able to get materials and supplies to which you could put added value to, there was still a lot of shortages and the result is there was a lot of ingenutiy required in raw materials and methods of producing."* |
| - meeting demand in most efficient way you could<br>- using judgement | *"I have always been influenced by that thirty years which was primarily a thing of meeting demand in the most efficient way you could, knowing your trade better than your opposition and using your judgement on investment to keep improving it."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Reading | *"I would still read probably four technical trade related publications a week."* |
| Networking | *"I would have been on four business trips since last January, a technical information conference in April, meetings with friends in the trade , annual general meetings, various things, in all this year about four of them."* |
| Informal Contact With Management/Staff | *"I have total freedom to talk to any member of the management or staff, as a matter of routine, I have umpteen members of the management committee and various members of the staff up here [to my office] to discuss what is going on. I had the head of machinery in here yesterday and he gave me a presentation on a system that they are using in Spain, he had been out there to improve and automate the inking system. I keep myself up to speed like that. The Chief Executive would do the same, but he would do it in a slightly more formalised manner through the management committee, but I don't do it that way."* |
| **KEEPING UP TO SPEED** | *"I suppose the drive isn't quite what it used to be, but I am still searching things out all the time, I have a lot of ambitions before I finally retire out of the place."* |

| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
|---|---|
| Leadership<br>- spreading the effectiveness of leadership | *"I think what I didn't really have was being able to spread the effectiveness of leadership across a broader number of people, that is being done at the moment and being done very effectively."* |
| - allowing managers to manage rather than watch<br><br>- recongition of own ineffectiveness | *"Alan (my successor) took a much more collegiate approach to the thing in so much as he made his managers' manage, rather than watch [laughs] the chief executive managing (which was my style), but I don't think I learned to do it any other way."*<br>*"There are two styles of leadership there would be the hands on leadership, working through the unions, working through what were department heads or foremen and in this particular case you have a much broader type of leadership, working down through a very tightly controlled management committee and then spreading it down..what I am saying is in the 1980's we reverted back to the 1930's. Now the place is being managed much more suitably for modern condidtions than it was being in the 1980's by me and I would be the first to admit it."* |
| Marketing/Sales<br>- compensating through others' | *"There was knowledge I needed, but I never had, one was marketing, one was the capacity to sell, but I always made sure we had someone in the place who understood it."* |
| Technology/New Media | *"The electronic side of it I find now that the terminology is passing me by, I am finding it a bit difficult."* |
| - loosing track<br>- fires boiling up underneath<br>- tired and mentally transmogified | *"I think I went out of the Chief Executive Role at the right time, actually I was fifty when I took it over and it was too late. I know in the last two years that I wasn't effective, the thing was getting away from me, it wasn't exactly getting away from me but the fires were boiling up under me and there were things going on that I should have…. I was tired, I think I was mentally, mentally I think I was a bit transmogified."* |

**PARTICIPANT J SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE J2**

***RETURNING TO WHAT I KNOW BEST:CRAFT KNOWLEDGE***
***BEING A VALUE ADDED PERSON THAT TAKES A LUMP OF METAL AND MAKES SOMETHING***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
|---|---|
| **ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE** | |
| Changed Identity | *"We went through a two-phase change we went from the X to X1 and then about 1996/97 we went to the X2."* |
| Growth and Expansion | *"During that period there were a lot of other things happening too a lot of expansion, quite a considerable investment in the provincial weeklies, and the purchase of a Sunday business publication."* |
| Changed Business Processes | *"One significant events was the internal one of moving the printing and you see you can't look at that as just moving the printing, it's a big change in technology because it means that all the publications we have are made up on the computer, the pictures are coming in now on the computer, and when the page is complete they press the button and it passes down a wide band wire and the page is stored on the big computer and goes on then to produce pages on a plate."* |
| **PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** | *"I retired as chairman in 2001"*<br>*"Well one of the significant events that has affected me is that I will be 79 in April, that is what is called a slow moving event though in my particular case I have never lost interest in any way, particularly in the last two years which have been quite difficult financially and business wise."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Change Is The Only Certainty<br><br>- the importance of thinking ahead | *"The events of the past number of years have taught me that even when times are very hard you must have a group doing planning. Planning generally costs a lot of money, even if times are hard the important thing is to get the plan to a stage that when funds are either borrowed or available, that if you are convinced that the plan is the right one you can go ahead and do it and that is what is missing out of the current government at the moment they have been so turned upside down over events that it is not apparent that there is that kind of planning…"* |

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| Balance Is Essential<br>- the capacity to make things<br>- the capacity to know things | *"One of the other things that is worrying me at the moment is that you have to get the mix of intellectualism and the capacity to make things, you have to get it right and we are swinging too far, I hate that word 'smart economy', but we are swinging too far towards intellectualism."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| My Father | *"There have been a number of people who I have learned from, my father first and foremost, was a great humanitarian, he taught me that while they could be a damn nuisance, that trade unions were very, very important and had to be treated with great respect. I think the early part of my commercial life from about 1965 till about 1987, I suppose 60% of my time was spent with trade unions and labour matters."* |
| Principled People<br>- total honesty | *"The secretary of the company, he was in the place from 1917 until secretary until about 1977, I learnt from him, a man of total honesty, total honesty, whereas he could be hard on staff he could be equally hard on the family. That is very important. A great story about him, when the Cork film festival started in about 1955, we used to get film stars over and there was a lady called Dawn Adams, and of course they were all kind of photo opportunities, and the idea was to take a photograph of Dawn Adams up by the monument fishing and of course we had a beautiful photograph of Dawn Adams and lovely fish on the end of the line, so there was an expense for 2 shillings and sixpence for the purchase of two fish from the market and the company secretary who was in charge of expenses was horrified and he had hysteria and refused to pay the unfortunate reporter who bought the fish. So he was that kind of a man you know but he was deadly honest and I learnt a lot from him."* |
| Learning From Everyone | *" If you ask me who influenced me, there were engineers, there were printers there were every kind of person under the sun."* |

| **ON REFLECTION/HINDSIGHT** | |
|---|---|
| The Past Must Be Honoured<br>- pay tribute<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>- the psychological mark of history<br>- our generation has been fortunate | *"I think nobody pays tribute really to the generation of 1912 to 1970, you take my father, my father was eighteen in 1914 and he had very bad sight, but most of his friends went to France, and a lot of them were killed out there. My uncle, his brother, who was four years younger joined the British Navy. First of all they had the first world war, then they had the war of independence then they had the civil war. We were the sole newspaper in 1923, they had a couple of years of good prosperity and he married during that time, but then of course they had the great depression and the economic war and 2nd WW and it wasn't really until 1947 that they got their nose ahead. I came into the company before I went to college in 1949 and at that stage there had been no investment for 12 years and psychologically it had left its mark on a number of people, including my father who was a bit of a depressive. Our generation was a very lucky generation because we were too young for the 2nd WW, Korea was not our business and all we had to deal with was gentle 4% inflation through the fifties and avoiding race tracks. And we have actually to a large extent economically been a blessed generation. hey talk about the 50's here but it wasn't half as bad as they make it out."* |
| The Loss Of What Is Important<br>- the rise of shareholder value<br><br>- the demise of value added<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>- the use of ingenuity | *"We have been absolutely sacrificed in the last twenty years to shareholder value, you never did anything without making sure that the value of shares was going to increase and that has produced a very bad side effect. There is another truism called value added, you are aware of this, where you take a £'s worth of material and you input £3 pounds you sell it for £5, that's value added. Now we have gone away from value added to a large extent."*<br>*"There was a wonderful bit on one of the documentaries on the National Geographic it deal with the port of Newport which was the centre from which all Welsh coal was exported and when they shut the Welsh coal mines they fell on very bad times, and a couple of years ago they built the biggest crusher in the world and its job is to take scrap metal and crush it down into 2 and 3 inch fragments, separate copper and plastic out of it and sell the processed iron all over the world and they have produced a magnificent export trade and it's is a good example of people using their ingenuity."* |

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| - playing a numbers game<br>- becoming bean counters | *"And you don't, (and this is a personal one), you don't let the accountants take over 100%. An accountant has never made anything in his life, other than his wife pregnant or himself drunk, I am not popular with accountants, but it is true, the word 'bean counter' comes to mind there, now I am not condemning all accountants, you can have some great ones…"* |
| - formal educaiton stifles creativity | *"Family businesses, when they get into the second or third generation they are very much inclined to rely on professional management, invariably professional management tends to come into family companies, it gets a bit beyond them and they don't have the skills anyway or they haven't the time to learn the skills. There is a great tendency to go for professional skills, but again those skills can, if they are going to become entrepreneurs, tighten their views too far."* |
| - returning to what I know best<br>- a valued added person<br>- an appreciation of craft knowledge | *"I am a value added person, I have been trained as an engineer, I get a lump of metal and I create something else, mind you I don't sell it, I do it for my own entertainment, but I am always appreciative of the capacity for people to make things you know."* |
| I Have Been Fortunate/I am Grateful | *"I have had a comparatively commercially and economically comparatively easy life, I have always had my wages at the end of the month, unlike an awful lot of people, I am not self-satisfied, I try not to be self-satisfied and I have had my own hardships in different ways, but I am a very lucky man because of my six children, five of them are alive and they are all married with lovely children living within five miles of me so that's not bad. But haven't said that it would be very easy to get self-satisfied, but I do think a little, and I do get prejudiced."* |

**PARTICIPANT K FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE K1**

**THE CEO WHO DOES VERY SIMPLE THINGS**
***EXPERIENCE DOESN'T MAKE YOU ANY BRIGHTER, IT DOES MAKE YOU OLDER***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
|---|---|
| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Environmental Knowledge<br>- how industry is evolving<br>- a changing emphasis on community provision of services | *"You need to able to see the way the business you are in, in our case the labour market, how the emphasis is changing. For example, state led intervention in our business has been dominant, we have been a monopoly for 30 years, well that is changing radically, where for instance the community provision of services is growing rather quickly over the last four years."* |
| - supply side changes: demographics | *"On the supply side, you have to know really, fairly accurately the demographic frameworks as they evolve and these have changed radically in pattern terms in recent years and in many ways they are the key inputs into the system in terms of people that want to acquire skills in a wide range of occupations, that's non third level related but want to go to the world of work."* |
| - demand side: skill profiles<br><br>- anticipate changes | *"On the demand side, one has to know the kind of skill profiles and their changes within industries and be able to match those with the programme development strategy that has been put in position for a fixed period, either directlly provided by the organisation or provided on a sub-contract basis. The other area, particularly related to high-tech... is to be able to anticipate the skill frameworks for updating of skills for the existing labour force."* |
| - international trends | *"We run national programmes in oil and gas exploration for the process industry in metal fusion and welding, and I would like to make sure that we know all the developments and trends in all of these things worldwide."* |

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| Sources Of Funds | *"There are funding frameworks that have to be put in position aswell. Funds come from three different sources, you have the state led exchequer spending – which we must be able to predict fairly accurately, there are the types of programmes that would sucessfully draw down European funding, and the third ones then are the ones where we we can get commerical income based on a partnership."* |
| Knowledge Of Clients<br>- from passive to demanding<br><br>- involvement in determining shape of services<br><br>- no longer autocratic service provision<br><br>- client feedback | *"The other you have to be able to look at is the client base itself, these are the things most people forget, in the 60s, 70s, and 80's a lot of the clients were passive, they were more or less prepared to accept what the state or any other institution provided for them. Nowadays, the clients are much more demanding they want to be involved, in fact they want to be involved in determining the shape of the services that affect their lives, from a strategy perspective when you are developing programmes and allocating resources you have to be aware of that, you can no longer have a single-minded autocratic way of saying you know 'we think this is the best programme for this group of people."*<br><br>*"Even though it was always an underpinning requirement in the allocation of financial resources, value for money and the presentation of best practice models is now a chief requirement. It doesn't really matter nowadays how effective the state thinks it has been in delivering a particular service there has to be an evalutation framework, a consumer panel, so that the consumers can actually have a say in what is being provided for them. And they are things, from a strategy point of view that ten years ago we wouldn't have paid much attendion to."* |
| Technical Knowledge | *"These days, you have to be some way nominally computer literature because a lot of the stuff is provided on screens."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |

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| Give Due Attention To Process<br>- speed should not take priority<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>- slow to build but rock solid | *"We tend in our planning process to use classic frameworks in strategic planning to build our plans fairly quickly, and in many cases I suppose with some level of consultation, we have found also that the minute the plan goes into operation you have people looking for change and there are objections and so on. Now what we have learned, by way of Europeans, is that it takes them much longer to put their strategic planning frameworks together, but when they are agreed there is no challenge, they tend then to put all their efforts into the implementation. So I don't know which is better. I have learned that maybe our consultation process, maybe the nature of it, the way we scan the thing might need to be looked at again… maybe it is not that important to have it done that quickly. If you can get to to the process where when you finish it you have no further demands and people changing it it might be worthwhile. The German economy in particular is very good at that – slow to build but actually rock solid in implementation and no challenges to the change. That is one of the big things we have learned."* |
| - process over content<br><br><br>- less is more | *"Too much time I often think is often put into the actual drafting of the text itself, to me the process by which you get to that stage is much more important than the building of the sheets of paper themselves. I will show you our plan now, we have much less text, and much more focused statements nowadays than we ever had in plans in the past."* |
| Build Market Credibility At Pace | *"The other thing we have learned is that you have to build credibility with the marketplace in various ways, we know that other organisations and other groups have tried to do what we did here and failed. The reason they failed is not because they are any less capable than we are but they didn't invest enough time in building relationships in small programmes first of all before trying to do the major commercial progammes. We have been fortunate in that we have been able to build links overtime at a pace that has suited our own organisation and the companies we have been dealing with. I am not saying these are the only programmes that have been successfu,l but they are the ones that have lasted the greatest length of time."* |
| Ensure Transparancy | *"If you have a plan and you set that out at the start of the year, which we tend to do it doesn't solve all your problems but at least it shows the wider public, the direction you are going in. Now of* |

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| - accept accountability | *course there is a down side to that, in that when you publish a particular plan people can come back afterwards and say 'Why didn't you do X or Y or why didn't you do it within the time scale you said you would and so on'. But I believe planning is a chief component of the whole process because it provides a framework for openess where people can actually see in tabulated format the direction you are going in, if you don't have plans I often think it is like walking down a road coming to a whole series of sign posts any road will take you to a place if you are not sure where you are going. That's where, at a regional level I think the planning side is quite critical, not just to focus the direction of where you are going but to demonstrate performance targets along the way so that the ultimate consumers, who afterall are the tax payers can see a number of things. One, whether you are achieving what you set out to achieve and two are they getting good value for money for that?"* |
| Knowledge Must Be Customised | *"Ah Yes, the biggest difficulty, I find, I think it is quite easy to prepare a regional plan when the resource allocations are centally agreed and you know what the supply and demand factors are, the difficulty really is to tailor make the plan so that the regional characteristics are reflected in it, because a lot of the planning in the past was very centralised, because we became an organisation with regional autonomy while we still had to more or less dovetail into the national programmes, The biggest problem really I think of balancing that with what is best for the region. And I think we have been fairly sucessful up to now but each year it becomes more and more critical because some of the labour market demands in the South West are particular to the South West and don't have a general application nationally."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Experience<br>- repetitive cycles | *"Well, After 30 years I suppose experience doesn't make you any brighter, it makes you older. But it does give you an interesting thing, I have found in cycles of five years, roughly, while some of the things have new names, new titles and there are new directions, fundamentally in the labour market things begin to repeat themselves in different ways. There are parallels in the 80's the 70's and the 60's, okay the scale was smaller but there are parallels. While my ideas about five year cycles could* |

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| - recourse<br><br><br>- different times/same principles<br>- safeguard/building in caution<br>- prudence<br>- reality check<br><br><br>- as a moral compass | *be kind of questionable, the type of statistics that are here now, the last quarter of 97', they have been here before, several times."*<br>*"That is what the experience is, you can fallback, like big factory closures, the one we had with Irish Steel, we previously had it with Fordes and Dunlops. The models we developed for Fordes and Dunlops for the interviewing of staff and appraisal and re-development of staff were quite useful to us. Okay it was a different era but the principles were the same."*<br>*"Experience is also good from the point of view of putting a little bit of caution into your planning process, it doesn't help sometimes if you are too open-ended with the plan, I don't use caution to mean one wants to be reserved or sluggish or slow, I mean it puts a better reality and a better balance into it."*<br><br>*"You get competing demands at two levels, you get community groups who want their project to be continued and others who say 'We have never had a project at all, how are you allowing that one to continue and you won't allow our one to start?'. Equally at individual level you have the same situation, you have long-term unemployed people, 'I am delighted with this programme, why can't I continue for another year, and then you have some unemployed people saying 'That is most unfair, I have never had an opportunity to start a programme, why can't I start?' Overlaying all of that at times would be representations and submissions from politicians. So the question you have got to ask yourself is where do you draw the balance in all of that, how do you balance the competing needs? What you have to do really is, in many cases, you have got to ask yourself as the director, what is the correct thing to do as opposed to the popular thing to do and experience is a big factor in all of that."* |
| Reading<br>- international publications | *"I think in ways to keep yourself up to date you have to read most of the published literature on the labour market side. Not just here, but in Europe, and one of the greatest assets we would have I suppose for putting barometers of change in place, I suppose would be the OECD that we would get regularly get reports from."* |
| Learning By Doing<br>- project work | *"I learn from other people through project-based work, I am a great believer in the building of teams, project based work is very applicable to our business."* |

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| Client Feedback<br>- reservations<br>- listening as opposed to structured impressions<br>- working with clients | *"I also learn quite a bit from going to some of the groups that would have strong reservations about the provision of some service. I listen to the people, I listen to the consumers as to what they have to say about our programmes, rather than be just trying to review things based on strucured impressions."*<br>*"In working with organisations it gives us an insight into how other people look at the same problem. You can learn the way people react to different things and we have been involved with displacements in Renault factories and so on and so forth, so we can see the way they handle their displacments and how they do it and we have learned from that."* |
| International Service Providers<br>- observation | *"I have been lucky enough through my career to have visited several similar organisations in mainland Europe and in the US. I have also looked at smaller scale operations in places like NZ and Australia."* |
| - partnership | *" I suppose another thing where we have benchmarked ourselves in this region, is that we have developed a very good commerical transnational programme with Germany and France at a craft or technician level whereby we have developed the programmes and harmonised the qualifications, dual qualifications, that keeps us to a certain extent in about ten occupations, fairly balanced between mainland Europe and to an certain extent with one or two of the best countries in terms of economic development that are there. That's not to say that we have it all right, we haven't."* |
| - benchmarking | *"We also of course have to make provision for foundation and first time job opportunities and re-training programmes for those who haven't achieved any other training and there are international models and programmes developed by other institutes that we actually look at in that regard."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Client Requirements<br>- career plans | *"The other thing I think we need to know much more about are the types of precise career plans that young people wish to follow. Some of our early interviews with school leavers suggest that the young person doesn't always have, other than the wish to follow a third level course, a precise career* |

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| | *development plan, the result of which is that sometimes an awful lot of switching occurs in the early years."* |
| - nature of skills required | *"Another area really is the gradual shift between what I would call the growth in knowledge-related skills as distinct from what I would call the demand for physical skills. In the 60's and 70's there was a high demand for physical skills, and there still is in certain areas a demand for physical skills, but it is gradually being outstripped by knowledge-related skills and again the balance we are not sure of how far, we try and estimate it for the different sectors through our planning process and the forecasts, but some of the forecasts are just that, they are forecasts, they wouldn't be as precise as they should be."* |
| - skills obselesence | *"One of the things that we don't know enough about is what I would call the skill obselesence cycle, by that I mean in some cases quite an amount of resources are dedicated to providing platforms if you like for skill development frameworks and the life cycle of those is often very difficult to deterime. Because sometimes when there is a significant product change, for example a company in the electronics industry going from hardware to software, some of the skills are transferrable but a lot are not and in some cases significant investment might be put into the hardware side but it is in software area that the company is going to develop, so that type of balancing is something we know little about."* |
| Affected By Context<br>- being in the public arena<br><br><br>- politically sensitive<br>- being centre stage | *"On the non-glamourous end of the industrial side where restructuring results in company closure, in such cases two things have to occur; firstly, Fas has to provide for the updating of skills for the remaining elements of the workforce and secondly, on a balanced basis then has to cater for the outflow, for those that are displaced. Sometimes some of these things are very politically sensitive. In one case recently (a longstanding state led company), we had to do both things, and we were centre stage for quite a while. Work practices and skill levels and so on all had to be changed over a very short period of time. On reflection it would have been better, from a training and development viewpoint, if more time and more information had been available as to the ultimate level in manning terms, and the ultimate skill profiles that were required and also knowledge in terms of the timing cycle by which the changes had to take place. While deadlines were being set, sometimes these were stretched out based on negotiations, other times they were allowed to stand, it was difficult to see* |

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| - moveable deadlines and negotiable targets<br>- knowledge vacumn<br>- haphazard planning<br>- absence of full disclosure<br>- balancing stakeholder sensitivites | *where the deadlines were, and it was also difficult to see at times what the minimum manning level would ultimately be, because was not determined at the outset, it was kind of negotiated through the process of review. Our planning of that was a bit haphazard mainly because it was difficult to find a disclosure of what the full picture was on the labour side. There were particular sensititives when the state was one of the main equity holders. In some of the other companies we have dealt with that are private plcs we were able to negotiate directly with the board of the company, it is more difficult when you are doing this in a public arena where you have to try and balance the needs of several groups."* |
| **CHALLENGES** | |
| Resistance To Change<br>- internally | *"Yes, the whole business of the management of change has been a traumatic process for this organisation, and in many ways, I suppose it is the classic thing, many of the staff, principal officer level or higher will have no problem with change once it doesn't affect them, and support all of them. But when it begins to affect them there are problems."* |
| - externally: service users | *"The other thing that is difficult is some of the consumers themselves, as I said at the outset, some of the consumer themselves are far more demanding now, and want to be involved in channelling the framework or programmes that will affect them, but don't want to take on some challenging issues that they themselves might have to change, their behaviour, life patterns and so on. That itself too can be quite difficult in terms of the provision of sevices where you have an unwilling element of the market."* |
| Authenticity In Partnership<br>- participation necessitates responsibility and accountability | *"You hear words like partnership and so on and so forth, a great many people now are requesting involvement and participation, at different levels. There is nothing wrong with that, but they don't like the other part of the equation, which is the accountability and responsibility of this,* |

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| Multiple Accountability | *"There are three kind of areas, you have first of all the board of directors of your own organisation, then you have the department and the network system, then you have the Oireachtas. "Ultimately you are accountable to the Oireachtas, you are accountable to the controller and auditor general for the expenditure side and most of the politicians, you find you have to account to them aswell. There are few enough organisations that would have that multiple reporting from a strategic point of view."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE AND LEADERSHIP** | |
| - doing simple things<br><br><br>- being just an operator<br>- not office-bound | *"I believe that it is very important to see the Chief Executive do very simple things. I spend time for instance interviewing unemployed people, I spend a bit of time each year teaching myself, I spend some time negotiating for instance the labour market side of inward investments, I tend to work on some of the projects just as an operator myself and that is where I particulary learn, I am not an office-bound Director of faxes, I would probably be a bit different than that, I walk the floors of the workshops, I walk the floors of the unemployment offices more than I sit here. I would only spend two days a week at most in the office."* |
| - walking the talk<br><br><br><br>- practicing what we preach | *"We have at any one time about six to eight people doing postgraduate programmes at masters level. All programmes are supported from a cost perspective by the organisation including up to 50% of the cost of general staff development programmes which might not necessarily be dedicated to the workplace. So we try and practice what we preach. We can't on the one hand be an organisation that promotes systematic training and development within companies and then not apply it ourselves."* |
| Two-Way Communication<br><br><br>- people are entitled to know<br>- out of that the development comes | *"We also have a fairly open system of staff appraisal of which the staff development is a particular component and every staff member is assessed by their superior, on both technical and say communications and general skill development terms. And it is a two way thing, people are entitled to know aswell why they are not progressing and why they have difficulties, and it is out of that framework the development comes, so it is an agreed process."* |

**PARTICIPANT K SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE K2**

***LEAVING COLLEGE WITH NO PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ANYTHING, CERTAIN SKILLS AND A WAIT AND SEE APPROACH TO WHERE ONE COULD APPLY THEM***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
|---|---|
| **A CHANGED ENVIRONMENT** | |
| Improved Economic Conditions | *"When I came back to Cork we had very difficult times in the labour market, unemployment rates in Cork city and county were about 13%, coming to the end of this year now they are about 3.4%. You had a situation where the investment cycles were slow in particular for the South West and you had the beginning of huge re-organisation in manufacturing, and you only had a modicum of export led growth. Now all those trends have been reversed and we have the capability to develop new skill sets as quickly as any other country in Europe."* |

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| A Global Village | *"The huge inflows from the new Slav countries was amazing, who would have thought ten years ago that we would be taking in people at the rate of 25,000 a year and sustaining them all."*<br>*"The world has become a much smaller place in the last ten years, we would place postgraduates in Boston in New Hampshire parts of the Far East, we would have seen people then in amazingly distant places."* |
| Changed Nature Of Clientele<br>- increased client power<br>- the pendulum of opportunity has swung towards employee | *"In the last ten years is the pendulum of opportunity for the jobs scene has swung very much away from the employer back to the individual. Ten years ago it started very much with the employer having the upper-hand, now employers more or less have to make do with the availability of the skills sets and profiles that are available today. And the complaints we would get in our office in the old days were 'why can't you send more people on a panel for interview, now they are saying 'why can't you send us someone that'll stay longer than three months."* |
| - greater client choice | *"Choice, that's the other thing I would say, in the 1960's the concept of choice was very limited, now the concept of choice is a given. Maslowe's hierarchy of needs, having enough food was what it was about when I was a young fellow. Choice in relation to career progression access to higher education is now more open than it ever was. People that are going through life changes in work and their personal life have the freedom to do that whereas before it happened by exception now it's more the norm."* |
| - greater client support/opportunities<br><br>- renewal of individual competitiveness | *"Another thing that I think it will be a big driver, it has started now in some countries, in Ireland we have a small bit of it, is the whole concept of paid educational leave, paid educational leave has begun in the last ten years where the renewal of competitiveness at an individual level is beginning to take place. Okay it is very small now in terms of what is there, but it will grow. I think paid educational leave will be part of the wage bargaining process because of the cycles of change now in the workplace individuals are entitled to achieve in that area."* |

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| - becoming an entitlement<br>- freedom to take greater risks | *"The whole business of the life cycles that people work under, some people now would have cycles of work and they would study and they would take time out, they would change careers much more than before when there was a very high dependency on a secure pensionable job, people were tied to that much more. The vast majority of first time job entrants now don't have pensions; they have a fixed term contract. People are prepared to take much more risk, everyone doesn't want everything to be 100% predictable."* |
| Flexible Learning Opportunities<br><br>- going to the ultimate consumer<br><br>- increased supply | *"The concept of choice from an individual point of view will drive the market with the building of modular programmes and access to Multidisciplinary third level education will be a reality. In other words what is happening really is that the education and training providers are going to the ultimate consumer and saying 'look what way would you like to have this', in the old days when the Dean decided okay what you'll have is this, that is one big thing in the future."*<br>*"I see a situation evolving where the state might be saying look we will give you an allocation of 10,000 euro and you can cash it in any way you like, you don't have to go to UCC you can go to the X, Y or Z University or you can go abroad, you can go the X Y and Z private contract. That's the thing I think it's frightening to realise that the agencies, they don't realise that they are not the only players in town anymore and that the world of work and the world of education and training is such where access by other providers is multiplying."* |
| **CHANGED BUSINESS PRACTICES** | |
| Greater Professional Certification<br>Reliance On Objective Knowledge<br><br>- moving away from intuition | *"Every instructor we have now in the South West has a primary degree in education, everyone, whereas ten years ago 10% of people had it. That's one thing, most of the people now at management level have a primary qualification of some description and most of the senior managers at senior officer level would have a postgraduate qualification like an MBA or something like that."* |
| Increased Certification Of Skills | *"One of the key things that began to happen and has happened rapidly in the last while is the closure of very significant tracks of indigenous industry, and that was one of the big things that was challenging to us. We had to develop skills very quickly that did a number of things: That interviewed people on a* |

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| - the need recognised competence<br><br>- associated trauma<br><br><br><br>- in skills terms moving up the value-added chain | *three-shift cycle over seven days in order to develop career paths for them. In particular then, when we had secured very good jobs for these people, in the growth sectors (such as IT at the time), we quickly realised that they were moving as displaced workers from an non-regulated to a regulated sector and the regulated sector didn't just want their professional skills they wanted a certification, each worker had to be certified to have competence in a particular discipline. Now that was a big trauma for a lot of people and for us too because to a large extent we thought that once the functional and say occupational skills were okay that you didn't need any further certification. So we had people who had great experience in say processes control but they had no qualification so that was a big change, a big learning for us and it became very demanding over the last five years; In skills terms, we had to move up the value added chain.* |
| **CHANGED BUSINESS PRACTICES**<br>A Re-Orientation Of Skills Provided<br><br>Increasing Capacity<br><br><br><br>- creating transitional frameworks to cater for temporary growth | *"Another strand was the closure of companies who were loosing competitiveness from a labour cost perspective. At a second level then I realised that while at supervisory or middle management people had good technical qualifications, they were very specific to a given sector, and the orientation skills training that had to be given to get them re-employed was quite significant. For example, people from Motorola who would have been very good software engineers we converted into signal engineers."*<br>*"The other thing then was to build the capacity to take the exponential growth in the construction industry. For instance, in apprenticeship terms, in a period of five years we have seen the intake of apprentices double. And the big thing in terms of meeting that growth was that the scaling up was enormous. That was particularly challenging because we knew, and still know, that not all of the facilities could be maintained permanently, indefinitely, but it was to build a transition framework that allowed temporary contracts for teachers, temporary buildings to be leased and temporary capital equipment to move the projects on and as the numbers then declined to more or less terminate some of those projects in line with the demands."* |
| Dealing With Shorter Programme Life Cycles | *"And the difficulty really for agencies and service providers like ourselves is that we had to realise that the time cycles were going to be much shorter, 5 year cycles are now 2 year cycles, same things happening but happening much quicker. We had these kind of upsurges in the past but we always had quite a bit of time to deal with them, now they were coming thick and fast and had to be handled in very short time cycles."* |

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| Creating Flexibility of Access | *"We had to have instruments developed for the first time which allowed people have career progression and career re-deployment in terms of service provision in non-standard hours of access. We had to allow people to re-train on Saturday and on Sunday, we had to have modular access to programmes, everybody didn't want to start at the start, some people wanted to do module four, which we never did up until then, everybody started at the start and went through your twenty weeks."* |
| **CHANGED KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Prior Learning Becoming Redundant<br>- skills obselesence: real not abstract<br><br><br><br>- multiskilling required | *"Skill obsolescence, I always thought it was an abstract concept but its not really, I have to admit I find now I can just about cope with the IT skills that I have to do at my level, I can cope with some of the new kind of formula for labour market interventions that are there. The concept of renewal is much quicker and I have found that the engineering principles that I learned in the late 50's early 60's have kind of become very redundant. And there is an integration of skills aswell, functional skills isn't just enough any more, you must be a human resource manager a materials manager and so on."* |
| New Approaches To Managing | *"I grew up in an era of autocratic management, now you have to develop a much more participative flavour, you have to work with people on projects usually on a team basis, that was unheard of in the past, it was autocratic management and that was it.*<br>*"Leaders now facilitate learning, they create the environment."* |
| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| Change Is Mandatory | *"The whole business of management of change which was talked about ten years ago is actually happening. It was a theoretical concept at one stage in manufacturing and to a certain extent in the labour market itself, but it's now a reality. Companies that don't manage change now are really in difficulty, that's the first thing I learned."* |

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| - change bites hard<br>- the text book becomes the reality | *One thing I learned above everything was that while we often talk about the words competitiveness, flexibility and so on, it wasn't until the management of change process bit hard at some operations that you really saw that it had to be done. There is no company that doesn't believe in the work of Michael Porter about Innovation – if you don't have some capabilities to innovate you don't actually survive, I think that was largely seen as a textbook comment at one time, it's seen as reality now."* |
| Appreciate Individual Difference | *"I learnt one huge thing, that some people are very good at what we call the pioneering stage of a project, they are very good at doing the initial set-up and installation and then you require different skills for the maintenance to keep the project going and we would usually have assumed in the past that everybody would have an equal capability and that's just not true."* |
| Perceptions May Hide The Reality<br><br>- it would have been assumed | *"I've learned I suppose in many ways at one end on a personal basis from the people whose lives were disturbed by the changes that they couldn't understand. For instance, I've learned an awful lot from some of the closures like Dairygold where truck drivers who were quite happy to live and work suddenly found themselves having to admit that they couldn't read or write and that they had big literacy or numeracy problem. We now know now that even in the growth areas such as construction, there are at least twenty percent of people that don't have correct literacy or numeracy skills. I would never have believed that that was a reality. That came through when we were trying to get people placed in roughly the same occupations in places where IT systems were much more sophisticated but delivery systems with hand held calculators and so on, and we found in the basis of the change process people couldn't actually read any digital instruments and they certainly couldn't spell or type, and it would have been assumed that because they were doing the same kind of work for another company, although they had a different range of products in a different sector that there shouldn't be much difference but there was."* |
| - the difficult business of getting at the truth | *"And the sad part really, how should I put it, but the sad part on a personal level was to see that it took a lot of difficulty to get this out, it was the wives crying on the phone, in some cases the wives would be asked why people wouldn't turn up at courses, you see how it would happen is that people wouldn't turn up and they would failing at courses. So we had a very big rethink and what we did* |

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| - respecting personal sensitivities | *was we put in a very big literacy and numeracy element in a structured way, which didn't make it obvious and built on the functional skills afterwards. Like it was very difficult to tell someone in their late 40's or early 50's 'fundamentally your real problem is that you can't read', we didn't' say we are putting you on a numeracy programme or we'll teach you how to read, we did it in a slightly different way, we had to do it in the context of a serious job proposal. It was no use saying to someone you know before you do any re-training we have to get your reading and numeracy skills up, you had to always focus on the job, this was just part of the pattern. So how we found things out really was for instance in a scaffolding course you would get people to read the safety signs for our safe pass programmes and read the emergency shut down and if they cant read the emergency regulations related to personal health and safety it's a problem."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Formal Education<br>- from craft to business knowledge<br>- finding out what was more pertinent<br><br>- developing the skills never given as engineers<br><br>- bolting on qualifications | *"In my own career I did three different things really, having gone through a craft career and a graduate school I then concentrated on the business skills side; and I found actually that business skills particularly economics were actually far more pertinent in practical day to day things that I thought, strangely enough science and mathematical stuff that I was fairly capable at was largely not as relevant. Being able to contextualise projects from an economic perspective was actually very important so it wasn't just managing the costs now of the project it was fitting them in to the reality of where the economy was at that time and those skills were never given to us as engineers."*<br><br>*"The other thing I found really that was very good is that in the universities nowadays, once you have a primary degree you can bolt on an awful lot of qualifications in things like marketing, business strategy, policy formation provided you have a basic understanding, and I found that very useful. I was able to get access at different times to programmes that suited the particular type of work I was doing."* |
| Keeping Up With Developments<br>- management science/pedagogy | *"I was an avid kind of reviewer of new developments from the point of view of the whole business of management science at one level and then the whole evolution and revolution in one sense of pedagogical sciences and teaching and they were the things in the last ten years that really changed."* |

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| Learning By Default<br><br><br>- teamwork<br>- sharing knowledge | *"I suppose by default really I began to develop more participative leadership skills, because when we were building projects for trans-national companies, for major projects, you had to work with people to make the end happen you had to have a disparate range of professional skills, no one person or no two people could carry it all and then to try and elaborate on that to get people to work together, its better to work as teams than individuals and the sharing on of knowledge and the sharing of target achievement as well."* |

**PARTICIPANT L FIRST INTERVIEW TABLE L1**

***YOU LEARN TO LEAD BY DOING IT AND BY MAKING MISTAKES***

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **KNOWLEDGE PRIORITISED** | |
| Knowledge Of Operations | *"What do you need to to know to manage an operation like we have? First of all the core of our business is the production and marketing of beer."*<br>*"For instance we have a brewery there, a manufacturing plant that is a highly technical intensive operation, so you need to understand a little bit about the economics of beer manufacture, the* |

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| | *process of beer manufacture, the quality of beer manufacture, that would be tremendously important."* |
| Knowledge Of Marketing | *"Secondly, in terms of marketing, since the company is basically about beer brands, premium brands, brand marketing, consumer marketing is tremendously important so you need to understand that."* |
| Knowledge Of Support Functions | *"Then of course to run the business you have the other support functions, which is you build an organisation, you man the organisation, you would assume therefore that there is human resource management. You have the administration, the financial administration, so you need to understand finance a little bit because the shareholders at the end of the day will want to see a profit."* |
| Experiential Knowledge<br>- what is critical/not critical<br>Common Sense | *"You need to have a certain depth of functional know-how but on the other hand I think you need also to have experience in it so that you understand what is critical and what is not critical and I guess for the rest you need to have a load of common sense."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Formal<br>- being fed the corporate diet | *"We are part of a group, of a multinational company so the multinational headquarters has corporate stock departments that feed you with loads of up to date stuff, what is happening in these functional fields."* |
| - being updated on trends | *"Regularly, twice a year we have a meeting where we are basically updated on developments within the company, those are led by people from the corporate organisation and they have all the research, what is applicable in terms of newest trends to our business."* |
| Formal | *"Heineken as a group organises all sorts of courses only for Heineken managers."* |

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| - training | |
| Reading<br><br>- learning what others have read | *"I have so much reading material coming on my desk, internal memos, reports, that I have to read really indepth. The reading in any particular field is hardly possible, it's very difficult to keep up to date, so basically what you do is you learn from others."* |
| Learning From Others<br>- internal project presentations | *"Well one of the ways that you learn is in specific meetings or from projects where people carry particular responsibility for doing something and you see how they are doing it and you gain knowledge from the way they are presenting it..you very often learn new stuff from people within your own organisation."* |
| Networking<br>- non competitive industries<br>- conceptual exchange of ideas | *"Whenever you have an opportunity you try and talk to people and very often simply because you are in industires that are not competing with one another it's just sort of a conceptual exchange of ideas and looking at a particular problem becomes a very effective way to learn. You build a network and you have people availabe that you can talk to on different problems."* |
| Reflection<br>- thinking through the strategy<br>- resolving weaknesses<br><br>Making Mistakes<br>- having the courage to learn from that<br>- reflecting on mistakes | *"It's basically in the formulation of strategies, you have ideas and adopt a particular policy or direction in which the company is going. This particular direction often arises out of weaknesses that the company has and you want to resolve those, so you say ok, first of all I'm going to resolve the weaknesses in this company, make it stronger in itself, secondly somewhere you see opportunties and then finding solutions to it and if your doing that, at least if your state of mind is doing that, you are learning."*<br><br>*"You learning comes from making mistakes aswell, as an organisation or as an individual you have got to have the courage to learn from that, what went wrong, what should we change, what should we do to prevent it happening again in the future. Very, very important."* |
| Making Mistakes<br>- teaches you how to manage/lead | *"You learn to manage, to be a leader, by doing it and by making mistakes. You start out as a team executive or something, so there is always a first time. All of a sudden you go outside a function and* |

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| - there is always that first time<br>- going outside your functional area<br>- having all of the responsibility<br>- knowing the way forward<br>- analysing mistakes made | *you have all the organisation's responsibility, the co-ordination of various functions, the way forward. Most of it depends on mistakes that you are making and the kind of feedback that you have made a mistake, analysing it for example, did I somewhere make a mistake where the organisation is not going in a particular way, to change it, got to redirect it, got to learn form it, that's how I would see it."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| - always under pressure to know | *"You are always under pressure, that there is an area that you don't completely understand and there may be an advantage to move the organisation in a particular direction. That pressure always exists."* |
| - not necessary to know everything<br>- detect what is relevant | *"You detect what is necessary to know, maybe you detect he knows a lot of things, a lot of things that are completely unecessary and not relevant to our business."* |
| - feel a little weak: compensate | *"There is a lack of knowledge for example in IT, the changes that are taking place, what direction it is going, enormous. So it's a complex world to get a full understanding of it and so that is one area where personally I feel a little weak, but then again we have within this organisation, we have an IT department which is very up to date, so you compensate."* |
| - we cannot solve it all ourselves<br><br>- asking for help is normal | *"Of course you are always finding areas where you know very little about, we cannot solve it all ourselves, simply because we don't have the knowledge or maybe because the capacity of the organisation cannot handle it. But you know, you ask a consultant to help you, that is definitely a very normal way, so that once you are involved in a very major exercise you know, very often you detect a consultant who has expert knowledge in his area, his specialisation."*<br>*"Others learn in completely the same way I do, they also say 'Okay I can solve it myself, or I cannot solve it myself, but it needs to be solved.' If they don't have the knowledge or they don't have the capacity they need help, maybe from within this organisation or from other functional areas or or from third parties."* |

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| - leaning on others occurs at all levels | *"Very often, in this position, we define problems, or we see problems and maybe we see opportunites, but you don't know the solution, or I'm not going to formulate the solution, it's very often the people around me that together we find the solution to a particular problem or seek a way to exploit an opportunity. We have a big partner who has expert knowledge in her field and is completely au fait with the developments in the world, has an opinion on what is happening for us and what is not, and thefore I feel very much comfortable that if I have a problem I'm not going to solve it myself."* |
| - leadership is about defininingproblems – not knowing solutions<br><br>- relying on others<br><br><br>- getting people to take ownership | *"Firstly I have to give them responsibility for a programme and for finding a solution. Sometimes it's a problem where they have to take ownership aswell, where I am saying to them, look this is a particular problem within your functional area and you have to solve it and let them come up with the ideas. So I say, that is a problem for the organisation, I see it as a weakness, you have to come up with a solution on it. I'm not going to solve it, they have to solve it. I guess the discretion which you have is they either accept it as a problem or they see it as an opportunity, but in giving them the responsibility to come up with an answer that is how they learn."* |

**PARTICIPANT L SECOND INTERVIEW TABLE L2**

| **THEMES/SUB THEMES** | **EXEMPLAR** |
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| **KNOWLEDGE GAINED** | |
| The Importance Of Team Work<br>- having all the noses in the one direction | *"What I learned really was about working in a team, the importance of having all the noses in one common direction, one common ambition, one common vision, one common goal. If the direction you are going in is not terribly clear or it is ambigious thetre is all sorts of possiblities for friction."* |

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| Maintain Focus | *"Success is a matter of focus, you have to maintain the focus, it is very easy to get distracted by problems which are not terribly important but which are on the site, and you have to say 'I am terribly sorry this is a relevant question but it is not important for the project.' So keep focused is a lesson I have learned."* |
| **SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE** | |
| Formal Education | *"Before I took up the position of CEO in Ireland I went on an executive development programme to the University of Michigan, that was excellent preparation, you get a focus on all the discplines and you learn to deal with probems you learn the interaction and the cohesion of all the functions."* |
| - management is common sense | *"I never really felt the need to go back and do further formal education because management basically is not the application of science, it is very much using common sense of course. Now you have to have a certain level of knowledge but it is much more the application of common sense."* |
| Management Team<br>- trust | *"I learnt from everyone on the management team though there were obviously some that I was closer to, that I trusted more, my sucessor for instance, I was very close to him."* |
| Outsiders<br>- insight | *"Outsiders, consultants, are always important to give you an insight into how a company is operating."* |
| Informal Social Interaction | *"In a social way I dealt with a number of people and you hear loads of things about Irish life which as a foreigner it is important to know, to understand basically as a customer because you are selling to the consumer, to get a feel."* |
| Reflection | *"We [the management team] were always thinking about problems to be solved in terms of the future and we would say 'well maybe we could do that, that and that, and we then if we do that we will have to do this and so on."* |
| **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE** | |

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| - you don't know everything<br>- having to make the decision<br><br>- living with the consequences<br><br>- keeping noses on track | *"Sometimes you have to make decisions and you don't know everything, and you are not sure whethere to go in this direction or that direction, but in order to make progress you have to make the decision at a certain point in time and there you are, the leader, and you have to say, okay, we wil do A and not B and you have to live with the consequences of course. But you have to make a decision, that is terribly important and make sure everyone remains involved and remains motivated and all the noses continue to stay on the same track."* |
| **ON BEING A MANAGER**<br><br>- solving identical technical and organisational problems<br><br>- reaching saturation point<br>- eagar to broaden scope | *"I started off as a management trainee and basicaly in time grew from managing one brewery to ultimately managing seven breweries in different countries and I did that over a period of twenty years approximately. But if you reflect on it the problems you have to solve are basically identical technical and organisational problems, only the scale is different and the location is different and maybe the circumstances are a little different, but the problem and the focus is the same. So after twenty years you really have mastered and you have seen all the challenges of that function. Therefore after twenty years I really just wanted to broaden my scope."* |
| - going beyond your functional area | *"For a long period of time, I had been a member of the management team, co-operating with sales people, marketing people, and financial people etc. So you get to know these functions, but there comes a point in time when you want to have that wider scope and that wider responsibility aswell."* |
| **ON BEING A CEO**<br>Taking Up The Role<br>- getting to know the role<br>- getting to know the problems<br>- looking around/talking to people | *"For a long period of time, I had been a member of the management team, co-operating with sales people, marketing people, and financial people etc. So you get to know these functions, but there comes a point in time when you want to have that wider scope and that wider responsibility aswell."*<br><br>*"You have first to get to know the people you are working with and your management team, getting to know what they are doing and also getting to know very quickly what are the problems of the company*<br>*The first thing I did in the first couple of weeks was to look around me, to talk with people to identify which are the problems and which are the challenges and what do I want to do about them."* |

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| - winning trust<br>- investing time<br>- recognising individual difference | *"I think the first thing you have to do is to win the trust of your collaborators, those on your management team, otherwise it is not going to work and that takes time and you have to have different attitudes with different people because they are all different."* |
| Acting In The Role<br>- being responsible<br>- decisions have to be made/ultimately<br>- it is you<br>- the question of leadership | *"You realise you are in a position that your are responsilbe for the progress of the organsiation and therefore decisions have to be made. Ultimately it is you, if everyone in the organisation is expecting it to be done that way it is not difficult, but when it is really dilfficult then you still have to make the decision and that is where the question of leadership really comes into focus."* |
| - coming with your own vision<br><br>- openess and transparancy<br>- being ultimately responsible but sharing that responsibility<br><br><br><br>- different from what I have always done<br>- self-questioning<br><br>- coming back to yourself | *"You have to come then with your own vision and your own programmes to answer the problems that you see and try to get everybody behind you and get things running."*<br>*"You have to be very open and very transparent, not directive and you have to say, look although ultimately I have responsibility, I am the first one among equals, the vision that you manage for the company, it is not me managing it, it is the team that is managing it and we have joint responsibility. And talking about what is that responsibilty then and making sure we share that responsibility and that we have the same vision about it. Instead of saying I want it this way because I am responsible, saying you are responsible aswell."*<br>*"It was different to what I did before in that you are talking with the marketing manager to see what are the problems in the field of marketing and then of course this man has his own vision for what the problems are and what the solutions are, but you have to ask yourself do I agree with him or do I have a different point of view and the same thing with all the other functions of course. If you do not agree to what extent do you come to a common solution or common vision."* |
| - going about things as a team | *"As a team we went about these problems and tried to define them and find solutions to them, everyone in the team was allowed to talk about all of the problems, not just the financial controller talking about money problems, and then it was the responsibilty of the person in the particular functional area to redefine the problem and implement that vision."* |

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| Exiting The Role | *"After four years of really working my head off I was ready, it was just the right moment."* |
| **ON REFLECTION /HINDSIGHT** | *"I think probably what I should have done, and what I would have liked to have done, is to have got general management responsibilty at an earlier stage because twenty years in a technical discipline was relatively long and it didn't widen and deepen my knowledg, the problems were only of a particular nature, so therefore I would have liked to have that responsibility earlier. I never asked for that responsibility, I waited to be asked and they said 'We think you can do it", probably I should have asked for it, maybe I didn't reflect on it."* |