Ladyshewsky, R. (2007) A Strategic Approach for Integrating Theory to Practice in Leadership Development. Leadership and Organisation Development Journal. 28:5; 426-443.

Abstract

Purpose: To evaluate the impact of experiential learning, goal setting, peer coaching and reflective journaling as a combined strategy to influence leadership development. **Design:** Subjects participated in a university based leadership development program over two years. Four focal units of study were undertaken. Participants set development plans based on their learning and implemented them over eight weeks with the support of a peer coach. A pre, mid and post 360 degree assessment was undertaken to measure changes in leadership competency. Learning outcomes and coaching reports were also submitted and evaluated qualitatively. **Findings:** A progressive increase in leadership competency was report by participants and their work colleagues in the 360 degree data. Qualitative data revealed a range of learning outcomes that elevated their leadership competency. **Research Implications**: The results of this research provide a model for further investigations into how training can be structured to promote transfer of training. **Value:** Considering the investment being made by organizations into leadership development, this research provides a strategy for increasing return on investment in leadership development.

Key Words: Transfer of Training, Leadership Development, Coaching

Industry invests significant resources on training and development of its leaders. The reasons for this investment are to enhance the quality of work life within the organization and to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and productivity for the company. However, this investment in training does not always pay off. Cromwell & Kolb (2004) report that only 10 to 15 percent of employee training results in long term transfer of learning to the workplace. Strategies to improve learning transfer back into the workplace, therefore, are needed if organizations are to capture a return on their training investment.

In Western Australia, for example, a survey of professional members of the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) reported that 42 per cent of respondents spent one to five

days on training with a further 28 per cent spending more than ten days on training annually (Australia, 2004). In another AIM survey of its personal membership, 61 per cent reported that training was used as a strategy for leadership development (LD) (Australia 2004b). Coaching is an important component of LD and is being used more frequently to support transfer of training back into the workplace. In another AIM survey it was found that coaching was used considerably in 38 per cent of respondents attending leadership training. Unfortunately, another 34 per cent of respondents in this same survey reported very little coaching as part of their leadership development.(Australia 2004b) thus lessening the potential for transfer of training into the workplace.

Transfer of training is defined as the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in a training context to the job (Newstrom, 1986). For training to be considered successful the learning must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Baldwin & Ford (1988) describe three key training inputs that influence transfer, namely, trainee characteristics, training design, and work-environment factors. Trainee characteristics are the skills, motivation and personality factors of the trainee. Baldwin & Ford (1988) note that trainees with a high internal locus of control, a desire to participate in training, and a high need to achieve were most likely to apply learning to work. Training design factors include the didactic versus experiential focus of the program. Work environment factors include supervisory and peer support as well as constraints and opportunities to perform learned behavior on the job. Support by management in terms of needs assessment, objective setting, training and evaluation were more likely to influence transfer of learning back to the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Cromwell & Kolb, 2004).

Similarly, the importance of post-training interventions such as goal setting and feedback to increase motivation promoted transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

McCracken (2005) describes a range of barriers that impact on participation in learning for mid-career managers. Intrinsic (perceptual, emotional, motivational and cognitive) and extrinsic (organizational culture, management development culture and physical pressure) barriers to learning were identified and participants had either a negative, neutral or positive approach to managing these issues with respect to their participation.

Learning outcomes are also enhanced by implementing training design factors such as experiential learning, goal setting, reflective journaling and peer coaching (Barker-Schwartz, 1991; Boud, 1988; Boud & Edwards, 1999; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Graham, 1996). Brown et al. (1989) describe this type of learning, which encompasses both the physical and social contexts, as situated learning. Learning in these authentic situations allows concepts to evolve because the new situation, and the negotiations and discussions that occur between participants, recasts the information into a more densely textured form (Graham, 1996). Reflective learning journals are particularly useful for stimulating discourse between participants as the journals make thoughts visible and concrete, allowing participants to interact with, elaborate on, and expand ideas (Kerka, 1996).

Kolb (1984) has outlined the experiential learning model in great detail and is an important concept for promoting transfer of learning. This four stage model has subsequently been expanded and developed by others (Argyris, 1991; Boud, 1988; Boud & Edwards, 1999; Honey & Mumford, 1987). In general, the first stage involves having a concrete experience, and then reflecting upon that experience. During reflection,

attending to feelings and current practice is examined. From here, conclusions can be made from this review and reflection. The outcomes of this learning comprise the fourth stage where the learning is applied to a new experience. The cycle then begins again. Leadership development programs should consider this model in designing their curriculum. Theoretical material must be expanded upon by situating it in actual practice, with goal setting and reflective opportunities to explore the application in context. Through reflective journaling one records concrete experiences or feelings, reflects on and observes the experience, integrates the observation into abstract concepts or theories and then uses these theories to make decisions for improving future practice (Kerka, 1996). The addition of coaching encourages participants to reflect deeper, and to make conclusions about the situated experience and set goals for reapplication.

This experiential learning cycle and coaching align nicely with the double and triple loop learning principles described by Argyris (1991). Double loop learning takes place when coaching facilitates the reshaping and restructuring of the coachee's underlying beliefs such that they become capable of doing different things. Triple loop learning is more transformational whereby the coachee's point of view about him or herself shifts to a different perspective. The external perspectives of a coach are very useful in moving coachees into this double and triple loop dimension.

Argyris (1991) notes that most professionals excel at single loop learning because this is how they build their skills and effectiveness. Single loop learning occurs when errors are detected and corrected, and performance carries on without altering the fundamental practice of the individual. However, when errors are made and attempts to remedy them are unsuccessful, double loop learning is needed. Double loop learning involves

reflecting upon initial action and making changes based on failure. Guilt and embarrassment unfortunately often accompany failure and therefore, block learning and make people defensive. This defensiveness creates a barrier for future learning and development. For double and triple loop learning outcomes, facilitation by a peer coach can be very beneficial because the trusting relationship encourages self-disclosure and learning through the equalisation of status and trust that emerges within the relationship (Ladyshewsky, 2001; Ladyshewsky & Ryan, 2006; Ladyshewsky & Varey, 2005).

Encouraging professionals to use other professionals to support their learning requires a paradigm shift in how organizations build and support learning. Segal (2001) frames this paradigm shift in the context of socratic humility which is the commitment to experience mistakes not as a source of shame, but as an opportunity to learn more about skills, knowledge and practice. Most management education programs and organizational cultures are not geared to this type of thinking as they are often grounded in rationality and objectivity which cause people to interrogate knowledge rather than considering more intuitive ways in which we experience our work. Baldwin & Ford (1988) have noted this factor in their research on transfer of training and the importance of the training environment.Knowles, Holton, & Swanson (1998) have also emphasized this concept linking learning to the extent an organization is innovative and empowering of its employees during the learning process.

Bubna-Litic & Benn (2003) argue that more learner engagement and critical reflection is needed to assist learners in transferring their learning to their work and practice experiences. This is certainly in keeping with the views of Leonard & Swap (2004) who emphasize the importance of coaching for transfer of training. They argue that

experience is the critical factor for building performance as it provides a context in which to apply the learning. Guided practice, with reflection and feedback based on assessments by the coach, help to strengthen developing competency. Riley-Doucet & Wilson (1997) apply these concepts in a three-step learning structure where learners critically appraise their learning, engage in peer discussion and engage in reflective journal writing. These approaches, as described by Leonard and Swap (2004) and Riley-Doucet and Wilson (1997) align to the LD program described in this study.

Methods

Over the last decade the 360 degree review process has become a very popular tool in evaluating the impact of LD programs (Toegel & Conger, 2003). When used as a developmental tool, the survey should aim at providing rich data and highlighting strengths and weaknesses for the candidate. When used as an appraisal tool, it should have sound psychometric properties if used for administrative purposes that drive promotion and salary increases for the candidate. In this study, a developmental appraisal was the focus of the 360 instrument.

The 360 degree review process, despite its growing popularity, is not without its weaknesses (Toegel & Conger, 2003). Some of these weaknesses include collusion to promote self interests and selection of raters who will influence results positively. This reduces the value of the 360 degree review because the opportunity for receiving accurate feedback is lessened. Managers, peers and subordinates may also ground their responses using different perspectives because of their relationship to the ratee. Hence, one needs to look at sub-group responses as well as overall responses. The need to add qualitative

comments is also recognized as a needed addition to make sense of the numerical data that is reported in a 360 degree review.

In this study three separate 360 degree assessments took place across a two year LD program. The participants that were involved in study consisted of middle level managers from a public sector agency. They self-selected into the LD program by applying to their Human Resources Department and gaining admittance based on their application. The agency had purchased the program for its staff from a local University. While there were over 30 participants in this cohort, only 15 had selected to receive credit for their participation in the program. This credit could be applied to further study. These 15 participants consisted of 11 men (73%) and 4 women (27%). The males were, on average, older than the women and in higher level management positions. The predominant background of most was a technical, planning, project management and/or engineering focus.

Program content for the four units in the LD program encompassed business strategy, human resource management, conflict and negotiation, communication and interpersonal skills, risk management, managing change, leadership, planning and resource management. All four units had lectures, experiential activities and work based projects and assignments. A peer coaching strategy was applied in three units of the four units. Business Strategy was excluded. In each of these three units, learners had to develop specific learning goals based on the unit content and work towards achieving them in the workplace. Participants selected a peer coach from within the program to support them in this implementation. A peer coaching and learning outcomes report was submitted at the end of each of these three units along with their major work based assignment. The four

units took place over two years with participants completing two units per year. The spacing and timing of the units was purposeful to minimize disruption in the workplace, to provide participants with time to integrate learning and complete their work based assignments, and to experience a robust peer coaching experience.

The first 360 degree assessment occurred at the commencement of the program (baseline measure). The second measure took place halfway through the program when two of the four units were complete (midpoint measure). The final measure took place at the end of the final unit (final measure). The Competing Values Framework (CVF) was the instrument used in this assessment (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, & McGrath, 2003) which is based on a series of empirical studies structured around the concept of organizational effectiveness (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Two dimensions emerged from these studies. The first dimension has an internal focus on one end and an external environment focus on the other end. The other dimension looks at the contrast between stability and control on one end versus flexibility and change on the other end. Four quadrants emerge as a result of these dimensions which are closely related and intertwined. This inter-relationship constitutes the competing nature of these management and leadership competencies.

The instrument measures leadership and management competence across eight different competency sets (2 per quadrant). Each of these eight competencies, in turn, has a further three sub-competencies thus yielding a total of 24 different measurements in the instrument. Scores in the range of four to six indicate a good grasp of the competency. Scores below four suggest a developmental need whereas scores above six suggest an over-reliance on that particular competency, often at the detriment of the competing or

contrasting competency. The CVF has demonstrated excellent validity and reliability (Kalliath & Gillespie, 1999) and has been used in numerous research studies to map organizational culture and leadership and management performance. It was for this reason that this instrument was used in this study rather than reinventing a new tool.

The CVF instrument was able to measure the impact of the course content on leadership and management development. For example, the concept of business strategy and managing change is reflected in the quadrants covering change and innovation and goal setting in the roles of innovator and director. Principles encompassing human resource management are covered in the human service quadrant roles of mentor and facilitator and broker.

The 360 degree assessment was structured in the following manner. Program participants selected their raters and were advised to select peers, superiors and subordinates who could provide them with honest feedback. Each participant was advised to select at least six raters. Participants in the program were instructed in the use of the 360 degree instrument along with its background properties. A presentation to the raters at the workplace was provided to ensure they understood their role in the process and how the CVF was used to measure managerial competence. An information letter for raters and ratees was sent out with each instrument at each administration to ensure all participants understood how to complete the instrument and to assure them of confidentiality. Responses from the raters were kept confidential.

Participants and raters returned their 360 assessments to the organization's human resources department using specially marked envelopes. These were then sent to the investigator who summarized the data onto an excel database. The results were then

mapped onto a corresponding 'spidergram' which provided a picture of the participant's 360 degree review. An example spidergram is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1
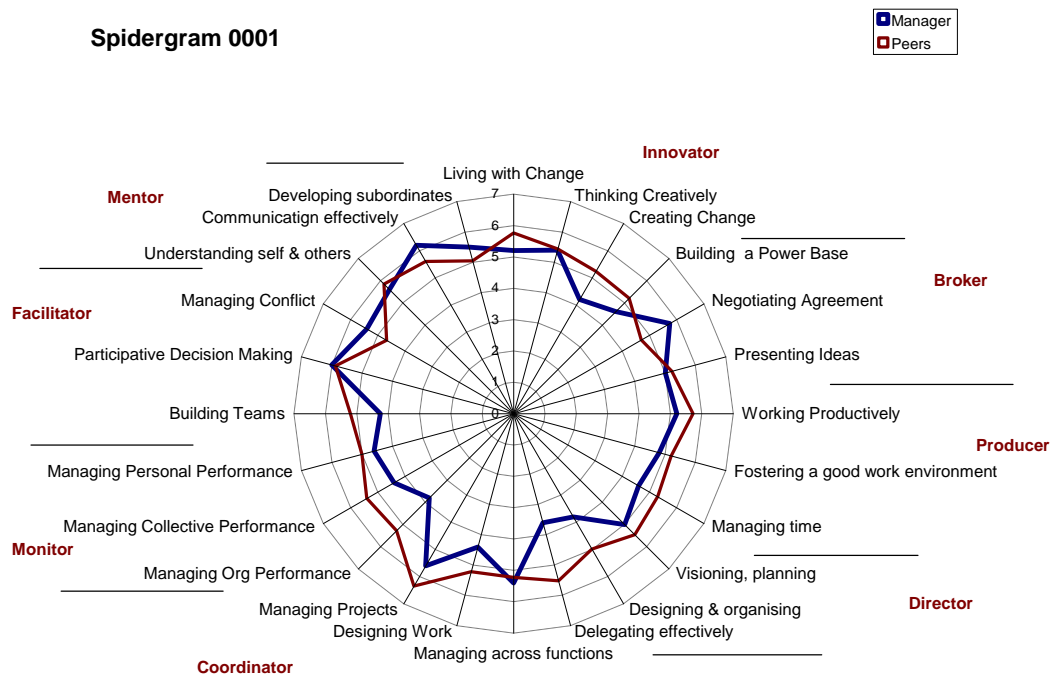
Spidergram 0001

The spidergram provided a group average along with the participant's self assessment. This information was provided to participants who also received a one hour interpretation session of their results at the midpoint and completion of the program. This interpretation session was conducted by the investigator with each participant to align results with the context of their work responsibilities. Goal setting and future planning for addressing these issues was also discussed so individuals could use this data in future learning initiatives and coaching.

The overall mean data of all raters and of all participants was plotted on graphs to illustrate differences in rating outcomes at the start, midpoint and end of the two year program. Only descriptive analyses were undertaken given the sample size.

In the qualitative component of this study, the learning strategies described earlier by Leonard and Swap (2004) and Riley-Doucet & Wilson (1997) were applied.. Locke's Goal Setting Theory (Locke, 1996) acknowledges the importance of goal setting in learning and behavioral change. For this reason, it was important that participant's designed their own specific goals that challenged them to apply course content to their daily practice. A goal planning template with written and instructional resources was provided to participants to assist them in establishing their learning goals.

For peer coaching arrangements, participants selected an individual from within the program to support them and vice versa. Participants were provided with a one hour information session on peer coaching and were provided with a written set of formal guidelines to assist them. Participants were also required to maintain a reflective journal and to use this information during coaching sessions. Information and resources on reflective journaling were also provided to the participants.

Peer coaching meetings were to occur at a minimum fortnightly and could be face to face, by telephone or if necessary, or via email. Each peer coaching assignment was eight weeks in duration, following the delivery of all material in the unit. At the end of each eight week peer coaching experience, participants were required to submit a report outlining key learning outcomes and factors that supported or hindered the learning process for grading. Excerpts of their learning journal and their learning goals were also included in this report. This report was worth 20 per cent of their unit grade.

At the end of the completion of the two year program, participants were invited to submit their written reports for this study. Participants gave their informed consent to participate in this evaluation which received ethics approval from the University. All participants were assured of confidentiality. A total of 11 participants in the program provided their reports for inclusion in this research (73 per cent).

The peer coaching and learning outcome reports were analysed qualitatively using nVivo, a software program that supports the coding and analysis of documents. The reports were read by a research assistant who highlighted text that either described learning outcomes or the peer coaching experience. The investigator then reviewed these highlighted texts and open coded the text according to meaning ascribed by the investigator. Through this process of content analysis and constant comparison (Miles & Huberman, 1994), certain themes emerged which were then organised into broader categories and a conceptual framework which described the qualitative outcomes of the study.

Results

There were 15 participants in the baseline line 360 degree assessment. At the midpoint 360 degree assessment (approximately one year later) only 11 of the original 15 participants (73 per cent) had completed the requisite two units. During the final appraisal only 9 of the original 15 participants (60 per cent) had completed at least 3 if not 4 units. Reasons for non-completion included withdrawal or leave of absence. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants in the program along with the total number of raters by measurement period.

Table 1: Summary of 360 Degree Review Participants

	Baseline	Midpoint	Final
Program Participants	15	11	9
Peer Raters	83	55	43
Mean No. Raters Per Period	5.5	5.0	4.8

Figure 2 illustrates the mean participants' CVF scores across the 24 competency items for each of the three measurement periods. There is an increase in scores across all competency items from the baseline measure. Competency items also, for the most part, increased further from the midpoint measure through to the final measure.
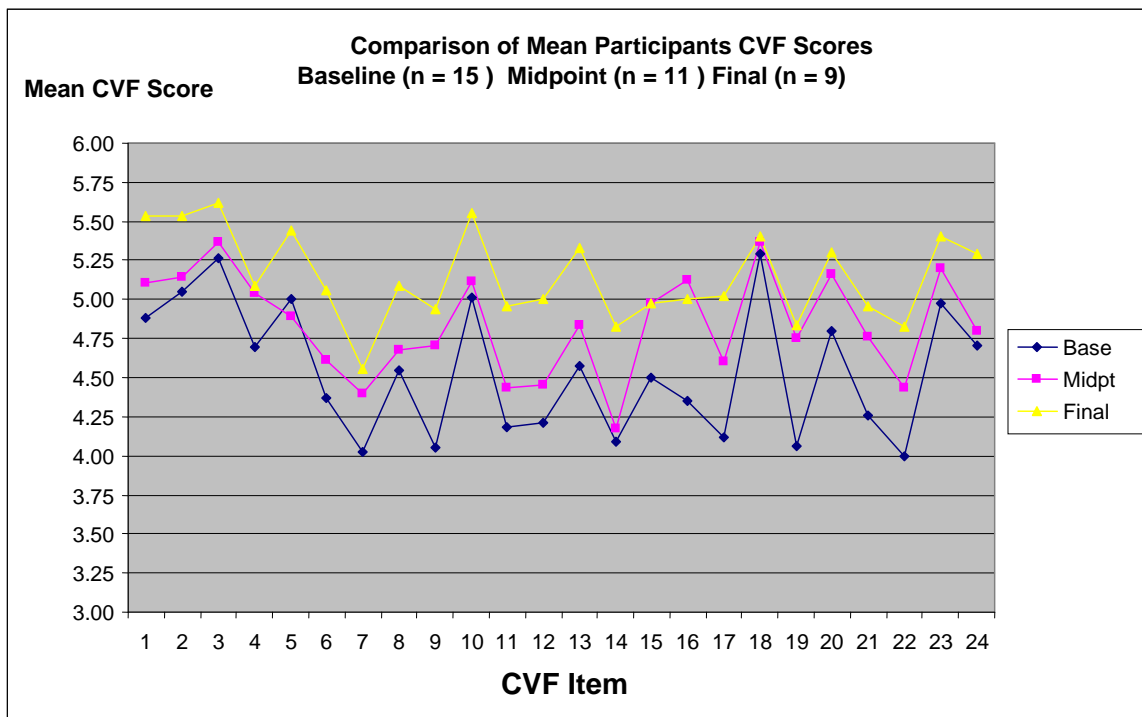

Figure 2 Mean Participants CVF Self Assessment Scores (All)

Figure 3 illustrates the mean rater CVF scores across the 24 competency items for each of the three measurement periods. There is an increase in scores across all competency items from the baseline measure, through to the final measure.
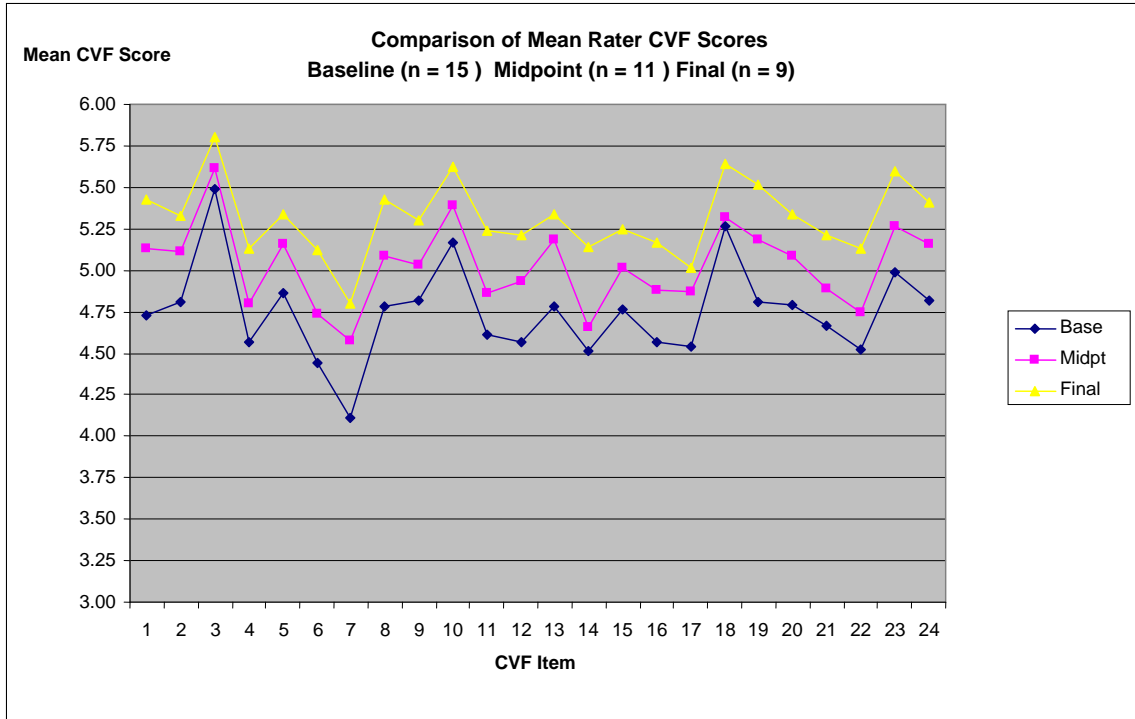
Figure 3 Mean Peer CVF Scores (All)

Of the 15 original participants only eight individuals managed to complete three or four of the units within the two year time frame. Table 2 provides a summary of these eight participants in the program along with the total number of raters for these eight participants by measurement period.

Table 2: Summary of 360 Degree Review Participants

	Baseline	Midpoint	Final
Program Participants	8	8	8
Peer Raters	45	41	39
Mean No. Raters Per Period	5.6	5.1	4.9

Figure 4 illustrates the mean participants' CVF scores across the 24 competency items for each of the three measurement periods. There is an increase in scores across all competency items from the baseline measure through to the final measure.
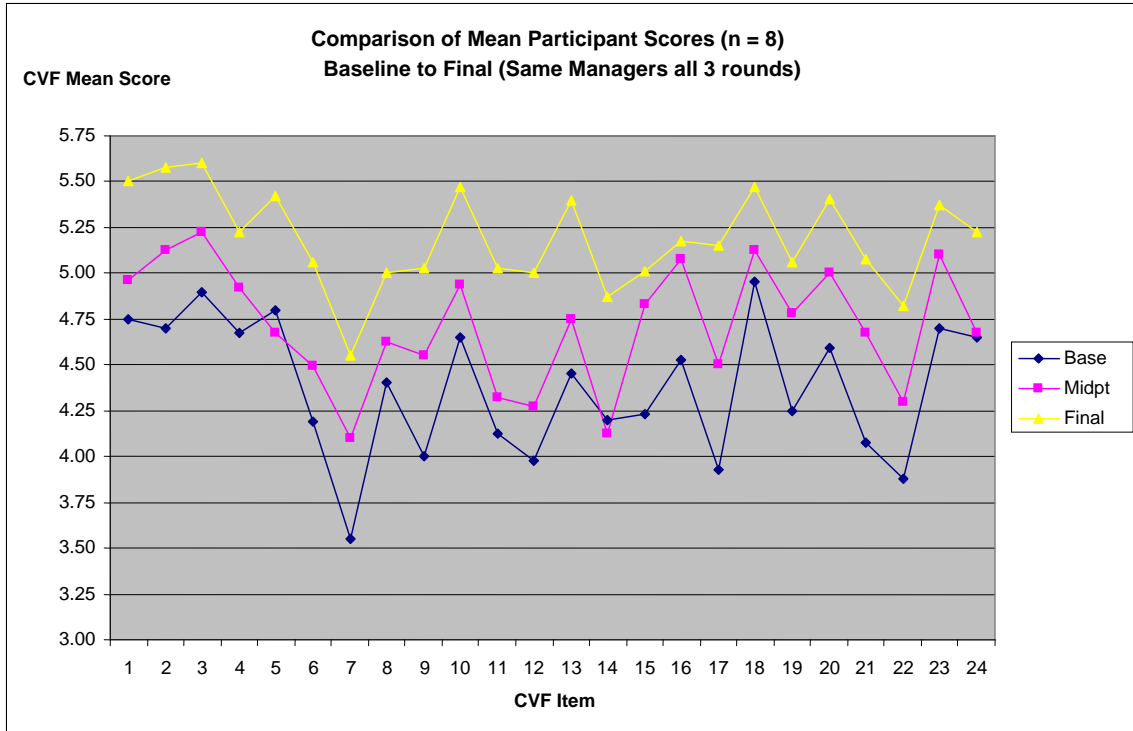
Figure 4: Mean Participants CVF Self Assessment Scores (Eight only)

Figure 5 illustrates the mean rater CVF scores across the 24 competency items for each of the three measurement periods. There is an increase in scores across all competency items from the baseline measure, through to the final measure.
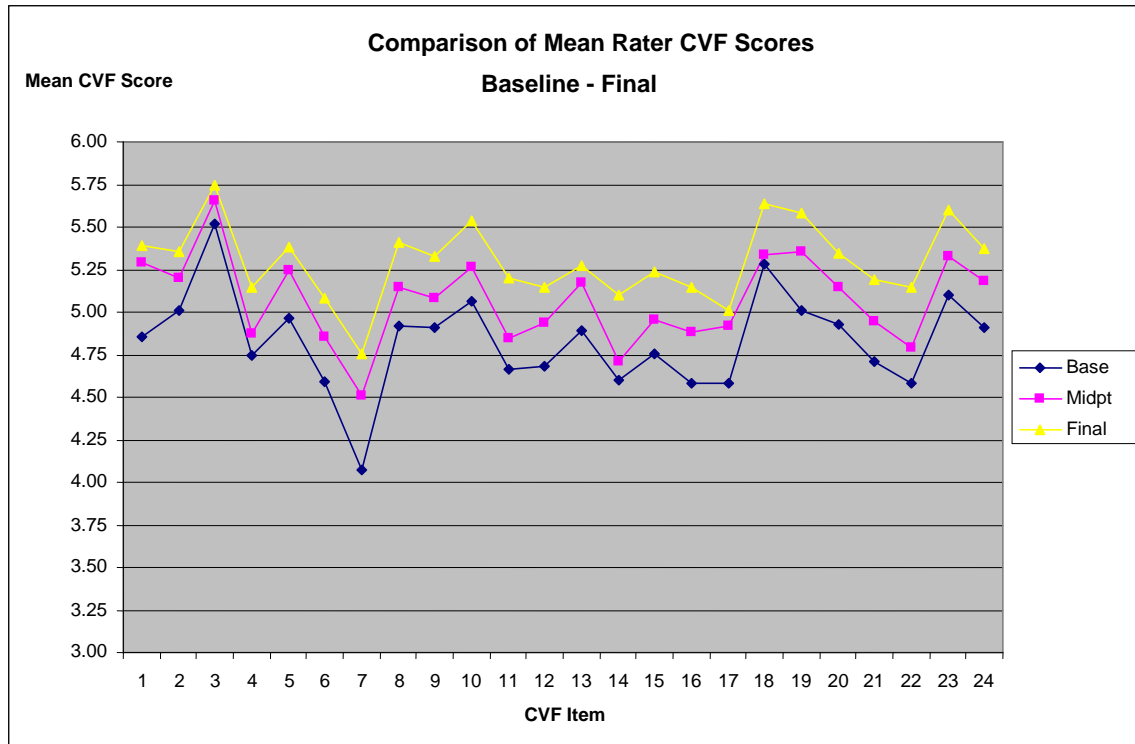
Figure 5 Mean Peer CVF Scores (Eight only)

Across all three measurement periods, the 360 degree review indicated a progressive increase in both the participants' self assessment of their leadership and management competencies and the scores by raters of these same competencies.

The information that emerged from the coding and constant comparison of the learning outcome and peer coaching reports can be illustrated in a conceptual framework (Figure 6). The learning outcomes category could be broken down into two components. One component reflected the development of coaching skills. The other component described leadership and management outcomes. The peer coaching category could be broken down into two areas. One area focussed on the meta-cognitive learning outcomes that emerged from the coaching. The other category described processes that enabled or interfered with the success of the peer coaching experience. There was also a category that emerged

which was expressed as the value of coaching. In this category, participants expressed how the coaching supported their transfer of training and learning. A single example from each category (due to length considerations) is provided to illustrate the essence of each code.
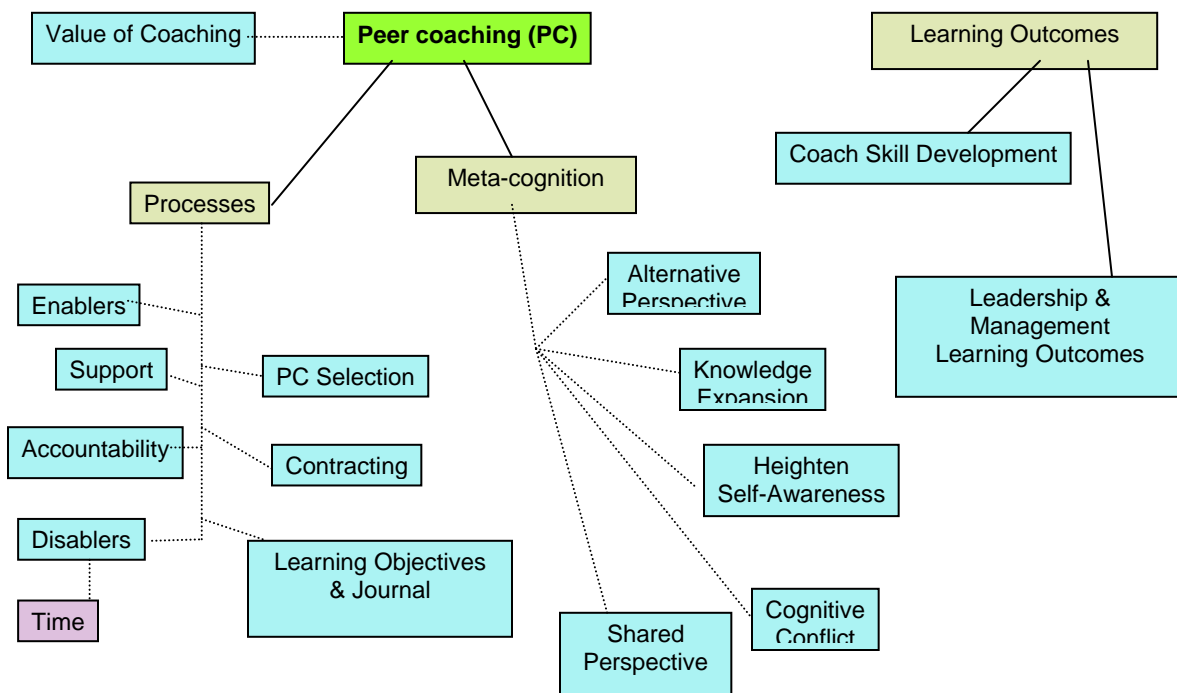

Figure 6: Conceptual Framework for Learning Outcomes and Peer Coaching

Leadership and Management Learning Outcomes

There were numerous comments regarding outcomes in the categories of communication skill, conflict management and negotiation, coaching, project management, time management and leading and facilitating teams. A few examples are noted.

"I believe that I have made significant progress in improving performance of my team through changing my communication and management style. …. I am more confident interacting with them and they tend to approach me more for advice and assistance."

"I have used my feeling side with more with Mary (that was one of the hardest things I have ever done), and what a difference. She performed very well."

"Armed with this new understanding that I can choose my emotional responses, I will endeavor to incorporate this into my working life…….this has proven to be an invaluable exercise for me"

Coach Skill Development

The opportunity to participate in a peer coaching experience enabled participants to develop their coaching skills with each other and also to extend this competency into the workplace with their subordinates.

"I found that through my role of peer coach to John (fictitious name) I was able to use the skills that I developed to assist me in other parts of my role as a manager. For example, I was able to improve the quality of feedback that I give my subordinates on their project work through asking open ended questions, actively listening, paraphrasing and initiating action on their concerns."

"The coaching sessions opened up the opportunity to assess my personal management in a non-threatening environment with a peer rather than my staff or manager where equality becomes an issue and can often inhibit meaningful discussion."

The peer coaching experience brought with it specific meta-cognitive learning outcomes. Higgs and Titchen (1995) define meta-cognition as being aware of one's own cognitive processes and controlling them. They feel that good meta-cognitive skills lead to deeper learning, as reflection-in-action and reflection-about-action (Schon, 1991) is what leads to competency. Meta-cognition can be enhanced by having a coach encouraging you to reflect more deeply.

Meta-Cognitive Outcomes

Meta-cognitive outcomes in the leadership and management program were categorised into five sub-categories reflecting the nature of the learning and reflection. These five categories are: alternative perspectives; knowledge expansion; heightened self-awareness; cognitive conflict; and shared perspectives.

Alternative perspectives were situations in which participants were able to share different perspectives on an issue or learning challenge.

"The peer coaching experience provided a focus for achieving my learning objective. It gave me a medium for investigating different scenarios and different ways of approaching the management of staff performance."

Knowledge expansion involved gaining new knowledge as a result of the peer coaching dialogue.

"Through deeper and more critical thinking, I am able to expand and refine my knowledge in program development areas. Peer coaching enables me to set aside time and talk about specific learning objective areas. I was able to source fresh ideas from peer coaching. "

Heightened self-awareness involved gaining an insight into one's own thinking or leadership and management practice.

"The whole experience was beneficial as it made me re-evaluate my previous management behaviors and actions and allowed me to engage in self reflection and analysis, so that I could review alternative courses of actions and achieve my learning objective."

Cognitive conflict was a positive exchange of different viewpoints, which eventually led to a deeper and more informed understanding of a concept, issue or learning challenge.

"We came across a number of situations where my approaches were different to my coach. We took the opportunities to explore and brainstorm the issues more in depth. It encouraged both of us to think critically to resolve the conflicts and problems we experienced."

Lastly, shared perspectives involved contributing ideas to a discussion or debate on a specific learning issue or challenge.

"As trust has been developed between my peer coaches and myself at the previous coaching sessions, it is easier to discuss sensitive issues like conflict experiences and what we think about common conflicts at the workplace and be able to share the experiences we had. "

Processes

There were a variety of processes that enabled and detracted from the learning within the peer coaching experience.

Disablers

Disablers were processes and factors that reduced the efficacy of the peer coaching experience. These typically involved comments that were judgmental, evaluative or advice giving in nature.

"I found it sometimes difficult to get a complete picture of Mary's (fictitious name) comments towards me. Several of her comments today seemed a little judgmental. Her criticism of how I had dealt with John (fictitious name) last week felt a little personally directed, however when we discussed it further she insisted that was not her intention. "

In some cases, experience was a factor in detracting from the relationship because the coachee felt that their coach did not have the insight or experience to assist them in their development. Participants in remote areas also found it difficult to maintain coaching relationships through means other than face to face. Lastly there was some speculation

that the parent organization did not provide enough time for participants to engage in peer coaching. This last point was accentuated in comments related to the lack of time for learning to occur in the workplace and excessive workloads.

"Another frustrating aspect was simply finding the time to meet and not rescheduling, and then not feeling guilty because it felt as if we were sitting around 'chatting' about problems, feelings and relationships rather than doing 'real' work. It took a few meetings to feel that the peer coaching exercise was 'real' work."

Enablers

Enablers were processes and factors which supported the achievement of good learning outcomes via the peer coaching experience. One of the most common comments was the non-evaluative nature of the peer coaching relationship and its lack of a status differential. This supported more self-disclosure and discussion of learning initiatives and challenges.

"The peer coaching provided a non threatening environment in which we were able to openly and freely discuss different issues and ideas. Discussion with superiors or senior managers within the organization do not openly invite ideas and comments because of their possible influence over your career and potentially critical evaluation of your professional ability. Our discussion during the peer coaching sessions went beyond that of conversations with our superiors and put forward ideas and concepts which may have otherwise been too controversial or perceived to shown a lack of competence or ability in a certain area. We were then able to debate the positive and negative aspect of these ideas and how they may or may not be suitable to be included in our daily work practice to improve our overall efficiency."

The trust that grew over time between peer coaches was also a key enabling factor. Collectively, the comments related to trust indicated a sense of safety with respect to the learning experience. The comments were indicative of a shift towards a high risk, low blame culture, which in itself, is an empowering factor to support learning. This empowerment is illustrated in pointed comment about support.

"The use of a peer coach has assisted in this part of the process as my peer coach has actively encouraged me to continue to pursue the cause. In these long and drawn out issues it is often easy to give up, but the peer coach is there for support and to bounce ideas off."

Peer Coach Selection

There were a variety of reasons why individuals selected certain people as coaches. For some, having knowledge in advance of how an individual operated within the organization was an important criterion for peer coach selection.

"John (fictitious name) and I have worked together … and therefore we have some insight into the way we each operate. Given this, we felt we would be able to work together on this exercise, and that we would be able to provide comprehensive feedback without the need to worry that if we said something negative, it would offend. "

For others, experience was a key factor, particularly if it aligned to the goals they were trying to achieve. Coaching skill was also an important determinant for some as they recognized that the ability to ask good questions was what made a good coach.

Contracting

Contracting refers to guidelines or strategies that participants put into place to ensure the experience flowed smoothly. Understanding the basic principles of coaching, setting up a weekly schedule, reviewing learning objectives, mapping out roles and reviewing progress were all identified by participants as processes that facilitated positive learning outcomes.

"Today I met with my peer coach to discuss how we have been progressing towards achieving our learning objectives. This was one of our weekly meetings, which we had programmed through Microsoft Calendar. We began by quickly reviewing each others learning objective. This was a useful starting point as it was reminder and reinforced the key elements of what my peer partner had been working towards."

Journals and Objectives

Learning objectives and reflective journals were important strategies that enabled

participants to more strategically reflect on their progress and to map out their learning. It

was also used in peer coaching meetings. Individuals could review events since the last

coaching meeting and bring their coach up to date on progress as well as raise new

questions for discussion.

"In most cases we did incorporate the learning journal contents into the peer coaching
sessions. Where there was significant time elapsed between sessions, it was not possible
to discuss all of the issues at hand. As a result I found I needed to select a good example
or situation that illustrated my approach and sometimes only concentrate on one issue
regarding that situation. Using this process seemed to improve the quality of the
discussion between my peer coach and myself. It prompted me to discuss my feelings and
promoted further discussion of the critical learning events and reflections made on my
approach/achievements/areas for improvement."

Accountability

The peer coaching and learning strategies led to what some participants referred to as

'accountability'. Investment in the process of coaching and being coached created a sense

of accountability to one another.

"A major benefit of the peer coaching was the sense of accountability that we shared
towards each other. We were also accountable to each other in regards to the transactions
in our own peer coaching relationship. That is, we would highlight any non adult-to-
adult transactions that occurred during our sessions. We were also able to coach each
other in assessing the health of our working relationships."

Value of Peer Coaching

Lastly, there were numerous comments on the overall value of peer coaching. Individuals

found the process of coaching helpful in the leadership and management program. Peer

coaching assisted people in achieving their goals and keeping them on track. It built trust

among co-workers and was extended into the workplace. Individuals saw it as a useful organizational learning strategy.

 "To me peer coaching was one of the most valuable learning experiences I have undertaken. In reflection, through reviewing my learning journal entries I was able to understand how, through working with John (fictitious name), my peer coach, I had endeavored to achieve my learning objective."

Discussion

The 360 degree review demonstrated a progressive increase in the CVF competency items for all participants. This progressive increase in scores was also seen in the evaluations offered by raters. While the sample size is small and became smaller as the program progressed, the increase in scores over the duration of the program was positive. Given concerns about the investment made in training, this study suggests that there was a positive outcome for both the organization and program participants.

While a very good result, one must take into consideration some possible limitations of the results. The participants that were involved in this study and LD program self selected themselves into the program. McCracken (2005) identified certain managers which, in light of intrinsic factors such as work life balance, cynicism, or risk aversion may not have pursued credit for their participation. Other managers may not have pursued credit for study because of extrinsic factors such as geographical issues, lack of perceived support from top management or the perceived depth and utility of the LD program. The motivation and energy to complete the program in those that did pursue credit may align with those managers that McCracken (2005) notes highly value development, have a high degree of confidence in their abilities, are motivated to participate, have positive experiences of learning, and are positive about their organization's management culture.

Baldwin & Ford (1988) have certainly noted the importance of trainee characteristics on training outcomes as has Digman (1990) in research on the 'big five' personality structures and openness to experience. These individuals, as a self-selected sample, may have specific characteristics that influenced their learning outcomes and the results of this study.

Participants also selected their own raters and results may have been influenced through a positive rating bias. As there was no control group, it is hard to determine how much of the improvement in competence is due to the program, or time in the field, for example. Obtaining a control group in organizational studies is often difficult because of the time and resource costs associated with such initiatives. However, the positive rating bias was controlled for by assuring raters of confidentiality and providing them with information about the evaluation process.

In turning to the qualitative comments about the design of the program and the learning outcomes, there is good support suggesting positive transfer of training taking place within the organization. Again, this is relevant only to those participants who were seeking accreditation in the program as only they were required to submit written reports of learning progress. It is difficult to postulate whether these same learning outcomes can be extended to participants who did not have assessment driving their learning. Biggs (2003) notes this is a critical factor influencing learning outcomes.

The organization, a public sector agency, was very committed to developing its managers and leaders for the future, having made a large investment in training and having senior staff also presenting within the program. Participants noted, however, that high workloads and time pressures were common in the workplace and these interfered with

their ability to pursue their learning to the extent they would have liked. This finding has certainly been echoed in previous research (Sambrook & Stewart, 2000; Belling, James, & Ladkin, 2004). This work environment factor, as noted by Baldwin & Ford (1988) and McCracken (2005) may have lessened learning outcomes, particularly for those who were not able to prioritize their learning.

Participants reported noteworthy learning outcomes in a range of areas. The experiential focus of the program, which incorporated work place assignments, peer coaching, reflective journaling and goal setting appeared to be an effective and low cost approach for promoting transfer of training. Learning outcomes, as reported by participants, appear to extend beyond single loop learning outcomes to double loop outcomes, and in some cases triple loop outcomes (Argyris, 1991). Participants reported changes, for example, in thinking and reductions in anxiety, discoveries which led to the re-examination of self talk patterns, new understandings of emotional responses, and in how they communicated and worked with their staff.

There was a clear suggestion that the benefits to be gained from the LD program required a commitment to the learning strategies (goal setting, reflective journaling, coaching). The learning outcomes were also strongly linked to the use of the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). By having participants apply theory from the units to practice and reflect on them in journals and with their peer coach, further conclusions could be made about their professional practice, which were then applied in further experiences to further augment their performance outcomes. The experiential learning framework that was integrated into this study, along with the learning strategies espoused by Leonard and Swap (2004) and Riley-Doucet and Wilson (1997) were central to the double loop

learning outcomes that participants achieved (Argyris, 1991). Double loop learning takes place when coaching facilitate the reshaping and restructuring of the coachee's underlying beliefs such that they become capable of doing different things. As was evident in the peer coaching reports, most participants were able to elevate their capabilities in a range of managerial and leadership competencies as a result of their participation in the theoretical and practical aspects of the course. Triple loop learning outcomes, which are much more transformational and shift an individual's point of view of him/herself, were less evident in this study.

Barriers which reduce the likelihood of triple loop learning outcomes may stem from the skill base of the peer coaches. As many were developing skills in this area, they may not have been able to 'push' their coaches towards self-discoveries. Time was also an issue within the organisation. Participants appeared to be 'time-poor' for engaging in extended dialogues and coaching sessions which may have resulted in triple loop transformations.

Conclusion

Transfer of training should be an important outcome of any LD program. This study has illustrated that the use of an integrated learning strategy can promote transfer of learning outcomes into the workplace and elevates leadership and management competency. It also provides a model for developing and evaluating the impact of leadership development initiatives. The importance of ensuring an experiential focus, with coaching, reflective journaling and goal setting appears to support participants in developing their leadership and management competency. This study focused on training design. Other studies should explore more deeply the impact of trainee characteristic and work environment factors on transfer.

References

Argyris, C. (1991). Teaching Smart People How to Learn. *Harvard Business Review, 69*, 99-109.

Australia, A. I. o. M. W. (2004). *Training and Development Survey 2004*. Perth: Australian Institute of Management Western Australia.

Baldwin, T., & Ford, J. (1988). Transfer of Training: A Review and Directions for Future Research. *Personnel Psychology, 41*(1), 63-.

Barker-Schwartz, K. (1991). Clinical reasoning and new ideas on intelligence: implications for teaching and learning. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45*(11), 1033-1037.

Belling, R., James, K., & Ladkin, D. (2004). Back to the workplace: how organisations can improve their support for management learning and development. *Journal of Management Development, 23*(3), 234-255.

Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University/Society for Research into Higher Education.

Boud, D. (1988). How to help students learn from experience. In K. Cox & C. Ewan (Eds.), *The Medical Teacher* (2nd ed., pp. 68-73). London: Churchill Livingstone.

Boud, D., & Edwards, H. (1999). Learning for practice: promoting learning in clinical and community settings. In J. Higgs & H. Edwards (Eds.), *Educating Beginning Practitioners: Challenges for Health Professional Education* (pp. 173-179). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Broad, M., & Newstrom, J. (1992). *Transfer of training: Action packed strategies to ensure high payoff from training investments*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Brown, J., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher, 18*(1), 32-42.

Bubna-Litic, D., & Benn, S. (2003). The MBA at the crossroads: design issues for the future. *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management, 9*(3), 25-35.

Cromwell, S., & Kolb, J. (2004). An examination of work-environment support factors affecting transfer of supervisory skills training to the workplace. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 15*(4), 449-471.

Digman, J. (1990). Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model. *Annual Review of Psychology, 41*, 417-440.

Graham, C. (1996). Conceptual learning processes in physical therapy students. *Physical therapy, 76*(8), 856-865.

Honey, P., & Mumford, A. (1987). *A Manual of Learning Styles*. Maidenhead, UK: Honey Publications.

Kalliath, T., & Gillespie, D. (1999). A confirmatory factor analysis of the competing values instrument. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 59*(1), 143-158.

Kerka, S. (1996). Journal writing and adult learning. *Available: ERIC Digest 174*.

Knowles, M., Holton, E., & Swanson, R. (1998). *The Adult Learner* (5th ed.). Woburn MA: Butterworth Heinemann.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Ladyshewsky, R. (2001). *Reciprocal Peer Coaching: A strategy for training and development in professional disciplines.* Jamison, ACT, Australia.: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Inc.

Ladyshewsky, R., & Ryan, J. (2006). Peer Coaching and Reflective Practice in Authentic Business Contexts: A Strategy to Enhance Competency in Post-Graduate Business Students. In A. Herrignton & J. Herrington (Eds.), *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education* (pp. 61-75). Hershey PA: Idea Group Publishing.

Ladyshewsky, R., & Varey, W. (2005). Peer Coaching: A practical model to support constructivist learning methods in the development of managerial competency. In M. Cavanagh, A. Grant & T. Kemp (Eds.), *Evidence-Based Coaching: Volume 1; Theory, research and practice in the behavioural sciences* (pp. 171-182.). Bowen Hills, Qld: Australian Academic Press.

Leonard, D., & Swap, W. (2004). Deep Smarts. *Harvard Business Review, September*, 88-97.

Locke, E. (1996). Motivation through conscious goal setting. *Applied and Preventive Psychology, 5*, 117-124.

McCracken, M. (2005). Towards a typology of managerial barriers to learning. *The Journal of Management Development, 24*(5/6), 559-575.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publicatins.

Newstrom, J. (1986). Leveraging management development through the management of transfer. *Journal of Management Development, 5*(5), 33-45.

Quinn, R., Faerman, S., Thompson, M., & McGrath, M. (2003). *Becoming a Master Manager: A competency framework* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Quinn, R., & Rohrbaugh, J. (1983). A spatial model of effectiveness criteria; Towards a competing values approach to organizational analysis. *Management Science, 29*, 363-377.

Riley-Doucet, C., & Wilson, S. (1997). A three-step method of self-reflection using reflective journal writing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 25*, 964-968.

Sambrook, S., & Stewart, J. (2000). Factors influencing learning in European learning oriented organisations: issues for management. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 24*(2-4), 209-219.

Segal, S. (2001). Socrates says. *Management Today, January/February*, 20-22.

Toegel, G., & Conger, J. (2003). 360-degree assessment: time for reinvention. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 2*(3), 297-311.