

Measuring the effectiveness of a management development programme for managers in an Irish engineering company

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Abstract

Purpose:

This research outlines the effects of a management development programme on an Irish engineering organisation. The study will uncover the positive and negative aspects of the management development course and outcomes for the participating managers key management skills. This will include the managers'/future managers' views on their own improvements and disimprovements in managing their teams; the operation director's (whom the managers' report to) views on their team and the Human Resource (HR) manager's view to establish if the aims of the management course have been achieved.

Design/methodology/approach:

A qualitative case study approach in an Irish engineering company was adopted for this research. This involved interviewing 10 management development programme participants (out of a population of 42 participants from the same organisation), the HR manager and the operation director. The four-level Kirkpatrick (1979) model [reaction, learning, application and benefit] is used as the analytical framework to measure the effectiveness of the management development programme.

Findings

The main positive findings of this research were improvements in self-awareness, delegation and self-management. The Myer-Briggs personality test was of particular interest to all participants and allowed them to better understand that everyone is different and works in different ways. The participants suggested key changes to the course; they decided a follow up refresher course would re-enforce their newly acquired skills and felt it would also be helpful to receive assignments both before and after their training to solidify their new skillset. Most of the negative findings surrounded the logistics i.e. location of the course as opposed to the facilitator or content.

Research limitations/implications

The main limitations of this research were time and sample size. The researcher had six months to complete the project and, as it was a busy period within the organisation, the manager's/future managers had limited time available to participate in the interviews.

Declaration

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(a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

(b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

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Date _____

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List of Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Professional Development
DM	Department Manager
HR	Human Resources
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
PDR	Performance Development Review
PM	Project Manager
ROI	Return on Investment

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Study/Research Problem

This research is going to outline the effects of implementing a management development programme in an Irish mid-sized engineering organisation. There are primarily two objectives of this research. Firstly, the study will discuss the effects the management development programme had on the managers who participated in the course. Most notably, it will consider the following: Has the way in which they deal with difficult situations since completing the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) course changed? Has their team's performance improved? Secondly, the operations director (the participants' manager) and the HR managers' views will be explored to establish whether the initial aims of the course were achieved. This will allow an understanding of whether the benefits of the management development programme outweigh the costs i.e. should the management development course be continued or should other alternatives be explored? As most of the senior managers in the case study organisation are focused on billable hours to clients and reducing overheads for the operations and not on evaluating the organisations training programmes, this dissertation is unique and will be very valuable to the company. One of the main aims of the course was to bring the skills learned by the managers in training to the workplace thereby improving their team's performance.

On a broader scale, this study will be of use to any mid-sized company (circa 1,000 employees) wishing to understand the costs and benefits of training programmes. It is vital for managers within the case study organisation to have good people management skills, especially considering the company is currently expanding and good employees are unquestionably a vital asset to the business. It is therefore important to develop managers and train potential future managers within the organisation. As both time and resources (financial and physical) were limited, the company had not comprehensively evaluated this programme, therefore this research is the first of its kind for the case study company. The findings will also be

submitted to the CPD committee for consideration and potential implementation on training courses in the future.

In order to evaluate this management development programme, the following questions will be considered.

- RQ1: Have there been any improvements/disimprovements in the managers' people skills and behaviours of the managers who participated in the course as perceived by the managers'?
- RQ2: Has there been any change in their team's performance since taking the course?
- RQ3: Have the operation director's (to whom the managers' report) seen an improvement/disimprovement in the managers who took the course?
- RQ4: Since completing the course do the managers', operation director's and HR manager believe the benefits of this course outweigh the opportunity and financial cost of it?
- RQ5: What aspects of the course were important to the managers? What aspects were not important?
- RQ6: Did the managers learn anything from the training?

After analysing the data collected from previous research recommendations will be made to the CPD committee regarding future management courses within the organisation.

Management strategies have been applied in various forms in order to allow society progress. For example, during the Industrial Revolution, factory growth and mass production necessitated strong management procedures. Even then efficiency and lower costs were required to boost profit and production (Black and Porter, 1999, p.458).

The modern workplace is a rapidly changing environment. Today's thirst for knowledge and innovation ensures that, within professional organisations, the improvement and development of managers is now a main focus. Effective managers

are essential to sustain a competitive advantage and organisations are focusing on developing their future managers by carrying out various forms of management development programmes.

Competent, effective managers are a key component of any successful organisation, from sports managers to local shops, as evidenced by Sir Alex Ferguson and Manchester United. Since his retirement Manchester United have struggled to find an adequate replacement, with the third replacement manager in three years having just been appointed and the two previous managers proving unsuccessful.

As the economy continues to improve, recruiting for the engineering sector is becoming highly competitive, for the case study organisation to secure the best people for the job. In order to win a bid for a project and secure a contract the case study organisation needs a strong team with effective managers, in this regard CPD can significantly differentiate the company from its competitors. The company is people centred (which is one the company's core brand values) and people are indeed its most valuable asset. As mentioned above, one of the studies' aims is to establish whether the knowledge gained from the management development course has been transferred to the workplace and if so, the impact of this knowledge. Learning and development is important for organisations to gain a competitive edge. According to Todd Tauber (Vice President, Learning and Development Research, Bresin by Deloitte) "In essence, learning and development is at the core of what high impact performing organisations do" (Bullen, 2014). There are too many organisations not evaluating their training systems using quantifiable evidence but instead implicitly believing they are beneficial (which may not necessarily be the case) (Cook, 2006).

1.2 Background to Company

The Irish engineering company studied employs over 1,000 people throughout 14 offices worldwide. The company is a long established design engineering, project management and consulting organisation primarily serving pharmaceutical industries

around the world and has grown exponentially in recent years. Its near-constant expansion has led the organisation to enter the US market, opening several offices across North America. This globalization makes the management development programme hugely significant in enabling the organisation to overcome new competitive challenges (Lisinski and Szarucki, 2011). At the onset of the organisation's expansion, a potential talent deficit between management and leadership was identified; without proper investment in management skills, it would prove difficult for future leadership positions to be filled internally. Therefore, in order to address the potential talent deficit, the CPD programme aimed to improve the manager's softer skills as opposed to technical skills. Soft skills are important to build a company's culture, to enable it to become more agile and develop an innovative environment (Phillips, Philips, and Ray, 2015).

1.3 Management Development Programme

According to Kessler to manage means to 'represent a broader concern for the proper handling of things or people, particularly with regard to a company or organisation' (Kessler, 2013, p. XXV). A good manager should be a problem solver and since they require their team to operate efficiently on various levels and abilities, managers need to be hardworking organised and tolerant (Zaleznik, 2004). Armstrong and Taylor defines management as 'deciding what to do and then getting it done through the effective use of resources' (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p.332).

A management development programme is fundamentally a form of training for managers. Ghosh, Jagdamba, Satyawadi, and Ranjan (2011) define training simply 'as an activity that changes people's behaviour' (Ghosh, et al., 2011, p. 248). Development, for the purposes of this study means, 'a learning process which focuses on specific requirements of an individual and is concerned with both threshold and superior levels of performance in the workplace' (Christian-Carter, 2002, p.78).

In Kotter's (1982) "What Effective General Managers Really do", it was observed that excellent managers in the study asked questions, encouraged, cajoled, praised,

rewarded, demanded and generally motivated others in face-to-face situations. Managers need to focus on the effectiveness of managing themselves as well as their team they should consistently be asking themselves 'What is the one thing that I and only I can do that will make the difference?' (Drucker, 1992, p.279). The ability to prioritize is another necessary skill for managers as it prevents them from taking on too much at once.

The management development programme in this study consists of a five-day course spread across seven to nine months delivered by an external trainer. The five themes of the course are:

- communication skills
- teamwork and conflict resolution
- planning, organising and prioritising
- motivation
- creativity and leadership

The case study management course comprised of five group sessions and at least three one-to-one coaching sessions. The first coaching session takes place between day 2 and day 3, the second between day 4 and day 5 and the third takes place approximately two months following day 5, with optional follow up coaching sessions. Four groups of between 8 and 12 people have completed the course so far. There has been one group of participants every year for the past 4 years. The participants included project managers (PM's), department managers (DM's) and lead engineers.

Department managers in the case study organisation typically have a team of people reporting to them ranging from 5 to 25 depending on their discipline namely process, architecture, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) and CAD (Computer Aided Design).

The four-level Kirkpatrick (1979) model (reaction, learning, application and benefit) is used as the analytical framework to measure the effectiveness of the management

development programme in order to facilitate the evaluation of the answers to the research questions.

1.4 Organisation of the Dissertation

The paper is organised as follows: chapter 2 explores the literature and looks at what the managers' responsibilities are, their daily tasks and the effectiveness of a management development programme. Chapter 3 outlines the different research methodologies used and any ethical considerations contemplated prior to commencing the research. Chapter 4 analyses the findings of the research and interviews. Chapter 5 discusses the consequences and programme in more detail. The research concludes with recommendations in chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review will evaluate existing research on the effectiveness of management development programmes and the required skills/characteristics for a manager to be effective. Subsequently similar programmes in other professional organisations will be examined and various evaluation methods explored.

The researcher aims to gain a further understanding of the relevant literature on management development/training in order to establish the effectiveness of the CPD course under study ultimately concluding whether it should be continued or other methods/courses of development be explored. This section will also explore the benefits of the Kirkpatrick evaluation model.

2.1 Evaluation Methods of Training Programmes

Programme success can be evaluated in quantitative, qualitative, non-financial and financial terms. Ultimately, the impact of the CPD programme needs to be illustrated to senior management in order for them to understand the benefit. All too often, training is carried out with no end goal in mind. In order to evaluate CPD it is necessary to consider the following factors: amount of money, time, resources available, size of the organisation including the expectations of the programme (Phillips and Philips, 2016).

It is interesting to note that billions of dollars are spent on training sales workforces in the US yet 80% of organisations don't evaluate their return on investment (ROI) on training (Tan and Newman, 2013). In 2013, an estimated £42.9 billion was spent by employers on training for a 12-month period in England and in 2011 US businesses invested almost \$172 billion on employee learning and development (Cairns, 2012).. According to the 2013 Employer Skills Survey out of the 66% of employers who had provided training in the previous 12 months, 35% of them provided management training (CIPD, 2014). Although Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2013) states that US government agencies are making progress and seeing the benefits of comprehensively measuring training effectiveness unlike most organisations who

evaluate training only to Kirkpatrick's level 1 as a formality. For example, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation Board (FLETA) ensures it provides the most relevant current training through continuous evaluation at all levels. Proper evaluation would enable the following question in the Kirkpatrick study is 'Have you applied the skills learned in the training program to other areas of your operation?' to be answered (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2013).

Organisations can evaluate the effectiveness of the management development programme by making use of the Kirkpatrick model. Kirkpatrick (1994) gives the following three reasons to evaluate training:

- To justify the existence of a training function by demonstrating its value
- To determine whether to continue or discontinue specific interventions
- To determine how to improve specific interventions

Generally, when an organisation is forced to administer cutbacks, management are likely to reduce the training and development budget first. Kirkpatrick recognized this when he first introduced the 4 level evaluation tool in 1959 (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2010). Citing Goodacre, he stated 'training directors might be well advised to take the initiative and evaluate their programmes before the day of reckoning arrives' (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2010). This statement highlights the need for evaluation within an organisation to illustrate the benefits of training and the need to make improvements in a training course.

Phillips expanded on the Kirkpatrick model to incorporate a fifth level namely measuring the ROI. ROI illustrates a monetary value of the results by comparison to the programme cost as expressed as a percentage. This evaluation model incorporates intangible benefits e.g. increased job satisfaction (Burkett, 2005).

There are a number of other models that can be used to evaluate a programmes' impact. Warr et al.'s (1970) CIRO framework model uses four levels of evaluation; context, input, reaction and outcome (Florence and Rust, 2012). This model focuses on measuring skills both before and after the training has been completed (Topno,

2012). Brinkenhoff's evaluation model focuses on 6 phases; goal setting, programme design, programme implementation, immediate outcome, immediate/usage outcomes and impact. Stufflebeam's (1983) CIPP model stands for context, input, process and product evaluation, this is designed to assist trainers in making informed decisions (Zhang, Zeller, Griffith, Metcalf, Williams, Shea and Misulis, 2011). It's mainly used to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the project and identify areas of improvement on service learning projects.

2.2 Kirkpatrick Model

The four level Kirkpatrick model consists of reaction, learning, application/behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick, 1979). Level 1 (reaction), generally requires participants to complete an evaluation sheet after each day of this course. This measures the individuals' motivation, interest and engagement in the programme but it fails to capture what they have learnt (Smidt, Balandin, Sigafoos, and Reed, 2009). Therefore, the 'reaction' is an immediate assessment after training, it can be used to decide if a training should be terminated or to identify what changes need to be made to improve the course (Lee and Pershing, 2002).

Kirkpatrick Level 2 (learning) attempts to identify the participants 'comprehension of instruction principles, ideas, knowledge and skills' (Yun-Tsan, Shui-Chuan and Hsiang-Ta, 2011). It measures the extent to which the participant's knowledge has increased as a result of their training. Level 2 can be implemented via written assessments and role plays which allow participants to demonstrate their newly acquired skills.

Level 3 (application/behaviour) measures the participant's ability to transfer their newly acquired skills or knowledge into the workplace post training (Smidt, et al., 2009). This can be implemented through the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) Level 4 (results) is an evaluation of the overall impact (both financial and otherwise) the course had on the organisation. For example, was the training worth the investment?

A downside of the Kirkpatrick model is identified by Plant and Ryan (1992). They claim it can only prove a correlation between completing a training course and an increased skillsnet and not a causation. Oliver and Eales (2006) explains that this model is useful for identifying patterns within training development and assessing if efficient knowledge sharing exists in the workplace as a result of the training. It also provides an insight into any issues which may have arisen through the CPD course. Overall it was noted that the 'power of Kirkpatrick's model is its simplicity and its ability to help people think about training evaluation criteria' (Alliger and Janak, 1989, p.331).

Steensma and Groeneveld (2010) note that while training is costly and time consuming and while companies are investing a lot of money in training they aren't adequately evaluating its' impact. These courses need to be evaluated at a deeper level (for example they could implement all four levels of Kirkpatrick Model) to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs. As it stands, companies who have used the Kirkpatrick model have generally over-utilised the reaction level due to issues with time/costs of measuring the other levels of the model (CIPD, 2015). Although it's difficult to measure the benefits of any course, it is important to ensure they are evaluated so the company can confirm that the programmes objectives are met.

The Phillips model is a version of the Kirkpatrick model which includes an extra step in the evaluation process which calculates ROI of training. While this method has been criticized for the difficulty of putting a monetary value on every aspect of training it is still used in industries worldwide (Kline and Harris, 2008). Notable organisations using this evaluation tool include BMW, FedEx and Dell computers which are all Fortune 500 companies (Kline and Harris, 2008). The Philips model can be easily implemented on Lean Six Sigma yellow belt training because in order to obtain a qualification from this course, a participant is required to demonstrate how they saved money on a project. This model is therefore not as useful on the case study CPD course as it is hard to quantifiably measure soft skills.

Organisations are keen to maximise ROI especially when it involves expenditure. Cindy Pascale CEO of Vado Inc (US-based training company) states that ‘research (in the USA CEO’s Top List iCP4) shows that companies that develop their employees – and do this well – reap big rewards in terms of product innovation; greater efficiency; quality of work; employee retention; worker engagement and the leadership pipeline’ (Little, 2014)

Kirkpatrick’s model is still the most universally recognized in performance evaluation. It incorporates many aspects of the training to include: satisfaction of trainees, change of behaviours after training, instructors etc. (Yun-Tsan, et al., 2011). According to the American Society of Training and Development over 60% of organisations that evaluate their CPD programmes use the Kirkpatrick model (Sarri, 2011). One of the main reasons for this is the simplicity of the model within the structured framework of the four step process. Once one level is complete the next level is built upon based the information previously provided (Sarri, 2011).

The XpertHR survey concluded that the most successful evaluations involved HR and/or managers in the process. Comments about improving training from HR managers in private sector services in this survey included: ‘greater use of action learning’ (Housing association); ‘to have a standard practice whereby three months after training, an assessment and evaluation of how the individual has applied the skills is undertaken – follow the Kirkpatrick model’ (IT, company) (Wolff, 2012). Ultimately managers’ need to find ways to encourage employees to put their learning into practice.

Skillsnets carried out a project to test the effectiveness of Kirkpatrick and Phillips Evaluation Model in 18 Irish enterprises when evaluating the impact of training. Some of the programme participants included Novartis, Glanbia, Pat the Baker and Bord Na Mona. Skillsnets trained the companies to use the Kirkpatrick model to evaluate the training courses within their organisation. The practitioners and HRD (Human Resources Development) managers, taking part in the Skillsnet project have previously found training evaluation the most difficult part of the job. Interestingly,

none of the companies taking part in this evaluation process had previously utilized such a comprehensive evaluation process. Similar to the US and the UK the majority of evaluations that take place in Irish companies are end of course reactions (level 1 of Kirkpatrick model). End of course evaluations use a variety of methods including surveys, follow-up questionnaires, observations on the job, follow-up interviews and focus groups (Impact Measurement Centre, 2005).

Companies in Skillsets evaluated all 5 levels of the Philips model for the training programme. Whereas The Ergani Mentoring Training Intervention (EMTI) applied 3 (reaction, learning, and behaviour) out of the 4 levels of the Kirkpatrick model for evaluating the mentor programme. Outcomes such as ‘how mentors reacted to the training, what they learned whether they were able to transfer what they learned to their mentoring relationship with mentees were examined’ (Sarri, 2011).

2.3 Training Methods

Learning and development can take many forms divided under two branches: informal learning and formal learning. On-the-job learning ‘happens outside a formal educational environment and individuals may not even be aware of the learning process’ (Hortovanyi and Ferincz, 2014, p.3). Formal learning is class room based training courses i.e. structured events for the participants to obtain a specific skill or knowledge (Choi and Jacobs, 2011).

The 70/20/10 model is a new representation of learning in the workplace. It comprises of a model whereby 70% of learning should be informally delivered through experience and practice, 20% occurs through other people via networking (i.e. conferences and watercooler conversations in the office) and 10% is through formal learning (i.e. formal training courses) (Eyre, 2011). This model can prove difficult to put into practice as it is hard to measure. The more traditional HR approach predominately uses formal training which can be evaluated through a one-page box ticking exercise. However, some of the management programmes on the study identified that managers also learn from on-the-job experience (CIPD, 2014).

Whatever the learning approach, with advancements in technology require people within organisations to learn at the pace at which the business is moving.

It is important to explore the other types of learning i.e. informal and e-learning courses to establish the most beneficial way to transfer the newly acquired skills and knowledge to the workplace. A survey conducted by Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) concluded that the most commonly used training tool for management development was on the job learning, with just under a quarter of managers having been on a course that led to a qualification (CIPD, 2014). E-learning, external conferences, job rotation, in-house development programmes and internal knowledge sharing events are the other types of learning that do not lead to a qualification. Accordingly, in this case study different methods of training are considered for example the inclusion of more follow up coaching sessions after the course or another course of similar training focused on a specific area to further develop the participants.

A recent Accenture survey identified that the top three ways an employee acquires new skills are the following: on the job experience, company providing formal training and by shadowing/observing others (Accenture, 2013). Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2010) article states that research suggests training and development alone does not lead to positive outcomes, rather actions taken prior to and after the training contribute hugely to the effectiveness of the training itself. A study by the University of Phoenix conducted in 2004 cited in Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2010) illustrated that 26% of learning occurs prior to the training event and 50% of learning occurs after the course and yet 85% of training investment occurs in the learning event itself (of the remaining 24%).

It is vital that the trainer ensures the programmes aims are met and tailored towards the participants. For instance, one of the aims of the case study management development course is to improve the manager's ability to have difficult conversations with their team and to balance their engineering skills with their managerial skills. Therefore, it is hugely important the trainer knows, understands

and works toward this goal, as the main reason the case study company is investing in training is so that upon completion of the programme, managers can then use the skills they have learnt in the workplace.

Saks and Belcourt (2006) acknowledge that follow up activities are important to the success of any training programme yet not many organisations have any of these activities in place. Mostly because organisations are unsure how to implement follow up sessions. Martin's article suggests they could carry out 'action plans, performance assessment, peer meetings, supervisory consultants and technical support' (Martin, 2010). Action plans should be written up immediately after the training detailing on how the participants will implement the skills acquired from the course. Performance assessments measures participants behaviour post training. This can be done through KPI's or targets that the managers must meet, for example they could have bi-monthly communication meetings with their teams.

In an article by Taryn Florence, he refers to a 4 step process for evaluation (pre-training evaluation, evaluation throughout, end-training evaluation and post training evaluation) with each step being equally important for a successful transfer of skills back to the workplace after training. Pre-training evaluation is aimed at understanding the current skill levels of the course participants so the course itself includes the relevant modules and is tailored towards their needs (Florence and Rust, 2012).

The methods of delivery i.e. timing and type of training are all significant components of modern day training in the workplace (Armstrong and Sadler-Smith, 2008). As Jack Welch (CEO of General Electric) famously said, 'an organisation's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage'. In recent times e-learning has grown as more organisations find it to be a cost-effective way of providing training. For example, IBM saved 'US \$166 million and achieved an ROI of 2284% from their e-learning programme' (Kaushik, 2012).

Karlsen (2012) also uses the Kirkpatrick model to evaluate the effects of a coaching programme with middle managers and their ability to develop and utilize newly acquired skills. The article notes that coaching can take two forms: one-to-one and team coaching. The programme implemented in this research involved a mixture of individual and team coaching.

in this global competitive marketplace, it is evident from the previous research that training/development of people within an organisation are now important factors throughout all workplaces today. However, ways in which organisations evaluate the training are not carried out on a consistent basis and attempting to evaluate programmes is proving problematic for many organisations (Xiao, Ross and Liu, 2011). According to 2012 XpertHR learning and development survey, more than a quarter (28%) of the 74 employers in the study do not use any evaluation tools to assess learning programmes (Wolff, 2012).

2.4 Measuring Changes in People's Behaviour and Attitudes

Within companies, attitudes are affected by management behaviour (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). Attitudes are developed through experience and can change as new experiences are gained. Measuring change in people's behaviour is an inherently difficult task.

The CIPD 2013 learning and talent development survey revealed that the most important objective of talent management procedures is growing future senior managers/leaders (62%). Retaining key staff and meeting future skill requirements of organisations also featured in the top six objectives of the survey.

A Management Development Audit by Durham University Business School aims to ensure that the training methods adopted for developing managers produce results (Cole, 2004). The audit attempts to evaluate managers' opinions on the current training methods and on methods they would like to see employed. The following questions asked were the following 'what discussion takes place before a manager

goes on a course? What are the main problems confronting management development at present? ' (Cole, 2004, p. 380).

Management by Objectives compiled by Peter Drucker in 1954 is a way of measuring the changes in behaviour of employees and managers (Daft and Marcic, 2009). It names 4 major objectives to be achieved in order to be a successful manager. Step 3 reviewing peoples progress is key to ensuring the action plan is working (Daft and Marcic, 2009). For the research in question the operation director can have quarterly reviews to measure the managers' progress after completing the course and then take necessary action to ensure the original goals are met. Subsequently, the managers can incorporate quarterly reviews with their team as opposed to only the Performance Development and Reward (PDR) review at the end of the year. Dochy (2015) explored team learning behaviours via a coding scheme and observed participant groups' interactions with each other while they studied. The theory of planned behaviour is a framework utilized to analyse individual behaviour. This framework uses the following 3 factors as predictors: attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural (Williams, Jones, Clubbe and Gibbons, 2012).

360-degree assessments are an effective way to measure the relationship between behaviour and impact (Manning, Pogson, and Morrison, 2009). These 360-degree assessments can illustrate significant changes in attitudes. This method can be particularly useful in measuring transactional leadership. Transactional leaders plan and organise, have the ability to solve problems and control groups through structures and processes of the organisation (Armstrong, 2012). Essentially, the team need to acknowledge their manager and only after such a point does effective leadership exist. This type of feedback provides more robust results and puts more significance on employee improvement and development (O'Boyle, 2013). The difference between this type of assessment and a PDR is that it captures many evaluations and feedback for the individual from people who work closely with them as opposed to the single view of their manager.

2.5 Summaries and Conclusions

In summary, the literature has explored the various methods for evaluating training, the different types of training and ways of measuring changes in people behaviour and attitudes.

The Kirkpatrick model for evaluating training is explained in more detail than the other measurements as this is the method utilized to evaluate the case study organisation. According to McEvoy (1997) it is important to note the point in time at which the evaluation takes place. Existing research indicates that the majority of evaluations occur when the participants are enthused immediately after the course has ended as opposed to a few months after completion. Indeed, one of the main reasons the researcher chose this research topic is because there has been such little research into evaluating courses long after they have taken place and in this case study a considerable time has passed since the participants have completed the course. Since the participants have already returned to work for some time after completing the course the researcher was able to determine whether the participants acquired new skills and if so to what degree these new found skills have transferred to the workplace.

The advantages and disadvantages of the various types of training were discussed in this chapter. Since the advancement in technology in the modern workplace there has been a significant increase in e-learning and more informal types of training i.e. watercooler conversations in the workplace. Having said that, there are many organisations which opt for formal training focused on their organisation. From previous research it is apparent that the blended learning approach (70/20/10) model is the optimum method to achieve the most benefits from developing the people in an organisation (Eyre, 2011).

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section will describe the research methods and the reasons behind choosing this method. The research question will be presented along with the various sub-objectives of the research topic. The various methods of research will be illustrated to demonstrate the reason for choosing the research method utilized. Thereafter, the limitations, ethics and summary of this section will be set out.

3.2 Research Questions

The research questions are outlined below:

- RQ1: Have there been any improvements/disimprovements in the managers' people skills and behaviours of the managers who participated in the course as perceived by the managers'?
- RQ2: Has there been any change in their team's performance since taking the course?
- RQ3: Have the operation director's (to whom the managers' report) seen an improvement/disimprovement in the managers who took the course?
- RQ4: Since completing the course do the managers', operation director's and HR manager believe the benefits of this course outweigh the opportunity and financial cost of it?
- RQ5: What aspects of the course were important to the managers? What aspects were not important?
- RQ6: Did the managers learn anything from the training?

3.3 Research Methodology

This section will discuss the different research methodologies considered by the researcher and identify what methodology will be used to carry out this research. The reasoning behind choosing this approach will be discussed and summarized.

3.3.1 Research Philosophy

Various research philosophies were analysed and explored in order to implement the most suitable philosophy for this study. The Saunders model will be used to conduct this research. Research philosophy means the assumptions that are made about the way the researcher views the world; research can be interpreted in different ways depending on the way an individual thinks and develops knowledge (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2003). The philosophical framework is 'the worldwide view within which the research is situated' (Quinlan, 2011). Ontology and epistemology are the two ways of thinking about research philosophy. Ontology refers to the world knowledge created by social and contextual understanding and epistemology questions relates to knowledge and reality i.e. the process through which knowledge is created (Quinlan, 2011). Objectivism and subjectivism are the two fundamental ideals of ontology. Objectivism is based on social entities existing independent of social actors. Subjectivism claims all knowledge is limited to experiences by the self and reality is not a firm absolute.

Epistemology is concerned with what knowledge is approved in a field of study, the theory of justification and how to respond to the challenge of local scepticism (Ladyman, 2007). There are three epistemological positions namely positivism, social constructionism and interpretivism (Saunders, et al., 2003). Positivism assumes that the reality is singular and separate from consciousness. On the other hand, social constructionism claims social phenomena develop social contexts and that individuals and groups essentially create their own realities. Interpretivism is critical of the positivist tradition and argues that management is far too complex (Saunders, et al., 2003).

The researcher adopts the approach of interpretivist philosophy as people's feelings and attitudes are of significant value to the research. This approach is most suitable as it deals with humans and this is a very people centred study. Interpretivism 'holds the social reality in a subjective construction based on interpretation and interaction' (Quinlan, 2011). This method will aim to gain a deeper understanding of the

participants reasoning for the impacts (both positive and negative) that their respective management courses had on them.

There are two types of research approaches: inductive and deductive. The deductive approach occurs when a theory is developed with hypotheses and a research strategy is designed to test the hypotheses (Saunders, et al., 2003). Inductive research approach takes place when data is collected and a theory is developed as a result of the data analysed.

For this case study the researcher took the inductive research approach by interviewing some of the participants of the management development course to gain insight into the positive and negative aspects of the course and how to improve the training for future participants or whether to change the process altogether.

3.3.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Research can include multiple methods for analysing data. Quantitative and qualitative analysis are commonly used in business research. Quantitative data is numerical data analysis using statistical methods such as questionnaires (Quinlan, 2011, p. 380). In contrast, qualitative data is primarily the gathering of data that generates non-numerical data (Saunders et al, 2003). Saunders et al (2003, p.377) emphasis the need for the data collection to be clear and well-structured so the data can be analysed thoroughly and verifiable conclusions can be identified. Interviews are an example of qualitative data analysis.

As noted by Eraut (2004) many previous studies of informal learning in the workplace were conducted via interviews. This article notes that interviewees' biases need to be considered when conducting interviews and that individuals find it difficult to identify informal learning (Eraut, 2004). Post training questionnaires, ROI, quantitative survey methods, development metrics, testimonies of individuals and impact on business KPI's are various tools for evaluating learning used by employers CIPD (2015). The XpertHR 2012 survey (Wolff, 2012) results also illustrated that

questionnaires completed by trainees directly after training was the most popular method of evaluating training. As well as that the manager assessing individuals learning outcomes in appraisal meetings was second on the list. Some organisations noted that although the tools were available, many managers were not using or implementing them.

Most of the previous research studies are based on quantitative methods, primarily questionnaires. The CIPD learning and development survey (CIPD, 2014) identified an increase in HR metrics and business metrics to measure organisations evaluation methods. Larger organisations tend to use integrated learning systems such as the Kirkpatrick model.

For this case study the researcher carried out semi-structured interviews. Although, questionnaires have been the method of choice for many existing studies, the researcher seeks a more in depth knowledge of the case study programme (Quinlan, 2011). Also due to the small number of participants, interviews yielded more fruitful results than questionnaires would have for this study.

Yun-Tsan study (2011) informed the research in this paper. The study used the Kirkpatrick 4 level model to research the effect of organisational commitment on employee reactions to educational training among golf clubs. They used quantitative analysis by way of a questionnaire. However, it must be noted the sample size was much larger (550 participants) than the evaluation of the management development programme in this research.

The researcher is seeking specific answers personal to the participant hence the semi structured interviews similar to the Berg and Karlsen (2012) study. In semi structured interviews, participants' answers to questions are analysed for common themes.

3.3.3 Sample

The participants in this study are some of the managers (project and department) and lead engineers who have completed the course. The research was conducted through interviews with employees who are based in the companies' Dublin or Cork offices. As well as this, the operations director (at the time the course was implemented first) and HR manager were interviewed for their opinion on the impact, if any, the course had on the managers who work under them. The other departments will not be included due to time and geographical constraints. It should also be noted that many managers in other departments, upon completing the course, left the organisation.

A qualitative case study approach in an Irish engineering company was adopted for this research, with 10 management development programme participants interviewed out of a population of 42 participants from the same organisation (nine of whom could not be considered for participation due to geographical and/or other obstacles). Geographical obstacles prevented other managers not based in Dublin and Cork from being interviewed (their role in the organisation requires them to consistently travel throughout Europe and USA to various client sites and to the companies' other offices). It should therefore be noted that those managers (not based in Dublin and Cork) who were not interviewed may have an alternate opinion or view of the course.

The interview process took place over a 4-week period and consisted of 12 face-to-face interviews of which 11 were recorded. One participant did not wish to be recorded so extensive notes were taken in this interview instead. The participants all signed a confidentiality agreement. During the interviews participants responded to open-ended questions. The researcher then transcribed the recordings enabling them to analyse the transcripts. To analyse the interviews, themes were established and then compared with previous research (literature review).

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a short pilot study to test the project design and the research method. A pilot study is generally used to ensure the questions for the interviews are easily understood/clear and to observe how the questions are answered (Quinlan, 2011, p.341). This aids the researcher by understanding possible problems that could arise so they can then clarify the questions. The questions were amended as necessary once the pilot study was carried out.

3.4 Research Limitations

This research provides a greater understanding and insight into the evaluation of the management development course for the organisation than previously recorded, notwithstanding the limitations of sample size and time as mentioned earlier.

Ideally all of the course participants would have been interviewed but due to time constraints of both the researcher and the interviewees (it was a busy period in the organisation) this was not possible. In some cases, geographical issues provided an extra obstacle.

Therefore, the research's main limitation is its small sample size. The bigger the sample size the more accurate the research thus providing better insight into the programme. However, it should be remembered that Saunders et al (2003) suggest a sample size of between five and twenty- five participants should be used for semi structured interviews and the researcher used 12 participants. Therefore, conclusions about the benefits of the CPD programme can still be drawn from the sample size used. Evaluating the managers over a longer period of time to see the progression and benefits of the programme is an area that should be considered for further research. For example, after each day of the course the managers should be interviewed on a one-on-one basis to observe and evaluate the improvements and disimprovements in real time. Also, observing the manager's job performance over a longer period of time would potentially produce rich data.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher has taken into account the interviewee's privacy when presenting the data of the dissertation. All data will remain confidential and only be used for the purpose of this research (Quinlan, 2011, p.79). Prior to interviewing the participants, the researcher discussed the nature of the study with them and explained what their data would be used for. Informed consent was obtained from everyone prior to their interviews. The author recorded the data honestly and openly in a clear and concise manner. All participants will be given a copy of the final dissertation and the script from the interviews if they wish.

3.6 Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, the researcher used qualitative methods to conduct this research by conducting semi-structured interviews on a case study organisation. The pilot study was utilized to improve the interview questions and ensure all the research questions and aims were covered. The data was then analysed and critically evaluated through the lens of prior research and academic papers. Findings and recommendations are presented in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 4 – Analysis and Findings

This chapter will look at how the findings from this research compare and contrast with previous research. Within the answers to the research questions, consistent themes were identified and outlined. The Kirkpatrick model was used to evaluate the participants answers to the research questions on the four levels of reaction, learning, application and benefit.

The researcher ensured that the participants were comfortable, understood what the project was about and that all information about them, the company and anything that they mentioned would be kept anonymous. All the participants have completed the course and were willing to provide feedback, give their opinion of the course and answer any and all questions about it. In order for the 12 participants in the research to remain anonymous they will be referred to as Interviewee 1, 2 etc.

4.1 RQ1: Have there been any improvements/disimprovements in the managers' people skills and behaviours of the managers who participated in the course as perceived by the managers'?

The following questions were asked in the interviews in order to answer this research question:

- What did you learn from the course?
- What were the positive and negative aspects of the course?
- Have you been better able to balance your managerial and engineering duties/other roles after having taken this course? Please give examples

This research question evaluates level 2 of the Kirkpatrick model. As previously mentioned level 2 evaluates what the participants did or did not learn from the course.

4.1.1. Improvements/Disimprovements in Managers' Skills

The two elements necessary for transfer of learning to occur in the workplace are proper design of the course and delivery of the training programme (Martin, 2010). The case study CPD course was very successful with the latter as all of the interviewees were highly complimentary of the trainer. The trainer did an exemplary job keeping the course entertaining while also controlling and reading the people well. Also many of the interviewees mentioned how the course was specific to the organisation since it was aimed at how to better execute projects. Interviewee 7 reiterated the good presentation, components and structure of the course. Many stated that a lot of the role play scenarios were specific to similar situations they have encountered in the office. The course was evidently tailored towards the organisation with organisation-specific content included.

Overall, of the 12 interviewees, the majority of them have improved their people skills and workplace behaviours since taking the course. They all noted that the mix of different people from across the various Irish operations on the course was an additional benefit. They also gained knowledge by seeing problems from a different viewpoint and started discovering new ways of tackling them. Interviewee 9 referred to an improvement in the project managers working with their team; since they had attended the course 'they have more of a consideration for people's views'. While

interviewee 2 recognized that 'it is more of a one company attitude now' whereas previously all operations were separate and didn't work as cohesively. There are still improvements to be made and more collaboration can occur but the company is certainly heading in the right direction and the CPD course has aided in this endeavour. Collaboration enhances a knowledge network to learn and creates value to all parties (Peters, Wesley, Pressey, and Kendrick, 2010).

Two of the interviewees have since moved into a new central role to improve the systems and cohesiveness of all operations. Interviewee 6 believes more cross pollination needs to occur for the operations to work in unison and more opportunities to transfer across operations should be available. This programme has been useful but something similar needs to be implemented for the other levels of engineers i.e. graduates, intermediates etc.

Nearly all interviewees had primarily positive reviews of the course except for one participant (Interviewee 3) who didn't feel it was beneficial. Although Interviewee 3 was negative about nearly every aspect of the course, the individual did mention that the mixture of people taking the course (Cork and Dublin) provided a great opportunity to get to know your colleagues. Also the individual noted that they would only give such an honest appraisal to the CPD committee if he was also operating under anonymity. The same interviewee suggested there should be more of a commitment and accountability from the participants via assignments or an end of course exam from which you would gain an accredited cert. This extra accreditation would then provide an advantage to the organisation when it bids for projects etc.

The HR manager (interviewee 10) mentioned how the managers PDR'S with their own team has greatly improved since the course. Also the one-to-one sessions greatly improved some managers' dealings with their team.

The main negatives of the course cited throughout the interviews surrounded its' logistics i.e. if the participant was Dublin based and the course took place in the Cork

office they would have to travel the night before or morning of the training so it would make for a very long day.

4.1.2 Understanding People

One recurring theme throughout the research was a vast improvement in the interviewees self-awareness and emotional intelligence. All except one interviewee mentioned that they now understand people better. Self-awareness is an important attribute for anyone who is managing people as it can change their behaviour with others and ultimately produce a more effective team (Bratton, Dodd, and William Brown, 2011).

Engineers are typically more task focused individuals. Interviewee 1 stated that ‘a lot of engineers focus on tasks rather than people’ which demonstrates the importance of the people management course. Interviewee 12 also stated that engineers are prone to care only about how they should do something and not about why they do should do it; this course assisted in giving the engineers a more rounded understanding of their projects. It helped the participants to take a step back and look at things from a different perspective.

4.1.3 Measuring Improvements in Behaviours

Interviewee 12 mentioned that ‘the company has developed quite a bit.....’ and they ‘have a greater maturity as a group now than we did before this initiative’. Although the individual states the increased maturity is not quantifiable and claims its ‘more kind of an impression really’. Similarly, Armstrong and Taylor refer to the difficulty of measuring changes in people’s behaviour (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). Interviewee 10 (HR manager) also alludes to this in that ‘the difficulty about the course is how do you measure its working’. In a mid-sized company, it is difficult to obtain the resources (both physical and monetary) to use metrics for evaluation. Previously, the managers’ improvement was measured by more of a gut feel from the HR manager and senior management than use of HR metrics or any formulae.

4.1.4 Evaluating the Course

There has been no in depth analysis of this course previously. The interviewees from the first two courses recalled a tick the box exercise consisting of one sheet of paper. Since that evaluation there has been no post-evaluation for them. Level 1 of the Kirkpatrick model was originally implemented via these evaluation sheets at the end of each day. It should be noted the tick the box exercise that this evaluation doesn't take place any more. According to interviewee 11 the level of commitment from the participants to the programme has waned since its' initial implementation.

McEvoy refers to the importance of noting when the evaluation takes place (McEvoy, 1997). In this instance, for the first two groups the tick the box exercise took place right after the training had been carried out, it was then discontinued for the remaining groups. All of the interviewees mentioned the need for a refresher course as there was no follow up once the course had been completed. Although interviewee 5 noted that in your PDR the operations director evaluates your performance for that year and provides critical feedback. Also interviewee 12 emphasises how an individual was given an opportunity to provide feedback from the course in the annual employee survey. The survey was not directly related to the management development programme, it captured every CPD course for that year and was an opportunity for the company's entire personnel to voice their opinion.

4.2 RQ2: Has there been any change in their team's performance since taking the course?

The following questions were asked in the interviews in order to answer this research question:

- As a manager what characteristics/skills do you feel are most important in your role to ensure you have the most effective team?
- Were the overall aims of the course met?
- Have you seen a change in the manager's team's performance (negatively/positively) since completing the course?
- Would you recommend this course to other organisations/continue it in the future?

This section evaluates Level 3 of the Kirkpatrick model, the transfer of learning to the workplace.

4.2.1 Effective Manager's Characteristics/Skills

An effective manager will provide coaching and guidance to their team, enable collaborative relationships, have regular communication with their colleagues and possess strong team building skills (Daft and Marcic, 2009, p.20). The participant interviewees gave similar answers to this question to include 'honesty', strong communication skills', 'develop their team', 'organised', 'good judge of character' and 'good interpersonal skills'. There were conflicting views expressed about whether the manager needed the highest level of technical expertise within the group especially for this type of organisation. Some interviewees felt it was a necessity whereas others felt that the manager needed technical expertise to a degree but didn't need to be the best on the team.

The HR manager mentioned additional skills required for a manager to be effective, namely the ability to have difficult conversations, be open to change, understand your team and give regular feedback to your team. The operations director emphasised the importance of communication in order to be an effective manager. A department manager needs to be 'able to communicate with their operations director, their project managers and their people' and 'to be technically strong'.

4.2.2 Team's Performance

Interviewee 5 thinks that his team and the operation team's performance has greatly improved since finishing the course. This individual (Interviewee 5) believes he has passed on the skills learnt to their team. As a result of the course he is better able to manage his time, this puts less pressure on his respective team and projects. Although it should be noted that there are outside factors i.e. improvement in the economy contributing to an easing of pressure on people. As a result of which, there are more projects to be worked on and business has picked up thereby enabling the organisation to hire more people for the projects and ultimately putting less pressure on the current resources.

A few of the interviewees mentioned that they had seen an improvement in their team's performance but it is difficult to quantify, it is more an impression they have obtained and a gut feeling. According to interviewee 10, some managers took a longer time to improve their managerial skills than others. However, after more one-to-one sessions with the trainer those managers improved their skills. In any event, the operations director gave them no alternative by not accepting failure as an option and emphasising that improvements had to be made. Interviewee 3 mentioned that their team already had a good structure so this course had no benefit on their team's performance. On the other hand, interviewee 2 admits that the team has benefited as the course addressed some areas that needed to be improved upon and were followed up in the one-to-one sessions. The negative areas included that some of the team were not performing (conducting the roles and responsibilities required of them) and not collaborating with the rest of their colleagues working on the projects.

4.2.3. Course Aims

There were a few course aims from the CPD committee and organisations perspective. Firstly, they hoped the managers would learn new skills from the content of the course and from each other. Secondly, they wanted the managers to improve their managerial skills as many of them would have had no previous management

training. Lastly they wanted this course to improve the manager's ability to have difficult conversations with their subordinates.

In advance of the course the interviewees did not get an insight into the CPD committees goals for them in taking the course nor had many of the participants given any thought to their own personal goals. However, on the first day the trainer discussed the course content and what they were going to cover and they set a target with overall aims for all participants. A small proportion of the interviewees then had their own individual aims for the course.

4.3 RQ3: Have the operation director's (to whom the managers' report) seen an improvement/disimprovement in the managers who took the course?

This question addresses level 3 of the Kirkpatrick model, dealing with the transfer of skills to the workplace. The operations director believes there were no negatives to the training course but the amount the participants benefited depended on the effort the individual was prepared to put in. The director mentioned how resource management and communication had improved throughout the organisation after the course.

This organisations main gap according to Interviewee 4 is that there are no KPI's for the manager to understand what is expected of them and what targets they should be meeting. According to interviewee 4, it is difficult to measure people's performance without a companywide method of reporting/analysing it and without KPI's (Ops Director). For example, senior management should be asking the manager's straight out if they had their bi-monthly communication meetings with their teams or if they produced their resource management look-ahead reports. This needs to be implemented across the board at all levels i.e. has the operations director communicated to the PM'S and DM's.

In addition to the interviewees giving their opinion on the impact of the course also gave their views about the organisation as a whole and how improvements could be made to coincide with the management development training to produce more effective managers. They concluded that overall the management training was worthwhile but there needs to be support post training. The managers need to be given time to implement their newly acquired skills and manage their people. This can be measured through reinforcing their responsibilities and roles with target KPI's, goals and regular reporting and by allocating more time for managing their people and less time on billable hours.

4.4 RQ4: Since completing the course do the managers', operation director's and HR manager believe the benefits of this course outweigh the opportunity and financial cost of it?

The following questions were asked in the interviews in order to answer this research question:

- Do you think the course was/was not a worthwhile investment?
- What were your goals going in to this course and were they met?

4.4.1 Participants Perspective

From the participant's viewpoint, the benefits of the course outweighed the cost (both opportunity and financial) for all interviewees except for one who didn't hold much regard for the programme. A recurring theme throughout the interviews was that the interviewees felt that by sending them on this course, the organisation was investing in their individual development and no longer just interested in their billable hours. They also stated that the management development course helped retain the employees, boost morale and it made them feel valued. Training can have both direct and indirect effects on the individual (Schraeder and Jordan, 2011). The direct effects in this instance (both positive and negative) were on the skills and abilities mentioned above. Indirect positive effects were the value they felt the organisation had for them after taking the course.

4.4.2 HR Manager and Operation Director View

Interviewee 10 (HR manager) thinks the management development course has had a benefit overall, 'good managers learn new things, average managers become more aware it might take them longer to really improve' and a few 'managers haven't improved that have gone on the course and could go on several courses and maybe know they are going wrong but not be willing to change'. The operations director reiterated the same point that most managers have had vast improvements whereas there are the few that complete the course and return to the same managerial standard they were exhibiting before the course, indeed 'it is as if they never went on the course at all'.

The HR manager believes that the benefits outweighed the cost, they stated that an organisation like this 'you have to look at the cost of the trainer you bring in, you look at the cost of lost billable time for manager' and with these in mind they 'definitely think it's well worth it'. According to the HR manager, an improvement of the quality of the manager's PDR's with their team has been evident since the training course, which could be due to an external trainer as opposed to the HR manager reinforcing their importance.

4.4.3 Goals and Expectations

A huge number of interviewees who said they had no goals or expectations (or if so they were very low) prior to the course. Interviewee 1 talked about how they expected it to be boring and were dreading it 'I had no expectations as I had been a manager for years and none of us had done anything like it before internally....in fact I thought it was going to be really boring...they would just throw loads of material at us'. After delving further into the topic with the interviewees it was discovered that no pre-evaluation (except on the first day with the trainer) of the course occurred which is one reason for the lack of expectations. The participants were emailed to inform them of the management development course they were to attend and there was no more information given to them. Although previous research illustrates that 26% of learning takes place prior to training yet a minimal number of organisations conduct pre-evaluation (less than 15%) (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2010). This case study therefore, confirms the existing research in this regard.

Nine out of the ten interviewees expectations were exceeded. Although interviewee 3 didn't have much regard for the course as a whole as his expectations were not reached, the individual was highly complimentary of the trainer who made it 'entertaining' and got the message across whereas 'it could have been a lot worse'.

In order for the course to be of benefit research demonstrates the need for goal setting on the part of the participants (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2010). Pre-evaluation allows for training to be more effective.

4.5 RQ5: What aspects of the course was important to the managers? What aspect was not important?

The following questions were asked in the interviews in order to answer the research question:

- What aspects of the course would you change?
- Do you think the trainer was effective in improving your managerial skills?
- Did you prefer the individual sessions or group sessions?

4.5.1 Improvements to the Course

All of the interviewees suggested a follow on refresher course would be beneficial to reinforce the courses initial teachings. This coincides with previous research that not many organisations have follow on session to ensure transfer of learning occurs (Saks and Belcourt, 2006). The interviewees themselves had several ideas about possible refresher courses from a power point presentation, to recommended reading or a half day training course. However, it is worth noting that five of the interviewees mentioned their notes were easily accessible but none of them have referred to the notes since. Only one participant (interviewee 9) mentioned that they study management techniques regularly as well as use the skills acquired on the course. Since completing the course interviewee 9 has developed more of an interest in management itself 'I would listen to podcast every week from the Harvard Business review'.

The operations director suggested that there should be an assignment after each session to ensure you understand how the course would apply to the organisation. It could be 'read these articles and summarize' or an assessment which has to be completed by a certain date. He also claimed it would be beneficial for the course documents be issued in advance of each module. There were other changes to overall organisational structures suggested as a result of the course which would be for senior management to implement. One suggestion for senior management was to allocate more of department managers working hours to managing people and less to billable hours. Numerous interviewees indicated they have a lack of time to

manage their team and there is a need for 'identifying exactly what the roles and responsibilities as a manager is'.

4.5.2 Trainer

All of the interviewees thought the trainer was 'fantastic', with great experience and the ability to read people quickly and control the debates which took place throughout the course. Some of the participants went into more detail than others. The participants were highly complimentary of the trainer throughout the interviews. This helped to ensure they had an initial positive experience and a good reaction to the course (Level 1 of Kirkpatrick Model). The Lee and Pershing (2002) paper emphasises the need to do a post evaluation to measure participant's reaction level immediately after the training when they will be on a high or a low.

Throughout various points of the interviews the trainer was described as 'controlling the group' well, 'understanding the people', 'staying neutral', 'experienced in dealing with contrasting personalities' and made the course entertaining while covering a lot of material. The CPD committee had an interview process to choose the company and trainer they felt was most appropriate to this organisation which clearly proved successful from analysing the participant's interviews. Although it should be noted that even though the interviews for this research were conducted a considerable amount of time after the training, the interviewees still had a vivid memory of the quality of the trainer and specific examples of the trainer's excellence too.

The operations director notes how the trainer challenged people to perform and encouraged participation and healthy debates. Interviewee 7 talked about how the course was very interactive with the video enhancements benefiting the participants. Interviewee 6 and 9 have both talked about how the trainer helped them 'to develop a career plan and look to things I can work towards' and since completing the course some of their goals have been achieved and some gaps have been filled on their CV's.

The trainer educated the managers about delegation and how to manage people themselves and those around them. Many of the managers in this organisation have been managing people for years yet never had basic training. They find it difficult to delegate as they believe they can complete the work quicker and better than somebody else. According to interviewee 5, the trainer explained there is only so much you can do before you need to talk to the Operations Director about resource and delegation. One person can only sustain so much pressure for so long. The trainer suggested ways of improving their busy schedules e.g. managing their email inbox by ignoring emails they are merely copied on until they have some spare time, since these are only for their information. She also suggested the participants take five minutes at the start of each day to plan their day and prioritize their tasks. A few of the interviewees mentioned that the trainer suggested they forecast how many people they will require on their team over the next few months by doing a resource look ahead. This is another way of improving the balance of workload to ensure there are an adequate amount of people working on the project and it's not under resourced.

4.5.3 Types of Training

There were two types of formal training on this course namely the group sessions and one-to one sessions. Overall, interviewees felt that one was not more important or beneficial than the other. Both had different positive outcomes, the one-to-one sessions enabled the managers to talk openly to the trainer, discuss issues that may have arisen and work with the trainer to develop a career plan. Whereas the group session build on the management theories, encouraged lots of interaction and debate, inevitably causing them to learn from each other. Interviewee 12 found the group sessions more beneficial as 'you get loads of ideas' from it' which 'you may not have thought of'. There was also a variety of activities and exercises throughout the course about the management theories covered and problem solving using role plays or a typical mock scenario for this organisation.

Some of the weaker managers (according to the HR manager) took advantage of additional one-to-one sessions that were offered which helped them to improve their people skills. The one-to-one sessions were all about yourself and any issues that arose for you in the workplace which could be discussed with the trainer and then formulate a solution or way of improving the problem. The general consensus was that both the group sessions and the one-to-one session were required as, according to interviewee 8 they weren't 'mutually exclusive' but 'complementary'.

4.6 RQ6: Did the managers learn anything from the training?

The following questions were asked in the interviews in order to answer the research question:

- Do you think the managers have utilized any new skills since completing the course?
- Have you utilized any new skills since completing the course?

A major benefit of the course as mentioned by most of the participants was their improved self-awareness and they also claimed to have a better understanding of the different possible personality types within their team. The Myers-Briggs personality test was mentioned by every interviewee as a beneficial teaching of the course. This test can improve people's understanding of those around them and help with overcoming obstacles in team settings (Varvel, Adams, Pridie, and Ruiz, 2004). Southwest Airlines have been using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) in their training and leadership programme for years. Elizabeth Bryant (Director of Leadership Development) says 'it's a great self-awareness tool, but it's an even better team building tool' (Butler, 2007). In order to develop people, it is imperative to understand what drives them and how their brains work. It is important to remember that the manner in which the Meyers Briggs personality test is administered, greatly impacts its effectiveness. As Interviewee 3 mentioned, the test was taken on a prior course and it was completely unhelpful, the trainer didn't administer it correctly and the participants could essentially choose which personality type they wanted.

The interviewees also learnt how essential it is for a manager to take immediate and swift control of a problem, i.e. they must be proactive because problems will only get worse if they are avoided or someone else will be forced to take control of the situation. According to Interviewee 2, the trainer said 'you have to take control and manage the role that you are in and if you don't manage the role that you are in somebody else will step in and manipulate it for you'.

It is important that the operations directors' (who the managers' report to) attitude and behaviour is aligned to ensure transfer of newly acquired skills (Martin, 2010).

Within the case study organisation, the operation directors and HR manager are on board for improving the engineers' people skills as some of them were on the CPD committee that implemented the training. Interviewee 4 (operation director) and 5 both alluded to the fact that the managers' role is a very tricky one in this sort of an organisation. The reason for this is that the managers time should be focused 'almost 100%' on billable hours which makes the management piece difficult compared to other organisations (Interviewee 5) and 'if we are going to invest in management for our people then we need to give them the time to manage our people and if they don't have the time they are not going to do it because they're throwing deliverables out the door' (Interviewee 4 – operations director).

4.7 Summary of Overall Findings

The overall findings of this research on the management development course presented both positive and negative recurring themes arising out of the interviews. The researcher will present these findings to the CPD committee.

A recurring positive finding noted by the interviewees was the mix of participants attending the course. There was a good mixture of participants from all of the Irish based operations primarily Dublin and Cork. The managers' learnt from each other and became familiar with the other managers during the course. They were not only exposed to different viewpoints as interviewee 12 mentioned how it is now easier to pick up the phone and ring your equivalent in the other office to get advice or ask questions. Also for some of the participants it was an opportunity to view the set-up of the other offices.

All interviewees found the Myer-Briggs personality test interesting and confirmed it helped them to understand that all individuals are different and not everybody thinks the same way. Other positive benefits were that managers identified the need to delegate more work to their team and better manage the projects/workload. A few interviewees noted that they needed to be cognisant of the importance of delegation and developing their people. Some of the managers are hesitant to delegate

workload to their teams as they believe that they can do it more efficiently themselves. The trainer highlighted the need to be proactive when managing issues that arise as somebody else will take control of the situation otherwise and the problem won't go away.

As a result of attending the course, managers generally have become more self-aware as they now understand that everyone works differently. According to interviewee 1, this has resulted in the managers giving more support and encouragement to the team more often. Even if a manager can't change the client requests, the managers can be there to listen to their team and help find a resolution to ease the pressure e.g. hire more people or allocate more of the team to the job. There has been an improvement in managers PDR reviews with their team at the end of the year. Managers are providing more constructive feedback to their team.

However, there were negative recurring themes identified and solutions suggested. There was a lack of information about the course prior to it commencing and post evaluation. The interviewees suggested the following changes to the management development programme: a refresher course and supply of pre and post course materials i.e. reading list and assignments. The assignments could potentially be either group based or individual or a combination of them. The individual assignments could take place between course days with the group assignment being completed in a 6-month timeframe after the final day of the course. There were criticisms of the creative team based activities on the course. Some of the managers found this section a waste of time and they didn't get anything out of it although it was fun. Another finding from the analysis of the research was the need for follow on mentoring or coaching as the next step of a process for the managers to develop further. It became evident from analysing the research that there was an absence of preparation by the participants prior to the course commencing. It was felt it would be worthwhile to have all participants write down their goals or aims of the course prior to commencement.

There were a few issues identified during the research not directly related to the course. These included the following; the allocation of additional time to managing their teams that ordinarily would have been billable time, more emphasis needed on the managers' role and responsibilities and clearer reporting procedures required from operation directors for the managers e.g. regular communication meetings with their teams and resource management forecasting.

Overall, it is evident that the positive findings outweighed the negatives in the research.

4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, all the interviewees referred to at least a few ways in which the CPD course improved their performance, and many claim to be putting their new skills into practice. Interviewee 11 confirmed the benefit of understanding individuals by accepting that everyone's brain operates differently. Martin (2010) emphasises the need for engaged and motivated participants on a training course to ensure that optimal transfer of learning occurs into the workplace hence the importance of a well designed and delivered course.

Interviewee 10 (HR manager) noted that with any of these courses if the participant learns one or two things and apply them to their work then it's worthwhile. From analysing the interviews, it is clear that all participants learnt at least one or more skills from the course, although some people got more out of it than others. Interviewee 9 elaborated on this by stating that two of the participants took a 'a bit of a cynical' view on management by mostly ignoring the course content and claiming that by giving their team a raise and letting them go home at 5pm they would be happy (which interviewee 9 disagreed with entirely as did most of his colleagues). Having said that, the researcher thinks that all managers should be given an opportunity to attend the course although recognises that, no matter the quality of the course, some people will never choose to learn anything on the training course. People will learn by choice, if they see no benefit and can't relate their 'existing knowledge and ideas, they will switch off' (Hinton, 1984). The HR manager made a good point in the interview that the operations directors (who the managers' report to) need to lead by example and demonstrate good behaviour and by giving them regular feedback and regular updates they will then be encouraged to do the same with their subordinates.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

An analysis of the research identified some themes recurred throughout the interviews. The main benefits of the course, according to the interviewees, included an improved self-awareness, a better understanding of the people around them, an increased ability to time manage, a more proactive stance on taking control of situations and problem solving and an increased ability to support the team. Other topics arose from the semi-structured interviews which the researcher had not previously considered. For example, the need for similar training courses in the organisation for employees on other levels of the business ladder e.g. a formal graduate programme and tailored training courses with specific focus for intermediate engineer within the organisation.

The researcher gained an insight into the positive and negative aspects of the management development course in this organisation from the semi-structured interviews. Recommendations will be presented to the CPD committee for their review. An IT company in the XpertHR survey suggest there should be a standard 3-month review after the training to measure if the skills have been applied to the workplace (Wolff, 2012). This review would be beneficial if considered before the organisation implements further training courses. While it is costly and time consuming to evaluate training as noted by Lee and Pershing (2002), at a minimum Kirkpatrick level 1 (reaction) needs to be evaluated.

Indirect Improvements as a Result of the Course

There were a few indirect positive effects of the course for the interviewees. All interviewees mentioned about how the interaction and mix of people was beneficial to them. This was one of the aims of the course as set out by the CPD committee. The participants were strategically chosen to incorporate a mix of both stronger and weaker managers from the Irish based operation so they can learn from each other and get to know each other throughout the course. A CIPD article emphasis the need for talent development, job rotation and job enrichment to retain your people and claims this is vital in becoming a leader (CIPD, 2006). The courses alternated between

the Cork and Dublin office every year and some of the managers would never have previously been to the office where the training was taking place. This means that they would become familiar with colleagues they would never otherwise see. Although one interviewee suggested that if half of the training days took place in the Cork office and the other half in the Dublin it would be more beneficial as it would ensure all parties had to travel for the training at least twice.

Alternative Training Methods

According to the CIPD 2014 survey, just under a quarter of management development courses led to a qualification (CIPD, 2014). Interestingly, a few of the interviewees mentioned that a certificate of acknowledgement for completing the course would have been beneficial. Having said that, it was noted that the course will need to be longer in length or include an assignment of some type if a cert or qualification was to be obtained. The interviewees were in favour of the qualification for their personal benefit and the organisations'. It would create a sense of achievement and people would be more committed according to the interviewees. From an organisation perspective, it would be a good selling point to their clients. The CPD committee had researched the requirements to accredit the course and the conclusion was that the cost and bureaucracy involved wouldn't make it worthwhile.

The structure of the training course was good and commended by the interviewees. Similarly, according to a recent Accenture study formal training was one of the top three ways for an employee to acquire new skills (Accenture, 2013). Most organisations are adopting the 70/20/10 model (Eyre, 2011) whereas the case study organisation is investing more time into the formal learning aspect (10% of the 70/20/10 model).

Formal training is beneficial if all steps of the process (i.e. pre and post training) are carried out. Taryn Florence notes the importance of pre-training evaluation, evaluation throughout and post evaluation to ensure transfer of learning occurs and maximum benefit is obtained (Florence and Rust, 2012). Saks and Belcourt reinforce this by emphasising the importance of follow up activities to be incorporated into the

training for maximum benefit (Saks and Belcourt, 2006). Follow on sessions or refresher courses were also suggested as potentially beneficial by the interviewees.

Throughout the in depth interviews a few possible improvements and changes to the course were mentioned. The main recurring theme was the need for a refresher course to reinforce the information obtained. Interviewee 8 repeatedly stated that if the researchers interview had taken place a year previous, they would have remembered a lot more information.

Refresher Course/Post Evaluation

Throughout the interviews numerous participants mentioned that they have forgotten some of the course content as it had been over a year since completion. McEvoy's paper (1997) mentions that the feedback can be very different depending on when the training is evaluated. The majority of the participants except one (Interviewee 3) made reference to how they were full of motivation immediately after the completion of the course but with lack of follow-up this diminished over time. There were more one-to-one sessions available but these differed from the group sessions. The individual sessions focus on a specific issue that the person has whereas the group sessions had high energy and debate throughout.

Interviewee 8 suggested negotiation and conflict skills as topics for future courses as they would be beneficial. Another recommended change was to have regular follow up sessions on new or old skills to keep reinforcing them, this could take the form of a recommended reading list.

Chapter 6—Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Objectives and Summary of Research Project

The objectives of this research project was to measure the effects of implementing a management programme in an Irish organisation. It was a qualitative research case study conducted through semi-structured interviews with some of the course participants, the HR manager and operation directors to ultimately identify the improvements and disimprovements in the workplace since the course has been completed.

6.2 Summary of Results, Comparison with Previous Research Findings and Significance of Findings

Overall, according to all the interviewees, the positives of the course outweighed the negatives. There are areas for improvement and a need for some change within the course but on the whole the managers had a positive experience. Most of the negatives were regarding course logistics (i.e. location) as opposed to the actual content and facilitator. It is clear from this research that many of the findings are similar to previous research. For example, the CIPD paper (2014) concluded that training can be more beneficial to all if there were follow up sessions or refresher courses. Similarly, a recurring theme throughout the interviews was the need for a refresher course or some form of follow up.

6.3 Implications of Research Findings

The research findings will be presented to the CPD committee with the aim of improving the management development course for future participants and implementing refresher courses for past participants. Initially many senior managers were apprehensive about implementing a management development programme due to the perceived negative monetary cost i.e. the cost for the trainer and the opportunity cost. This research illustrates the positive and negative impacts of the programme on the managers and established that the benefits outweigh the costs. Also the researcher will highlight to the CPD committee some of the suggestions from

the interviews to ensure all training and development becomes more effective and to improve the organisation as a whole.

6.4 Limitations of Research

As stated earlier, the main limitations of this research were time and sample size. It was difficult for the researcher to ensure all the interviews were completed in the allowed timeframe as it was a busy period in the organisation and it was also holiday season. Ideally, the four level Kirkpatrick model would be evaluated for all participants after each session and then have a 3-month evaluation post end of course as was done in the XpertHR survey. (Wolff, 2012).

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

It would be beneficial to evaluate the managers over a longer period of time to see the progression and benefits of the programme. Additionally, after each day of the course the managers should be interviewed on a one-on-one basis to observe and evaluate the improvements and disimprovements in real time. Also, observing the manager's job performance over a longer period of time would potentially produce rich data. It could also prove useful to gain further insight into the managers, mentioned by interviewee 4, 9, and 10, who were reluctant to and therefore didn't learn anything from the course. The research could be carried out with an eye to finding ways to motivate and encourage them to learn and acquire new skills.

6.6 Recommendations and Implementation Plan

The researcher recommends continuing with the most basic evaluation of the course (the box ticking exercise at the end of the session and a survey at the end of the course). This is vital, as the feedback from the course can change over time. Some interviewees also mentioned that commitment to the course among the participants waned over time, so these evaluations could prove vital in pinpointing when and understanding why this happens. Senior management need to reinforce the importance of the course and the investment of the organisation to the individual to

ensure all attendees are committed and the place on the course is not wasted. Both of these recommendations will not be costly either in time or financially.

Another recommendation is to have a one-day refresher course for all previous participants and a powerpoint slide for them all to reference in the workplace throughout the year. Another recommendation would be to have mentor or coaching sessions for the participants on a one-to-one basis to further develop the managers. This would be the most significant financial burden for the organisation but as its' expanding and the market has picked up, it's important to develop and retain high quality employees. Some of these managers may progress to senior management if they continue to develop further.

The last recommendation is to introduce the management course into all operations outside of Ireland, once the right trainer has been identified and the material of the course was focused on the operation (similar to this one).

6.7 Personal Learning Reflection

Working on this project taught the researcher a lot about themselves. First off, it was a challenge and a big step outside the researcher's comfort zone to choose interviews as the research method. Initially, it proved a daunting task but it ultimately improved their confidence, communication and people skills as a consequence and ended up very enjoyable.

It was very interesting to learn about how the CPD course instilled a sense of belonging and value among the interviewees. The researcher also found it fascinating to learn about what motivates the employees. They also learned how vital it was to correctly word questions so as to prevent bias and ensure long, fruitful answers. Prior, to this project, they had no understanding of how difficult this could be.

The researcher has gained further insight and a deeper understanding of the evaluation of training methods and both the indirect and direct impact it has on an organisation. Also it has allowed the researcher to understand the importance of the training process and how to ensure the training process has the maximum benefit to an organisation.

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Appendix 1 – Confidentiality Agreement Form

Purpose of the Study:

As part of the requirements for Masters in Human Resources in NCI Ireland, I have to complete a dissertation. The study is concerned with measuring the effectiveness of the management development course of managers in an Irish engineering company.

What will the study involve?

The study will involve a recorded interview lasting 45 mins – 1 hour in duration for each participant at a time that is convenient for the individual.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked because you completed the management development course so are suitable to provide data for the study

Do you have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. This consent form will be signed and each individual can keep a copy of the form and information about the study. All participants have the option of withdrawing before the study commences (even if you have agreed to participate) or discontinuing after data collection has started.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the dissertation. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the dissertation will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information which you give?

The data will be kept confidential.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be presented in the dissertation.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part.

Who has approved this study?

Approval has been given by the National College of Ireland before the study has taken place

Any further queries?

If you need any further information, you can contact me: Roisin McInerney email: roisin.mcinerney@dpsgroupglobal.com or at 01 - 4661762

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

Project title: Measuring the effectiveness of a management development programme for managers in an Irish engineering company

Background: This research is going to outline the effects of implementing a management development programme in an Irish engineering organisation. The study consists of interviewing participants who have completed the management development course and measuring the effectiveness of the course to ascertain their views on what was effective/not and how can the programme be improved.

I _____ (insert name) the participant:

Circle as appropriate

Have read or have had the information sheet read to me and that I understand the contents.

Yes No

Have been given an opportunity to ask questions and am satisfied with answers.

Yes No

Consent to take part in the study.

Yes No

Understand that participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time.

Yes No

Understand that withdrawal will not affect my access to services or legal rights.

Yes No

Consent to possible publication of results.

Yes No

Participant's Name:

Contact Details:

Participant Signature:

Date:

Researcher's Statement: I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study, the procedures to be undertaken and any risks that may be involved. I have offered to answer any questions and fully answered such questions. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

2.A Questions for Managers

1. Can you explain your role?
2. How long have you been a manager?
3. How many people do you manage?
4. Is this the first managerial training course you have been on?
5. What did you learn from the course?
 - Aspects important
 - Aspects not important
 - Have you used it since completing the course?
6. What were the positive and negative aspects of the course?
 - Why?
7. What do you suggest changing in the programme?
 - Why?
 - Specific aspects
 - Length
 - Time of course
 - duration
8. As a manager what characteristics/skills do you feel are most important in your role to ensure you have the most effective team?
 - i.e. communication, leadership, delegation,
 - Skills dealt with in the course
 - Improved since completing the course
 - Communication alter since completing the course
9. Did you prefer the individual sessions or group sessions?
 - What benefits for individual, group?
 - Negative aspects
 - Would you have more sessions?
10. Have you been better able to balance your managerial and engineering duties/other roles after having taken this course? Please give examples.
 - Team performance improved?

- More efficient?
 - Better at dealing with people
11. What were your goals going in to this course and were they met?
- Did course exceed expectations?
12. Do you think the course was a worthwhile investment?
- Did the benefits out weight the cost (opportunity and financial)?
 - i.e. learning new skills versus losing a day of work
13. Would you recommend the course to other employees?
- Why or why not?
14. Do you think the trainer was effective in improving your managerial skills?
- Why or why not?
15. Will this course assist you going forward in other managerial roles?
- How?
16. Have you seen a change in the manager's team's performance (negatively/positively) since completing the course?
- How
 - What?

2.B Interview Questions for Operation Directors' and HR Manager

1. Can you explain your role?
2. How long have you been operations director?
3. How many people do you manage?
4. Were the overall aims of the course met?
5. Has the course benefited the participants negatively/positively?
 - How
 - Why?
6. What aspects of the course would you change?
 - Length
 - Time
 - More/less sessions?
7. Have you seen a change in the manager's team's performance (negatively/positively) since completing the course?
 - How
 - What?
8. Do you think the course was a worthwhile investment?
 - Did the benefits outweigh the cost (opportunity and financial)?
 - i.e. learning new skills versus losing a day of work
9. Do you think the managers have utilized any new skills since completing the course?
 - Improved their people skills
 - Difficult conversations
10. Would you recommend this course to other organisations/continue it in the future?
 - Why/why not?