



National College of Ireland  
MA in Learning and Teaching  
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‘Are interactive activities effective in engaging adults in  
workplace learning?’

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Arts in Learning and Teaching is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to explore the effects of activity based learning; the focus is on the interactive side of learning and the importance of interactive activities on training courses for adult learners.

Observations were conducted on two mixed groups; the areas of interest which were identified during this process were the participants' behaviors, their interaction and engagement with the activity, the facilitator and with their colleagues. These findings helped formulate the survey questions, 150 surveys were randomly issued to employees who had attended the specific training. The study also included conducting interviews, interviewee's were asked to complete the full Honey and Mumford learning styles questionnaire to identify their preferred learning style.

The responses in this study indicated that 'Interactive Activities' within this training course were not only effective but also increased the engagement and enjoyment for the adult in workplace learning. It was also evident from the research that the activities allowed learners an opportunity to participate, involve themselves and draw from their experience. Another aspect of the study which was revealed was the central role of the facilitator within the entire process, with the facilitator actively involved the response from the adult learner was positive in terms of buy in, involvement and engagement.

However, while the findings of the research indicate that 'Interactive Activities' within a training course are effective for adults in workplace learning it must be remembered that these findings relate to a small cohort of learners within the host organisation, the course was specific to this organisation and therefore did not have enough of an external focus in order to make significant correlation or comparison to adults outside the organisation.

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‘The people and circumstances around me do not make me what I am, they reveal who I am’  
Laura Schlessinger

### *Dedication*

Dedicated to my wonderful family.

My husband Colin Morrissey, for his love, support and tolerance.

My three wonderful children Fia, Jayme and Abigail for their love, perseverance and special words of encouragement, hopefully this experience will inspire them to achieve great things in their own lives.

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## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction to Chapter Content**

This chapter will introduce the company which is at the centre of the research and give a brief background to the research project and will introduce the research questions. It also outlines the research aim and approach and finally the chapter provides an overview of the company and course upon which the research was conducted.

### **1.1 Background to the project**

The company which provided access to the research participants is a medium sized organization within the service sector. The company operates in the transport and logistics industry and has 336 employees. With regards to the demographics, given the nature of the business there are more men vs. women working in the company. A large proportion of staff has been with the company for a long period of time. Approximately 70% of the workforce in the Company are over the age of 30, and have an average year's service of 15 years, so it would be fair to say that the organization has a lot of experienced employees.

The transport and logistics industry dictates an extensive array of training courses in which all employees must attend, both for legal and regulatory reasons. The training to date has been mainly lecture based and this fact coupled with a poor performance result of 63% in the Employee Opinion Survey under the area of Learning and Development suggested that the training being delivered was in some way wide of the mark in terms of engagement, which then prompted this research study.

The main impetus behind this project was to assess the structure and delivery of company training programmes, and this research study will assess if interactive activities within a training programme have an effect on adults learning in the workplace, and if interactive activities in the classroom have an overall effect on engagement in the learning process.

## 1.2 Research Question

The research question in relation to this study is: ‘Are interactive activities effective in engaging adults in workplace learning?’ The study will focus on a cross section of individuals who have completed a specific training programme designed with a combination of lecture and interactive activities. The study was conducted in a medium sized transport and logistics company with a diverse population of staff, in terms of demographics, experience, functional area and job level.

### 1.2.1 Sub Questions Stated

Sub questions related to this study will include:

**Question 1** – Do interactive activities have an effect on adults learning in the workplace?

**Question 2** – Do interactive activities in the classroom have an effect on how adults engage in the learning process?

**Question 3** – Do interactive activities enhance learning engagement?

**Question 4** – Do interactive activities improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner?

**Question 5** – Do interactive activities increase enjoyment when learning?

**Hypothesis** - If a training course is designed with interactive activities then the adult in the workplace is more engaged.

‘Are interactive activities effective in engaging adults in workplace learning?’

*(Key words –Interactive, activities, effective, engaging, adults, workplace, learning)*

The key words used in the research question as follows: -

**Interactive** – would involve a social setting for students according to Vygotsky (1978) social interaction helps and supports learning, with students influencing each other. Vygotsky (1978) also describes **Activities** as constructive factors of development and Ranganath (2012) states that activities help learners how to learn. With regards to how **Effective** activities, Crookall

(2010) highlights in order to be effective the end results need to be measured and debriefed by the educator. *Engagement* - defined by Natriello (1984) 'participating in the activities', however Natriello also states that engagement is not only student participation in learning but also the internal motivation of the student to connect and commit to the learning process. Chapman (2003) describes engagement as active participation in and emotional commitment to their learning'. Engagement is also not limited to just the individual, there are also other effects on engagement, such as the environment, students relationship with their teacher, their managers and colleagues (Harrison, 2009, p. 369) an aspect of engagement which also forms part of the research in terms of facilitator interaction, enjoyment and an effective learning process. *Workplace Learning* – is the concept of learning within the workplace, learning is twofold, and workplace learning should benefit the learner and the workplace. According to Bowman (2003) people learn in different ways and workplace learning should accommodate different learners and their styles.

### **1.3 Research Aim**

The aim of this study was to explore the effects of activity based learning with the support of trained facilitators; the focus is on the interactive side of learning and the importance of having an activity or interactive session on all learning courses for adult learners. Typically the current workplace training within this organisation has been designed around a lecture style format which is mainly directive training within a classroom of varying demographics. The aim of this research is to assess the benefits and appeal associated with the introduction of interactive sessions within training, its positive impact or negative impact

In addition the research aim is also to look at the possibility of interactive activities within classroom training as an important part of learning and development for adults in the workplace, it is argued that educational games are not a new phenomenon. With the introduction of technology, it is an area that is currently being researched on a larger scale. Unfortunately this type of training style will not appeal to all, and this can result in barriers to meaningful learning. People learn in different ways, new information is digested in multisensory ways: hearing, seeing, discussing, writing, reflecting, imagining, participating, and teaching it to others. Adults learn by doing and need to be involved in order to learn new

skills and behaviours, and in turn bring those newly acquired skills and behaviours back to the workplace (Bowman, 2003)

This study will investigate the area of engagement in relation to the interactive activities and in relation to the facilitator/ learner interaction. We are now working in a more competitive and challenging world, for this reason in order for organisations to be as successful in the future as they have been in the past, they need to be working together with their employees and need to be working toward the same goal if they are to stay ahead of the competition. In recent years there has been a large focus on employee engagement within organisations. Employees worldwide view training and development as one of the top drivers of job satisfaction and engagement within the workplace (Blessingtonwhite, 2011).

#### **1.4 Research Approach**

This study uses a mixed method approach which uses a combination of both Qualitative and Quantitative research methods. Observation was carried out on two cohorts of learners; from this a survey was designed and was issued to a large data sample. In addition to the observations and survey, interviews and pre-interview questionnaires were conducted on four participants. A description and rationalisation for this mixed method approach is outlined in chapter 3.

#### **1.5 Dissertation Structure**

The following describes the structure of this dissertation:

*Chapter 1 Introduction:* Background to the company which provided access to the research participants, research questions and description of the training programme being used to conduct research on.

*Chapter 2 Literature Review:* Describes and identifies existing research in relation to this study.

*Chapter 3 Methodology:* Gives an overview of methodology and gives an outline description and rationalisation for the mixed method approach used in this study.

*Chapter 4 Analysis & Results:* Describes the results from the observations, survey, pre-interview questionnaire and interviews.

*Chapter 5 Discussion:* Interpretation of the results from chapter 4.

*Chapter 6 Conclusion & Future Perspectives:* Concludes and gives recommendations for future research and development.

## **1.6 Background of the company**

For the purpose of this study and to explore literature in relation to the research question, this paper will make reference to a particular organisation which, for the purpose of confidentiality will be named ABC Express. Like most organisations ABC Express has a training strategy which is based on a number of needs from different perspectives - employee demographics, regulatory and mandatory training needs and organisational training directives.

### **1.6.1 Employee Demographics**

There is a diverse background to the employees in ABC Express with regards to age, gender, length of service and employment history. The individuals within the company are at different skill levels, they bring their own levels of experience for example on the job experience and also previous educational experience.

Within the company there are three levels of employees to be trained: -

1. The customer-facing employees within the organisation sit within the Sales and Marketing department, Customer Services, the Operational area, Information Technology and the Finance section. These employees deal directly with the customers on a day to day basis.

2. Middle Management also within these functional areas is the dedicated team-leaders and supervisors. These team-leaders and supervisors although primarily leading their teams, would also have customer contact at a more senior level, when issues or calls are escalated.
3. Senior Management the managers of these functional areas; a large percentage of the managers across the company would have third level education or the equivalent experience.

### **1.6.2 Regulatory and Mandatory Training needs**

The company specialises in transport and logistics and due to the nature of the business, there are a number of regulatory training requirements which are imposed both legally, and for health and safety reasons. There are a number of courses which are mandatory for each employee at all levels to attend periodically. There is also training which must be completed by all employees to comply with legislation and the requirements from the Department of Transport.

### **1.6.3 Organisational Training Directives**

The company is a large international company with a number of central training directives.

One of the main central training directives is standardisation training, which involves certifying all employees in particular skills so that the customer receives the same standard of service no matter what station they contact, in every country across the world.

Training is important to the company, the organisation has a 'focus strategy' that indicates if they focus on having a motivated and trained team, the team will be engaged and in turn will then give a great quality service to the customers. If the customers are receiving a top quality service from ABC Express the customers will become and remain loyal to the business and generally when customers are loyal, they usually buy more and this can and should result in a profitable network for the organisation.

## **1.7 Training Course used for this Study**

CIS (Certified International Specialist) is a term that will be referred to in this study, CIS is a set of courses which are being rolled out to standardise training across the business. The course that will be focused on in this study is 'Welcome To My Country'. This course is a three hour session and was designed both globally and locally with input from the researcher. In this particular course there are four activities (which are all interactive) that will be referred to throughout the study.

### **1.7.1 Activity 1 - Decade Board Discussion**

The running of this interactive activity involves all participants, boards are laid out on the floor and each participant is given three or four fact cards. The groups are then asked to create a timeline matching the correct fact cards to the correct decade.

### **1.7.2 Activity 2 – Matching KPI's (Key Performance Indicators) to Departments**

The running of this interactive activity involves all participants. Boards are laid out on the floor and each participant is given fact cards in relation to systems, number of employees, departmental targets and targets which feed into global targets. As a group they discuss the details on each card and decide as a group where they belong.

### **1.7.3 Activity 3 – Shipment Cycle**

This interactive activity involves all participants; each group is given a set of 10 cards which represents the 10 stages of the *shipment cycle*. Each group needs to discuss and decide the order in which the stages are to be arranged and then arrange them in sequence; part of this activity includes a short questionnaire which needs to be completed by the group.

### **1.7.4 Activity 4 – Test your Knowledge**

This interactive activity tests the knowledge of all the participants. A slideshow is run with each question showing an option for a 'yellow' or 'red' answer. The participants are asked to

hold up their cards showing 'yellow' or 'red' in response. Correct answers are then highlighted and reinforced by the facilitator.

## **1.8 Chapter Conclusion**

Chapter 1 describes the impetus behind this project, an overview of the company which provided access to the research participants in terms of background and current training directives. The chapter introduces the structure of the dissertation, the research aim, approach and describes the training course being used for the study. This chapter also introduces the research questions and sub question and gives a background to the company and to the training course in which the study will be conducted.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction to Chapter Content**

In line with the research questions this literature review will look at the key relevant theoretical works in relation to learning and teaching. This chapter will discuss previous research in relation to adults in the workplace and the area of employee engagement. This study sets out to examine how interactive activities within classroom training are an effective part of learning and development for adults in the workplace, with that in mind the literature review will explore concepts on how adults learn and various learning styles.

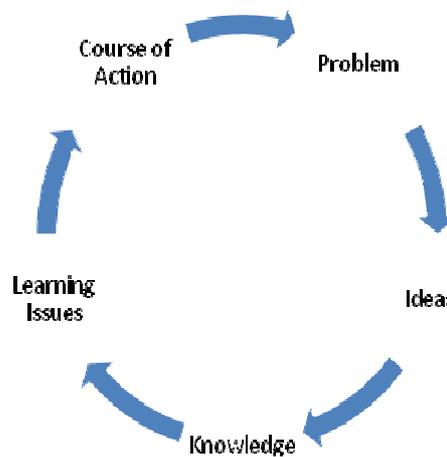
The review will then look at previous research and the important role that activities play in learning and development in today's workplace environments. The aim is to identify research which shows the importance of interactive activities in the enhancement of the adult learning and the engagement throughout the learning process. A variety of instructional strategies can introduce a renewed enthusiasm for both teaching and learning; students remember content for longer periods of time if they are actively involved as they learn. (Bowman, 2003)

### **2.1 Organisational Training**

Ultimately the reason why organisations run training courses is not only to educate but also to change or improve the behaviours of their employees. Lecture or top down instruction is possibly the most common method of training. According to Bowman (2002) Lecturing is a common form of teaching, it is an easy method of instruction and the instructor can part with a lot of information at a past pace. Unfortunately this type of training style will not appeal to all, and this can result in barriers to meaningful learning. As discussed by Bowman, 2002 'People learn in different ways, new information is digested in multisensory ways: hearing, seeing, discussing, writing, reflecting, imagining, participating, and teaching it to others' Bowman (2003) also stated that adults learn best when they are actively involved, they learn when they can practice new skills and behaviours, they are more ready to adapt the new skills to the workplace if they have had a chance to practice them in a learning environment.

Typically workplace training has been designed around a lecture style format which is mainly directive training with the classroom. The aim of this research is to assess the benefits associated with the introduction of interactive activities within that training, its impact and in particular its appeal to adult learners in the workplace environment. (Knowles et al, 2005) suggests that adults are self directed, tend to draw from life experiences and are more problem centered than subject centered when it comes to learning. ‘Problem-based learning is a rigorous, highly structured teaching methodology which places the student in a position of active responsibility for learning and mastering content. In a group of peers, the student learns new material by confronting and solving problems’ (Barrows and Tamblyn, 1980, xii) Using the PBL concept as shown below in figure 2.1, the model shows how the learner, when confronted with a problem, solves this through knowledge, experience and peer support. By incorporating problem based interactive activities into workplace learning the organization draws upon the individuals’ knowledge, skills and experience to solve a problem and in doing so this approach not only engages the learner but also has a positive and enhancing effect on the overall learning experience.

**Figure 2.1 Problem Based Learning Process**



## **2.2 Constructivism**

Constructivism refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves and that each learner individually and socially constructs meaning as they learn. ‘In the

constructivist approach, the students are in the centre of the teaching and learning process' (Kahveci and Ay 2008, p. 125), constructivism puts the emphasis on the learner, supported by the facilitator to engage in the activity or problem and to draw upon their knowledge and skill to find a solution to the problem or challenge, by including interactive activities into workplace learning learners must collaborate and share their combined ideas and knowledge in the construction of a solution, this enables the learner to not only work as an individual but also as a team member, 'constructivism emphasizes independent learning' (Kumari, 2008), it also forces them to engage in activity and learning process. By adopting the constructivist approach organizations would need to change their teaching methods to engage the learners in meaningful activity based learning that reflects their workplace environment. 'They construct knowledge with stimuli from their surroundings and these constructs are mostly related with the way they perceive the environment' (Kahveci & Ay 2008). Many theorists such as Dewey (1916), Piaget (1973), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996) each proposed that learners could learn actively and construct new knowledge based on their prior knowledge and experiences, by including relevant activities onto training courses in the workplace environment the overall experience for the learner can be enhanced and given value.

### **2.2.1 Dewey**

According to Dewey (1916), a situation represents the experiences of the environment affecting the learner, and interaction takes place between the learner and his or her environment. So, knowledge is based on active experience. With this in mind it could be suggested that activities based on real life experiences would benefit and should be introduced in the learning environment wherever possible.

'We know that some methods of inquiry are better than others in just the same way in which we know that some methods of surgery, arming, road-making, navigating, or what-not are better than others. It does not follow in any of these cases that the 'better' methods are ideally perfect... We ascertain how and why certain means and agencies have provided warrantably assertible conclusions, while others have not and cannot do so' (Dewey, 1938, p. 104).

### **2.2.2 Vygotsky**

Vygotsky's theory stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978), as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning." (McLeod, 2007) The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the distance between a student's ability to perform a task under teacher guidance and or with peer cooperation and the student's ability solving the problem independently. According to Vygotsky, learning occurred in this zone.

‘The actual forms taken by adult assistance in the proximal zone vary enormously: the demonstration of methods to be imitated, examples, maientic questions, monitoring by the adult and, most important of all, shared activities as a constructive factor of development’ (Vygotsky, 1978).

Kolb (1984) suggest that in addition to behavioural and cognitive learning theories, experiential learning can complete the holistic learning experience, which again would add value in improving engagement.

### **2.3 How Adults Learn - Andragogy**

Research based on the characteristics of learners has been in the area of students in a formal educational setting. Many of the students in these types of settings are adolescents rather than adults with workplace experience. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005, p.66) note that the experiences of adult learners distinguish them from youths. “This difference in quantity and quality of experience has several consequences for adult education”

(Finn 2011, p. 38) advocates that

‘educators need to be sensitive to the experiences of the individual and how this might necessitate individualised teaching and learning strategies. It is critical that teachers of adults become familiar with the individual learners and their experiences’.

Knowles (1980) recognised and attempted to address this need of educator sensitivity when teaching adults. Knowles work in relation to how adults learn was underpinned by the fact that he categorised adult learners very differently from that of children, and felt they should be

treated accordingly. The areas of his work entailed the 'Concept of the learner', from Pedagogy to Andragogy representing a

'move from dependency toward directedness, but at different rates for different people and in different dimensions of life' (Knowles, 1980, p.43).

Knowles also maintained how important it was that training allows for the 'Role of the learners' experience.

'As people grow and develop they accumulate an increasing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning-for themselves and for others' (Knowles, 1980, p.44)

The educator has a responsibility to create conditions and provide tools and procedures for helping learners

'Discover their "needs to know". And learning programs should be organised around life-application categories and sequenced according to the learners' readiness to learn' (Knowles, 1980, p.44)

In relation to Orientation to learning adults

'Want to be able to apply whatever knowledge and skill they gain today to living more effectively tomorrow. Accordingly, learning experiences should be organized around competency-development categories' (Knowles, 1980, p44)

Taking the areas that Knowles describes it is necessary that these areas are taken into consideration in the workplace. The training environment should be respectful for each level of employee, to allow the freedom for sharing and listening to each other's experiences, achievements and areas for development. The learner needs to see relevance in what they are learning, so that they are engaged by the fact that when they go back to their job they can put their new skills to good use. Now that educators are aware that adults learn through experience, it would suggest a possible move away from lecture based format.

In the workplace and in line with the research question the experiences of the learners provide the basis for the interactive activities, adults are more interested in learning skills and subject area when they can see the relevance to their job or personal life.

## 2.4 Adults in the Workplace

In a number of research papers it was noted that there was generational cross section or groups within organisations, refer to Table 2.1 (Yost, 2008, p18, Dwyer, 2008, p102, Harris, 2005, p49)

**Table 2.1 A Generational Cross-Section (Yost, 2008, p18)**

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>National Workforce</b>	<b>Average Tenure(Yrs)</b>
Matures/Builders	1920-1945	5%	15 plus
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	45%	6-12
Generation X	1965-1979	30%	3-5
Generation Y	1980-2000	20%	2-4

The paper indicates that these generational groups are only guidelines and that not everyone will reflect the characteristics assigned to their group. In terms of this study the demographics of the organisation were varied in terms of generational groups, therefore the organisation needed to adapt the training strategies in order to motivate and engage the various learning styles across the workforce.

## 2.5 Engagement

According to Chapman (2003) the way in which student acquire knowledge has become a primary concern, with a focused emphasis on student engagement levels, one of the aspects of this research was to assess the impact of interactive activities within training in order to improve the engagement of staff, which in this case is predominantly above the age of 30 years (70% of workforce). There are varied definitions of engagement (Natriello, 1984, p. 14) defined student engagement as ‘participating in the activities offered as part of the school programme’, however not only is engagement the student participation in learning but also the internal motivation of the student to connect and commit to the learning process, as defined by

Chapman (2003) engagement is the 'students' cognitive investment in, active participation in and emotional commitment to their learning'.

Engagement is not limited to just the individual, there are also other effects on engagement, such as the environment, students relationship with their teacher, their managers and colleagues (Harrison, 2009, p. 369) an aspect of engagement which also forms part of the research in terms of facilitator interaction, enjoyment and an effective learning process. Zepke and Leach (2010) paper makes reference to the Australian Council of Educational Research and propose that 'students' involvement with activities and conditions are likely to generate high quality learning'. In today's learning environment students have become intensely interactive learners, e.g. web, email, Skype, Facebook etc. Taylor & Parsons (2011, p. 8) state that 'respectful relationships and interaction – both virtual and personal – are shown to improve student engagement. Also according to Taylor & Parsons (2011, p. 18) there are two factors that encourage engagement amongst students and that is an 'engaging pedagogy and engaging curriculum' they state that not only should the science of teaching be assessed but also the content and structure of topics within the subject matter, in order to increase the willingness of the student to participate and also to increase their enjoyment during the learning process, employee engagement refers to 'the individual's involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for work' (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269).

For ABC Express, employee engagement is critical to their business success and organizations have started to rely heavily on learning functions for engagement support Paradise (2007). This research focuses on the introduction of interactive activities in order to enhance and improve learner engagement, 'when learners are involved in an activity that has a balance of challenge and skill, they are more inclined to take a chance and become engaged', it is also this balance of 'challenge and skill' that allows the participant to involve themselves or engage themselves in the activity Csikszentmihalyi (1997). In line with the research, another important factor of engagement is the 'Theory of flow' Csikszentmihalyi's (1975), this is where a person can become engaged in a task or activity that 'time passes unnoticed' and the learner is so focused on their task that they can adapt to 'varying degrees of task complexity'. Employee engagement at another level can help the overall organization. Employees who feel engaged in their job and with their organisation do the job at a different level, they work with integrity and accountability, as if it were their own company 'This sense

of mutual accountability also produces the rich rewards of mutual achievement in which all members share' (Katzenback and Smith, 1993, p116).

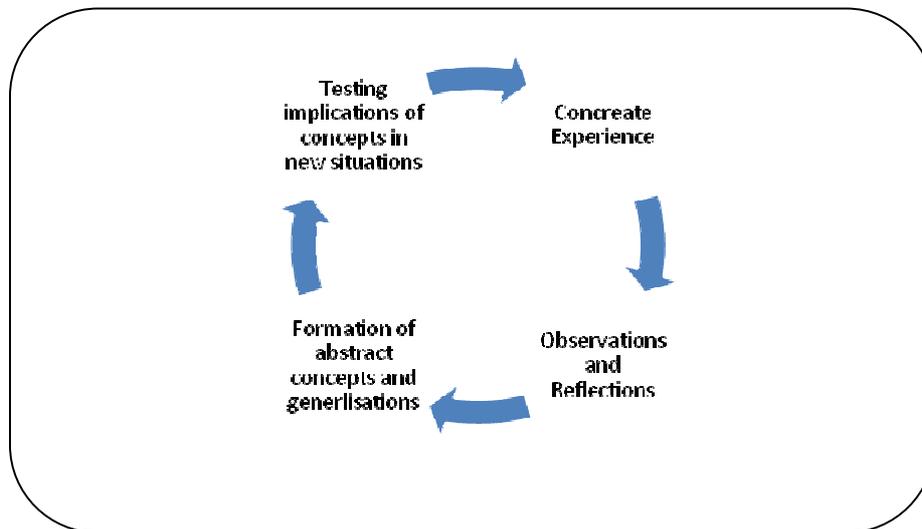
## **2.6 Learning Styles**

Ultimately educators want to pass new skills to the learner, and provide them with opportunities to engage in the learning process, (Burns, 1995) saw learning as both an 'observable activity' and an 'internal process' which included the learners attitude, emotion and thought process which would ultimately result in a relatively permanent change in behavior. (p. 99), by factoring in these other variables the educator draw upon the learners internalised values to compliment the overall learning process. There are a number of models that help to understand the various learning styles.

### **2.6.1 The Lewinian model**

The Lewinian model (Figure 2.2) describes the learning process which could be adapted to an interactive activity within a classroom of adults; for example 'Concrete experience' would entail using an activity, observing and reflecting on how the activity ran and met with the learning objectives, implementing strategies to improve and then testing those strategies. 'If the knowledge is simply stored in memory, it is inert and of little use. Only by actively using the tools (knowledge) can we come to a complete understanding of how the tools work and the environment in which they are used' (Jeffrey et al, 2010, p. 160) any learning without reflection would have learners repeat mistakes; this would result in time wasted for both the student and the teacher.

**Figure 2.2** *The Lewinian Experiential Learning Model*



Kolb's research established that people in general have a preference in how they learn. There are four ways of learning that learners prefer more than another. As shown in the Experiential learning model above (Figure 2.2), learning is through a combination of concrete experience, observation and reflection, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation, it is this holistic perspective that allows learners engage in the overall learning experience.

### **2.6.2 Honey and Mumford**

Building on Kolb's work, four different learning styles (Figure 2.3) were identified by Honey and Mumford (1995). These four learning styles categorised learning characteristics which in turn helped not only the learner but also helped the teacher or educator 'understand and profile the type of trainee' (Garavan et al, 2003, p. 109) the benefit for the educator in knowing and understanding the students learning style is that they can assess the training content and the best manner in how to deliver the training in order improve engagement across all the styles, 'the teacher who is concerned to investigate the learning/teaching encounter, is clearly concerned with improving his/her teaching practices' (Cuthbert, 2005)

**Figure 2.3** *Honey and Mumford Learning Styles (1995)*

**Learning Style Descriptions**

<p><b>Reflector</b>  <i>Reflectors prefer to view things from different perspectives with an opportunity to plan ahead, attend to detail and look for the meaning of things.</i></p>	<p><b>Activist</b>  <i>Activists enjoy new and challenging activities, and benefit most from learning through experience and working with others.</i></p>
<p><b>Theorist</b>  <i>Theorists benefit most from learning through models, theories or concepts, and analysing ideas logically within structured environments.</i></p>	<p><b>Pragmatist</b>  <i>Pragmatists learn most easily through immediate practical application of activities, with an obvious link between subject matter and ‘real life’ applications.</i></p>

**2.6.3 VARK Model**

According to Fleming and Mills (2006) the VARK model, individuals are presumed to have a preferred style of learning: Visual, Auditory, Reading/ Writing or Kinesthetic. It is important that individuals and educators understand the learning style that suits their ability to both learn and retain information. If the educator understood the way their students preferred to learn they could adapt their teaching strategy so that students would not only learn more but also be engaged and enjoy the learning experience. If the students understood their ideal way of learning, they could adapt strategies that would enhance their experience in the learning process. In line with this research and with the introduction of interactive activities in workplace learning many learning styles are catered for in that the students have the opportunity to read, listen look, feel and experience what is being thought.

**2.6.4 Gardner**

In review of Gardner (1999) multiple intelligences, he suggests that intelligence is not a singular, but rather that each human being is gifted with a set of several intelligences each of which can be nurtured and used in specific ways, they consist of: *Linguistic* intelligence, this

intelligence is being sensitive to the spoken and written word and can include the ability to master languages. **Logical**-mathematical intelligence this is capability to think analytically and logically. **Musical** intelligence, this is skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of music. **Bodily-Kinesthetic** intelligence, as illustrated by dancers, surgeons, and artists. **Spatial** intelligence, which would be the characteristics of a pilot, graphic artist or architect. **Interpersonal** intelligence, the capability or talent for understanding and relating to another. **Intrapersonal** intelligence the capacity for understanding oneself.

## 2.7 The Approach of Educators

Considering these learning styles and instinctive approaches to learning it is important that trainers are aware that different adults learn in different ways. Although it is not always possible to satisfy all learning types, all of the time, it is important that provision is made within a training session that all learning styles would be catered for from time to time during the session to ensure motivation and engagement for all learners.

Educators do have the ability to meet the need of their learners in the way that they structure and instruct courses so if educators adapted these strategies we would anticipate a higher level of enjoyment and engagement in the overall learning process,'evidence does suggest that learners learn better when they are allowed to use their preferred learning style' (Lovelace, 2005)

Meyers, Billett and Kelly (2010, p. 122) looked at mature-aged workers and their motivation and experiences identified through the analyses of interview data, four particular findings: - *Firstly*, they found that although the group were labeled mature-aged workers, the age bracket was quite wide, 45-64, and the group also had a diverse work and educational background. The main findings within this area were that there was not ever going to be a 'one fits all' approach and that the goals of all the participants would not be fulfilled due to the diversity of the groups.

*Secondly*, relating to the motivational factors or reasons for participation in training, the findings indicated that the main motivational factor was from an external and regulatory

pressure to attend, so they were in some way motivated to attend however not necessarily enthusiastic to be there.

*Thirdly*, quite a few of the participants had previous negative training experiences.

*Fourthly* there was a perception shared amongst the participants, particularly the women that they did not value themselves or have the confidence in their abilities as individuals.

Although this research was carried out on a small cohort the findings have been a common thread in papers relating to adult learners in particular the findings relating to motivation to learn and confidence in oneself to learn.

The fears in relation to previous learning experiences and confidence in the ability to learn were mirrored in another research paper where 25 students out of 50 took part in a study which was based on their individual qualities, feelings, beliefs and desires regarding their own learning journey. As part of the study they all students received individual feedback after each session and interviews were arranged at three key points within the first term. The initial fears that were experienced by the students were: “Am I good enough?”, “Will I be able to keep up?”, “What if everyone knows more than me? I don’t want to make a fool of myself”, “Will I be supported?” and “What if I can’t do the assignments?” (Canning, 2010, p64) Feelings and emotions seem to pose barriers and can delay or even halt the process of learning and teaching, ‘We believe that educators who can facilitate empathic knowing as a foundation for learning-within-relationship are needed to meet the challenges of increasingly diverse communities’ (Yorks and Kasl, 2002, p190)

Educators cannot ignore the emotional barriers, conflicts or concerns particularly in a workplace setting as it is increasingly important that employees return to their jobs with the skills and/ or behaviours that the training was intended to achieve, training in the workplace or indeed in any other place should not be a box ticking exercise, and with training resources and budgets, training should not be time wasted. If however the trainer is not using games, activities or interactive session how they would recognise or potentially confront fears within their group of learners.

‘Due to the high degree of interaction in ABL(Activity Based Learning), essential instructor skills involve facilitating, motivating, enabling and coaching rather than simply presenting facts and figures didactically (Ranganath, 2012)

Burke and Hutchins (2008) in which the aim was to capture and describe how training professionals support the transfer of learning in their organisations, based on their own experiences. The study purposefully selected training professionals: training associates, managers or those with master degrees. Within this study three main areas that were explored, of which one concentrated on what practitioners suggested as best practices for enhancing training transfer. The activities which were at the top of the list for trainers suggestions were: supervisory support activities, coaching, opportunities to perform, interactive training activities, transfer measurement and job relevant training. Given the expanse of diversity in ABC Express, the age groups, gender, educational background and the various functional departments, investigating preferred learning styles may enhance engagement and commitment to the learning process. As highlighted by Lovelace (2005) the approach of educators need to instruct in a style that best suits the learners or find a common ground for training employees that is not only motivational, confidence building, but is also enjoyable and will assist in helping the diverse individuals retain and use the improved their learning skills, this could enhance the overall learning engagement.

## **2.8 The Use of Games – Interactive Activities**

According to Ranganath (2012) ABL (Activity Based Learning) is a technique that is not generally used, he goes on to say that according to research 80 per cent of companies that have engaged in activity-based methods found them to be successful. He describes activity-based learning as a successful way to combine teaching with the learners’ prior experience and knowledge by having them complete activities, which ‘helps them learn how to learn’. Ranganath (2012, p. 17).

Children need a sense of play to learn and develop in a social setting. Play creates energy by the very definition of the word ‘**Play** - to engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose’. Play can be a learning tool once it is mentored from a skilful source. According to research, important learning by the child occurs through

social interaction with a skilful tutor or teacher. This is reinforced by Vygotsky (1978) that social interaction helps and supports learning, also Knowles' (1980) states that adults learn through experiences. We do not lose our sense of play when we become adults, for the very reason that we engage in hobbies for enjoyment and recreation.

According to Wiebenga (2005) games have been used as a source of training in organisations for over 60 years. Crookall (2010, p. 899) states that there are many methods of training that can incorporate simulations or games that would help students practice their knowledge these include 'gaming, serious game, computer simulation, computerized simulation, modeling, agent-based modeling virtual reality, virtual world, experiential learning, game theory, role-play, case study, and debriefing'.

Crookall (2010) discusses the concept of games and whether or not gaming is a method or a discipline. He goes on to explain what exactly is a discipline, he describes a discipline as grounded theory in research and practice, highlighting that practice should include the most effective method and should also incorporate effective debriefing from the educator.

The evidence suggests that a lot of educational institutions are using simulations and games to enhance or as an add-on to training in order to make the training more engaging and interesting for the learner. Lewis et al. (1989) states that by the inclusion of games into the established training that students can become more involved in the learning process.

Interactive activities can be used to infuse energy and engagement to the formal approach to learning; informal learning is often described by contrasting it with formal learning.

'Formal learning can be likened to riding a bus, as the route is pre-planned and the same for everyone. Informal learning, then, is more like riding a bike in that the individual determines the route, pace, etc. (Cross, 2007, p.236).

According to Finn (2011) all learning strategies can be impacted by experiential learning in adult education. Adults are experienced learners and they can enhance the learning experience by contributing their knowledge as they participate in interactive activity based learning. In line with this research the introduction of activities can improve learning engagement 'Students must be actively engaged in digesting concepts, rather than passively taking lecture notes and reviewing them' (Massey, Brown and Johnstown, 2005, p10-13).

The study was carried out with 40 graduate students and 37 undergraduate students, the

results indicated that the use of games were beneficial to both exam performance and student perception of learning and the learning experience.

Azriel et al (2005) carried out a research study which was based on two fundamental questions 'Do games affect students' attitudes toward learning?' and 'Do games affect student achievement?'

The finding in relation to their first research question: the findings indicated that students had positive attitudes towards games in class and overwhelmingly stated that games were appropriate, however ten students indicated on the questionnaire that they disagreed with the statement "games helped me learn" and although the majority of the class liked the idea of participation-orientated class, 20% of the class preferred the lecture-orientated format. The researchers indicated that these findings could have been due to the high population of foreign students. In regard to the findings on their second research question, there was less than one point in the difference when the mean scores are compared from the group that were taught through activity against the group that were taught through lecture format. So this finding would indicate that there is no significant difference when it comes to the effect of games on student achievement.

The use of games in the workplace can be very effective; there are a number of activities which can be used to add value to the learning experience.

'Games are great fun for students to play; they get students active, involved, moving and engaged. They encourage collaboration, team work and interpersonal and social skills'. (Ashwin, 2005, p. 31)

Although it is argued that educational games are not a new phenomenon, with the introductions of technology it is an area that is beginning to be researched on a larger scale. Shelton (2008) stresses the important role that games will have especially in the educational sector and he also states that research in this area is growing fast. Activity based learning is a growing phenomenon and one which has been recognised in a number of industries for it's' hands on benefits for the learners.

'Activity - based learning is assumed to be built on the rationale that management students learn best when they do or are involved in action. Learning is then structured

into activities that will facilitate what has to be learned. This specific approach is closely related to "discovery based learning" and "inquiry based learning" (Ranganath, 2012)

## **2.9 Chapter Conclusion**

In conclusion, the purpose of this research is to contribute to existing findings in relation to use of interactive activities in adult learning with a particular focus on the workplace environment, in order to do this we must revert back to the research questions.

In terms of whether activities have a positive effect on adults learning in the workplace, we have seen from Vygotsky (1978) that social interaction aids in the development of cognition, coupled with Knowles' (1980) theory that adults learn through experiences, would certainly seem to support these questions. Add to this Honey and Mumford's (1995) classifications of learning styles, the style of Activist and Pragmatist would also greatly benefit from hands on logical activities. Finally the studies of Massey, Brown, and Johnstown (2005) and Azriel et al (2005) not only support the view that games affect students and their attitudes to learning but it also indicate the benefit of such games on both exam performance and student participation.

In assessing how adults bring classroom learning back to the workplace, we have seen from Burke and Hutchins (2008) and Burgess (2005) that interactive training activities along with supervisory support activities, coaching and opportunities to perform have been key to successful classroom transference. When introducing interactive activities there can be certain challenges, we have seen from Yorks and Kasl (2002) and Cannings (2010), that in order to introduce such activities into the learning, the role of the teacher is key in creating the right environment where adults can learn from these activities and each other's experiences, this is where the main research questions emerged.

The use of games in organisational training has been in existence for over 60 years Wiebenga (2005), the research indicates that interactive play can be an instrumental and important part of learning and development for adults, especially in the workplace environment, although it must be delivered correctly, and achieved through motivational learning activities that not

only suit the subject being taught, but also aligns itself to the style of how adult learners learn. With such a diverse background of employees and roles within today's organisations we simply cannot discount the importance of interactive activities in the delivery of company training.

With such diverse workforces, in-house training within organisations needs to be adaptive and engaging, grabbing the attention of all learners across the generations so that all participants are catered for with regards to motivation for training, engagement while learning and their individual learning styles. In-house training is an opportunity to teach and learn new skills; it should also be used as an opportunity to create an environment which allows relationship building between colleagues and managers. "Effective teams develop strong commitment to a common approach" (Katzenback and Smith, 1993, p115)

## **2.10 Chapter Summary**

This Chapter looked at constructivism and theorists such as Dewey and Vygotsky. The chapter then looked at the area of how adults learn and engagement for learning. Learning styles are described and also the approach of the educator. Finally the use of games and interactive activities is portrayed in-line with previous research studies.

## **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction to Chapter Content**

This chapter will give a brief background to the methodology and research methods, and will then indicate the research strategies for this study. This study will use a mixed method approach.

### **3.1 Research Question – Explicitly Stated**

The research question in relation to this study is: ‘Are interactive activities effective in engaging adults in workplace learning?’ The study will focus on a cross section of individuals who have completed a specific training programme designed with a combination of lecture and interactive activities. The study was conducted in a medium sized transport & logistics company with a varying population of staff, in terms of demographics, experience, function and status.

#### **Sub Questions Stated**

The research question in its explicit form cannot explore the broad areas involved and therefore a number of subsequent questions will also be needed in order to fully investigate the effectiveness of interactive activities in the learning and development of adults, in terms of engagement, within a workplace. Sub questions related to this study will include:

**Question 1** – Do interactive activities have an effect on adults learning in the workplace?

**Question 2** – Do interactive activities in the classroom have an effect on how adults engage in the learning process?

**Question 3** – Do interactive activities enhance learning engagement?

**Question 4** – Do interactive activities improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner?

**Question 5** – Do interactive activities increase enjoyment when learning?

**Hypothesis** - If a training course is designed with interactive activities then the adult in the workplace is more engaged.

### **3.2 Methodology Overview:**

**Methodology Time Line Plan (See Appendix 3.1)** the methodology time line plan gives an overview of the researchers approach and timeline for collecting the quantitative and qualitative data.

### **3.3 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations have been taken into account for this research study. Firstly the researcher considered her position within the company and if it would impact on the participants who contributed to the study. After due consideration and discussion it was decided that the training manager role, although senior in position was viewed by the participants as being a supportive role and not one that would be viewed in terms of power relations. Also prior to the research project the researcher met with the Company Director and Head of Human Resources to discuss the research area in accordance with the organisations ethical guidelines, codes of practice and protocols.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account prior to the distribution of the survey questionnaire with regards to anonymity. An email was sent by the researcher, to employees who had completed the training, with an invitation to participate in the survey. Those who did not have access to email were invited to complete a manual survey. They were advised of a central drop off place for the completed surveys. Again this process was completed by participants on a totally voluntary and anonymous basis.

In relation to the ethical considerations around the interview, this was conducted on a voluntary basis. Those who participated in the survey were invited into the interview process.

Prior to the interview an ‘Informed Consent’ form (see Appendix 3.2) was prepared for those who would participate in the interview process which included the details of the research, its purpose and benefits. The document also highlighted the procedures and explained that it was confidential and that the interviewee could use the ‘opt out’ clause at any stage of the process. The consent form also included authorisation from the interviewee and was signed by the interviewer. Interviewees were also advised that they would receive a transcript of their interview for their full inspection and sign-off.

### **3.4 Paradigm Background and Approach**

#### **3.4.1 Paradigm Background**

Methodology refers to the philosophical framework or paradigm which guides the research. A ‘Paradigm’ or ‘Worldview’ as referred to by Creswell (2009). Creswell (2009, p. 6) refers to ‘worldviews’ and sees them as ‘a general orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher holds’. The worldview is determined by the researcher with regard to their area of research, their past experiences and their individual beliefs. These beliefs together with their past experiences and area of research shapes the direction of their approach and methodologies being used in their research, these components often support the researcher in their decision to use quantitative, qualitative or a mixed methods research approach ‘the strategy of inquiry that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice’ (Creswell, 2009, p. 5).

Creswell describes four different worldviews, post-positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. Table 3.1 below presents and refers to Worldviews and the workings of each position:

**Table 3.1 Worldviews**

<b>Four Worldviews</b>	
Post-positivism	Constructivism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determination</li> <li>• Reductionism</li> <li>• Empirical Observation and Measurement</li> <li>• Theory Verification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding</li> <li>• Multiple Participant Meanings</li> <li>• Social and Historical Construction</li> <li>• Theory Generation</li> </ul>
Advocacy/Participatory	Pragmatism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political</li> <li>• Empowerment Issue-Orientated</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Change-Oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequences of Actions</li> <li>• Problem-Centred</li> <li>• Pluralistic</li> <li>• Real-World Practice Oriented</li> </ul>

### **3.4.2 Approach**

The philosophical worldview or research paradigm which will be used for this research study is the pragmatism paradigm, or mixed methods approach. This methodology is used when the researcher wants to research a problem and will use many different approaches to understand and test the problem at hand. Creswell (2009) indicates that this approach is not rigid and that the researcher has the freedom within this worldview to choose different research methods in order to meet their need and using both quantitative and qualitative data should increase a better understanding of the problem.

This study will use a mixed methods approach of activity based learning, this methodology has been selected to seek evidence relating to the effect on engagement in relation to adults in the workplace learning, ‘this methodology uses mixed methods and will include observation, interviews, surveys, documentary research etc. (Mac Keogh, 2011).

### **3.5 Research Methods**

Research methods refer to the ways we go about collecting and analysing our data, research methods can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed. Strategies of inquiry are types of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs or models that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design (Creswell, 2009). The first question to ask in relation to the decision is what kind of data is required, or, what kind of data would be the most useful for the purposes of the research (Mac Keogh, 2011).

#### **3.5.1 Quantitative Research Method**

The methods that are predominantly used in quantitative research are measured using numbers e.g. scoring or rating which would be found on surveys or questionnaires. The results can then be statistically measured and analysed. The results and findings are then compiled in a report. ‘Those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalise and replicate the findings’ (Creswell, 2009, pg 4).

#### **3.5.2 Qualitative Research Method**

The method refers to, in qualitative research data is measured using data analysis. The methods which the researcher can use to gather data can vary; data collection is often gathered through interviews, focus groups and observation. The data is usually recorded and then transcribed for data analysis; the researcher then tries to interpret the data by looking for possible themes, synergies, links and meanings. After an analysis of the data the researcher publishes the findings in a final written report. ‘Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honours an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2009, p.4)

### **3.5.3 Mixed Research Method**

This mixed method approach combines the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods; according to Spratt et al (2004) ‘using multiple approaches can capitalise on the strengths of each approach and offset their different weaknesses’. They also state ‘It could also provide more comprehensive answers to research questions, going beyond the limitations of a single approach’. Stake (1995, p. 135) suggests that researchers in the social and behavioural sciences might attempt to ‘serve too many audiences’ when they combine the two methods. The main rationale for the mixed method approach of this study is because the problem under scrutiny is a very complex one with many different components and it is unlikely that one method alone would capture enough data to completely analyse, also in this case the quantitative aspect of the survey is the catalyst for the qualitative method, in that the results from the survey can only be truly investigated, or corroborated by the researcher in the follow up action of the interviews.

### **3.6 Observation**

Two training sessions that implemented the interactive activities as an approach were observed for this study. The observation was conducted on two similar sample groups, which were made up of 15 participants, mixed age groups, mixed gender and mixed functions from the business. The observation was carried out in an unstructured way in that the observer did not look for any particular behaviour but merely observed and recorded whatever occurred before, during and after the activity sessions (Bailey, 1987). The reason this method was used for this study was to assess the types of interaction and to identify relevant questions for the survey. This method involved observing and recording behaviour. The type of observation being used was nonparticipant, where the researcher did not participate in the group activities (Bailey, 1987). The focus of the observer (researcher) was the cause and effect of the interactive activities in relation to engagement or non-engagement, the observer was looking for both positive or negative behaviours as both types of observation are important and would be useful in this study ‘The direct observation of defective behaviour is particularly important’ (Skinner, 1956). The main areas which were identified during this process were the behaviours around

the participants' interaction and engagement with the activity, with the facilitator and with fellow participants. These findings were used to help formulate the questions for the survey.

### **3.7 Survey**

The rationale behind using a survey for this study was to measure and analyse the individuals' rating of activity based learning, in relation to engagement with the activity, engagement with the facilitator, and in comparison to prior learning. It was felt that the results of the survey would also indicate further areas of research and find common threads, which could be brought to the interviewing stage, in relation to the structure, questions and format of the interviews. The method of data collection for this research combined closed questions in relation to demographics, and a Likert-type Scale for the other areas, which are relevant to the research questions.

#### **3.7.1 Piloting the Survey**

Prior to the survey being distributed to the participants within the company, the survey was piloted with a group of participants, who would not participate in the live study; the survey was also piloted with four fellow students of the researcher and the thesis supervisor. There were a number of recommendations received in terms of focus and improvement and these were implemented. The aspects of the survey which were recommended for change were in the following areas:

After the survey was piloted changes were made in the following areas: - Clear instruction was added to the survey and a grid of the numerical meanings. The question in relation level of education was formulated into a multiple choice question, giving the respondent a choice of five options. In the Engagement – Activity section of the survey one of the questions was reworded from 'Completing the interactive activities was easy' to 'Completing the activities provided a learning challenge'. It was suggested by one of the pilot group that it may be useful to ask explicitly about previous experience on styles of training, although it was agreed that these are important aspects of the research the decision was made to explore this area at the interview stage of the research.

### **3.7.2 Survey Development (Appendix 3.3)**

The survey is divided into six different clusters containing 36 questions, these questions were directly linked to the research question and sub questions.

#### **Cluster 1 - Demographics**

The demographic questions are in the areas of age, gender, nationality, length of service, educational background and functional area. As part of this research, a table will be used to depict the generational cross section or groups within the organisation being researched (see appendix 4.2). This will allow for further quantitative research in relation to age groups, gender and years of service.

The questions associated with this cluster were: -

- *Question 1:* When were you born?
- *Question 2:* Gender?
- *Question 3:* Nationality?
- *Question 4:* Length of Service?
- *Question 5:* Educational Background – Highest level achieved
- *Question 6:* Department

The reason that these questions were asked was to identify if the demographics had an impact on engagement in activity based learning within the organisation.

#### **Cluster 2 – Activity Engagement**

The questions that were asked within this cluster are in relation to the experience that the participant had with the activity e.g. if they enjoyed the experience, were they engaged, challenged, frustrated or hindered etc. This cluster of questions was designed to have the participant reflect on their own learning experience and for them to self assess how the introduction of the activities helped or hindered their learning experience.

- *Question 7:* The activities on this course were an effective way to learn
- *Question 8:* I enjoyed learning using activities
- *Question 9:* I was engaged in the learning process
- *Question 10:* The activities helped me learn
- *Question 11:* The activities hindered my learning
- *Question 12:* The learning activities were frustrating
- *Question 13:* The activity helped me understand what was being taught
- *Question 14:* Completing the activities provided a learning challenge
- *Question 15:* I could teach another person using the activities

### **Cluster 3 – Engagement with the Facilitator**

The questions in this cluster were intended for the participant (learner) to reflect on their experience with the facilitator and whether they felt supported and instructed to complete the activities, this cluster also explored whether the facilitator helped the participant (learner) feel competent and confident in the learning process through relevant feedback.

- *Question 16:* I understood the facilitator's instructions on how to complete the activities
- *Question 17:* I felt supported by the facilitator during the training
- *Question 18:* The facilitator helped me feel confident in my ability to complete the activities
- *Question 19:* Feedback from the facilitator helped me complete the activities
- *Question 20:* Feedback from my facilitator helped me feel competent as a learner during the activities

#### **Cluster 4 - Comparison to Prior Learning**

These questions require the participant (learner) to compare the activity based training against their prior learning experiences in order to see the impact the interactive activity had on the engagement and experience.

- *Question 21:* I engaged more using activities than I engaged on previous training
- *Question 22:* I learned more using activities than I learned on previous training
- *Question 23:* I remembered more using activities than I remembered from previous training
- *Question 24:* I enjoyed the training more using activities than I enjoyed previous training
- *Question 25:* I participated more on this course than I have participated on previous training
- *Question 26:* I would recommend training using activities more than training without activities

#### **Cluster 5 - Learning Style**

This area of questions is a minimised version of Honey and Mumford; the questions are a subset of the Honey and Mumford, learning styles questionnaire. The rationale for this was to get an indication of the preferred learning style of the participant (learner).

- *Question 27:* I like to get straight to the point in discussions
- *Question 28:* In discussions I get impatient with irrelevance and digressions
- *Question 29:* I tend to solve problems using a step by step approach
- *Question 30:* I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse
- *Question 31:* I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing many alternatives

- *Question 32:* I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly
- *Question 33:* I love the challenge of working on something new and different
- *Question 34:* I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas in discussion

### **Cluster 6 - Preference for Learning**

These questions were asked so that the researcher could identify the activity which was most enjoyed and engaged the participants (learner).

- *Question 35:* What activity did you enjoy most?
- *Question 36:* What activity helped you learn most?

### **3.7.3 Sampling**

The target population for the survey was all employees that had completed the training programme which this study is focused around. ‘Stratified Random Sampling’ was used for the purpose of this research study. According to Mendenhall, Ott, and Scheaffer (1971, p. 53) ‘a stratified sample is obtained by separating the population elements into non overlapping groups, called strata’. There are a number of strata which may be relevant in this study such as the generational areas and the various departments within the organisation. ‘Stratified sampling is not limited to stratification on only one variable. ‘One can stratify on two or more variables simultaneously’ (Bailey, 1987, p. 90-91). The variable which will be used will be across the five key functional areas of the business. In total 150 surveys were issued to participants of the training programme. The process that was used for selecting the sample and to ensure that ‘Stratified Random Sampling’ was applied, was that the researcher ran a ‘CIS completed training’ report, the training report was sorted by department and six participants from each of the 25 completed courses were issued with a survey. This would also ensure that every course that was run was represented in the survey responses. At the time of issue, almost 300 employees had completed the training. Overall 150 surveys were issued; this represents more than 50% of staff who completed the training. See Table 3.4 which shows ‘Stratified Random Sampling’ response rates.

### 3.7.4 Survey Distribution

The survey would have to be distributed using two different methods. The reason for this was because a number of the targeted groups did not have access to a computer and therefore could not complete the survey electronically.

- The survey was distributed to office based participants via email with a link to Lime Survey. Lime Survey is a web application which allows users set up surveys and collect responses, the application is flexible in that it has the capability of hosting different question types e.g. multiple choice, drop down lists, yes/no etc.. When the respondent fills in the survey it is uploaded anonymously.
- For the participants that did not have access to a computer or may not be computer literate a paper survey was issued and later keyed into lime survey manually.

The information from Lime Survey would later be fed into SPSS to allow data analysis. SPSS the statistical program that allows data analyse (Norusis, 2002, p. 2).

There was a cover letter attached (see appendix 3.3) to both the email and paper survey to explain what the survey was for and to invite any participant who might be interested in being interviewed as part of the study. Those who were interested were requested to contact the researcher directly.

**Directions:** The directions were explicitly highlighted on both survey types:

Please self-rate the following items using the 1 -5 Scale, the survey asked for participants to avoid choosing option 3 (if possible). The reason for this was it was felt by the researcher that the results could become diluted if this option was over used, unless deemed necessary by the participant. The reason for giving the neutral option was for participants to choose if they did not have an opinion.

**Table 3.3 Rating System**

<b>1 = Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>2 = Disagree</b>
<b>3 = Neutral</b>
<b>4 = Agree</b>
<b>5 = Strongly Agree</b>

**Table 3.4 Stratified Random Sampling Results**

<b>Function</b>	<b>No Employees</b>	<b>No Surveys</b>	<b>No Responded</b>	<b>% Response Rate</b>
<b>Network Operations</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>Customer Services</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Information Systems</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Sales</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>64%</b>

### **3.8 Pre-Interview Questionnaire**

After the interviewees had been identified and prior to the face to face interview the interviewees were asked to complete the full Honey and Mumford learning styles questionnaire so that the researcher would have an understanding of their preferred learning style. The reason for the completion of this pre-interview questionnaire was to enable the researcher to later refer to and draw comparisons between the Honey and Mumford learning styles identified for the individuals. These comparisons coupled with the findings from the interviews would help in identifying if there was a correlation in relation to the individuals engagement to activities and their learning style.

### **3.9 Interviews:**

#### **3.9.1 Interview Type and Structure**

According to Creswell (2009) much qualitative research is based on interviews with key individuals. There are three main interview types, structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. Structured is where the interview questions are decided in advance and the interviewer sticks to an interview schedule, reads the questions straight from the schedule, in the correct order and uses very clear and unambiguous questions. This type of interview ensures consistency but can interrupt the flow of conversation and thought by both the

interviewer and interviewee. An unstructured interview has no predefined questions; instead the interview is centred on a topic, and in 'skilled hands', does produce a wealth of valuable data (Bell, 2010). Bell goes on to say that this type of interview requires a great deal of expertise to control and subsequently to analyse. Dexter (1970, p. 123) described it as 'a conversation with a purpose'.

A semi-structured interview has a set of predefined questions as a guide rather than as a schedule. There is an attempt to establish a rapport with the interviewee and the interviewer has the freedom to probe interesting areas that arise during the interview.

Interviews may take place face to face, via online chat, over the phone, or via email. There are many pros and cons for using either interview mode. The real advantage is that they can take place at any time and in a variety of locations.

As part of this research study the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews face-to-face with four participants who represent a cross section of demographics and key departments within the organisation. The purpose of using face-to-face interviews was to explore further the findings or trends found in the results of the survey, which relate directly with the research question.

Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as a follow-up to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses. (McNamara, 1999)

### **3.9.2 Validity and Reliability**

To ensure reliability of the survey, Cronbach's Alpha was tested for the following clusters 'Engagement with the Activity' scored .9, 'Engagement with the Facilitator' scored .9 and 'Previous Learning' scored .89. Values of over .8 are normally regarded as indicating reliability in this context.

Being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry; researchers must examine methods and conclusions for bias (Creswell, 2003, p. 8)

In order to ensure validity and reliability the interview questions were dependent on the responses from the surveys but set in advance of the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured in that all core questions were the same but there was freedom to probe any

interesting areas that arose during the interview. The interviews were recorded with the candidates' approval, and then transcribed for both their approval and analysis of the data. 'A good interviewer can reconstruct the account and submit it to the respondent for accuracy and stylistic improvement' (Stake, 1995, p. 66). The interviewer needs to know and be aware of the many ways that they can inadvertently bias the results, understand why it is important that they do not bias the study, because by slanting the results they might jeopardise the results or purpose of the study.

### **3.9.3 Interview Preparation**

In preparation for the interview the researcher (interviewer) chose a setting with the least amount of distraction. The purpose of the interview was explained to the participant (interviewee) with a particular focus on the terms of confidentiality, the interviewee was then asked to read and sign the 'Interview Consent Form' (Appendix 3.2). The format of the interview was explained and the interviewee was clearly advised that they could clarify any questions or doubts that they may have at any stage during the interview. The interview commenced following mutual agreement and understanding that the interview would be recorded.

### **3.9.4 Interview Questions** (see Appendix 3.4)

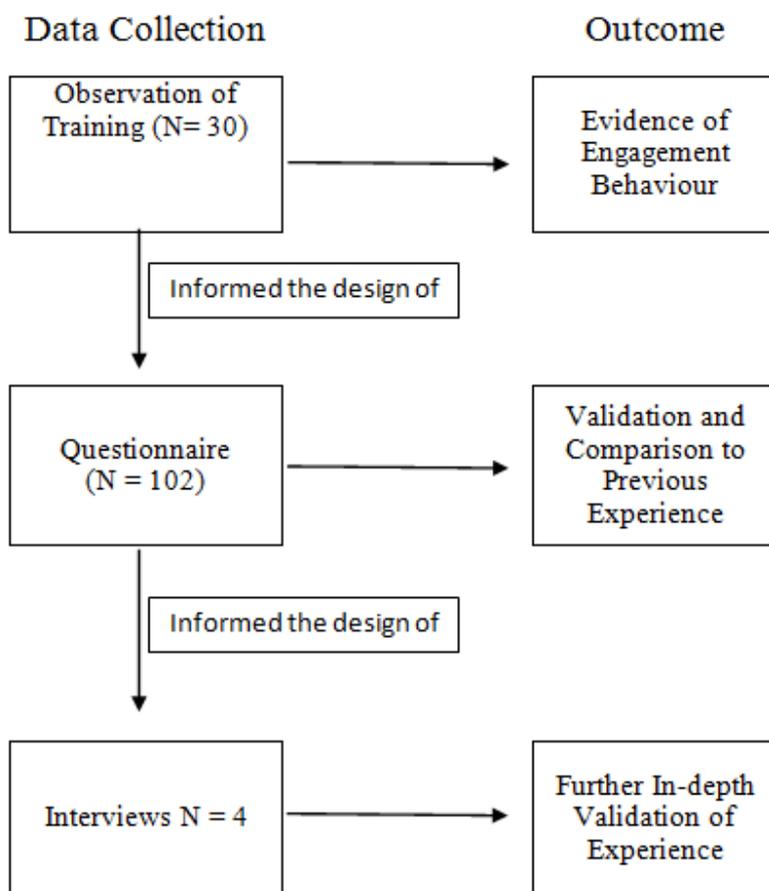
### **3.9.5 Recording the Interview**

The interviews were recorded to facilitate transcription and analysis at a later stage. One of the main benefits for recording the interview is so that the interviewer can focus on the conversation without having to worry about note taking, which in turn will allow the interviewee to relax into the flow of the conversation. The interviewer has the assurance that they will have an accurate record of interview content. One of the main drawbacks of recording interviews for the interviewer is the time it may take to transcribe the conversation. The analysis of interview data can take a lot of time and requires considerable interpretive skill on the part of the researcher. (Bailey, 1987, Bell, 2010 and Blaxter et Al, 2010)

### 3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter details the methodology chosen for this research study, along with justification for that chosen methodology. The chapter also expands on aspects of the questionnaire and the interview process, the development and reasoning behind both the survey questions and the interview questions. This chapter also details the piloting of the survey, recommendations and corrections applied to the survey along with details of the sample population for the chosen methodology.

**Figure 3.1 Methodology Overview**



## **Chapter 4 - Analysis and Results**

### **4.0 Introduction to Chapter Content**

This chapter presents the results in relation to both the quantitative and qualitative information. It includes the results from the observation and interview process, the results from the pre-interview questionnaire and also presents the results in relation to the statistical analysis derived from the survey. There were four participants who completed the pre-interview questionnaire and were then interviewed. The sample size for the observation groups in total, were 30 participants and four facilitators and the sample size for the statistical analysis is made up of 102 participants', 96 complete responses and six partial responses. The responses outlined below include all responses both complete and incomplete.

### **4.1 Survey Results**

The results are detailed using a combination of tables, statistics, histograms and pie-charts. This section highlights the most important results in regard to the participants' demographics, engagement levels, comparisons to prior learning and learning styles and preferences. A more detailed outline of the survey results, including statistics for each question is provided in Appendix 4.1.

#### **4.1.1 Cluster 1 – Demographics**

The demographic questions which the participants are asked to complete are in the areas of age, gender, nationality, length of service, educational background and functional area.

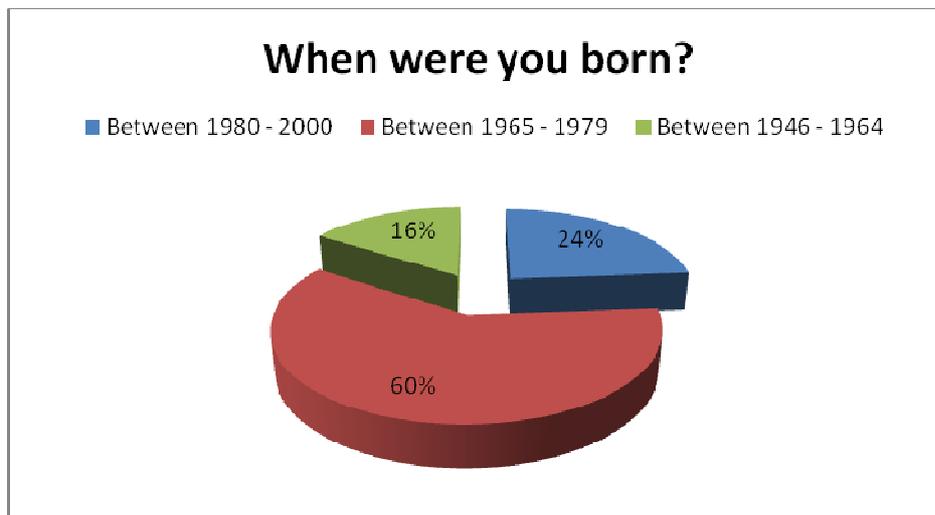
##### ***Age***

In total 101 participants out of a possible 102 answered this question. The table below (Table 4.1) shows that the majority of participants were born 1965–1979. The minority of the participants were born between 1946–1964, with the remaining 24% born 1980 – 2000. In comparison to the whole organisation based on 336 employees, where 21% were born 1946-1964, 51% 1965-1979 and 28% 1980-2000. (see Appendix 4.2)

**Table 4.1 Percentage Age Overview**

Age Overview	Survey Percent	Overall Company
Between 1980 - 2000	24%	28%
Between 1965 - 1979	60%	51%
Between 1946 - 1964	16%	21%

**Figure 4.1 Percentage Age Overview**



***Gender***

In total 101 participants out of a possible 102 answered this question. The majority of the respondents were male totalling 59%. The female were in the minority and totalled 41%. This was the expected result, given the fact that the organisation is predominantly male. In this organisation the overall ratio of males to females is 66% male and 34% female (see Appendix 4.2). An interesting point to note is that there is a shift in gender balance below the age of 33

years, where there is a higher proportion of female staff (17%) to male staff (11%) a difference of 6%, another statistic to note is that only 3% of the workforce over the age of 48 years was women.

**Table 4.2 Percentage Gender Overview**

Gender	Survey Percent	Overall Company
Male	59%	66%
Female	41%	34%

***Nationality***

In total, 101 participants out of a possible 102 answered this question. The majority of the participants were Irish (94%). The remaining participants were a mixture of nationalities, American, Lithuanian, Polish, English and Nigerian. The reason that this question was asked was to find out the percentage of employees who have completed the specific training within a different culture and possibly not through their first spoken language. As outlined in the table below, all but six of those who filled out the survey were of Irish nationality.

**Table 4.3 Percentage Nationality Overview**

What is your nationality?		
Nationality	Frequency	Valid Percent
Irish	94	93.07
American	1	0.99
Lithuanian	1	0.99
Polish	3	2.97
English	1	0.99
Nigerian	1	0.99

### *Length of Service*

In total, 101 participants out of a possible 102 answered this question. From the table below it is evident that the majority of the respondents have between 5 – 10 years of service measured at 33%. The minority are in the category of between 0 – 5 years, which represents 12% of the respondents. The number of respondents with a length of service of between 10 – 15 years was 26% and over 15 years was 30%.

**Table 4.4 Percentage Length of Service Overview**

Length of Service	Survey Percent	Overall Company
Up to 5 Years	12%	18%
Between 5 – 10 Years	32%	27%
Between 10 – 15 Years	26%	30%
Over 15 Years	30%	25%

**Figure 4.2 Percentage Length of Service Overview**

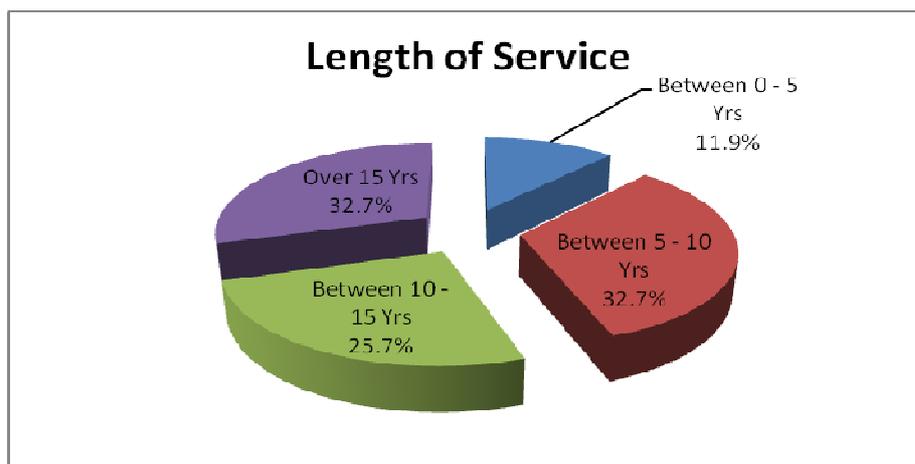


Figure 4.2 represents the length of service of those who had completed the training course

### ***Highest level of Education***

In total, 99 participants out of a possible 102 answered this question. In total 37% of the participants completed further education, while 63% had the Leaving Certificate as their highest educational level. In a study (O’Connell, 2002) carried out on the Irish population aged 25–64, of which the main population is drawn, Ireland had 25% of the population in third level education, which compared to an EU average of 21% however; Ireland also had a larger population at the lower levels of education, 40% of the population aged 25–64 had lower secondary education, or less and the remaining 35% had upper secondary education. The results from this study indicate that the educational levels are higher than that in the 2002 ESRI study with a percentage score of 37 for those who have complete some type of third level education.

**Table 4.5 Percentage Highest Educational Level Overview**

<b>Higher Educational Level</b>	<b>Survey Result</b>
Secondary - Leaving Cert. Level	63%
Third Level – Diploma	19%
Third Level – Degree	11%
Third Level – Masters	2%
Other Higher Course	4%

### ***Functional Department***

The maximum numbers of participants were from the Network Operations function, totalling 56%; this was the expected result given that over half the workforce sits within that function. The other participating functions were Customer Services, Sales, Finance, Information Systems and HR which combined made up the remaining 44%. In total, 95 participants out of

a possible 102 answered this question. The table below (Table 4.6) shows a comparison of the participants who took part in the survey against the actual head count in each functional department. The percentages indicate that the numbers of responses are a fair representation of the overall company.

**Table 4.6 Represented % from Functional Departments**

Department	Survey Result	Overall Company
Network Operations	56%	55%
Customer Services	19%	19%
Sales	15%	14%
Finance & HR	5%	6%
Information Systems	5%	6%

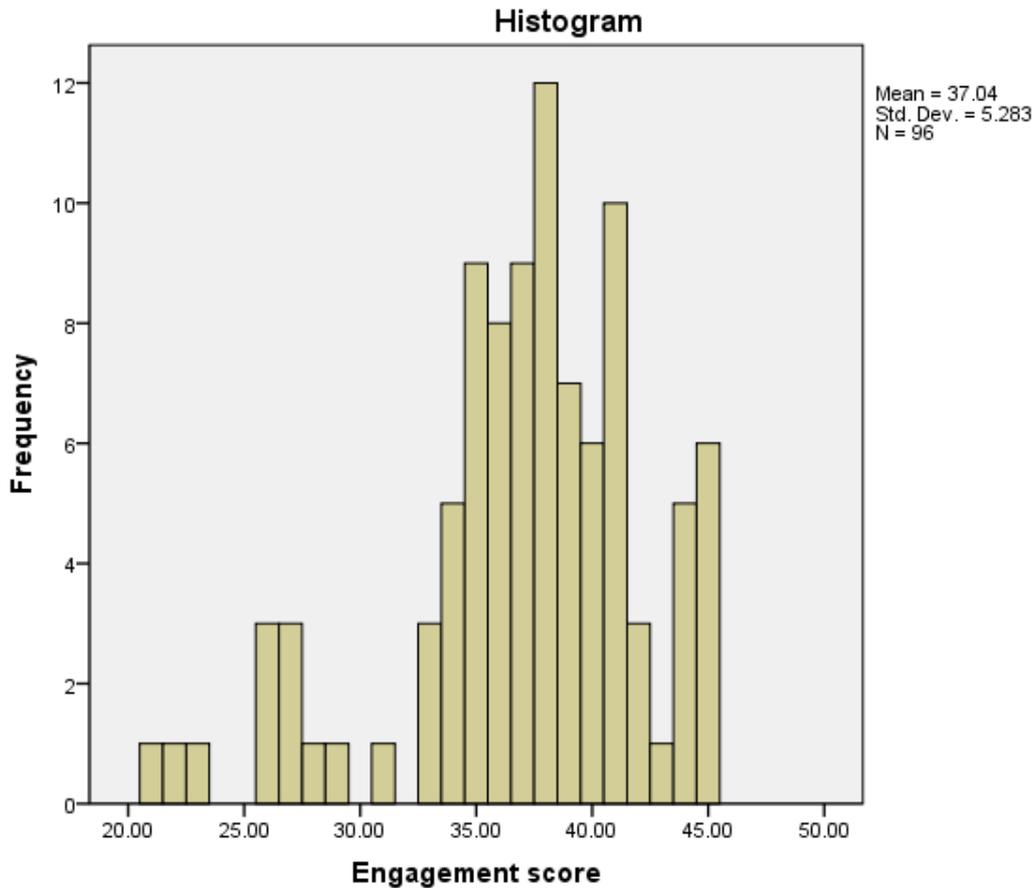
#### 4.1.2 Cluster 2 – Activity Engagement

The questions that were asked within this cluster referred to the experience that the participants had with the interactive activity. The participants were asked to rank the statements from 1 to 5 (1 being ‘Strongly Disagree’ and 5 being ‘Strongly Agree’). In total, 96 participants out of a possible 102 rated the statements in this cluster. The results below are presented as a cluster, and also highlight the individual results. Overall the results support high engagement with the interactive activity.

There were nine questions in this cluster relating to ‘engagement with the activity’. The score was calculated using the follow method, each question had the potential to score between 1 and 5, accordingly the maximum score is 45, and the minimum score is 9. The questions which were worded negatively e.g. ‘activities hindered my learning’ and ‘activities were

frustrating' were re coded so that their score would have the correct effect on the overall score. More than 60% of the participants rated their engagement at 38 points or higher, which would indicate combination of two scores, 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree'.

**Figure 4.3 Engagement with the Activity**



***In order to ensure reliability Cronbach's Alpha was tested and for 'engagement with the activity' scored a Value of .9***

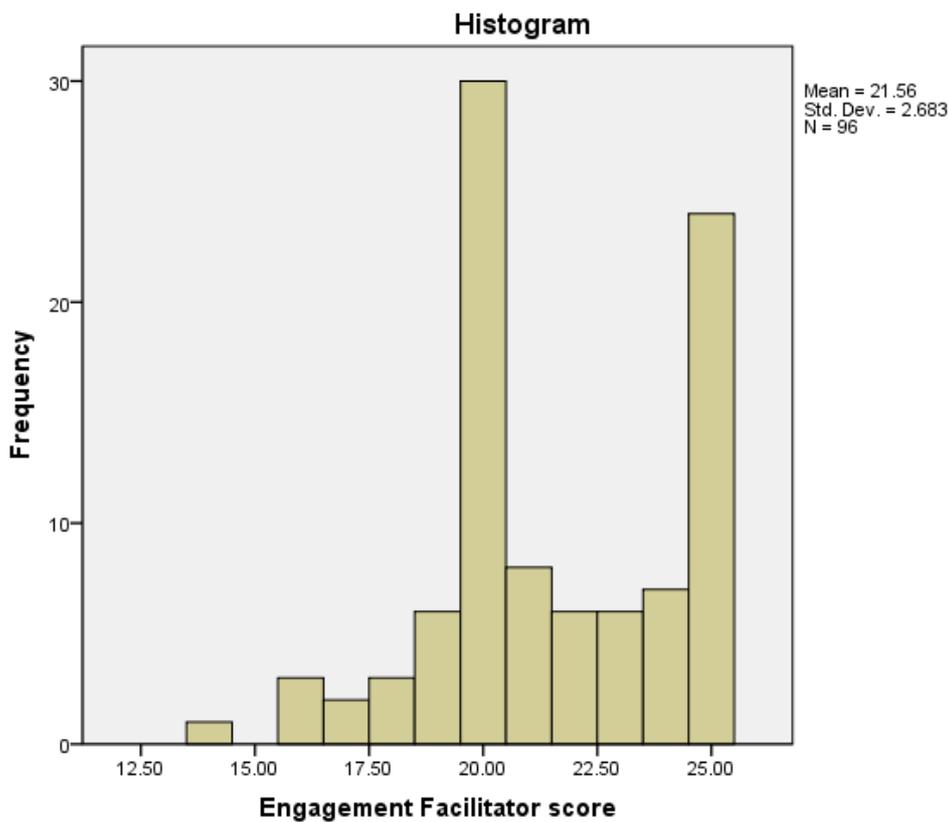
**4.1.3 Cluster 3 – Engagement with the Facilitator**

The questions that were asked within this cluster were in relation to the experience that the participant had with the facilitator and whether they felt supported and instructed to complete the interactive activities. There were five questions in this cluster relating to 'engagement with the facilitator'. The score was calculated using the follow method, each question had the

potential to score between 1 and 5, accordingly the maximum score is 25, and the minimum score is 5. In total, 96 participants out of a possible 102 rated the statements in this cluster. The results below are presented as a cluster and also indicate the individual results. Overall the results support high engagement with the facilitator.

Figure 4.4 shows the total 'engagement with facilitator' scores per participant, i.e. the sum of score for the five questions relating to this cluster. More than 90% of the participants rated their engagement with the facilitator at 20 points or higher, which is a combination of two scores, 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'

**Figure 4.4 Engagement with the Facilitator**



***In order to ensure reliability Cronbach's Alpha was tested and for 'engagement with the facilitator' scored a Value of .9***

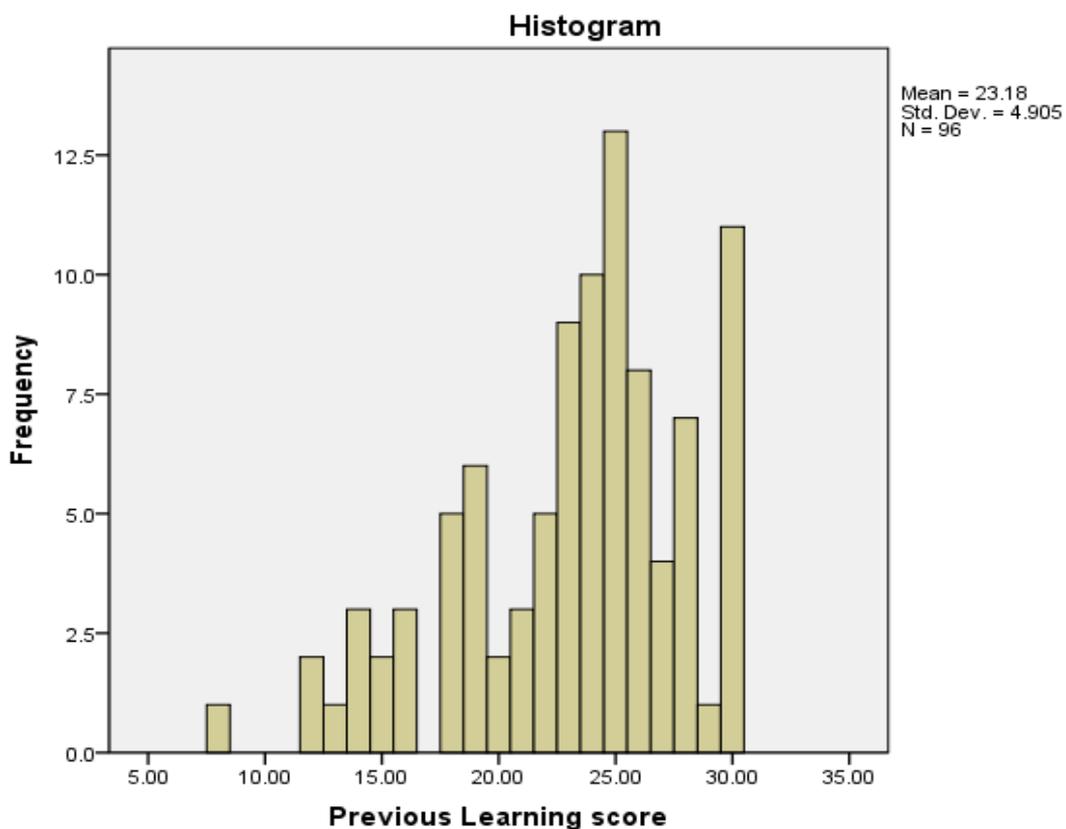
#### **4.1.4 Cluster 4 - Comparison to Prior Learning**

These questions were asked so that the participant (learner) could compare the interactive activity based training against their prior learning experiences. The participants were asked to

rank the statements from 1 to 5 (1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'). In total, 96 participants out of a possible 102 rated the statements in this cluster. The results below are presented as a cluster and also provide the individual results. Overall the results support high engagement with the interactive activity based training against their prior learning experiences.

Figure 4.5 shows the total score per participant in relation to their comparison to prior learning, i.e. the sum of score for the six questions relating to this cluster. The score was calculated using the follow method, each question had the potential to score between 1 and 5, accordingly the maximum score is 30, and the minimum score is 6. More than 75% of the participants rated their engagement at 20 points or higher, which are a combination two scores, 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'.

**Figure 4.5 Previous Learning**



***In order to ensure reliability Cronbach's Alpha was tested and for 'Previous Learning' scored a Value of .89***

#### 4.1.5 Cluster 5 - Learning Style

This area of questions is a minimised version of the full Honey and Mumford; the questions were taken directly from Honey and Mumford (1995), learning styles (see Appendix 4.3) Question 27 & 28 relate to the ‘Pragmatist’, question 29 & 30 relate to the ‘Theorist’, questions 31 & 32 relate to the ‘Reflector’ and question 33 & 34 relate to the ‘Activist’. The purpose of this set of questions was to obtain an indication of the preferred learning style of the participant (learner). The participants were asked to rank the statements from 1 to 5 (1 being ‘Strongly Disagree’ and 5 being ‘Strongly Agree’). In total, 96 participants out of a possible 102 rated the statements in this cluster. The results below show a mix of learning preferences. The strongest results would be most evident in the ‘Reflector’ and ‘Activist’ learning styles, and the lowest ratings are most evident in the ‘Theorist’ learning style.

**Table 4.7 Honey & Mumford – Reflector Question** (used in survey)

Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing many alternatives	0.00%	3.13%	11.46%	68.75%	16.67%
I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly	0.00%	5.21%	15.63%	57.29%	21.88%

According to Rosewell (2004) students who are ‘Reflectors’ learn more effectively by standing in the background observing, they take the time to consider all options before making a final decision. They take time to think before taking action and after action they tend to reflect or go over what just happened. Rosewell states that the most ineffective way to train ‘Reflectors’ is to ask them to do an activity where they could not prepare or where the deadline to complete a task was not achievable. This information would be important for the facilitator to know in order to engage this type of student by not pressurising them to make

quick decisions. The design of the activities, based on this learning style would have to incorporate preparation and reflection time.

**Table 4.8 Honey & Mumford – Activist Question** (used in survey)

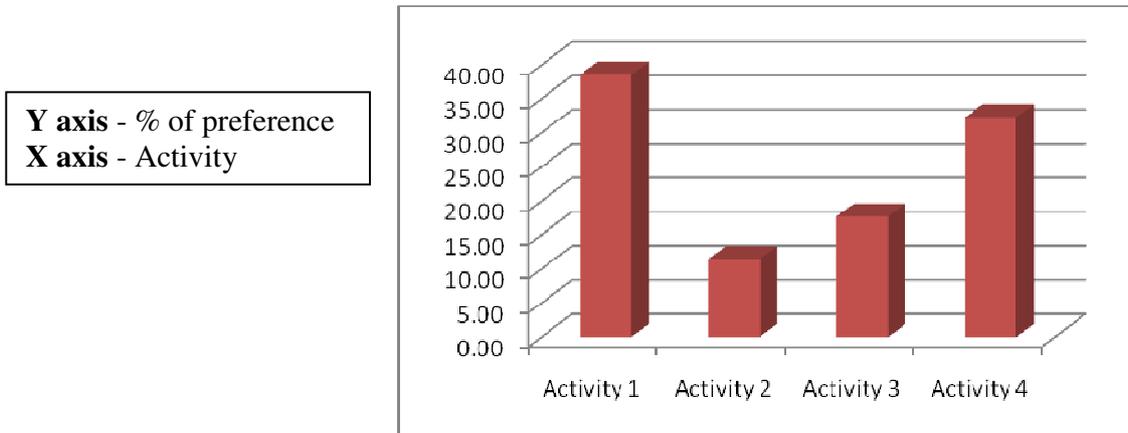
Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I love the challenge of working on something new and different	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	60.42%	33.33%
I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas in discussion	0.00%	16.67%	27.08%	45.83%	10.42%

According to Rosewell (2004) students who are ‘Activists’ learn more effectively by doing, they prefer to get involved in an activity that would push them out of their comfort zone e.g. problem solving and role-playing. They tend to jump in without thinking and think about the impact afterwards. Rosewell highlights that the most ineffective way to train an ‘Activist’ is through lecture and individual learning e.g. reading. This information would be important for the facilitator to know in order to engage this type of student.

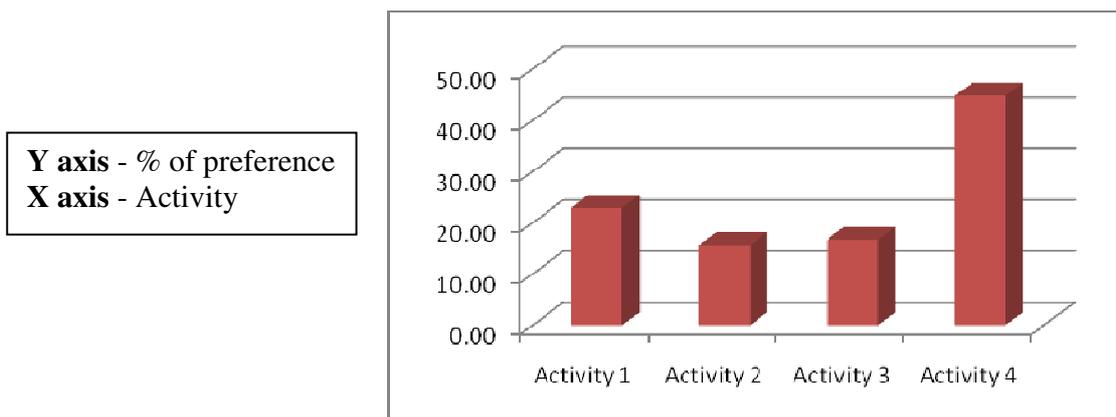
#### 4.1.6 Cluster 6 - Preference for Activities

These questions were asked so that the researcher could identify the activity which was most enjoyed and which activity helped the participants (learner) learn most. Activity 1 = Decade Board Discussion, Activity 2 = Matching KPI’s to Departments (KPI – Key Performance Indicator), Activity 3 = Shipment Cycle, Activity 4 = Test Your Knowledge. In total, 96 participants out of a possible 102 rated the statements in this cluster. Overall the results support high enjoyment with the ‘interactive activities’ 1 & 4 and the activities which aided the participants learning the most was again activities 1 & 4. The lowest rating in both questions was in activity activities 2 & 3.

**Figure 4.6 What activity did you enjoy most?**



**Figure 4.7 What activity helped you learn most?**



## 4.2 Interview Results

Four participants were interviewed as part of the interview process, The interview was semi-structured in that six core questions were asked of the participants, and there was freedom in how the researcher probed and investigated further.

### 4.2.1 Interviewees' Demographic Backgrounds

The four interviewees' were made up of two female and two male, the age group of the interviewees had two born between 1946 – 1964, one of the interviewees' was born between 1965 – 1979 and the remaining interviewee was born between 1980 – 2000. The years of service, one interviewee was with the company less than three years, one was with the

company between five and ten years and the two remaining interviewees had more than 15 years service. The interviewees also represented a mix of functional areas across the business – Three from network operations/ support and one interviewee was from the customer services function.

### **4.3 Pre Interview Questionnaire**

After the interviewees had been selected for the interview process and prior to the actual interview, they were asked to complete the full Honey and Mumford learning styles questionnaire (as opposed to the short version used in the survey). The results indicate a possible link between the results, in that all four questionnaire results show ‘Reflector’ as the dominant learning style (see Appendix 4.3). ‘Pragmatist’ was the next most popular style, with three out of the four scoring relatively high in this style and one of the four scoring high in the ‘Activist’ learning style.

### **4.4 Results in Regard to Main Research Questions**

#### **4.4.1 Do interactive activities have a positive effect on adults learning in the workplace?**

According to Dewey (1916), a situation represents the experiences of the environment affecting the learner, and interaction takes place between the learner and his or her environment. So, knowledge is based on active experience. Knowles (1980) also maintained how important it is that training allows for the ‘Role of the learners’ experience and as people grow and develop they build up a wealth of experience that can become a growing resource for learning-for themselves and for others, with this in mind *Interviewee 4* – responded

‘when we were doing the first activity, it was all about timelines and our history and everyone was able to talk and discuss and for some it was a trip down memory lane which was really nice and for those who were not with the company for so long they were learning from us but also were able to input in a fun light hearted way. I felt that those with a lot of knowledge sometimes took over however those with less knowledge still knew what was happening and could still participate. I think that the teambuilding and the sense of fun, rather than if someone is just looking at a presentation, by doing

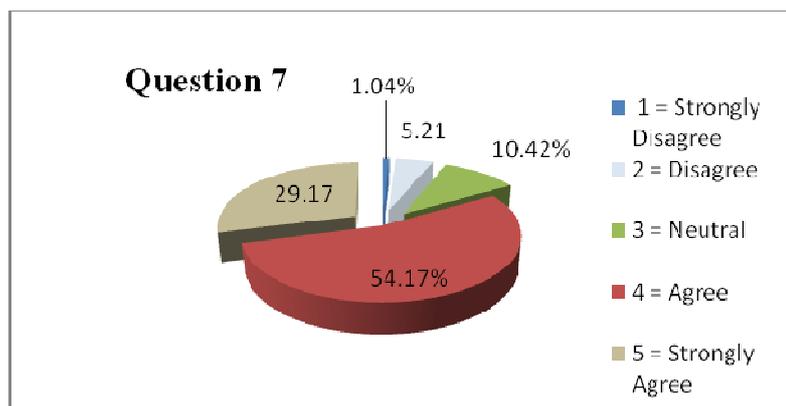
an activity people can get to know one another's strengths and weaknesses and they can be helped and supported'.

'Helped' and 'supported' two questions were asked in relation to these two areas, '*The activities helped me learn*' Scored 89% positive on the survey results and '*I felt supported by the facilitator during the training*' scored 94% positive on the survey results. But do the interactive activities have a positive effect for all learners, Interviewee 1 – responded

'my experience as a trainee you would see someone struggling and I would make it my business to help that person, to guide them with me as I'm going, cause I'm learning as I go along with them and you will find sometimes that there are people like me on courses that have this empathy with a person who is struggling and will tag them along. It can be very difficult for them cause they've no confidence, they have very poor self esteem, sometimes it can be a lack of understanding or lack of education unfortunately'

From the survey results 83% of the participants agreed or strongly agree that using activities on this course was an effective way to learn and 84% would recommend training with the activities rather than training without the activities.

**Figure 4.8 'The activities on this course were an effective way to learn'**



'Games are great fun for students to play; they get students active, involved, moving and engaged. They encourage collaboration, team work and interpersonal and social skills'.  
(Ashwin, 2005, p31) Interviewee 2 – responded

'I think that activities bring out peoples personalities, the type of individuals they are and it also, to me now, it exposed my limitations, it told me lots of things that I don't know' and to support the area of teamwork and interpersonal and social skills

*Interviewee 3* – responded

'you get to communicate more with people, because the group was mixed, and I probably wouldn't have spoken to other people who work in different departments in the other depot and here, it gets people mixing and getting to know one another as well and communicating together, for your day to day job it is important, cause your going to be emailing this person or on the phone to this person and its nice to know who you are speaking to especially in the work place, so I probably would have learned more cause they would have held my attention more than just sitting in a room and been spoken to and been told this and told that'

Another aspect that was highlighted when asked '*Do interactive activities have a positive effect on adults learning in the workplace?*' *Interviewee 1* responded

'Ye, on individuals very much so, I've seen a situation where you might have a male or female employee and they might be very quiet in themselves and they are not to sure of where the barriers are and they are quiet reserved or conservative and when they are in this particular situation then all of a sudden the barriers have dropped mm it's fun, they're on first name with people and all of a sudden they are in and then on the other side of the coin'

However , this interviewee also went on to describe a negative effect of interactive activities:

'Not everybody because of peer pressure, human factors, poor self esteem and its a terrible word I have to say and what I mean by lack of education is because they slip through the system and they don't have the confidence in themselves in that respect, but if you work on them you can change their mindset and you can bring them along, but you must bring them along at their level'

#### **4.4.2 Do interactive activities in the classroom have an effect on how adults engage in the learning process?**

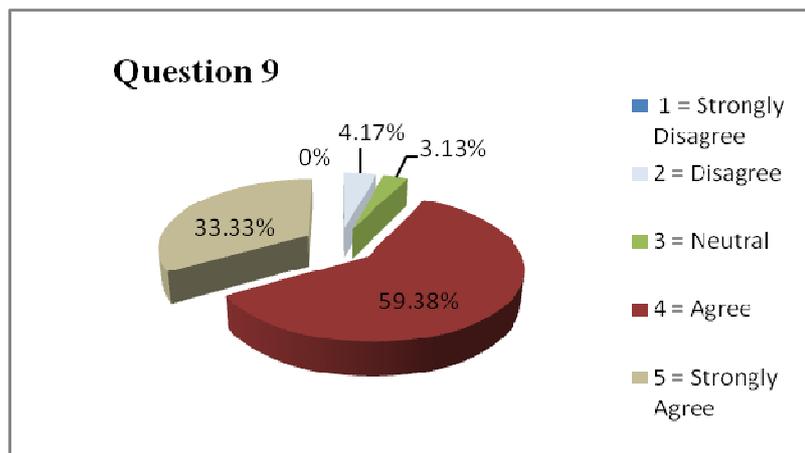
Interactive activities give an opportunity to the learner to gain experience in a safe environment and practice all their skills that combined decision making, understanding and

behaviour ‘Experiential learning theory a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour’ (Kolb, 1984, p21)

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes the ‘Theory of flow’, which is a theory of how a person can become so engaged in a task or activity that time passes unnoticed, distractions have no effect, and the learner adapts to varying degrees of task complexity. The engagement refers to ‘the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for’ (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269)

The survey asked participants to rate this statement ‘*I was engaged in the learning process*’ 93% agreed or strongly agreed that they were engaged in the learning process.

**Figure 4.9 I was engaged in the learning process**



*Interviewee 1* – responded

‘activities give me a lot more encouragement, and I found that we all had this thought process and its very hard to sit down and be asked a question on a questionnaire cause I find that my thought process changes completely, negatively if that's a better word, when its interactive my thought process changes completely and I'm able to bring more out and it kind of flows better, if it is just written it takes a while for it to kick in.’

*Interviewee 2* – responded

‘I find myself at an activity like that, learning from the people who are in my group’,  
‘so I might start off by saying, ok if that parcel was in Dublin first, then it goes to the  
UK, that might be the limit of my knowledge, but then another person maybe a  
courier you're with, or a sales person you're with or another colleague you're with  
from another department, they are adding in a bit more and that's a very good way of  
learning and remembering’

Interviewee 2 describes here, that the learning process was possible because of the interaction  
and the activity which involved participation from the relevant areas of the business, and  
gave a sense of belonging to the participants and where they fit in in relation to their fellow  
colleagues. *Interviewee 3* – responded

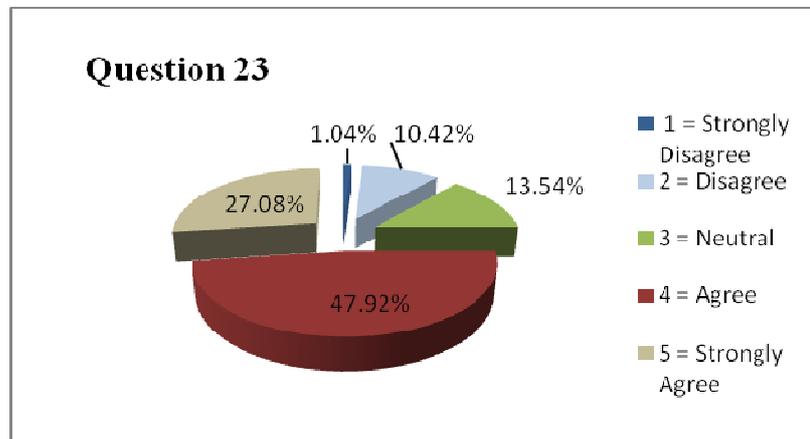
‘well probably at the start people weren't speaking up very much at first, but as the  
course went on people seemed to listen more and as we got into it and started doing  
the activities everybody started talking more and everybody got involved from the  
different departments because there was different aspects on the course related to  
customer service, related to operations, so we all got a bit of each others information  
that we probably wouldn't have know about otherwise’

and *Interviewee 4* – described how

‘the departments were sharing information as well and it was helpful to see things  
from a different perspective, it was so helpful for example to see how a courier would  
deal with a difficult customer and how it feeds into my area’

*‘The activities helped me learn’* scored 88% on the survey results, *‘I remembered more using  
activities than I remembered from previous training’* scored 75%, whereas, *‘I learned more using  
activities than I learned on previous training’* scored lower at 68%.

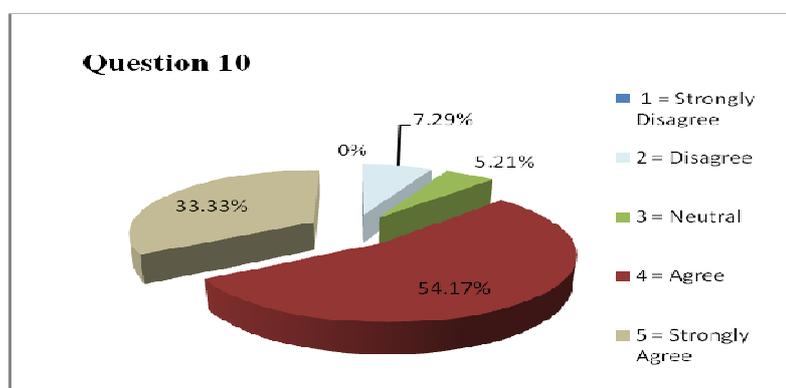
**Figure 4.10 I remembered more using activities than I remembered from previous training**



**4.4.3 Do interactive activities enhance learning engagement?**

According to Csikszentimihalyi (1997), when learners are involved in an activity that has a balance of challenge and skill, they are more inclined to take a chance and become engaged. A number of statements in the survey e.g. enjoyed, engaged, helped and challenged were set to measure learning engagement and if interactive activities enhanced this engagement. When asked if *'the activities helped me learn'* over 87% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

**Figure 4.11 The activities helped me learn**



*Interviewee 4* – responded

‘activities make the subject matter more interesting, looking at a slideshow its very easy to switch off or to start thinking of random things but when you are engaged in activity, your full attention has to be on it and that is a definite benefit. By doing something helps it sink in and that is time saving, I have to say that the feel good factor from CIS was much better than some courses that I have been on as well as taking on board the information because in some courses you can feel that you are being bombarded with information, I know that it would take longer but a lot of training could happen in the form of activity and it would be worth it in the long run because it helps people retain the information’.

If the survey results above are collaborated with the response from interviewee 4, a clear indication has been made that the interactive activities had a role to play in helping the participants to learn. The activity ‘helps it sink in’ and ‘retain the information’. However when asked if they agreed or disagreed with this statement ‘*I learned more using activities than I learned on previous training*’ the score, although ‘agreed’ and ‘strongly agreed’ scored significantly lower with 68% of the participants agreeing.

On the survey the participants were asked to rate ‘*the activity helped me understand what was being taught*’ 92% agreed, with one person disagreeing with the statement. *Interviewee 1* – responded

‘I find with training adults in the workplace you have to bear in mind one major factor and that is that this could have been their first time back in a type of education since they left school and that could be from when they left school 10 years ago, 15 years ago, 20 years ago or dare I say 35 or 40 years ago, activities would relate to real life scenarios and its an opportunity, the activity is a block of information its done in sound bites and learners are able to either place a card on a particular map or card on the floor, roll the dice and move certain places to answer .. the question and it seems to give them a lot more confidence and that little confidence boost to move on to the next step and before they realise they say 'hay I can actually do this' ' it's not as bad as I thought it was'.

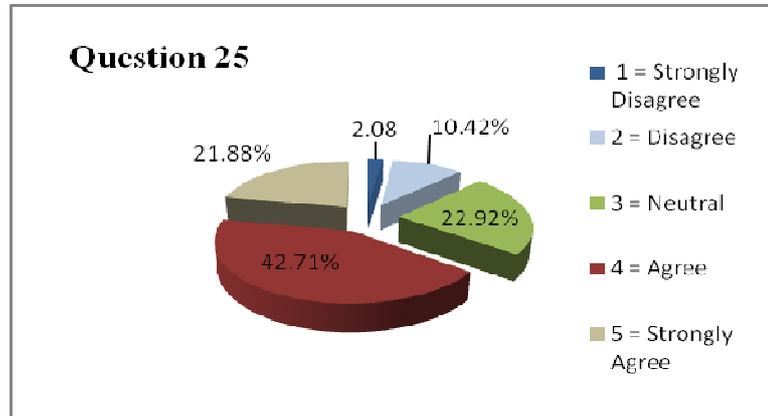
With regards to enhancing learning engagement through the use of interactive activities the survey inquired into the challenge of the activities '*completing the activities provided a learning challenge*' 73% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and close to 20% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. *Interviewee 2* – responded

‘there's a recognition there that that person has a role, its an important role, they are being respected in a fashion by that involvement, whereas if someone calls you up to a classroom situation, okay lads sit down there for 2 hours stay bloody quiet [laugh] that's not effective.’

‘When your in a group activity, a collective group activity, people are pooling their resources 'What do you know that I don't know?' so that is a great benefit to come out of it and peoples personalities are revealed and I think its easier, not so much to fail like there is a certain.. if you fail on your own, its a bit daunting but if you're involved you feel more confident in a group and there's an activity going on and not only do you learn something from that activity, and remember it better, you can recall it then...doing it, cause you've actually done it'. It may be the case that Interviewee 4 was not so challenged, those who were not with the company for so long they were learning from us but also were able to input in a fun light hearted way. I felt that those with a lot of knowledge sometimes took over however those with less knowledge still knew what was happening and could still participate and learn from us’.

In line with this research question the survey asked the respondents to rate how much they participated '*I participated more on this course than I have participated on previous training*'

**Figure 4.12 I participated more on this course than I have participated on previous training**



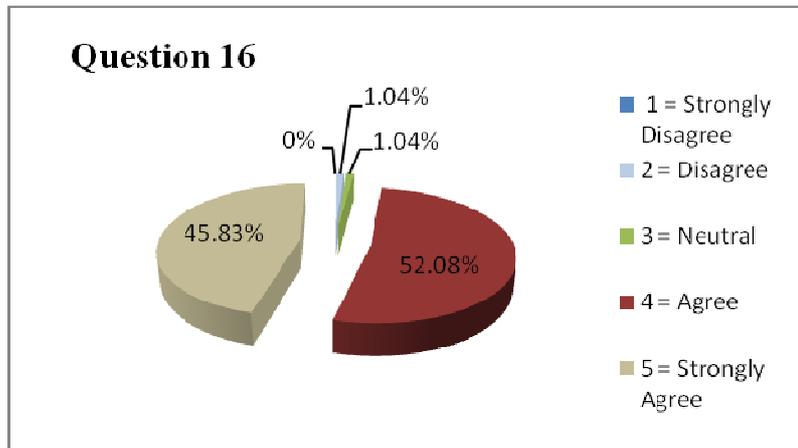
Almost 65% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with the remaining 35% undecided or in disagreement. *Interviewee 3* – responded ‘well to me it would, because doing activities I concentrate more, I’m more interested in learning when it’s, well it just more interesting when, it has my attention more, I took more away from the course with activities than I have done with a sit down course, cause ye know people tend to drift off a bit on courses when there’s no activities, the whole attention span, well with me it keeps me interested, so I would have learned more on this course where I’m more interested and taking more notice of things, participating more’.

The survey asked if the participants’ engaged more as a result of the interactive activities than on previous training ‘*I engaged more using activities than I engaged on previous training*’ 68% of the participants agreed, 19% undecided and the balance disagreed with this statement.

#### **4.4.4 Do interactive activities improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner?**

A full cluster of questions were asked in the survey, with regard to this research question, all questions agreed ‘*I understood the facilitator’s instructions on how to complete the activities*’ 98% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

**Figure 4.13 I understood the facilitator’s instructions on how to complete the activities**



*Interviewee 1* – responded specifically in relation to understanding the facilitator instructions on how to complete the interactive activities

‘from my experience with the CIS programme I felt the interaction with the facilitators and the activities was very important as a learning tool, if I didn't have confidence in what I was doing there was always the opportunity to wait for a lead to come along and then I could follow’

‘There was a time that you mightn't fully understand what was being asked of you and the facilitator was always very good at encouraging you to come along with an idea and once you got the flow going or got that door opening you were fine, most times I'm grand with this but sometimes you will freeze and I find the activities are great for pushing you out a bit’.

The other survey statements which related to interactive activities and if they improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner were *‘I felt supported by the facilitator during the training’* 94% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed, *‘The facilitator helped me feel confident in my ability to complete the activities’* 93% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement’. Feedback was looked at from two different perspectives, feedback in the form of support for completion and for the feeling of competence. *‘Feedback from the facilitator helped me complete the activities’* scored 95% positive and *‘Feedback from my facilitator helped me feel competent as a learner during the activities’* scored 88% positive. In totality for this cluster of

questions no participants' strongly disagreed with any of the statements and 8 participants disagreed with some of the statements. The statements in relation to support, helping people feel confident in their ability and feedback for completion had no negative score. Involvement from the facilitator was an important aspect according to the interviewees, *Interviewee 2* - responded

'the activities gets the facilitator to get people involved and to draw them in to that training', it was great to see the content, the preparation that went into it, the interesting content, the informative content that we got we learned from, the way it was presented but the involvement of the lads too'.

During this interview the interviewee indicated that he respected the facilitator for the amount of time and effort that went into the preparation of the course, this added to interaction because as a participant he felt valued as a learner' and interviewee 3 expanded on this by saying 'well the facilitator tends to get more involved when there are activities because they have to really get more involved, there is more of a mix going on within the group than if the facilitator is just teaching the course, the facilitator has to try and get everybody going but if there not getting anything back from the group its going to be hard as well, I think it works both ways really, the facilitator would kind of have the most responsibility in getting everybody involved' and *Interviewee 4* – responded 'most definitely yes, in a normal course the facilitator just asks questions and people who are shy are more inclined to stay quiet, whereas in an activity, you need to learn how to do, and thats what makes the contact happen, so long as every individual is given an activity or a task, it opens up the channel of communication more, its a two way thing'.

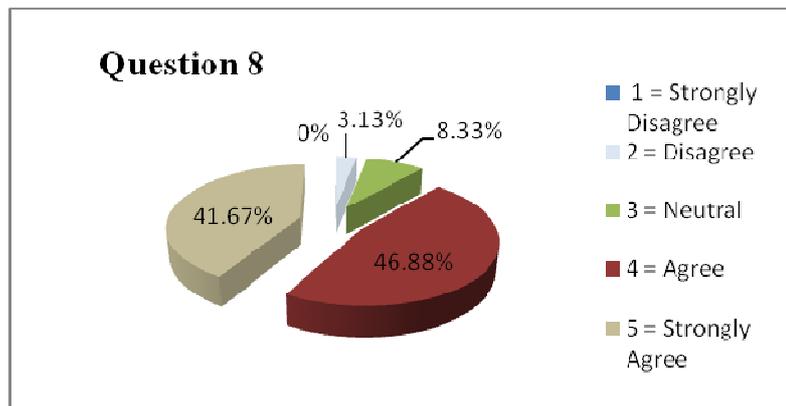
By and large the results indicate an enhanced level of interaction between the facilitator and the learners through the use of interactive activities. 'The teacher who is concerned to investigate the learning/teaching encounter, is clearly concerned with improving his/her teaching practices' (Cuthbert, 2005), (Yorks and Kasl, 2002) and (Cannings, 2010), state that in order to introduce such activities into the learning, the role of the teacher is key in creating the right environment where adults can learn from these activities and each other's experiences.

#### **4.4.5 Do interactive activities increase enjoyment when learning?**

A number of questions relating to interactive activities increasing the participants' enjoyment when learning were asked in the survey and at the interview stage. The questions in the survey

that would relate to this particular research question were *'I enjoyed learning using activities'* more than 88% of the participants' agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

**Figure 4.14 I enjoyed learning using activities**



Also supporting an increase in the enjoyment of learning using interactive activities was *'I enjoyed the training more using activities than I enjoyed previous training'* this question gave the participants the opportunity to reflect on their previous training experiences and decide which they enjoyed more, 75% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, which would indicate a high level of enjoyment. When asked to rate *'the learning activities were frustrating'* more than 87% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, which would further support the enjoyment factor.

During the interview stage the interviewees were asked *'Do interactive activities increase enjoyment when learning?'* Interviewee 1 – responded

'the activity is like the carrot, they know there's going to be an activity, they know there's going to be a hands on approach, a hands on activity or something so like I do know if I am doing a course that we have to go through, you know, a certain bit of PowerPoint but at the end of it we're going to do 'The Do' with it, that encourages, that gets me excited because I can't wait'.

Interviewee 2 – responded

'to be doing something is more interesting than not to be doing something, it shouldn't be laugh out loud enjoyment because a lot of the training and study is serious stuff, a

lot of the enjoyment I think is that people find out something interesting and new, that's enjoyable in itself, discover something new and to kind of get that reassurance you get, that you understand something, that you are fairly decent at it, that you have something to contribute, that's important too'

Interviewees' 3 and 4 added to that by saying

'yes for me they would, cause it would keep me interested, it is more enjoyable when your learning something with activities rather than sitting there with a text book or just having someone talk to you rather than role-plays or what ever, you just get more involved so I think then if you are more involved you take away a lot more information'

'Oh yes definitely, there was lots of interaction and it made it so much more fun'

The responses to this interview question suggest that there was certainly an element of enjoyment as a result of the introduction of interactive activities, with strong statements indicating excitement, self discovery, involvement, interest and fun.

#### **4.4.6 Are interactive activities effective in engaging adults in workplace learning?**

As highlighted in chapter 2 there are varied definitions of engagement (Natriello, 1984, p. 14) definition of student engagement saw engagement as 'participating in the activities offered as part of the school programme' and Chapman (2003) offered a definition of engagement as being 'students' cognitive investment in, active participation in and emotional commitment to their learning' (Harrison, 2009, p. 369) highlighted other factors that can effect engagement such as the environment, students relationship with their teacher, their managers and co-workers. There are a number of areas in the survey which point to the varied mix described by Harrison, Natriello and Chapman above e.g. relationship with facilitator and co-workers, the opportunities for development and their involvement in the process through the use of interactive activities. When asked if '*interactive activities were effective in engaging adults in workplace learning*' Interviewee 1 – responded

'Yes very much so because in this organisation, everything is a kind of 'hands on deck' scenario although we all are quite specialised in the various departments that we work in, there are times that you will have to jump in and do other people's jobs or help out

in other thing and that's an important thing to have in this organisation and I imagine in other organisations as well, when you have these activities it helps you to home in on that and say ok, the activities are great in the sense that they encourage you to participate with other departments, other people and to mm converse, to speak, to talk, to ask questions etc. ye so it is very important'

*Interviewee 2 –*

'I prefer that type of training to training were I am passive, maybe its stupid me, I tend to learn less than when I am actively involved in either role-playing or maybe game playing as part of training'

*Interviewee 3 – responded*

'Well I do think that the activities do aid learning, it basically encouraged people to take part in any sort of training course or anything rather than just sitting at a desk and having no sort of interaction, if I was asked on my own to do it I wouldn't have stepped forward. Once it was within teamwork, we all kind of participated together, it was a bit of fun and we did learn from it that way'

and *Interviewee 4 – added to that by saying*

'I think people learn by seeing what is happening, by hearing, by touching and by doing and I think the most beneficial one is by doing because it helps it be retained in the memory most. I really benefited from the activities in this course, when people were engaging together, it was like team building and it made people get to know one another better and it created a lighter atmosphere'.

#### **4.5 Observation Results**

The observations were conducted on two separate training courses, each training course consisted of 15 participants and two facilitators. Each group were stratagically mixed in terms of gender, functional area and length of service. The observation was semi-structured in that the researcher had a general idea and planned to record and take note of any instances observed in relation to behaviour around engagement. The results below indicate the observed behaviour around engagement, before, during and after each interactive activity. The observation was conducted from both aspects, from the aspect of the facilitator and from the

aspect of the participant. The researcher observed from the back of the room and did not participate or contribute to the course in any way.

#### 4.5.1 Observation 1 (Appendix 4.4)

On observation 1, the facilitators were engaging from the start of the course, what they were saying sounded enthusiastic and they sounded like that meant what they were saying, they used very open, positive body language e.g. facing the participants and had good eye contact, it was evident that there was rapport being established within the classroom environment. The participants were sitting up listening and body orientation of all participants would indicate high engagement.

Interactive activity 1 - was explained well, in that it was broken down into manageable steps, the facilitators split the group into two groups by giving them a number, 1 or 2. They were enthusiastic and their sense of enthusiasm seemed to pass to the participants. The groups were excited to complete the activity, a healthy sense of competition emerged, one group against the other. While the activity was being explained in general there was good listening. More than half the participants in each group were checking the cards against the interactive floor boards.

**Table 4.13 Observation 1 Activity 1**

Activity 1		
Group 1 (7 Participants)	3 x Participants listening to the facilitator	4 x Participants checking the cards against the interactive floor boards
Group 2 (8 Participants)	2 x Participants listening to the facilitator	6 x Participants checking the cards against the interactive floor boards

During the completion of interactive activity 1, which was the Decade Board Discussion, the activity involved all participants, boards are laid out on the floor and each participant was given three or four fact cards. Table 4.13 indicates what the participants were doing during the explanation of the activity. It was identified that there was engagement on three different levels, participant to participant, participant to facilitator and from the participant to the interactive activity. The participants were asking questions of each other and there was a

great deal of quotations such as ‘very good, I didn’t know that’ and ‘ you must be here a long time’, visually, the participants were engaged with one another, during the first interactive activity the researcher observed five instances where a participant clapped another participant on the back as if to say well done. With regards to the interaction with the facilitator during the interactive activity, there was good interaction throughout, however in one of the groups there was one participant who was not participating, the facilitator simply handed the participant some of the cards and he then joined in. The facilitator introduced a deadline which seemed to improve the engagement and enhanced the sense of fun around the completion of the task. This was evident in that all participants were engaged either verbally or through their actions e.g. on their knees arranging the cards.

Interactivity activity 2 – which involved matching KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators) to the key departments, this interactive activity involves all participants. Boards are laid out on the floor and each participant is given fact cards in relation to systems, number of employees, departmental targets and targets which feed into global targets. As a group they discuss the details on each card and decide as a group where they belong. The activity was well introduced, it could have been a bit clearer with regard to the amount of detail involved. The class was divided into four groups, which instilled new energy into the activity. The facilitators went from group to group to check answers but did not get involved with the activity. The groups were working well with each other, all groups were either on the ground or standing beside their boards, the evidence of engagement that was particularly noted, was in relation to the body orientation (leaning in toward the activity), the focus within the groups was on the activity, asking questions of each other to find the answer and also to clarify. There was a growing confidence within the groups as they were completing the activity. The facilitator gave a one minute warning that the activity was almost complete and again the engagement level seemed to peak as the groups strived to complete their task.

Interactive activity 3 – The Shipment Cycle, this interactive activity involves all participants; each group is given a set of 10 cards which represents the 10 stages of the shipment cycle. Each group needs to discuss and decide the order in which the stages are to be arranged and then arrange them in sequence; part of this activity includes a short questionnaire which

needs to be completed by the group. This activity was introduced well, the facilitators were very encouraging and set the scene, making comparisons to real life situations. Participants got so engaged in this activity that the time ran over. With the functional mix in the groups e.g. couriers, customer services, sales etc there was a powerful sharing of knowledge and experience. There was a high level of participation and engagement by all participants, good group work and there was an appreciation for each others knowledge and experience of the business.

Interactive activity 4 – Test your Knowledge, this interactive activity tests the knowledge of all the participants. A slideshow is run with each question showing an option for a ‘yellow’ or ‘red’ answer. The participants were asked to hold up their cards showing ‘yellow’ or ‘red’ in response. Correct answers are then highlighted and reinforced by the facilitator. This activity was testing all the sections of the course. The activity was introduced well and the facilitators were very encouraging, it was obvious that the confidence levels were high, every single participant answered a question and did not seem to be afraid or embarrassed to be involved as individuals. The facilitators were engaging, with good solid eye contact and they seemed genuinely proud of the group and gave encouraging feedback to the participants for their correct answers e.g. ‘very good’, ‘well done’ and ‘exactly, what I was looking for’.

#### **4.5.2 Observation 2 (Appendix 4.5)**

Nice introduction from the facilitators, the facilitators did not do a group introduction, it became obvious that the group would have preferred to know what departments were represented in the classroom. The participants began asking each other what department that they were from, the very fact that the introduction was not done seemed to prevent them from engaging. Nice encouragement from the facilitators to get the participants to ask questions. Before the introduction of activity 1 the facilitators decided to do class introductions after they had identified the need for it, the participants were more comfortable and at ease after the introductions.

Interactive activity 1 – a nice technique was used by the facilitators to get everyone up on their feet while explaining the activity, this technique heightened the interest in the room, good management of groups and clear instructions given in terms of the activity. All participants

were fully engaged and listening to the instruction, with this technique used by the facilitators, fewer participants started the activity during the explanation, there was was good listening as seen in Table 4.14 which indicates what the participants were doing during the explanation of the activity.

**Table 4.14 Observation 2 Activity 1**

Activity 1		
Group 1 (8 Participants)	7 x Participants listening to the facilitator	1 x Participant checking the cards against the interactive floor boards
Group 2 (7 Participants)	5 x Participants listening to the facilitator	2 x Participants checking the cards against the interactive floor boards

During this activity there was real evidence of teamwork with plenty of discussion and questioning. The facilitators kept checking with the groups and gave feedback where necessary e.g. 'that's in the right place', 'well done', and where correction was needed to be made the feedback was in the form of a question e.g. 'are you sure about that card in that position?' or 'where else do you think that card could go?'. The participants recieved the corrective feedback very positively and took corrective action straight away.

It was noticed by the facilitator that in one of the groups there were two participants that were sitting in their chairs and not fully engaged, the facilitator simply said 'Is everyone helping in their teams' and it was the group members, their colleagues that got them involved, this prevented the facilitator having to come into any conflict with the participants.

Interactive activity 2 – This activity was very well explained by the facilitators, with clear instruction and a lot of detail. All of the groups were very engaged and listening to the instruction. The facilitators then got the participants to distribute the interactive boards and cards within the newly appointed groups. With the introduction of the new groups and the participants helping to distribute the activity there was a lot of movement in the room and a real sense of excitement. It was observed that when reflective music was turned on during the activity that there was a sense of calm after all the commotion.

During this activity it was observed that every person in every group was highly engaged in the activity, there was questioning, advise giving, positive body language and very positive verbal language being used.

It was noted by the observer that the engagement levels dropped before the next activity, there was talking and two participants left the room for a few minutes.

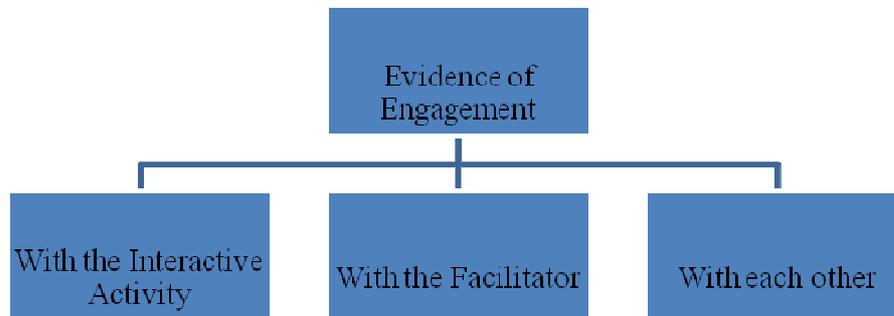
Interactive activity 3 – This activity was introduced well, the facilitators made the activity very relevant to a real life scenario, so much so that the participants started offering examples from their own experience, asking questions and making comparisons. Each participant seemed to automatically adapt a role within their group to either arrange the cards, read what was on the card or fill in the questionnaire, during which they received good feedback and encouragement from the facilitators. Each group were very involved in completing the task, checking and inquiring into each others experiences and giving praise e.g. 'fair play to you', 'does your department always do that?'. It was observed that two participants had come up with an idea of resolving a real issue that was happening in the workplace and were planning action around it.

Interactive activity 4 – The facilitators issued red and yellow cards as part of this activity, to answer the multiple choice questions. Every question that was asked of the group was answered, all participants got involved. The red and yellow cards were held high in the air, with no fear of getting the answer incorrect. The facilitators asked the questions clearly, engagement seemed high and was evident by the fact that the participants were ready sitting up straight, eyes focused on the facilitator ready for the question. The confidence level also seemed to be high, there were very few participants who waited for someone else to answer first (3 to be exact). Good praise given by the facilitators, which added to the connection with the group, good rapport and fun atmosphere.

#### **4.5.3 Observation Results**

The results from the observations indicate evidence of engagement in three different areas: - engagement with the interactive activity, engagement with the facilitator and engagement with fellow participants.

**Figure 4.15 Observation Engagement Evidence**



#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

Chapter four details the results with regards to the survey results and descriptive analysis were detailed question by question. Presented in this chapter are also the qualitative results in relation to the pre-interview questionnaire and the results of the interview questions which were asked of four interviewees and the training course observations which took place prior to the survey. Most of the results had a good outcome with some of the most positive results in the area of *participants feeling supported by the facilitator* at 94%, *improving their understanding* scored 98% and *improving confidence in ability* 93%. The areas that scored lower were if the participants *learned more using activities than they learned on previous training* scored 68% or if they *remembered more* 75% or if they were *challenged enough* scored 73%.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

### **5.0 Introduction to Chapter Content**

This chapter gives an overview of the research and its context. The chapter then discusses the research questions in terms of the literature review and the survey and interview results and findings.

### **5.1 Research Overview and Context**

The research study was to explore the effects of activity based learning with the support of trained facilitators; the focus was on the interactive aspect of learning and the importance of having an activity or interactive session within a course for adult learners.

This research intended to look at the effectiveness of interactive activities in making workplace learners engaged in learning.

### **5.2. Discussion**

#### **5.2.1 Demographics**

To begin with the organisation analysed was a medium sized transport and logistics company within Ireland. The research question focuses on the effective engagement in workplace learning, the host organization involved in the research showed distinct variation in terms of the age brackets throughout the organization (Appendix 4.2).

The results indicated that 72% of total staff was over the age of 33 years, 51% between the age of 33 and 47 with an additional 21% between the age of 48 and 66. The remaining 28% of staff were below the age of 33 years. So the host organizations workforce is made up of a predominately well experienced, mature workforce with an average length of service over 15 years.

### **5.2.2 Do interactive activities have a positive effect on adults learning in the workplace?**

The findings of the research carried out indicate a positive attitude from the respondents in terms of the effectiveness of activities in engaging adults in the workplace. The findings of the results show a positive attitude across all sub questions of the research questions, although it can be argued that all such results can only really be used in a practical sense within the research organisation. 83% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that using activities on this course was an effective way to learn and 84% would recommend training with the activities rather than training without the activities, such high percentages would certainly indicate that the respondents agreed with including activities within adult workplace learning.

### **5.2.3 Do interactive activities have an effect on how adults engage in the learning process?**

In assessing how adults bring classroom learning back to the workplace, we have seen from (Burke and Hutchins 2008) and Burgess, (2005) that interactive training activities along with supervisory, engagement and support have been key to successful classroom transference, in terms of the engagement in the learning process. Of those surveyed 93% (Question 9) indicated that the activities had engaged them in the learning process, not only that but 89% (Question 8) stated that they enjoyed the process of learning through the use of activities and that the activities actually did enable them to learn, 88% (Question 10). Assessing this with the opposite disagreement figures, that the activities in some way hindered learning 90% (Question 11) or frustrated learners 88% (Question 12) would certainly support the use of activities in the learning process of adults. From these results it can be seen that the effect of using activities had not only complimented traditional methods of learning but it also increased the participation and involvement in the learning and engagement within the process – the results show greater enjoyment, more engagement and an overall ability to learn through activities all key factors in the research. These positive results are also seen during the course of the interviews: Interviewee 3 ‘everybody got involved from the different departments’. Adults are self directed, Knowles et al, (2005) and tend to draw from life experiences that are more problem centered than subject centered. When reflecting on the problem based activities within the course, Interviewee 2 also states ‘that's a very good way

of learning and remembering’, and also through the response of Interviewee 1 – ‘when its interactive my thought process changes completely and I’m able to bring more out and it kind of flows better’ , so not only were the participants more “actively engaged in digesting concepts” (Massey, Brown and Johnstown, 2005, p.10-13) but the use of a “cognitive” (Chapman, 2003 ) strategy did promote active participation, and from the results a higher level of interest, positive attitude towards the learning process and engagement level.

#### **5.2.4 Do interactive activities improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner?**

Wlodkowski (2008, p. 100) noted that “adults want to be successful learners” and Pintrich and Schrauben (1992) associated engagement levels with the students use of cognitive, meta-cognitive and self regulatory strategies to monitor and guide their learning processes.

Regardless of the classroom setting, it is essential that instruction be approached and designed from an adult perspective (Finn, 2011), this is where the facilitator of the interactive activity within learning becomes key, Meyers, Billett, Kelly, 2010 p. 122) show that there was a perception shared amongst their participants, particularly women, that they did not value themselves or have the confidence in their abilities. In this research study 93% indicated confidence in their ability to complete the activity as a direct result of the help and support the facilitator had given them throughout, this is supported by the corresponding figure on feedback given by the facilitator of 88%, which made the learner also feel competent during the activities, so active facilitation, support and feedback throughout the activity not only improved the interaction between the facilitator and the learner, it also led to an improved learning experience, these results can be linked to the responses received from the interviewees - Interviewee 1

‘I felt the interaction with the facilitators and the activities was very important as a learning tool, if I didn't have confidence in what I was doing there was always the opportunity to wait for a lead to come along and then I could follow’.

(Finn 2011) advocates that ‘educators need to be sensitive to the experiences of the individual and how this might necessitate individualised teaching and learning strategies. It is critical that

teachers of adults become familiar with the individual learners and their experiences’ - again endorsed by Interviewee 2

‘the activities gets the facilitator to get people involved and to draw them in to that training’.

(Canning, 2010) also states that in order to introduce such activities into the learning, the role of the teacher is key in creating the right environment, where adults can learn from the activities and each other’s experiences, again seen in the results from Interviewee 3

‘the facilitator tends to get more involved when there are activities because they have to really get more involved, there is more of a mix going on within the group than if the facilitator is just teaching the course, the facilitator has to try and get everybody going’.

So to relate back to the research question and whether interactive activities improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner , the results do suggest that the learners attitude and engagement in the training improves but the improvement in terms of this research was heavily reliant on the facilitator, the research would suggest that when the facilitator actively became involved with the learning activity there was a greater degree of buy in, resonance and participation level amongst the the learners.

### **5.2.5 Do interactive activities enhance learning engagement?**

Csikszentimihalyi (1997) states that when learners are involved in an activity that has a balance of challenge and skill, they are more inclined to take a chance and become engaged, it is evident from this responses in the research 93% (Question 9) that this was the case.

Windham (2005) recommended that in order to enhance the engagement of a learner, new forms of teaching would need to include – ‘Interaction, exploration, relevancy, multimedia and instruction’. In assessing this research of the experimental population, the results show that the activities on the course did actively engaged the learners in the learning process 93% (Question 9) , the activities also increased the understanding of what was being taught 92% (Question 13) and did provide a learning challenge to the learner, Interviewee 3

‘doing activities I concentrate more, I'm more interested in learning’,

so again from the research results it would indicate that the particiapnts not only had a positive attitude towards learning through activities but also had increased understanding, felt more

engaged and challenged with the introduction of activities. On the negative side of learning engagement the results in terms of engagement and comparison to previous learning - only 32% (Question 21) of those surveyed felt engaged using activities than on previous learning, it is possible that the questions within the research on prior learning was too vague, in that it didn't focus enough on a "like for like" scenario, in answering this question the participants automatically assessed all of their previous experiences of learning, this may also indicate the large result in neutrals 33% in that the participants had no frame of reference in terms of comparison.

### **5.2.6 Do interactive activities increase the enjoyment of learning?**

It would seem from the results of the research that 89% (Question 8) of those surveyed did enjoy the training which encompassed the interactive activities, with only 12% (Question 12) finding it frustrating, Merriam and Brockett (2007) believed that successful learning experiences were linked to the correct environment, key links between physical and psychological aspects were indentified in order to improve the learning experience, where the learner and teachers could actively engage in a supportive and honest environment. By improving the overall environment not just in physical terms but also in physiological terms, this serves to improve not just the enjoyment of the learning but also the effectiveness of the learning, *Interviewee 2*

‘ it shouldn't be laugh out loud enjoyment because a lot of the training and study is serious stuff, a lot of the enjoyment I think is that people find out something interesting and new, that's enjoyable in itself,

*Interviewee 3*

‘it's more enjoyable when your learning something with activities rather than sitting there with a text book’

it seems that the learners feel that the more involved they are in the training, the more enjoyable the experience was, ‘there was lots of interaction and it made it so much more fun’. It would seem that Ashwin (2005, p31) assessment that ‘Games are great fun for students to play; they get students active, involved, moving and engaged’ does encourage collaboration,

team work and improved learning, the research therefore does indicate that the activities in this case did increase the enjoyment of the participants during the learning which is a positive result.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter gave an overview of the proposed research study and context. The chapter then discussed each of the research questions in terms of the literature review and the survey and interview results and findings.

## **Chapter 6 – Conclusions**

### **6.0 Introduction to Chapter Content**

This chapter details the conclusions from the study in terms of the effectiveness of interactive activities on adults within workplace learning, it highlights a number of key points as succinctly as possible. The chapter also details areas for future research.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

In terms of this research the overwhelming positive attitude and results in the quantitative and qualitative findings would strongly indicate that ‘Interactive Activities’ within a training programme are very effective in engaging adults in workplace learning, in particular the results and responses around the increased engagement of the participants once involved in an activity would strongly support this position, it is also evident from the research that the majority of those involved in the interactive activities did enjoy the process and that the interactive activities gave them a chance not only to participate and involve themselves but to also draw upon their level of experience which seems key in any programme designed at educating adults. Another aspect revealed in the study was the critical role of the facilitator within the entire process, the research shows that the effectiveness of activities on engagement explicitly lies with the facilitator, the study shows that when the facilitator is actively involved with the interactive activity the response of the adult learner is very positive in terms of buy in, involvement and engagement, this improved the results in terms of confidence and competence in the adult learners ability to deliver the desired outcome and emphasises that it was not just the interactive activities that led to improvement but also the way in which they were managed by the facilitator.

However, while the findings of the research are positive it must be remembered that this perception and these findings can only realistically be used in a practical sense within the host organisation, the research did not have enough of an external focus on adult learners outside of

the host organization, so the opening statement must be put into context in that it must be remembered that the course from which this research followed was a very organisation specific programme, so the findings of the research are limited as a result.

## **6.2 Future Perspectives**

In terms of future research there were a number of areas of interest that the study touched upon but did not explore fully, first of all the importance of the relationship between the adult learner and the facilitator and the possible impact and effect that a change from teacher/pupil relationship to peer based learning has. The environment and atmosphere set by the facilitator could also warrant further research, the results indicate that the willingness of the adult to engage in the learning process was very dependent on how they felt within their peer group and as a result it was critical that the facilitator set the tone within the group in terms of trust, openness, support involvement and interaction. Another area for possible study that emerged from the literature review was the need for adults to not only understand the need for learning as a motivating factor but to also have the ability to draw upon their experience to aid cognition in terms of the learning, such research could possibly benefit the structure and development of adult teaching.

## **6.3 Research Limitations**

This research was confined to one organisation with a unique set of demographics, and centered on a specific training programme; also some of the questions surrounding previous learning experiences were too vague with no defined frame of reference, which resulted in less relevant results, another aspect that would have provided better results in terms of the analysis would have been to run a second course, side by side, that did not include activities and assess the difference in feedback using a second questionnaire.

## **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter details the conclusions from the study in terms of the effectiveness of interactive activities on adults within workplace learning, it highlights a number of key points as

succinctly as possible, it also details areas for future research that this study did not include, as well as the limitations of the research.

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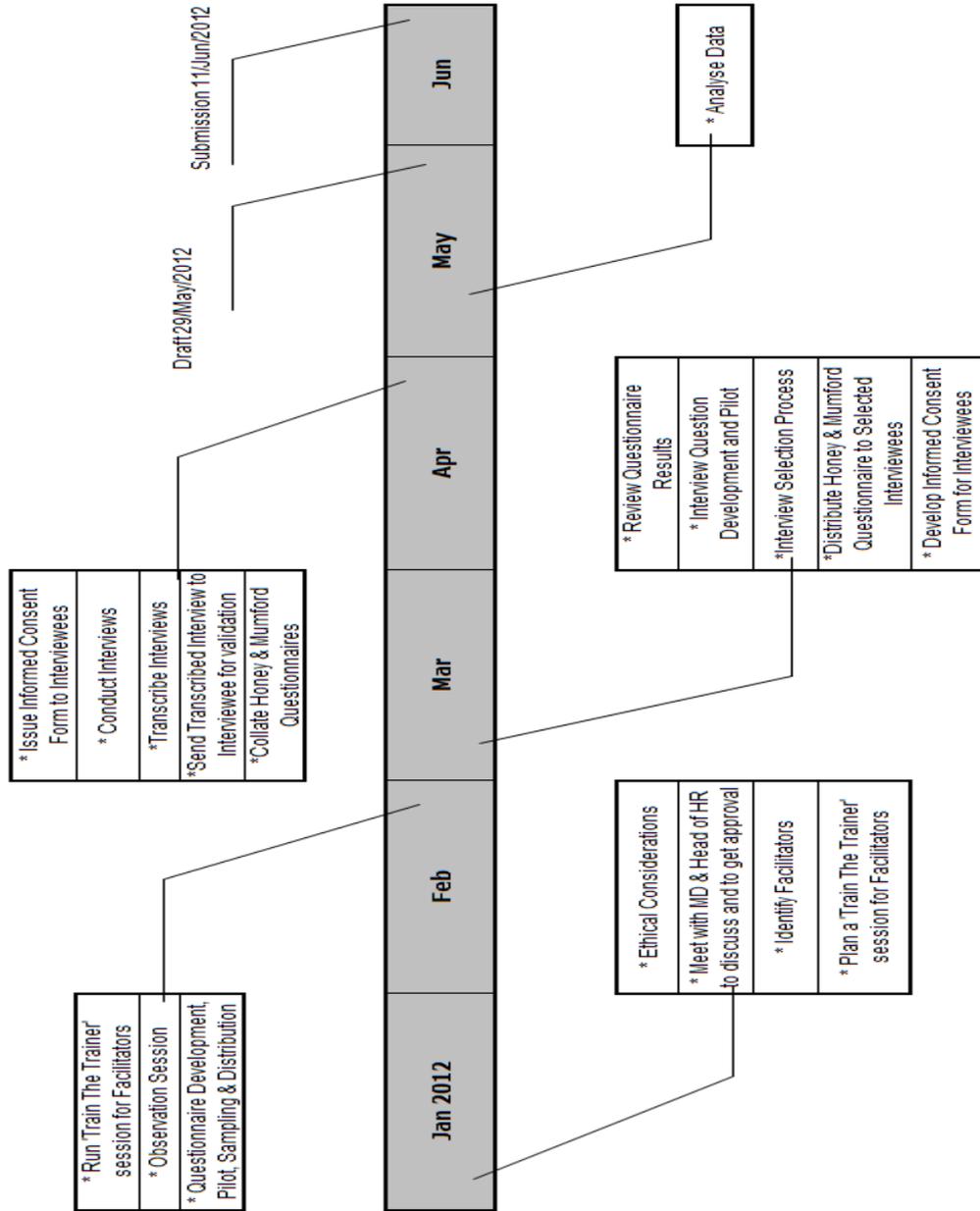
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# Appendix 3.1

## Methodology Time Line Plan

## Methodology Time Line Plan - Jan - June 2012



# Appendix 3.2

## Informed Consent Form

## KELLIE MAHON - RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<b>Research Project – Adults experience of interactive activities being used in the delivery of companywide training</b>
--

Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

### Project Information

<b>Project Title:</b> Is 'Interactive Play' an important part of learning and development for adults in the workplace environment.	<b>Course Title:</b> M A in Learning and Teaching
<b>Student Number:</b> x09107134	<b>Supervisor:</b> Dr. Stephan Weibalzhal
<b>Investigator:</b> Kellie Mahon	<b>College:</b> National College of Ireland

### 1. PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY

You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to look at interactive activities being used in the delivery of companywide training and if the use of activities in the classroom have an effect on how adults engage in the learning process.

### 2. PROCEDURES

The interview will be a structured interview focusing on 6 key questions and should take approximately 30 minutes. It is requested that you answer all questions as openly and as honestly as possible, you will also be asked to answer the questions based on your own experience.

To ensure accuracy of the research the interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed, a copy of the transcription will be sent to you for your approval. All recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed when the research project is complete, no later than Aug. 2012.

### 3. POSSIBLE BENEFITS

With such a diverse background of employees and roles within today's organizations we simply cannot discount the possibility that interactive activities may improve how adults engage in the learning process within the workplace.

### 4. CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential. The results of the study may be available for future research purposes but will not give your name or include any identifiable references to you. Any records or data obtained as a result of your participation in this study may be inspected by the sponsor, Supervisor, by any relevant examination boards, by the National College of Ireland Review Board, or by the persons conducting this study.

### 5. TERMINATION OF RESEARCH STUDY

You are free to choose whether or not to participate in this study. In the event you decide to discontinue your participation in the study please notify Kellie Mahon 086 8272687. Any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject will be answered by: **Name:** Kellie Mahon, **Phone Number:** 086 8272687

### 6. AUTHORIZATION

I have been invited to participate in research about interactive activities and the role that they may play in improving how adults engage in the learning process within the workplace. I have read and understood this consent form, and I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and the answers have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this research.

Participant Name (Printed or Typed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

**STATEMENT BY THE RESEARCHER** - I confirm that the participant has read and understood the information overleaf and was given the opportunity to ask questions about the study, any questions have been answered honestly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and that the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Principal Investigator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

# Appendix 3.3

## Survey

Dear colleague,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and to consider taking part in this survey.

My name is Kellie Mahon. I am currently studying an MA in Learning and Teaching at the National College of Ireland.

As part of my final thesis I am focusing on the subject of “activity based learning” (learning through doing, versus learning through lecture).

I hope that you will help me by completing this questionnaire, which I can assure you will be completely confidential.

I will also be completing approximately 3-4 interviews following completion and return of the questionnaire. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please indicate by ticking the box: -

**Interested**            **Not Interested**     

The combination of fully completed questionnaires and interviews, I believe will provide an in-depth analysis and understanding of how employees within the transport and logistics service sector feel about “activity based learning”.

If you have any queries or need clarification on the above study or of my student status with the National College of Ireland, please do not hesitate to contact either: -

**My Details**

[kellie.mahon@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:kellie.mahon@student.ncirl.ie) or 086-8272687

**College Details**

Dr Leo Casey                      [lcasey@ncirl.ie](mailto:lcasey@ncirl.ie)  
Dr Stephan Weibelzahl         [sweibelzahl@ncirl.ie](mailto:sweibelzahl@ncirl.ie)

Thank you once again for your time.

Yours sincerely

Kellie Mahon

**Tell Me A Little About You?**

<b>When were you born?</b>	Between 1980- 2000	Between 1965 - 1979	Between 1946 - 1964	Between 1920 - 1945
<b>Gender</b>	Male		Female	
<b>Nationality</b>				
<b>Length of Service</b>	Between 0 – 5 Yrs	Between 5 – 10 Yrs	Between 10 – 15 Yrs	Over 15 Yrs

<b>Educational Background – Highest level achieved</b>	Secondary	Diploma	Degree	Masters	Other
<b>Department</b>	Operations	C.S.	Sales	Finance	Other

**Directions:** Please self-rate the following items using the 1 -5 Scale  
Please avoid 3 = Neutral were possible

<b>1 = Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>2 = Disagree</b>
<b>3 = Neutral</b>
<b>4 = Agree</b>
<b>5 = Strongly Agree</b>

**Engagement – Activity**

<b>1</b>	The activities on this course were an effective way to learn	1	2	3	4	5
<b>2</b>	I enjoyed learning using activities	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3</b>	I was engaged in the learning process	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4</b>	The activities helped me learn	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5</b>	The activities hindered my learning	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6</b>	The learning activities were frustrating	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7</b>	The activity helped me understand what was being taught	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8</b>	Completing the activities provided a learning challenge	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9</b>	I could teach another person using the activities	1	2	3	4	5

### Engagement – Facilitator

10	I understood the facilitator's instructions on how to complete the activities	1	2	3	4	5
11	I felt supported by the facilitator during the training	1	2	3	4	5
12	The facilitator helped me feel confident in my ability to complete the activities	1	2	3	4	5
13	Feedback from the facilitator helped me complete the activities	1	2	3	4	5
14	Feedback from my facilitator helped me feel competent as a learner during the activities	1	2	3	4	5

### Comparison To Prior Learning

15	I engaged more using activities than I engaged on previous training	1	2	3	4	5
16	I learned more using activities than I learned on previous training	1	2	3	4	5
17	I remembered more using activities than I remembered from previous training	1	2	3	4	5
18	I enjoyed the training more using activities than I enjoyed previous training	1	2	3	4	5
19	I participated more on this course than I have participated on previous training	1	2	3	4	5
20	I would recommend training using activities more than training without activities	1	2	3	4	5

### Learning Styles

21	I like to get straight to the point in discussions	1	2	3	4	5
22	In discussions I get impatient with irrelevance and digressions	1	2	3	4	5
23	I tend to solve problems using a step by step approach	1	2	3	4	5
24	I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse	1	2	3	4	5
25	I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing many alternatives	1	2	3	4	5
26	I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly	1	2	3	4	5
27	I love the challenge of working on something new and different	1	2	3	4	5
28	I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas in discussion	1	2	3	4	5

### Your Preference for Learning?

29	What activity did you enjoy most	<b>1</b> Decade Board Discussion	<b>2</b> Matching KPI's to departments	<b>3</b> Shipment Cycle	<b>4</b> Test Your Knowledge
30	What activity helped you learn most	<b>1</b> Decade Board Discussion	<b>2</b> Matching KPI's to Departments	<b>3</b> Shipment Cycle	<b>4</b> Test Your Knowledge

# Appendix 3.4

## Interview Questions

## **Interview Questions**

### **Question 1 –**

**Is interactive play an important part of learning and development for adults in the workplace environment?**

#### **Possible Probing Questions**

How do the activities aid learning and development?

Why?

What are the benefits?

Who benefits?

How does the workplace benefit from interactive activities during the learning process?

### **Question 2 –**

**Do activities have a positive effect on adults learning in the workplace?**

#### **Possible Probing Questions**

How?

What are the effects of using activities?

Why?

### **Question 3 –**

**Do activities in the classroom have an effect on how adults engage in the learning process?**

#### **Possible Probing Questions**

How?

What effects do activities have?

Can you give me an example of your own experience of engaging in the learning process?

Why do activities help/not help?

### **Question 4 –**

**Do activities enhance learning engagement?**

#### **Possible Probing Questions**

In comparison to prior learning, was the experience enhanced by the introduction of activities?

How?

Why?

What do you believe enhanced the learning engagement?

### **Question 5 –**

**Do activities improve the interaction between the facilitator and the learner?**

**Possible Probing Questions**

Why do you think this is?

Who is responsible for this interaction improvement/non-improvement?

When was this improvement/non-improvement most evident?

What do you think was the main reason for the non/ improvement?

Where was the interaction at its best?

**Question 6 –**

**Do activities increase enjoyment when learning?**

**Possible Probing Questions**

How?

Why?

Describe your experience in relation to your enjoyment of the activities?

# Appendix 4.1

## Descriptive Statistics

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The activities on this course were an effective way to learn	96	1	5	4.05	.838
I enjoyed learning using activities	96	2	5	4.27	.747
I was engaged in the learning process	96	2	5	4.22	.699
The activities helped me learn	96	2	5	4.14	.816
The activities hindered my learning	96	1	5	1.72	.830
The learning activities were frustrating	96	1	4	1.74	.885
The activities helped me understand what was being taught	96	2	5	4.27	.640
Completing the activities provided a learning challenge	96	1	5	3.64	1.027
I could teach another person using the activities	96	1	5	3.92	.867
I understood the facilitator's instructions on how to complete the activities	96	2	5	4.43	.576
I felt supported by the facilitator during the training	96	3	5	4.35	.598
The facilitator helped me feel confident in my ability to complete the activities	96	3	5	4.27	.589
Feedback from the facilitator helped me complete the activities	96	3	5	4.34	.577
Feedback from my facilitator helped me feel competent as a learner during the activities	96	2	5	4.17	.749
I engaged more using activities than I engaged on previous training	96	1	5	3.76	1.044
I learned more using activities than I learned on previous training	96	1	5	3.72	.981
I remembered more using activities than I remembered from previous training	96	1	5	3.90	.957
I enjoyed the training more using activities than I enjoyed previous training	96	1	5	3.87	1.039
I participated more on this course than I have participated on previous training courses	96	1	5	3.72	.992
I would recommend training using activities more than training without activities	96	1	5	4.21	.962
I like to get straight to the point in discussions	96	1	5	3.88	.874
In discussions I get impatient with irrelevance and digressions	96	1	5	3.04	1.273
I tend to solve problems using a step by step approach	96	1	5	3.94	.831
I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse	96	1	5	2.59	1.062
I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing many alternatives	96	2	5	3.99	.641
I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly	96	2	5	3.96	.767
I love the challenge of working on something new and different	96	3	5	4.27	.571
I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas in discussion	96	2	5	3.50	.894

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

# Appendix 4.2

## Generational Cross Section Overview

**ABC Express – Generational Cross Section Overview**

Total Employees	% Male	% Female
336	66%	34%

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>% Workforce</b>	<b>% Male</b>	<b>% Female</b>	<b>Average Tenure (Yrs)</b>
Matures/ Builders	1920-1945	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	21%	17%	3%	16 yrs
Generation X	1965-1979	51%	38%	12%	13 yrs
Generation Y	1980-2000	28%	11%	17%	6yrs

Appendix 4.3  
Honey and Mumford Learning  
styles Questionnaire

# Honey and Mumford

## LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE



### **Instructions:**

This questionnaire is designed to determine your preferred learning styles(s). Over the years, you've probably developed learning 'habits' that help you benefit more from some experiences than from others. Since you may be unaware of this, the questionnaire will help you pinpoint your learning preferences so that you are in a better position to select learning experiences which will suit your style.

Knowing about learning styles will also help you be a better trainer, facilitator and coach because you'll be able to adapt your messages to different participants' learning styles. The accuracy of the results, however, will depend on how honest you can be. Please proceed step by step – don't jump ahead or check back. There are no right or wrong answers.

**If you agree more than you disagree with one of the following statements, put a tick/check in the box. If you disagree more than you agree, put a cross in the box. Be sure to mark each item and then score your results.**

- 1. I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad
- 2. I often act without considering the possible consequences
- 3. I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach
- 4. I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people
- 5. I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly
- 6. I often find that actions based on feelings are as good as those based on careful thought and analysis
- 7. I like the kind of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation
- 8. I regularly question people about their basic assumptions
- 9. What matters most is whether something works in practice
- 10. I actively seek out new experiences
- 11. When I hear about a new idea I immediately start working n how to apply it
- 12. I am keen on self discipline such as watching my diet, taking regularly exercise, sticking to a fixed routine etc.
- 13. I take pride in doing a thorough job
- 14. I get on best with logical, analytical people and less with spontaneous, 'irrational' people
- 15. I take care interpreting data and avoid jumping to conclusions
- 16. I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing many alternatives
- 17. I'm more attracted to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones
- 18. I don't like disorganisation and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern
- 19. I prefer to stick to procedures if they seem an efficient way of getting the job done

- 20. I like to relate my actions to a general principle
- 21. I like to get straight to the point in discussions
- 22. I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work
- 23. I love the challenge of working on something new and different
- 24. I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people
- 25. I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion
- 26. I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse
- 27. I believe in coming to the point immediately
- 28. I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly
- 29. I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible
- 30. Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me
- 31. I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward
- 32. I tend to be open about how I'm feeling
- 33. In discussions, I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants
- 34. I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things in advance
- 35. I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning etc.
- 36. It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline
- 37. I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits
- 38. Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy
- 39. I often get irritated by people who want to rush things
- 40. It's more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future

- 41. I think that decisions based on analysis of information are better than those based on intuition
- 42. I tend to be a perfectionist
- 43. I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas in discussions
- 44. In meetings, I put forward practical, realistic ideas
- 45. More often than not, rules are there to be broken
- 46. I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives
- 47. I can often see the inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments
- 48. On balance, I talk more than I listen
- 49. I can often see better, more practical ways of getting things done
- 50. I think that written reports should be short and to the point
- 51. I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day
- 52. I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engage in social chat
- 53. I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically
- 54. In discussions, I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions
- 55. If I have a report to write, I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version
- 56. I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice
- 57. I am keen to reach answers by a logical approach
- 58. I enjoy being the one who talks a lot
- 59. In discussions, I often find that I am the realist one, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations
- 60. I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind
- 61. In discussions with people, I often find that I'm the one who's most dispassionate and objective

- 62. In discussions, I'm more likely to adopt a 'low profile' than to take the lead and do most of the talking
- 63. I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer-term, bigger picture
- 64. When things go wrong, I am happy to shrug it off and 'put it down to experience'
- 65. I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical
- 66. It's best to think carefully before taking action
- 67. On balance, I do the listening rather than the talking
- 68. I tend to be rough on people who find it difficult to take a logical approach
- 69. Most times, I believe that the end justifies the means
- 70. I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done
- 71. I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling
- 72. I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party
- 73. I do whatever is expedient to get the job done
- 74. I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work
- 75. I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events
- 76. I am always interested to find out what people think
- 77. I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to a laid down agenda etc.
- 78. I steer clear of subjective, ambiguous topics
- 79. I enjoy the drama and excitement of crisis situations
- 80. People often find me insensitive to their feelings

**SCORE:**

Please circle below each statement you ticked/checked and total each column. Do not circle statements you crossed.

Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist
2	7	1	5
4	13	3	9
6	15	8	11
10	16	12	19
17	25	14	21
23	28	18	27
24	29	20	35
32	31	22	37
34	33	26	44
38	36	30	49
40	39	42	50
43	41	47	53
45	46	51	54
48	52	57	56
58	55	61	59
64	60	63	65
71	62	68	69
72	66	75	70
74	67	77	73
79	76	78	80
Total <input type="text"/>	Total <input type="text"/>	Total <input type="text"/>	Total <input type="text"/>

Please now turn to the descriptions of each of the learning styles. Read about your 'dominant' style first, of course, but don't forget to take a more balanced look by considering the other style on which you scored relatively high.

## **ACTIVISTS:**

**Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new learning experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical and this tends to make them enthusiastic about new learning. Their philosophy is 'I'll try anything once'**

**They tend to throw caution to the wind. They like to tackle problems by brainstorming and, as soon as the excitement from one learning activity is over, they are busy looking for the next. They tend to get bored with implementation and longer term consolidation.**

**They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others and, in doing so, they like to take the lead. They enjoy a social learning environment and tend to centre all activities around them. With their 'I'll try anything once' approach they are well equipped for ACTIVE PARTICIPATION / CREATIVITY / PRESENTING.**

## **THEORISTS:**

**Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step-by-step logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories.**

**They tend to be perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into their rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. As learners, they are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. Questions they frequently ask are 'Does it make sense?' 'How does this fit with that?' 'What are the basic assumptions?'**

**They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. In learning, they prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjectivity, lateral thinking and anything flippant. Theorists, with their need to tidy up and have 'answers', are well equipped for STRUCTURING / PROCESS MONITORING / CONCLUDING.**

## **REFLECTORS:**

**Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data and prefer to chew it over thoroughly before coming to any conclusion.**

**The thorough collection and analysis of data during the learning experience is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious, to leave no stone unturned. They are thoughtful learners who like to consider all possible angles and implications before acting on the learning. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They like to listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points.**

**They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant, unruffled air about them. When they act, it is as part of a wider picture which includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own. Reflectors are well equipped for REVIEWING / VERIFYING / "SEEING THE BIG PICTURE"**

## **PRAGMATISTS:**

**Pragmatists are keen on trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively seek out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications.**

**They are the sort of learners who return from management courses full of new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on things which attract them. They don't like 'beating around the bush' and tend to get impatient with open-ended discussions.**

**They are essentially practical, down to earth learners who like making practical decisions and solving real problems. They respond to problems and opportunities as a challenge. Their philosophy is 'There's always a better way' and 'if it works, it's good'. Pragmatists, with their liking for practical things are well equipped for PLANNING / CHECKING / APPLYING TO REALITY.**

# Appendix 4.4

## Observation 1

Welcome to My Country. 1

14/12/12 Observation.

Facilitator: -

Opening - very engaging  
 gained everyone's attention  
 very open, genuine,  
 really good positive  
 body language - good  
 rapport with the  
 group.

Encouraged all to ask  
 questions.

Nice introduction  
 introduced topic and  
 objective clearly

Activity 1

Explained activity well  
 broke it down into  
 manageable steps.

Good management  
 of groups - gave all  
 a number 1 or 2  
 to split up group  
 sounded very  
 enthusiastic

Trainees: -

Participants setting  
 up listening, looked  
 very engaged.

As the instructor explained  
 paperwork - the participants  
 were checking the  
 detail against what  
 was being explained.

At

While activity was  
 being explained -  
 good listening  
 checking the cards  
 against the floor  
 boards - GDP 1, 3/4-checking.

Group seemed  
 excited to complete  
 the activity, healthy  
 competition -

- asking each other  
 within the group for  
 the answers.

Direct Quotations:  
 "Very good, I didn't know  
 that"  
 "You must be here  
 a long time".

Visual

Facilitators

There was good interaction through out-

one person was not participating and the facilitator simply just handed some of the cards to the participant and then he joined in

Good amount of fun introduced into the activity and a sense of urgency to help the engagement. Activity 2.

Well introduced, could have been a bit clearer on the detail involved

A board put on to the floor and cards distributed

Good reflective music played in the back ground-

facilitator were checking answers but not getting involved walked around the groups

Trainees

Some of the group on their knees arranging cards into the correct position

A lot of interaction huge amount of engagement, all participants were all participating either verbally or through their actions

Again good listening most of the group seemed to be lifted that there was an activity being introduced

all groups were on the ground or standing beside their boards

- Engagement = body lang.
- leaning into act.
  - asking Q's of each other
  - clarifying Q's to facilit.
  - peer to peer Q's.

participants were asking Q's of each other rather than the facilitator

were confident with the answers they arrived at.

- Facilitator gave a 3 min warning } Engagement level seemed to go up as a result, trying to finish the activity
- Good recap of activity - with key learnings } there was a couple of key people in each group which seemed to stir the group.
- Activity 3. Shipment Cycle } Listened and checked answers against the Brief Point presentation.
- Well introduced: - very engaging and encouraging - set the scene well - compared it well to real life situational experience } Because groups were mixed e.g. CS, courier, sales, finance. There was good collaboration with each other
- Participants got so carried away that the activity went over the time allocated } Good dependency on each others experiences.
- Facilitator added questionnaires during activity as a result competition kicked in } Good group work and a huge out of appreciation for each others knowledge & exper.
- } Good verbal participation by all.

Activity 4.  
Test your knowledge

During this session there was question asked of the participants with regards to what they learned.

- facilitator was encouraging and asked Q's in a open manner

Good eye contact and seemed to be very proud of the group - nice comments

eg,

'Very good'  
'Well done'  
'Exactly what I was looking for'

Good contact with the facilitator through out this session

A huge amount of confidence from the group - in that no-one seemed to be afraid to answer in front of each other

All in All there was overall interest in the activity and a good sense of fun in the classroom

→ Encouraged when receiving the positive feedback.

# Appendix 4.4

## Observation 2

# CIS Welcome to my country

(1)

21st Feb 2012.

Observation. Appendix 4.2

15 x participants

2 x facilitators

## Facilitator

## Participants

Nice introduction from the facilitators. - I would strongly encourage a class introduction, it was obvious that the group would have preferred to know who was in the room and what departments were represented.

Nice encouragement to ask questions  
- Good idea to do class introduction after it was <sup>the need</sup> identified

Activity 1  
Nice technique used by the facilitators to get everyone up on their feet while explaining the activity it seemed to heighten the interest in the room.

Good management of groups and clear instructions

- Again inviting questions

participants began asking each other what dept. they were from which prevented them from engaging at the start of the programme.

Much more comfortable and at ease after the class introduction

All participants fully engaged listening to the instructions it was clear that there was an energy to complete the task.

No Q's everyone knew exactly what had to be done.

## Facilitators

handed out the cards to the groups after explanation.

listening / 1 (checking cards) - Group 1  
listening / 2 (checking FB) - Group 2

facilitators - checking with the 2 groups and giving feedback where necessary - eg "that's in the right place", "well done"

and where corrections were needed they were asking.

"Are you sure about that card in that position"

"Where else do you think that card could go"

2x people in 1 group were sitting back on these circles not contributing to the group discussion

One of the facilitators said - Is everyone helping in their teams

## Activity 2.

Activity well explained - clear instruction using a lot of detail

## Participants

Real teamwork was evident with plenty of discussion and questioning

Good level of confidence in the groups.

Participant took feedback (including corrective feedback) very easily and took corrective action straight away

Others in the group so engaged that it was not noticed by the rest of the group.

Group members asked and made sure that they got back involved so the facilitator did not have to deal with any conflict.

All groups very engaged and listening to the instruction

## Facilitators

the facilitator got the participants to distribute boards and cards within the newly appointed groups

it was observed that when reflective music was turned on during the activity there was a sense of calm after all the commotion

the facilitators during this session allowed the positive engagement to happen, by standing back and only getting involved when it was needed or requests to correct feedback or feedback in general

△ - Engagement levels dropped slightly before this activity - taking (2 people left room) Activity 3.

was introduced by the facilitator very well - made it very relevant to work scenarios - in that people started offering examples from their experience.

## Participants

to with the intro of new groups and the participants helping with the distribution of tasks there was a lot of movement and a

sense of excitement in the classroom.

during this activity it was observed that every person in every

group was highly engaged in the activity - there was questioning, advice giving, positive body language and very positive verbal language being used.

Very engaging activity lots of questions and comparisons from the participants

most participants automatically took a role in their group to either

(4)

Good feedback and encouragement from the Facilitators during this activity

} arrange the cards, read what was on the card, fill in the questionnaire etc.

↳ Quiet but Supportive!

Each group were very involved in completing the task.

→ checking each others experience and giving each other praise. "farr play to you", "does your department always do that"

↳ it was observed in one of the groups that 2 participants had come up with an idea of resolving a real issue that was happening in the work place and were had planned action around it.

### Activity 4.

The facilitators during this activity issued Red and yellow cards for the participants to answer multiple choice questions

Every question that was asked of the group was answered by all → the Red/ yellow card were being held high in the air to answer the question

Very clear instruction given by the Facilitators.

Facilitators	Participants
<p>Nice clear questions asked by the facilitator</p>	<p>Engagement was high and very evident - all</p>
<p>↳ Good praise given to the participants for the correct answers</p>	<p>participants with cards in their hands ready to answer questions</p>
<p>really good connection with the group - rapport, and fun atmosphere.</p>	<p>↳ the confidence level was high there were very few (3 to be exact) waiting for others to answer first.</p>
	<p>Confidence in the way the cards were raised to answer Q was strong.</p>