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Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

Master of Arts in Educational Practice National College of Ireland

"Finding The Future - An Exploration of The Phenomenon of Leaders' Learning through the Novel circumstances of COVID"

Jacqueline Brown 14100193

"Experience is a string of occurrences that are "related to the whole"

-Dlithely, 1976, p.185

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my social constellation who rallied around. This research doesn't capture the time, effort, love, patience, tears and support everyone afforded for this to happen. Experience of people is "the ground floor of knowledge" (Midgley, 2005) . Without them this couldn't have been possible.

Dedicated to:

My Family: Eamonn, Claire, Mam, Dad, Shane, Linda, Eric, Kevin, Linda, Paudie, Lorraine, Lily and Michael . For all the missed family events and the endless distractions. To My Nephews and Nieces, who have helped me retain perspective towards Finding a Future that they can thrive in: For Joshua, Jacob, Kevin, Noah, Elliot, Maisie, Aoife and Alfie. For my friends and people who acted as coach and supporters, especially Susan, Sinead and Fiona - small words go a long way when you are in need of support. To my Supervisor, Dr Yvonne Emmett and The NCI team, not to mention Dr. Leo Casey and Dr. Bill Mallon who helped me unravel my thinking and straighten out perspectives.

Finally to the Participants of this research to whom I am forever grateful. Though I cannot reference you personally, know that you have changed my thinking and practice and I am eternally grateful for your open participation and honesty afforded to this process.

Abstract

Purpose: An exploration of organizational leaders' learning experiences whilst dealing with novel circumstances through the COVID pandemic which offered insights into the often difficult to locate reflection-in-action of leaders and learning contained within their practice.

Design, Methodology: A qualitative approach that used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) utilising semi-structured interviews for data collection. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and in total three were recruited three participants, all self identified as senior leaders.

Findings: They experienced learning as a boundary crossing instrument to attend to group needs, a critical function of leadership Each participant experienced learning as "profoundly re-creating their personal lives and social systems" (Kolb, 2015, p.858), framing it as experiential in nature and transformational in impact.

COVID as a context created space unlearn and relearn their base beliefs abut leadership and learning highlighting the importance of reflexivity in reflective towards the depth of learning.

Four superordinate themes emerged: 1) learning is the work for leaders, 2) learning is unlearning, 3) leaning is social with the zone of development stretching and 4) Reflection as a skill in learning creates value and reflexivity affects impact

Contributions: Concerning reflection and reflexivity: as skills they can illuminate and stretch the zone of development for leaders as-well as to the importance of having reflective spaces that support ongoing expertise development. This research also revealed possible limitations on workplace learning to develop the type of critical reflection that will be needed to support future leadership development to mediate including the negative emotions and impacted fractured reflexivity can have to learning for leaders.

Implications: This research supports the relevance of micros-stories in leadership theory and supports ongoing discourse in critically evaluating leadership practice; aswell as identifying an expansive space between learning and leading. The implications for which extend to experiential learning, reflective practice and general workplace development.

Keywords Phenomenology, Leadership, Reflexivity,COVID, Boundary Crossing, Unlearning, Workplace Learning

Table of Contents

Abrreviations

BME   Beginning-Middle- End Linear Narrative

CHAT   Cultural Historical Activity theory

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

CoP   Community of Practice

CSI   Conversational Story Telling Interviews

IPA   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

L&D   Learning and Development

PWC   Price Waterhouse Coopers

Zo-Ped   Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

This research began as a reflection of personal practice, as a leader and learning practitioner, who despite cognitively understanding disorienting dilemmas, nonetheless experienced disruption, change and learning on a scale unprecedented against the backdrop of COVID.

This research sought to explore the phenomenon of leaders' learning as they mediated novel circumstances during COVID. This pandemic is causing and further necessitating a unique set of circumstances and this research thus serves as a context for an unprecedented set of experiences that no blueprint exists for. COVID meets the definition of a crisis due to it being "a specific, unexpected and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organisation's high priority goals" (Ulmer et al., 2011, p.7; Al-Dabbah, 2020).

At the outset, some questions must be asked. Did leaders experience learning as individually transformational or was their experience expansive contributing to a body of evidence which Yang (2014) would describe as wisdom? COVID presents an opportunity to evaluate whether the "underlying theory of business", a paradigmatic reference (Tourish, 2021,p.268),has sustained and been embraced by leaders or whether their experiences resonated with "disorientating dilemmas" which are known to act as catalysts for the type of learning that supports new frames of understanding and Transformation of the individuals involved. The consequence of learning can be better understood with this definition as the "generation of knowledge through the transformation of experience," (Kolb, 1984, pp. 38-41). As Learning is thought to be a product of everyday thinking and acting (Billet, 2001) and in understanding the experience of learning we have a lens to

understand the human experience of COVID and whether it has changed the practice of leadership for these leaders.

1.2 Problem Statement

Tourish (2021) notes that human institutions are now "under threat and theories of leadership are being tested the knowledge and context of leadership and the frame within expertise operates needs to change" (p.262). He asserts that COVID has simultaneously illuminated a fragmentation of the practice and theory of leadership with the underlying theory of business needing a critical evaluation as it may not be supporting the people, the experiences and the changing conditions that workplaces are experiencing. As such, this current research is less about mapping the field of leadership and more about understanding what the experience of learning was at a time when institutions confronted with the unknown: Learning as a process can generate new knowledge therefore in understanding the experience of learning of leaders at these boundaries we seek to understand the emerging know-how.

Boundaries, defined as "socio-cultural differences that lead to discontinuity in action or interaction" (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011, p.153). Akkerman and Bakker (2011) identify that micro-experiences of boundaries can reveal actual discontinuities rather than assuming expected discontinuities between already named socio-cultural disruptions. COVID as a context offers this micro experience of an individual facing into a crisis and exploring this experience through the lens of learning can reveal how "sociocultural differences play out in and are being shaped by knowledge processes, personal and professional relations, and mediations, but also in feelings of belonging and identities" (p.153).

Contending that COVID as a crisis has created disorientating dilemmas for people. Crisis management literature extends leaders' responsibilities to include performance of evidence interpretation, application of intentions, as well as evaluation of the locus of responsibility for a crisis (Fernando & Sim, 2011, p.505). Crisis leadership and learning at boundaries share features of shared problem spaces aswell as real consequences for decisions, features of boundary crossing

that is transformational (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011 p.147-148), all of which require perspective. Reflexivity, how a person views themselves in contrast to the world, is a skill that can determine perspective (Baerheim, 2021), with the type of reflexivity a person practices changing depending on "the social context between fractured, communicative, autonomous or meta reflexivity" (p. 882). COVID is changing our social context but the impact is unknown towards how boundaries are conceived and mediated.

Mezirow et al. (2009) found that transformational learning in individuals is more evident when premise reflection occurs which is the reflecting on the why, not so much the what or how. Locating the reflections leaders, at times when world cannot be taken for granted can reveal their learning (Jarvis, 2009, p.27). Reflection has been identified as problematic for leaders because of the primacy over tasks towards reflection (Gray, 2007, Billet, 2001). Self-reflectivity is a component of senior leadership skills development (Mumford et al., 2000, p.94) therefore generating space for reflection can aid them in learning, changing capacity to deal with the unknowns in the midst of the Pandemic as it unfolds.

Ill-defined problems that dominate leadership practice. Mumford et al. (2000) identify a feature of expertise as being able to move beyond problem solving into solution formulation: A series of traits are needed including the "requirement for long term planning, diverse experience, autonomy and boundary spanning opportunities" (p.106). As such, the "Workability" (Mumford et al., 2000) of these decisions to resolve unknowns in a context like COVID may need broader thinking than has happened previously, remembering Rosen (2021) has described COVID as a huge natural experiment with unknown outcomes. Critical reflection extends beyond the person raising awareness of environmental factors (Brookfield, 2009). Kolb (2015) describes reflection as a continuum and in determining why leaders focus on the extent of the problems they are resolving reveals the extent of their contributions which is what they are judged on (Eraut, 2004). Their reflections is what will precede action. (Boud et al. 1985). Mezirow (2009) contends that the final stage of

transformational learning is a "reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective" (p.19). Reintegration of reflections will change outcomes and stretch the zone of development to move beyond the boundaries that are confronting leaders because of the enormity of the disruption COVID has generated.

Mumford et al. (2000) identify leadership development to "lie within the Zone of Proximal development" (Zo-Ped) (p.94). In expansive learning Engestrom, (1987) reconstituted the Zo-Ped for adults to represent "the distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity, which can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in the everyday action" (Engestrom, 1987, p.135). This suggests that the development of leaders happens within the everyday activities of leading or their practice, which presents a challenge of proximity to the work between leading and doing. Conger (1992) argues that leaders are individuals who "establish direction for a working group of individuals and who gain commitment from this group of members to established direction and who then motivate members to achieve the direction's outcomes". Thus, the proximity of leadership to "the work" in a crisis may be closer to the ground.

Edwards (2014), showed reflective practice as important to professional practice where roles require "more than just the exercising of technical skills and knowledge" (p.2) and involve coordination of relationships but that there is difficulty in teaching reflection-in-action, which, by is located in real contexts. As practitioners often find it difficult to articulate to others their practice, their reflection-in-action, is often inaccessible or indescribable outside of the places that they practice but stories can sharing of expert practice that facilitates learning beyond what reflection alone can do (Edwards, 2014).

The extent of learning or non learning leaders has experienced is at present an unknown. This research is intended to explore in their own words, their experience of learning amidst events with unknown consequence.

1.3 Research Question

The Research Question is as follows:

> What were the experiences of organisational leaders learning in response to
> novel circumstances in the context of the COVID pandemic?

The following sub questions are as follows:

1. Why have leaders experienced learning?

2. In understanding the knowledge they have generated because of this
experience, what has the essence of their experience of learning been?

This research sought to understand the experiences of leaders in dealing with novel circumstances arising from COVID and the new knowledge that exists because of their experience. This research aimed to provide further insights into what has been described as the hidden aspects of performance for expertise and the thinking that is defined as "thinking is shown in constant interaction between doing and communicating," (Eraut, 2004, p.257). Their learning, the process of generating knowledge involves thinking and this research sought to understand what they thought , reflected on and subsequently changed.

In researching their learning and experience, this research generated a vehicle to access an unexplored phenomenon at a micro level offering a source of narrative knowledge; the knowledge we gain through others' experiences and which is enshrined in stories (Husserl, 2013, Walter, 1936; Boje, 1991; Gabriel, 2000). This is significant, as it supports the primacy of experience as a source of truth.

The primary objective of the research is to explore the personal experience of leaders who wish to share their experience of learning. This research was culturally and contextually nested in a context that had disrupted collective ways of being. Using crisis leadership as a lens further supported understanding how the experience of leaders and their exposure to stressors had an emotional component likely to impact performance and often diminished in retrospective review of performance. (Eraut, 2004) As learning is also culturally and historically situated

(Engestrom, 1987) this research considered what theories of learning supported the generation of knowledge within an experience of what was described as a runaway object like a global pandemic (Engestrom, 2009).

As a point in time , COVID created many social-cultural discontinuations and Akkerman and Bakker (2011) identified that the type of learning happening at boundaries is not well researched. As such, leaders' learning presents boundaries, which Engestrom (1987) contends can be crossed by the application of horizontal expertise which Mumford et al. (2000) rationalise that as experts have more concepts available to them they are able to move from identification from rapid ideas to action based on their primacy of prior experience.

1.4 Methodology and Theoretical Concepts

This research was influenced by a social constructivist approach to human development. It drew from theories of individual learning starting with a view of significant learning (Merriam and Clarke, 1993) because of the propensity of this type of learning in people who hold leadership positions (Yang, 2014). As this research focused on individual experience of learning at a time of disruption it drew from Transformational learning (Mezirow, 2009). Learning as a process straddles both the internal world of experience aswell as the external aspect of experiencing. (Illeris, 2009) The internal involving thinking, feelings, reflection and knowledge reconstruction and the external experiences which become experiential because we have consciously attended to the perception of emerging events. COVID has disrupted on a scale that is not understood therefore harnessing learning as a process to map their experience of learning will illuminate what is important and attended to in their reflections. Given reflection precedes activity, (Boud et al. 1985) this research will seek to understand the role of reflection in leaders learning and why their experience emerged as reflected by them.

The secondary research in the literature review was accompanied by primary data gathered through semi-structured interviews. Selected specifically, Semi-Structured Interviews are spaces that allow for knowledge construction (Kvale and Brinkmann,

2015). These interviews provided spaces where sense making and meaning making could be co-created in relation to the research questions. The data gathered from this was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA offers a method for systematic examination of the experiential by applying a rigorous process and as this research sat in an interpretivist paradigm it used IPA as outlined by (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

1.5 Rationale and Significance

This research is an exploration of whether the experience of leading through the COVID pandemic has led participants to transform and learn and to understand the emotional aspect of learning and because this research is taking place in COVID. In retrospect view of experience can often reduce the emotional component of experience (Kabat - Zinn 2003), therefore undertaking this research amidst COVID was important.

In seeking out to understand what Mezirow, (2009) describes as the premise reflections of these leaders as to the how learning has been experienced it was intended to understand the role and impact of learning in finding workable solutions to the creative problems that COVID are presenting to leaders in their roles (Mumford, 2000).

Bamberg (2006) describes "small s", as small stories, in storytelling science. The micro experiences of these leaders formed a unit of analysis described in their own re-constructed recollections and could be considered a small s. Bamberg (2006) recommends that small stories and big stories, larger narratives, compliment each other and when viewed in abstract, even the smallest of stories are reflective forming a narratology (retrospective view) or a futurology (forward looking perspective). Walter, (1936) described the time travelling abilities of stories to sustain long after the initial experience that is in the moment. "A story is different: it does not use itself up. It preserves its inherent power, which it can then deploy even after a long period of time has passed" (p.971). In capturing small stories of leaders experience of learning, as close to them happening, this research offers a means to

counter the idea that "narratives can't help but falsify the past" (Bamberg, 2006, p.135).

This research was positioned to understand the insider reflections that generate wisdom and focused on leaders because leadership is a phase of adult life that is known to enable significant learning (Yang, 2014, Merriam and Clark, 1993). A wise person "learns and remembers and gains information from past mistakes or success," (Yang, 2014, p.129). In understanding how and where this learning impacted and was reflected on had the potential to reveal wisdom which contributes to broader leadership learning and development of expertise that is fit for the future.

Derrick (2020) has identified that phenomenological accounts of workplace innovation and practitioner learning to be under-researched. He describes the dynamic organisational and learning processes, through which new practices can emerge, be articulated and tested, implemented and become routine in their turn, as still lacking. This research contributes to better understanding learning experiences that innovate and generate workable solutions in novel circumstances.

As a juncture in history, COVID has features like climate change in its existential threat to us. Therefore, if we can learn or take wisdom from it, then it may further support or at least help us to understand what newly created knowledge we take from the transformation of experience captured in this current research.

1.6 Researcher Positionally

The lived experience of the participants remained the focus and the source of the research and findings. To support this approach as researcher, I worked with an interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology and saw myself in a role akin to a curator: curating the experience of the participants and creating an artefact through this research.

I explicitly subscribe to the ideologies of leadership being an activity system and a collective practice. As such, I adopted an interpretive paradigm with a constructivist view of knowledge, learning, and development for people. Equally, I recognise that

critical reflection, as described by Brookfield (2009), as "the deliberate attempt to uncover, and then investigate, the paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal assumptions that inform how we practice". This is a difficult place for leaders to go to, as it challenges the very power and control that they retain. As a tool, it permits "interrogation of the dynamic tensions associated with real life" (Farrell, Oerton and Plant, 2018). I am passionate about experience of individuals and their own accounts being supported as sources of "truth". This is challenged somewhat by the extent and presence of dominant narrative throughout organisational structures. I recognise that leaders are often faced with critically reflective moments where they sit at the boundaries between the right thing to do and that which is best for the organisation. The challenge positioned with critical reflection by Brookfield (2009) is that when practiced it brings into question power and hegemony by unearthing why one set of practices has status over another. Drawing on the hermeneutic circle, the experience of making sense as the participants made sense revealed my own limitations with critical reflection. In part, it caused this research to translate into an affective and, at times, emotional experience for me as a researcher.

1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter one introduces the context and the perspective that frames this research.Chapter two reviews the literature on the current topic. It connects key literature from the field crisis leadership, leadership development, expertise development, aswell as cognitive performance with a focus on the role of reflection in learning and leadership. Chapter three details the methodological choices engaged in throughout this research, specifically the theoretical frameworks that informed the choice of methodology, the data collection and sampling process, and how IPA that has been used to analyse the data collected. Chapter Four is the presentation and discussion of these findings in detail and Chapter Five then offers a conclusion and further research opportunities emerging from this current research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Divided into eight sections this literature review explores the ideas of human experience situated in a unique context of COVID. It focuses on the experience of leaders in organisations and draws from the extant research on crisis leadership, workplace learning and contemporary theories of adult learning aswell as exploring the importance of emotions and reflection as mediators of how crisis experienced.

2.2 COVID as a Context

At the time of writing this literature review, COVID was affecting the entire world. Although initially contained as a health-crisis, like a raging fire, its embers scattered to every facet of our lives, causing disruption across all social institutions including education, work, family, health and democratic processes. It is currently an "event with unknown consequences" which this meets the definition of crisis, (Al- Dabbah, 2020). The metaphor of fire has been identified as a global means to describe COVID (Semino, 2021). As a culturally embedded tool, language is laden with symbolic meaning (Abdel-Raheem, 2021); however fire transcends cultures because its power and danger are instinctually understood by people at a primal level (Semino, 2021). COVID offers both power in that it has opened up opportunities to change and danger because of the forced changes which have discontinued so much of our human experiences, exposing us to anxiety inducing stressors. The extent and the scale of this global pandemic has been described as a "runaway object" (Engestrom and Sannino, 2009, p.4) because our focus on it has shifted our perspectives and activities, opening up spaces for great learning or equally catastrophic free-fall into not knowing. It is an experience with potential for which can be defined as the "generation of knowledge through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.51).

COVID as a context is a phenomenon and to understand it returning to the thing itself, which are the experiences of people (Husserl, 2013). Workplaces are places of collective experience: social constructions which have both social and economic reasons for existing (Parsons, 1951) and their collective tendency towards stability (Tourish, 2021, Mumford, 2000). As locations the experiences of people can be found and explored and there is a specific group, leaders who have responsibilities when it comes to sense making for organisations. (Brown and Humphreys, 2003). By locating the sense making of leaders, the experience of COVID through an organisational lens can be understood.

2.3 Sense Making in Crisis

 The need for sense-making increases, in the face of large organisational changes. (Maitilis and Christianson, 2014). COVID, viewed as an existential event has forced change resulting in changing needs of organisational sense-making. There is an organisational group, Leaders, who have special purpose and designated privileges concerning sense-making (Brown and Humphreys, 2003). This responsibility extends to sense-giving (Gioja and Chittipatti, 1991). It is known that sense-making contributes to leaders finding the workable solutions to the complex problems (Mumford et al. 2000). COVID has brought about major disruptions, confronting leaders with gaps in performance. Mclaughlin (2022), identified organisational disruptions such as changing roles and responsibilities of leaders, major capital spends on infrastructure and technology and broader workforce contributions requiring extended collaboration and inclusive practices.

The disruptions are not just at a macro level and so pervasive have the disruptions from COVID been, that even the simple routine of transitioning between work and home life has been interrupted with the increase in remote work, combined with the reduction of social mobility, bringing significant changes to their lives (Akkaya et. al, 2021, p.60). Connecting this with, Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, (2000) found that micro-role transitions, the transitions people experience as they cross boundaries between work, home and third community activities were spaces that involve

mediating different roles that transition into the various contexts. They found crossing required either an integration effort if the gap is vast between the two contexts or where the contexts have high congruence separation can be difficult as both contexts blend. COVID has created conditions with role transitions collapsing because people are working from home or living at work. Role aspects such as permeability and flexibility have been moderated affecting the spatial and temporal patterns of working life. (Hall and Richter, 1988, Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000.) Taking the example of the micro-transition of commuting between work and home, a routinised activity of leaving work to commute home is a boundary crossing activity. As a boundary understood as a "socio-cultural discontinuities through action or inaction" (Akkermann and Bakker, 2011 p.153) the delineation for people between work and home is clear. When absent, the boundary is blurred between work and home and in the case of highly integrated roles difficulties may emerge as people struggle to "decouple psychologically" (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000 P. 481). Equally if magnitude of transition has reduced because prior stressors such as long commutes, relief or positive emotions can be felt.

As leaders have accountability for group activities (Mumford et al. 2000), this is one example of how COVID has brought forced change to the patterns of organisational life and the shifting boundaries are locations for sense-making. As sense-giving helps to shape members' understandings of new ways forward, how leaders make sense of and give sense to these changes become part of the solutions towards the problems leaders are faced with.

COVID has revealed challenges for leaders as they encounter what Mumford et al. (2000) describe as the complex form of social problem solving that separate leader problems from standard problems. These ill-defined problems are part of their status quo and their role is further complicated because leaders have their own work to attend to aswell as being responsible for attending to group needs. COVID has been described as meeting one of these challenges were leaders are "finding a path through what needs to be done when all around is unclear, places a heavy and

unique burden on leaders" (Gerada, 2021, p.717). These leaders' responsibilities, map to their organisation, which by one definition is " a series of interlocking routines, habituated actions patterns that bring the same people together around the same activities at the same time and place"(Westley, 1990, p.339). The size of the disruption to these interlocking patterns because of COVID is unqualified and Akkerman and Bakker (2011) contend that researching micro-stories of boundaries can reveal the actual discontinuities rather than the assumed and in times of great change this might reveal changing priorities which will drive performance.

2.4 Performance and Contributions of Leaders

Performance research conducted by Eraut, (2004) identified that leaders using implicit learning strategies based on prior experience build intuition that can be an unobservable component of their performance. Their cognition fuels performance; however leaders are evaluated on contribution. As there can be time between performance and contribution the emotional aspect of performance can be reduced because retrospective views often discount emotion reducing some of the experience from learning (Eraut, 2004). Reflective learning a process that uses tacit knowledge gained by the routinised application of experience (Eraut, 2004), therefore can underestimate the emotional impact when tacit understanding is no longer a reliable source to support performance. This can be experienced any leaders as a regression to feeling akin to a novice (Eraut,2004). As leaders' confidence is partly achieved through proficiency in reading the situation including early detection of breaks in patterns (Allen and Middlebrook 2013) this source of self-efficacy along with process routinised sequencing brings satisfaction (Eraut, 2004). COVID with the disruptions are spaces where emotions can rise and for leaders " The pain of change lies in the loss of control over one's practice when one's tacit knowledge ceases to provide the necessary support; and the emotional dimension is also of considerable importance" (Eraut, 2004, p.261). As experience is "severely edited" by the habitual and unexamined activity of thoughts and emotions (Kabat - Zinn 2003, p. 148). Retrospective reflections of performance

within routinised experiences may be insufficient for leaders to sense make and problem solve compounded with novel and uncomfortable emotions that leaders have forgotten.

2.4.1 Performance for a radically open future

In their research on leadership Mumford et al. (2000), leaders have primary accountability towards the categorisation of problems bringing them to resolutions: To diagnosis these problem, they utilise their principles drawn from a broad range of concepts which collectively builds expertise (Mumford et al. 2000, Allen and Middlebrook 2013). A global pandemic like COVID has challenged evidence based expert knowledge proving it to be unreliable with Anker (2021) describes this phenomenon as "wrong-footing": decisions based on evidential based expertise can be erroneous, because risk is underestimated or misinterpreted. The subsequent decisions being mismatched to the unfolding raises challenge with traditional leadership development strategies because ambiguity and uncertainty thwart locating the real problem, rendering this approach less helpful. Weick (1993, 1995) describes a phenomenon known as centrality bias where experts find it difficult to see novel disruptors and can underestimate the challenge because they are not known challenges to the field of expertise arising from the periphery. The propensity of erroneous decisions in the face of COVID is vast. Combined with the need to change without relying on past tacit knowledge and ensuing emotional components, conditions for disorienting disruptions are ripe. If the changes needed will contradict underpinning assumptions conditions for a type of learning that can change individuals is generated: Transformational Learning (Mezirow 1978, 2000, 2009). The conditions of ambiguity, time pressure and risk of needing radically different solutions will require leaders to potentially learn new patterns towards workable solutions and this type of learning and need is individually mediated.

2.4.2 Personal Traits Frame Crisis and Performance

How leaders perform is further influenced by the personal preferences as to how to do things (Eraut, 2004). COVID is a crisis offering conditions of high levels of risk,

time-pressure, and ambiguity on decision making that leaders need to moderate meeting conditions that can amplify personal crisis (Wu et al. 2021, Weick, 1993).

COVID; ambiguous, lacking information and complex, meets the criteria of Creative Problem Solving which Mumford (2000) describes as problems that differs from standard management problems and are part of leader/expert responsibilities. Kay and King, (2020) differentiate these problems types as mysteries or puzzles: The latter has a right or wrong path and is solvable compared with a mystery, which at best can be framed. With temporality and pressure being components of a crisis, how individuals respond and frame situations can differentiate their responses and extent of experience of crisis. Judgement is part of a crisis and a component of hidden performance (Eraut, 2004) which in part is influenced by leaders' intrinsic motivators. Further studies emphasise cognitive processes of thinking and sense making, determines the actions required in situations (Kraft, Sparr and Peus, 2018; Burmeister et al., 2021; Weick, 1995; Brown and Humphreys, 2003). This cognitive process supports decision making, which affects communicative action (Crayne and Kelsey, 2020) and sense-give enabling organisational members to commit and engage with change afoot (Gioji and Chittipatti, 1991). The experience of leading is intrinsically connected with the cognitive ability of leaders to take cues from their environment and act on the information they perceive as pertinent.

Mosley and Laborde, (2015) identified Personality Trait-Like Individual Differences (PTILD's) of competitive trait anxiety, resilience, mental toughness, emotional intelligence, pessimism versus optimism, and sensation seeking (p.293) that, when combined with the pressures of time and circumstance, contribute to how an individual will perform under pressure. Just like athletes, leaders can enhance their performance in preparation with up-skilling for times of crisis.

2.4.3. Up-skilling for Crisis

Weick, (1993) identifies four conditions that can generate resilience which combats vulnerability, an anxiety inducing condition. Improvisation using and combining things that already exist in novel ways, virtual role systems, wisdom as an attitude,

21

and respectful interactions: These transform a complex and messy experiences into a sense making because of the shared meaning (Weick, 1995) and the question is how can they be learned? With traditional linear skill development track from novice to expert estimated to take 10 years to develop (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986) and as Kolb (2015) challenges the "front-loading" of education as insufficient to support development because of the speed of technology and social changes inferring that the approach of pre-learning and programming knowledge may not be fit for purpose with the changing context of COVID for leaders development. Programme based learning is emerging from COVID as being less helpful compared to Problem Based Learning (Buheji and Buheji ,2021).

2.4.4 Location for Leadership Development

Leadership is complicated which requires Leaders to identify the dimensions of dynamic changing situations, lack of feedback, limited chances of repetition, and the need to predict others human behaviour (Mezirow, 2000, Allen and Middlebrook, 2013). Allen and Middlebrook (2013) posit that is arguably not attainable because of these conditions. Caley et al. (2014) define expertise as "comprehensive and authoritative knowledge in a particular area not possessed by many people" (p.2) Billet (2001) identifies two areas of knowledge that experts need to operate: Knowledge of performance, what is required to undertake tasks and knowledge of the cultural and social practices of the workplace.

If both of these become incomprehensible at the same time leaders are exposed to anxious and radically uncertain times (Tourish, 2021) which can generate emotive responses.

2.4.5 Experiential Learning for Leaders

One such location that has learning potential are boundaries (Engestrom, 1987) and as leaders and experts must move across boundaries that often entails stepping into unfamiliar domain. Akkerman and Bakker, (2011) define boundaries as " Socio-cultural discontinuity in action or interaction" (p.152). In part sense making

22

brings about decision whether the discontinuity needs reordering and seek control the pattern, (Star, 1988) Finding locations where " the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015 P.1521) at boundaries can be found in experiential contexts. Kolb (2015)

contends that learners attend to the realities of the experiences as opposed to seeking academic reflection on problems which gives experiential learning boundary crossing property. As Leaders contend to find workable solutions to creative, complex problems (Mumford et al. 2000) it seems inevitable that they will learn however the fallacy of centrality (Weick, 2012) may inhibit learning alongside the emotional impact or pain of letting go of leadership to regress to novice status (Eraut 2004). Leaders in COVID may experience circumstances as a personal crisis but still need to perform as their value is on their contributions and experiential learning is fundamentally highly individual (Kolb, 2015). In seeking to remediate discontinuities of social practice that prevent progress they are influencing "adaptive social forms" which is their purpose (Weick, 1995 P.72).

Derrick (2020) has identified the lack of research on the experiential learning of leaders, identifying boundary crossing as a viable methodology for evaluating the significant dimensions of workplace practice and learning. Returning to leader purpose as influencing "adaptive social forms" opens up the experiential leaders to involve more people. Mumford et al.2000), identify leaders as responsible for attending to group needs which generates a tension for leaders. Their contribution is dependent on the performance of others but they are accountable for their contributions which places leadership practice residing or perhaps mapping their zone of proximal development (Mumford,et al. 2000). Resilience in crisis generated between social connections can also act as boundary crossing condition supporting people from crisis towards stability (Weick, 1993).

As leaders are accountable for group needs (Mumford et al.2000) awareness of others is determined by their reflexivity, the skill of mediating yourself to the world (Baerheim, 2021) The wider the disjuncture felt by leaders between themselves and

23

other groups is expressed in "othering" (Akkerman and Bakker,2011). This sense of difference can brings choice to action: retain the boundaries and act as a Gate keeper or expand them by becoming a boundary crossing instrument. Leaders can experience "no man's lands" sitting between "neither nor" fully able to attend to group or their personal needs and this is akin to edge walking, they can mediate of both sides, (Beals, Kidman, Funaki, 2019). Akkerman and Bakker (2011) connect learning behaviours including identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation as features of boundary crossing and all of which determine direction and perspective on the difference needed.

Wisse and Sleebos (2015) undertook a research study around responses to complex situations that involved change. They found that elicited stress responses differed from person to person. The cognitive function of self-construal, how people view themselves, could orient towards social-collective or towards an individualistic view. This factor was identified as influencing how responses to change were experienced. The closer the change impacted patterns connected to the self-construal, the more responsive or reactive the person was towards the change.

Boundary crossing requires action and in uncertain times like a crisis, self construal and perspectives as internal cognitive forces in part determine how people act and propel their actions. In extreme radical uncertainty like COVID emotional responses also feature.

2.5 Emotions, Learning and Uncertainty

COVID has created what Tourish (2021) calls "radical uncertainty" in the practice of leadership. The pattern of knowing has been disrupted reducing leaders to feel akin to a novice but without the leniency afforded to those learning their trade (Eraut, 2004).Therefore as a context COVID has potential to amplify negative emotions the loss of identity and feeling of anxiety when one reflects on disjuncture. (Alveeson and Willmott ,92) can bring challenge to core assumptions which can span across work and home further amplifying anxiety (Reynolds et al.1999) Wu et al. (2021) has found there to be a lack of research into how the negative emotions of anxiety,

fear, and anger are managed. Spaces for reflection on critical incidents provide space for improving leader practice which builds on the research of Sullivan (2000) who found such incidents allow these to reflect and learn to act in new ways, which were shown to save the viability of some of their businesses.

In her reflection on the pandemic experience, Gill (2020) identifies what she describes as leaders being overwhelmed, not necessarily because of the happenings, but because of the cognitive aspect of this experience. She described how it came from the "fear of the fear" or "panic of panic," with the feelings being amplified by the social isolation that came from working from home. This sense of being overwhelmed relates to inhibiting cognitive and mental functions (Kagan, 1972), expressed as Anxiety, a known stressor that results from unknowns and existential threats (Fu et al., 2021).

Existential anxiety has predicted to shape our collective consciousness for at least the next three decades; "The deepest anxiety type of humans caused by the perception of the instability of life and existence" (Farnam,2021, p.166). It has three types of anxiety: fear and death, guilt and condemnation, and emptiness and meaningless.

Equally crisis affects people differently and the salient aspect of self (Wisse and Sleebos, 2015) is one condition that determines the level of stress that change can causes. Fu et al. (2021) found that people acclimatise to anxiety if the stressors are constant, however if the rate changes, anxiety will increase (p.55). This erodes the idea that people will become used to anxiety over time and could explain why people will oscillate with their responses and emotions.

Although change can affect negatively how people feel, there is also evidence that there are inter-individual differences on how people experience change and difference. Wisse and Sleebos (2015) undertook a research study around responses to complex situations that involved change. They found that elicited stress responses differed from person to person. The cognitive function of self-construal, how people view themselves, could orient towards social-collective or

towards an individualistic view. This factor was identified as influencing how responses to change were experienced. The closer the change impacted patterns connected to the self-construal, the more responsive or reactive the person was towards the change. Latent pattern identification, is a core component of decision making during high incidence situations (Curnin, Brooks and Owen, 2020) but recognition implies awareness. If the discontinuity of patterns around them is not visible to leaders they are exposed to a phenomenon, described by Weick (1995), as the 'fallacy of centrality' (p.2) and risk in-action. Early failures of government leaders (Crayne and Kelsey, 2021) illustrate this with decisions and communicative activity faltering .

As instruments metaphors are " psychological tools used to mediate our world and solve given psychological problems" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.2). Detection and appraisal of metaphors constructed through their sense making can reveal the undercurrent of happenings, illuminates something about the experience whilst also including projections towards the future (Gibbs, 2006) aswell as having the potential to add anxiety to the already disorientating experience (Semino, 2021) .

The chronic nature of the ongoing pandemic, punctuated with the episodic fluctuations of increased case numbers, lockdown regressions, or changing global consciousness may be surfacing or amplifying these existential anxieties. Tourish, (2021) describes this time as having "radical uncertainty" in the landscape for leadership because COVID has exposed contradiction in the underlying theory of business is exposing contradictions between short term share holder value and the long term benefit for society. He illustrates how COVID is being experienced this as crisis of practice and theory of leadership is challenged which considering that rapid social and technical change is rendering " A front loaded educational strategy obsolete" (Kolb, 2015, P.504), combined with the increased propensity for anxiety is creating a perfect storm for leaders to experience.

In crisis Weick, (1993) defines a cosmology episode as a scenario where multiple dimensions of a person's reality collapse simultaneously. These types of crisis as

being situations our frames of references of how to do collapses disrupting known patterns or routine activity disintegrates at the same time that our understanding or purpose if removed.

The way to reverse this is through social connections and having people around you Weick (1993) identifies that in times of crisis, having a partner within the organisation is more beneficial, as it is with the social connections that we are able to allay anxiety and take cues for others.In the analysis of the Man Gulch Fire disaster, the lack of communicative activity was thought to be a contributing factor towards the failure of leadership (Weick, 1993). Burmeister et al. (2021) found that daily knowledge seeking behaviours, a form of communicative action is more likely to be avoided because their colleagues weigh up the opportunity cost of time in sharing advice and defer which, as a behaviour, would contribute to leadership failing. These social interactional costs have implications when considering communicative activity and social ties, meaning that leaders are as reliant on other activity system members for success presenting a broader success measure in a crisis that relies on more than just leadership. In contrast ,synthesising meaning is core to respectful interactions which are known to enhance the formal and informal social ties between people (Weick ,1993) .If social ties disintegrate in a crisis, individuals need to reshape structures, heightening their need to independently make meaning which can open deviation-amplifying loop (Weick, 1993, p.645) between meaning and frameworks dislocating that person from the constructs they were connected through people. Dell (1980) as cited in Engestrom (1987) describes how over time relationships can fragment because of the mounting contradictions in a system. Disintegration of relationships a potential consequence of circumstances; as COVID has amplified focus and surfaced contradictions which could see leaders facing a disintegration of relationships because of the circumstances.

The experience of the disintegration of meaning or purpose collapses has been described as a feeling of 'backing up'; "reality backs up as it is approached by the subject who tries to understand and ignorance and knowledge grow together,"

furthering putting them into crisis" (Meacham, 1983, p.120). This type of locating conscious experience happens when the world cannot be taken for granted (Engestrom, 2009). As a phenomenon, Jarvis (2009) defined this as disjuncture: this moment when the person experiences a gap between their personal biography and the external environment (p.27).

2.6 A Framework to Support the Experience of Learning

COVID as a context seems primed to create the pre conditions for learning and as workplace learning is situational (Billet, 2001), understanding learning specifically in this context may include Experiential learning is defined as learning in which learners are directly in touch with the realities of the situation (Tate and Keeton, 1978).There is a challenge as COVID is that this has not happened before meaning that the required knowledge to continue to perform may not be sufficient with reflective learning , the process of looking back assumes knowledge exists in the culture or with leaders and this may not be the case.

This connects with Sfard's, (1998,2009) deconstruction of two traditional metaphors of learning "acquisition and participation". The former assumes that knowledge exists and is provided or acquired with the scaffolding from a more knowledgeable other, an expert or a specialist. Participation implies membership of a collective and learning to happen by participating. Participation does not guarantee learning and non-learning can a occur if the disjuncture felt by the person is too great or causes pain as the reflection required for mental schemas to be impacted, i.e new knowledge to be generated cannot happen as attention is absorbed elsewhere (Gray, 2007)

Both acquiring and participating situate learning as a social process and could be described as a non-cognitive activity like leadership, teamwork, collaboration. (Martin Raugh, 2020.) The requirement of "transfer" and have a dependency on the existence of a structure and though experience could be argued as being "culturally mediated by many trips around the learning cycle" (Dewey as cited in Kolb, 2015, P.358), the reliance on these forms of learning for a "radically open future" (Bosma

et al., 2015, p.15) that exposes organisations and leaders to novel events. Leading through uncertainty have been identified as a development gap for leaders (Clarke, 2020). This study connected cognitive processes, sense making, and resultant activity as a pathway for leading through uncertainty.

As sense making and resultant activity are socially constructed, cognitive processes infer an internal process so learning processes to support what needs to happen need to have an individual aswell as a collective perspective. Sfard (1998,2009) offers a mediating alternative to acquisition or participation and posits expansive learning. As Engestrom (1987) notes, "The new is not generated from the old but from the living movement leading away from the old" (p.87) Expansive learning is a dynamic conceptual framework that supports an understanding of situational learning: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). Evolving from Vygotskian traditions of education, it has been described as "the best kept secret of academia" (Engestrom, 1993, p.64). Vygotsky (1978) laid the foundations to evolve education to be collective and human centred "which learners are involved in constructing and implementing a radically new, wider and more complex object and concept for their activity" (Engestrom and Sannino, 2009, p.2).

As a framework, it enhances understanding inter-relationships between human activities that interrelate subjects, objects, and outcomes (Batiibwe, 2019; Engestrom, 1987; Engestrom and Sannino, 2009; Akkerman and Bakker, 2011). It is a space where people learn together, building intersubjective understandings of contradictions in the activity systems normally around critical incidents and in addressing these together they find a means to expand and change. It involves a social process of constructing and reconstructing collective activity systems be resolving contradictions that build up over time and resolving them through a collective social process that involves, identification, historical understanding of position, reformulating based on reflections, trying out new alternatives and embedding the changes or iterating to reconstitute.

Engestrom, (1987) reconstituted Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development as "distance between the everyday actions and the historical new form of societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in everyday activities" (Engestrom, 1987, p.136). This suggest that learning within everyday actions will be where the being of the future will emerge. (Gray, 2007) has shown that leaders who can reflect on critical incidents in their practice can learn and build resilience to combat stressors. supporting expansive learning as a potential learning approach for organisations who find them selves in crisis.

Leadership by the very nature of its exposure to "different perspectives" has been identified as a boundary crossing time in adulthood, where significant learning can happen (Merriam and Clark, 1993) .Three conditions are needed for learning to be significant: reflection, personal connection to their own experience, and learning connected to their personal subjectivity value set. Merriam and Clark (1993) found that experiences, which were deemed significant, expanded skills, abilities, or a sense of self or life perspective.

Although Vygotskian theories were originally based on child psychology ,(Scribner, 1985) suggest that child history be replaced with life history to open this application to broader uses. Yang (2014) identifies leadership as a life experience that has the conditions for significant learning which the output or generated knowledge can be wisdom. Contending that wisdom comes from everyday experience. Weick (1993) places further emphasis.

Jarvis (2009) describes how a person can be wholly transformed through learning. Transformative learning, happens when an individual is triggered to learn because of a disorientating dilemma and through a phased process is able to resolve difficult realisations or challenges and eventually reintegrate into one's life on the basis of the new conditions and perspectives that they now hold" (Mezirow et al. 2009, p.19). Leaders responsible for latent pattern identification on behalf of their organisation means that drawing from their experience of crisis there comes an

additional undercurrent of potential anxiety from being a person with broader life experience that becomes a "well and depth from which they can draw from" (Mezirow et al., 2009, p24). This well and depth is accessed through critically evaluating assumptions and different from Expansive is between people, transformational learning resides with the individual and experience. The experience of transformation can therefore draw a new path for a leader, bringing them closer or further from their group, depending on how they find a means of reintegrating their challenging perspectives and this is amplified self because of the supercharged time.

Early research from COVID has outlined "leaders who have excelled are those who have shown compassion, empathy, connectedness and even vulnerability" (Gerada, 2021 p.720), all indicators of practice Raelin (2020) defines a practice as a "coordinative effort among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome" (p.480). that paving the way for leaders to find workable solutions (Mumford, 2000). For Leaders through COVID, Learning agility is best defined as the ability and willingness to learn from, experience, and subsequently apply those lessons to perform successfully (Lombardo and Eichineger, 2000) and to transform there must be reflection and the type of critical reflection that is truly transformative requires space and a reordering of existing concepts held in existing mental models (Kolb, 2015).

Heron (2009) describes the process of learning and unlearning anything as modes of life cycles. When disruption happens and a cycle is dislocated, people (leaders) will experience a re-organization of their activities by revisiting ground processes or first principles and rebasing their actions: a reversal cycle. Leaders needing to unlearn or relearn may experience reversal cycles within their sense making and reflection. By revisiting the past and projecting the implications of action towards the future, they will then resume a pattern that fits with their experience. Hislop (2014) identify that unlearning happens when "individual experience whose characteristics and outcomes are unexpected, and which bring into question some

basic assumptions" (p. 45). Rushmer and Davies (2005) argue deep unlearning may be accompanied by challenging emotions such as anxiety, fear and confusion and it impacts at an axiological level unlearning of values and assumptions. Leaders learning through COVID who can no longer rely on old patterns of learning are further exposed to a deeper level of anxiety which if too great may block learning from happening (Gray, 2007) and they may deflect to favouring action over reflection, subordinating learning to doing (Billet 2001, Kolb 2015, Gray, 2007).

2.7 Reflection, Critical Reflection and Reflexivity in Learning

Identification happens when people recognize through reflection the demarcation between them and "others". The manifestation of identification relates to how the leader interacts and can be reveal as instances of "othering": the "them versus me" or indeed legitimating co-existence which can be highly political which can lead to reconstructing of personal identity to mask the threat that one feels. Research shows that this can done by re-storying identity in novel ways (Javidizadeh, 2019).

Social-conversational engagements act as instruments of expansion and are a feature of the social constellations that form part of an expansive learning cycle (Engestrom, 1987). Transformative and expansive learning are dealt with and resolve by creating collectively new forms of activity. This process involves the resolution of series of interconnected contradictions that expand outwards from experience in daily activities, towards double binds. These are contradictions that start to interact with what Engestrom (1987) refers to as other "social constellations" (p.132). As social-conversational springboards act as boundary crossing instruments where solutions to previous impasses or barriers are achieved between people (Engestrom, 1987) they also have the capacity to promote reflection or critical reflection and are known to generate spaces where power and hegemony are challenged (Brookfield, 2009).

This reflection, the act of noticing differences between oneself and one's surroundings raises consciousness and can have unintended consequences in disrupting existing schemas of knowledge (Gray, 2007) resulting in in challenge to

what has previously held to be true (Weick, 1995). Identified as a critical part of the learning process it is a skill managers benefit from being trained on reflection (Gray, 2007, Ollila, 2000). Described as the "bridge between learning and experience" (Boud et al., 1985). As a precursor to learning, reflection has been established as an underdeveloped skill in workplaces, with primacy given to task completion (Gray, 2007). He outlines methods of supporting the development of critical reflection in managers but , there is perhaps a broader question that in times of episodic change such as COVID why would organisations support the development of critical reflection which is known to challenge hegemony? Described by Brookfield (2009) as "the deliberate attempt to uncover, and then investigate the paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal assumptions that inform how we practice" seems problematic for leaders, as it has potential to challenges the very power and control that they retain (p.125).

This feature of adult learning often prompted when there is an awareness of conflicting thoughts, feelings, or ideas (Mezirow, 2000). Brookfield (2009) extends the idea of critical reflection to involve challenging power and hegemony, which is a means of raising critical consciousness (Frerie, 1970). Gray (2007) contends there is a higher value placed on action over reflection however as critical reflection moves the changes in the person from an individual transformative beyond into a collective challenging the assumptions of the social, political and cultural level.

Leaders are expected to detect and prevent crisis (Fener and Cevik, 2015), but if there is no reflection on the experience of crisis, or only reflections have strong affective associations , our cognitive limits prevent rational decision making (Simon, 1957) reaching "limits in the decision maker's mental capacity compared with the complexity of the decision environment" (Dequech, 2001 P.913). Communicative action features in crisis management can extend personal bounded rationality (Baczynska and Kozminski, 2022) in strengthening social and dialogic behaviours are able to mediate the crisis of COVID. The ability to reconcile and transform difficult frames of reference and reintegrate into their world is strengthened

(Mezirow, 2001) .In one study Crayne and Kelsey (2021) have connected the sense-making styles that lead to communicative action as being successful strategies to lead at the beginning of COVID using New Zealand Prime-minister, Jacinda Arendt as a comparative case study. This study illustrated the difference with these Leaders their critical reflections were subjective in part because of their perspective of themselves towards the rest of the world.

To fully understand how reflections of leaders classification is a retrospective activity and to holistically understand the experience of learning and disjuncture it is necessary to as the question why leaders reflect on the world in the way that they do. Mezirow (2009) call this type of reflection premise reflection. As a lens understanding reflexivity offers a lens to understand why reflect is the way it is and makes space to evaluate performance and how they are reflecting which has been identified as a means to support leaders development (Gray, 2007). (Baerheim and Ness, 2021) describe reflexivity as involving internal dialogues the language and the positioning of "I" compared to others make coherence of the world and "Reflexivity mediates the self towards the world " (p.2). Archer (2012) identified four types of reflexivity: Fractured, Communicative, Autonomous and Meta reflexivity. Fractured reflexivity which is a non-working reflexivity that brings on anger, distress and hyperactivity (Baerheim and Ness, 2021). Communicative reflexivity, evoked with social rules and pre-controlled decisions . Autonomous reflexivity is when the self is more directed and in control and as it is necessary for life long learning (Baerheim and Ness 2021) it would be expected to be present in significant learning and transformational learning. Meta-Reflexivity is the kind of reflexivity that considers the "me" and "you". In Meta reflexivity all aspects of surroundings and social conditions are considered. Research has shown that reflexivity may change based on this social setting (Archer,2012).

For leaders, the construct of meta-reflexivity supports the attendance to group needs that they are responsible for (Mumford et al. , 2000) aswell as it seems to align with critical reflection which questions power and environmental influencers

towards communicative action (Brookfield, 2009). With the rise in anxiety and the view that COVID as a crisis could be increasing episodic stressors it is reasonable to consider that leaders may be experiencing fractured reflexivity and their responses to this can change given the social setting. Exploring reflection must also involve understanding the positionally of the leader in their disjuncture and the extent of "othering" that is represented in their language to understand their experience of learning and the extent.

The disruption of the disjuncture of challenging critically has been found to disrupt work and home (Reynolds 1999) aswell as the loss of identity, the feeling of anxiety can be amplified. Considering existential anxiety, episodic stressors and the competing needs, leaders are vulnerable and the boundaries they find themselves require boundary crossing tools (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011) to allow them to transform their experiences and generate knowledge towards the future, they need to learn as part of the process.

2.8 Stories as Bridge Through Crisis

Leaders' stories of this time will, in part, capture their experience, and they will also in the process of mediating these stories transform towards a future. Their ante-narrative, the story before the story is solidified, may reveal possibilities towards an emergent future (Boje, 2020). And their social conversational spaces of stories will create a reconstituted zone of development and set the trajectory forward for the future.

Svane, (2019) explains, gathering living storylines supports the emergence of true stories before they are collapsed into a narrative form, which Boje (2008) refers to as "petrified narratives". These dynamic accounts enable transformation of existing activities from which a life world of being and becoming emerges. This connects with the ideas of semantic transformations, the process of sense making and finding our future by re-storying and linguistic transformation (Bosma et al., 2015). Retrospective recollections of crisis remove the emotional aspect of decisions .

Sense making is social insofar as intersubjectivity defined as meaning making is what binds social institutions together. This infers that contextual reality which is described "conceptions of right behaviour and a good life with others," contributes to sense making (Brookfield, 2009). Equally, amidst the idea of a "good life," false perceptions can be embedded through rationalisation. Freire (1970) identifies that this can happen "when a change in objective reality would threaten the individual or class interest of the perceiver" (p.34). The role of leaders in crisis is to uphold the continuity of organisations so that they achieve their purpose: Therefore, the historical context of the organisation aswell as leaders reflections and critical reflections is an important frame to understand what metaphorical glue is needed to resolve the crisis and retain continuity.

2.9 Summary

This literature review has explored emergent literature on the impact of COVID on leaders and has considered how learning, leading and crisis, combined can be enhanced through the cognitive processes of critical reflection aswell as the social aspect of learning in crisis. Compared with reflection, " The bridge between experience and learning ",critical reflection and reflexivity serve as a bridge between the type of experiences that generate transformative and expansive learning. (Boud,et al,1985) identify learning as involving both cognition and feelings and to better understand the affect of COVID as an context seeking to understand why people have learned may reveal changes or insights into this under researched event.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will detail the methodological underpinnings that allow the research question to be answered. It addresses the paradigmatic foundations, research approach, sampling strategy and participants, methods of data collection and analysis as well as steps to ensure rigour and ethical considerations. The chapter will then conclude with an overview of the data analysis strategy. The main aim of this chapter is to explain and justify the adapted approaches taken throughout the research.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Philosophy

This section describes the ontological and epistemological foundations for this research, making explicit links to the relevance of the methodological approaches considered. This addresses the axiological assumptions of the researcher so that the reader, the participants and the researcher can become conscious of the types of research assumptions that inevitably have shaped the research (Burrell and Morgan, 2017).

Whether tacit or explicit we each form our understanding of the world using "first principles" or "world view," defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) as being "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (p.96). This research is situated within an interpretavist paradigm and adopts a relativist ontological position. It takes the view that reality is subjective to the experience and perception of those involved, meaning that different people will have different experiences of the same phenomenon

As humans, our social and historical context is used to help make sense of the world and we construct meaning as we engage with a world which we are interpreting. The generation of meaning is a human trait and this research adopted an inductive stance arising in and out of interaction with the human community.

The research aimed to explore the personal experience of learning by leaders encountering novel circumstances, through COVID, and who attended to their experiences within their own context. It thus had potential to generate "the experience of the experience," which is what phenomenology seeks to uncover (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). Central to the theory of knowledge is a recognition that knowledge is constructed between individuals; therefore, the idiographic exploration of the individual participants experience was in essence more relevant to "knowing" than applying a nomothetic generalisability towards broader statements of "truth". Learning and Leadership are situational constructs that take place within complex and adaptive activity systems. They will be situated in cultural and historical contexts therefore the inter-subjectivity afforded by this research approach was deemed contributes to activity of Engestrom's (1987, P.254) methodological cycle of expansive developmental research.

Ascribing to a social constructivist view of knowledge, that is people construct their own knowledge based on their experience and interpretation of the world and interactions, the researcher understood second order experiences could only, at best, be interpreted or captured through the mediating tools between the researcher and participant. The instruments of connection being language, enshrined in the conversations between them, which when viewed as a whole and in retrospect revealed the story of the experience of leaders' learning through COVID. Recognising that participant experience would be uniquely theirs, I embarked on completing a hermeneutic loop of interpretation where I tried to make sense of the experience of the participant as they themselves were making sense of their experience, though retrospective looking semi-structured interviews (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). The context of the research was in the everyday, recalled accounts and experiences of leaders that they connected with learning or change and the container for the retrospective view was semi-structured interviews.

In understanding that the positionally of knowledge is bounded in theories of knowledge, epistemological assumptions enshrined in subjective and relativists

positions, I subscribe to their being different forms of knowledge. This research was located in an interpretavist paradigm, with social constructivist epistemological assumptions underpinning it. As Carter and Little (2007) note, "Having a theory of knowledge is important for reflexive practitioners in education and to provide a theory of knowledge" (p.1319). As I come from a practitioner perspective in adult learning, this has more importance and connectivity to the central axiological underpinnings I hold. In surfacing this, I am enabling readers of this research to make a subjective value judgement about this research. In short, it offers an answer to a central question that epistemology serves to answer: How do we know what can be known and how do you know as a reader how I know something to be?

People seek to make sense of the world and derive meaning from events, activities, and experiences. An exogenous event like COVID has disrupted our patterns of living and working found in everyday life are so espoused are surfacing many questions going back to what Heron, (2009) contends are first principles.Reliance on personal biography, involving individual sense of history and social perspective s mediate the impact and inference of any changes we might undergo.

Our worlds are 'built" between people, ascribing to the ideas of Actor Network Theory put forward by Latour (2005) recognises that experiences of the social world is uniquely human and not something physical but instead subjective. He described it to be "that our social world is entirely held in our social, but as the tracing of associations" i.e interconnected associations between non-social objects and that it is in fact the human experience that creates the social. In the context of this research which was intended to find the experience of learning by leaders which could be understand as the interconnecting component between the objects of focus, the instruments of influence and the system of activities that the leaders participated in, thus revealing the "social" aspect of learning.

The plurality and multiple perspectives of reality of our "life world" is opened up and with this view social reality is not a "thing" but instead an as-semblance or connection which means that it lies between people and therefore our realities are

in their entirety socially constructed. In this relativist view of the world and the social "between ness" of our worlds, what can be known then is always contained between people and is socially constructed.

This conforms to a constructivist view of epistemological assumptions. Social constructivism holds central to it that "the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community" (Creswell, 2007, p.8). With respect to knowledge then, holding a view that it is not a com-modifiable physical thing that can be transferred from one person to another and take possession of it. Knowledge is socially generated and drawing on a definition from Kolb (1984,P.51) that "learning is the creation of new knowledge through the transformation of experience," firmly places knowledge as being constructed and created or generated socially.

Taking this view of knowledge and recognising that each person is unique in their biography, knowledge is distinct and unique to the holder and is therefore subjective. If "experiences" are transformed into new knowledge, the biographical print of that person has changed because of the experience. This is relevant as the experiences of leaders learning can therefore offer an insight into the changes that they have undergone because of their experience.

As a theory of learning and expansion, the idea that we learn as people through and within our cultural and historical settings and to become a person, our development is fostered through and within our socially constructed worlds, mediated by objects which we have acquired through our culture or have constructed with the intention of influencing another. Simply put, to know something requires consciousness and experience. If we are mediating our social world through secondary instruments (cultural artefacts including language), knowing demands experience, otherwise it is a further subjective view of another's experience that has already been mediated through culturally acquired objects. Accepting this allows one to use "others knowledge" to support a starting position or interconnect with their own experience, hence learning through others.

This research conveys a process and methodological approach that allows understanding once-in a lifetime event through a qualitative lens and to help readers learn through others experiences of learning. The meaningful realities constructed by people are impossible to comprehend without human and social engagement and therefore all knowledge is constructed and transmitted in an essentially social context, (Crotty, 1998). Mezirow 1978; 2000; 2009) describes critical dimension of adult learning as transformative learning where individuals locate and reflect on their critical assumptions because a specific experience has caused a disorientating dilemma for them. In this process, reflection is only possible because of the experience.

3.3 Research Approach

The connection between methodology and epistemology become clear when considering that methods produce knowledge and therefore methodology informs this process. It stands to reason those epistemological assumptions are therefore connected to methodology and research approach. This research adopted a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell, 2007, p.13).

The methodology adopted for this research is in line with a Husserlian approach whereby the belief that the essence of the experience can be located through the exchange between the researcher and participant and in that understanding, new knowledge can be generated between them. The research intended to explore the subjective experiences of learning that leaders underwent as they lived and lead through a period of disruption, COVID.

Husserl (2013) subordinated scientific methods of knowing to phenomenological understanding, stating that science is a "second order means of knowing" because everything we know is situated in the everyday experience in the first order" (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p.362). In terms of first principles, everything that can be known by people starts in lived experience thus preceding science and positivist

positions leading to a choice of a qualitative research approach in order to address the research question.

Thus, to answer a research question that was situated within the everyday experience of leaders, a phenomenological analysis of the experience of individuals was deemed appropriate, with the methodological approach of IPA selected. The data gathered from this was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA offers a method for systematic examination of the experiential by applying the rigour its process (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009).

As a phenomenological exploration, this research sought to explore "the meaning ascribed to social or human problems." (Carter and Little 2007)

A qualitative approach was selected as the method of data collection and analysis. (O'Leary 2017, P.132) advocates for qualitative and quantitative to be used as adjectives to describe the analysis and collection methods of data. As this research is about exploring the intersubjective sense and meaning that participants attribute to their own experience of learning, adopting a qualitative approach where the broader secondary instruments of psychological influence (Vygotsky, 1978) would be the containers for the data collection and analysis. They are not intended to contribute to a general theory but instead act as an illustrative view into the phenomenon of leaders' learning, contextualised against the COVID pandemic.

(Carter and Little 2007) state that a framework for qualitative research evaluates the interconnected and integral function of describing methods, methodology and epistemology in qualitative research. They recognize a limitation in their framework by excluding ontological assumptions and explain that the nature of reality is having to assume things are real to act on them. Thus, whether they are "real or not" is not always something that researchers will have to consider. Although there is merit in this positioning, as a researcher involved in educational practice, I understand that, in departing from an ontological understanding of the future, readers of this research were less able to evaluate the coherence of the research from beginning to end, which was not preferable.

3.4 Participants and Sampling

As a technique, purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2012). It is a process where a small sample of people are selected because they share a particular lived experience (Creswell, 2007). The participants were approached specifically to take part in this research because of their position as being a leader within their organization. Smith et al., (2009) recommend research to locate participants who have perspective as opposed to representing an entire population. The main objective of a purposive sample was to produce a sample that was logically assumed to be representative of the population (Lavrakas, 2008). The population of this sample were leaders who had learned. Defining leaders is subjective and, therefore, I took a broad definition of leaders and leadership from a systematic literature review produced by Read, Klutz and Mattingly (2019) that presented characteristics of leadership. These include influencers, enablers, and motivators who empower other people, often in the achievement of a specific goal, also including people who hold a service, team and learning orientation and are recognised as leaders by their title.

Participants were engaged initially by email and selected based on those who were willing and available to share their personal experience of leading through COVID, with an openness to exploring challenging decisions and learning for them (Creswell,2007). To address potential power dynamics between myself and participants, all participants, although known to me via a professional channels, none were active clients of mine. To that end there were three criteria used for inclusion within the study:

1. Their willingness to share personal stories and accounts connected to their activity within their organization and their role,

2. Held a position of leadership as described by the working definition,

3. They held a position of leadership before, during and after March 2020

IPA was undertaken on the three idiographic sets of interviews with the participants, Mike, Jens, and Luke. Each participant had two interviews, which were later combined to represent the participants' experience.

1. Mike works for an international services firm that has responsibility for 3 European countries totalling 140 people and almost 10% of the international workforce. He is an acting member of an International Board of Directors for this organisation for 13 years. The organisation is a heavily networked organisation that acts as a third-party intermediary service. Although a salaried employee, Mike has a broader financial interest, insofar as they are a type of equity partner. They are at the end of their career, with retirement on the horizon in the next 5 years. They see their core role as being responsible for eight managers who they are there to support and think about for the next 2-3 years and to help deal with any issues that arise.

2. Jens is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a scale-up organizational that although could be classified as a technology company, their purpose has a strong social core. His employees have grown from 20 to 65 people since the onset of COVID and the professional expertise of these staff is diverse and varied. As CEO, Jens has a strong connection to being an educator and their career has been a life purpose. They identify their core role as being to strengthen the culture in order to deal with the growth it is experiencing.

3. Luke identifies as a thinking partner on the concepts and principles of systems leadership for learning across a national health service. He is a major support to a broader leadership population, managing 50 separate trusts. He views his core work and purpose as to act as a thinking partner for multiple stakeholders and aid them in applying system thinking in order to enable growth and development.

3.5 Data Collection

Primary Data was collected via semi-structured interviews. As an instrument they created conditions that generated proximity between the researcher, whilst retaining

an emic view of experience from participants (Whitaker and Fitzpatrick, 2021). Dialogic spaces are the location of where the experience and the reflection interact, and the experience of the experience can be better understood. Semi-structured interviews provided dialogical spaces for critical reflection of the participant as well as the researcher.

Within the interviews, I sought to address this by asking participants to share their views on learning. Thus, to answer this question, the truth will be subjective and generated between people. Therefore, the tools being used to mediate the connection will also play a role in the quality and the creation of that knowledge and include tools such as instruments, questions, transcripts, analysis , etc. Semi-structured interviews are known to be sources of knowledge construction and generation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015) which supported the interpretative nature of this research. They were chosen as they supported the qualitative approach to data collection, allowing emic views of experience from a researcher perspective. This is opposed to an entic view that as I as researcher could have overlaid with more close-ended questions.

These tools were embedded within the selected research approach and methods for data collection and analysis and included semi-structured interviews. Each semi-structured interview was conducted using a pre-organised open ended set of questions. The first question was a request for the participants to describe their role and normal work patterns, serving as an overarching context setting. This continued with a sub-set of questions designed to act as means to understand the emic view of the experience of the participants prompting a sharing of experiences where the participant experienced disjuncture which according to (Jarvis,1987) is the start of all learning processes. The final set of questions acted as lighter touch questions concerning learning and the experience of learning that leaders had.

A pilot set of interviews were conducted in advance of the main research, with the intention of assessing the structure of the semi structured interviews (Majid et al., 2017), the experience of data analysis, and to consider and enable that the right

conditions would ensure validity of this type of qualitative research. Yardley (2000) describes procedures that can support and act as validity criteria and includes the concepts of sensitivity to context, using disconfirming cases to evaluate the limitations of generalisability, commitment and rigour, Coherence and transparency, and Impact and importance. As a learning process for the researcher, the pilot study highlighted some important iterations which influenced the final approach to data analysis, interpretation, and towards a refined introduction. The pilot made the researcher aware that the situational context for the overall study could be improved through a refinement of the introduction to expand what was known about learning as seen through crisis leadership.

The emotive response of the participant in the pilot study further emphasised the importance of having a second round of interviews with the participants, ensuring that they retained choice and transparency through the data analysis process.

For the study, participants engaged in two separate interviews to enable continuity of learning. The first interview at times served as a pre-reflective moment, while the second interview afforded the research participants control by creating the possibility to clarify or re-story anything that they wished to do so between the two interviews.

The interview schedule for the first interview was created based on three broad areas, each of which supported the exploration of learning of the participants in their own words (see Appendix 4). The first area of questions was designed to help the participant and the researcher to establish an account of how activities are conducted in the research participants' work, namely their role, position, and responsibilities. The second area took a view that learning is situated and contextual, where the object and foci for participants were revealed: the dilemmas, decisions, and the experiences of leading through COVID, revealing the specific situations where learning was experienced. The final area then explored what leaders believed learning was and how it was supporting their practice.

A second interview schedule was created with a view to providing a space and opportunity for a living story of the experience of learning for leaders to emerge. Living stories tend to be fragmented, dynamic and in flux (Boje &Rosalie 2020 P. 35) and having a second interview afforded the participants to reflect, identify and transform the recollections and memories that most significantly resonated with them.

The second set of questions were that were designed following the first set of interviews, (see Appendix 4) creating a dialogic learning space where the participant was able to partake in a back-and-forth dialogue rather than what Boje and Rosalie (2020) critique as being interview by interrogation that can become a monologic narrative fallacy (p. 14) thus preserving the social constructivist understanding of the new knowledge being created between the participant and researcher.

3.6 Data Analysis

Upon reviewing methodological literature connected with phenomenological analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as the appropriate methodological approach because of the in depth and multi levelled data analysis process which facilitated the structure and scaffolding that a novice researcher could rely on, thus enhancing the quality of the research. was selected and the procedures outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) were used in the data analysis. This approach further supports an exploration of experience that is aimed to understand the phenomenon rather than necessarily moving towards changing things. This aligns with an interpretative paradigm as outlined by (Burrell and Morgan, 2017)

The process for data analysis was captured in a six-step process that took place over a three-month period. The analysis of the data collected was an iterative process, where I iterated in a back-and-forth motion of moving between thinking about the data and returning to each of the steps.

1. **Reading and Re-reading** Once transcribed, I spent time familiarizing myself with the interviews and added initial notations, which were initial exploratory comments, as well as listening to the interviews.

2. **Initial noting** This involved segmenting each interview according to the interjected prompts given by the interviewer, creating 156 separate blocks of transcribed interviews. Semantic content, language, and metaphors were noted and, where explicit references to learning were made, these were collected. Conceptual statements were then collated through the researcher by re-reading the segments and extracted statements or inferences that relate to the conceptual or abstract mind's eye or thinking of the participant. This involved a degree of researcher interpretation.

3. **Developing emergent themes** This stage represents the participants' original words and the researcher's interpretation of these words. The analysis focused on discreet chunks of transcripts where they had some interest to the research question. Data was reduced at this stage, leaving a subset of participants' words connected to the experience of learning.

4. **Mapping of emergent themes** a final review of the themes that bridged idiographic cases and which formed an overarching theme. Each participants' set of interviews were reviewed as a whole unit and how they fit together.

5. **Next case** the entire process was repeated a second time, with the themes that emerged from the previous analysis being bracketed.

6. **Cross case patterns** The final step took themes across the three cases and sought to find patterns across them by reviewing the themes from all three cases together as a collective and presenting super-ordinate themes as interpreted by the researcher.

3.7 Quality Considerations

To assure quality considerations the researcher used the four principles ascribed by Yardley (2000) to assess the quality of this qualitative research by creating an internal quality marker of this research. The first quality marker connected to sensitivity to context was enhanced by adhering to Guba and Lincoln's (1994) constructivist paradigm metaphysical framework. The relativistic nature of this inquiry was upheld through remaining close to the experience of the participant and rigorously staying close to their expressions, descriptions, and sense making, with a semi structured interview forming the foundation for the subjective and transactional exchanges undertaken between the researcher and the participant.

The second quality marker of commitment and rigour which Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, (2009) refer to as thoroughness of the study, including the research question, the quality of the interview, and the completeness of the analysis undertaken. The procedures throughout IPA offered me a scaffolded process to conduct a rigorous and detailed phenomenological analysis. The coherence can be connected to the fit of the overall research to the underlying theoretical assumptions, which have been demonstrated to be congruent throughout.

My epistemological stance has acted as a boundary to this research and the constructivist paradigm has been honoured with IPA as a method of data collection and analysis.

The supervisor support in the latter part of the research ensured the legitimacy of the approach and level of focus of the novice researcher. This prompted the reflexivity needed so as not to imbue preordained or researcher held views over the story of the learning of leaders. To further this, I retained a physical journal alongside the research, which allowed me to continue my bracketing where possible; because of the nature of IPA and a requirement of this for me not to overlay my thinking on top of participants experience , bracketing was less relevant for this study (Finlay, 2009). The provision of an intra-review document and subsequent feedback afforded me the opportunity to improve the interview

technique for the second round of interviews and to help participants to "go back to the thing", the learning in their own words, all of which had an impactful effect on the flow of the conversations.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

I retained a central guiding principle through this research that participants need take precedence over the actual process of the research (Punch, 2006). In addition to supporting and attending to the participants through the interview by allowing them space to move and defer from prompts, To enable full participant understanding and consent in the research I drafted and provided a plain language statement aswell as receiving informed consent forms from participants.(Ref Appendix 1 and 2). I also upheld the principle of anonymity and confidentiality for participants and the NCI ethics policy was adhered to throughout.

To protect anonymity participant data was recorded on a secure licensed platform, Zoom and transcribed. Following this, the recordings were destroyed. All correspondence was conducted and retained on NCI email to ensure maximum security. As part of the IPA process and to ensure validity and good ethical practice, I depersonalised first person accounts by anonymising, in the first instance, their transcript.

I moved towards adding my own notes and finally extracting themes that represent the essence of what had been experienced by the participants. The inherent risk of moving away from what they experienced through my interpretation was mitigated by revising the texts (transcripts) in different ways, including a review of the main substantive themes, a close look at the metaphors the participant used, as well as a temporal construction of accounts across the two interviews, considering this process as a hermeneutic circle.

The data collection method of semi-structured interviews created a conversational aspect of the research, which although beneficial for building understanding became subjective. Reflexivity allowed me to identify areas where my interpretative position influenced participants through prompts in the interview, which I was aware

of throughout the analysis. To overcome this, I captured, alongside the experience of the participants, bracketed reminders of my own thoughts, preconceptions, biases, and questions. These were symbolised by inserting notes on my initial margins. I treated this as part of my critical self-reflexive practice. When analysing the accounts from the participants, I also made a note of where I may have prompted a response and made a value judgement about discarding immediate responses. The chunked transcripts represent this process. This, along with other documents, created a valid Paper trail (Flick,2019) that further supports transparency and validity. Finally, the use of data and the "ownership" of results was addressed by the researcher by providing each participant with a copy of their transcripts for correction, as well as providing each one of them with the option to read the data analysis before publication, which they all declined.

3.9 Limitations of the Research

As a methodological approach IPA, although centred on the human and lived experience, presented as a tool that produces consistent and nuanced analysis (Flowers, Smith and Larkin, 2009), which provided a scaffolded approach for me as a novice researcher to adopt.

As theories could be argued to be value statements (Lincoln and Guba,1994), as a researcher I did not attribute value judgements against the experience of the participants. This was mediated by capturing their experience in their words, with me contextualising their experience to what is known of leadership and expertise development, rejecting the ability to generalise from this research.

In addition, given my proximity to the research question, the fact that I myself have experienced learning as a leader through COVID meant it was impossible for me to fully bracket my interpretation. At times this resulted in me struggling to interpret the experience without overlaying opinion or my own subjective deductive analysis. To mediate this I kept a journal and I paid attention to where entries had evoked an emotive responses or disjuncture that appeared in my journals.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has provided the methodological outlines that supported the research question to be explored. It has provided a rationale for the approach, and it has outlined the processes deployed for data collection and detailed the data analysis strategy. The perceived limitations of this research, as well as the ethical considerations have also been presented to enable an open and transparent representation of this research.

The following chapter will present the key findings and outcomes of the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data gathered during the interview collection phase and subsequent six-stage IPA analysis applied. To reiterate, the research question was as follows:

> "What was the experience of leaders learning as they responded to novel circumstances in the context of the COVID pandemic?"

This chapter is divided into three main sections, Introduction, themes from analysis and conclusion. The participants' experiences were further combined to produce four superordinate themes, forming the body of this Chapter.

Reconstructions of participants experience is reflected with direct quotations from them and aspects of the literature review support some critical discussions to further explicate the themes.

4.2 Themes from Analysis

A sub-set of themes emerged, that combined form the premise of this study. The themes were:

(1) Learning is The Work of Leaders

(2) Learning is Unlearning

(3) Learning is social and the boundaries have moved

(4) Reflection as a Skill in Learning Creates Value and Reflexivity Affects Impact

4.2.1 Learning is The Work for Leaders

The experience of learning was integral to each participant's practice of leadership which is captured in the reflections of this section. This reflects the importance of learning towards performance which is often difficult to locate and leaders being valued on contribution only (Eraut, 2004).

In this quote Jens describes a reflection on learning shared with an external consultant. "Learning Needs Work could be your slogan. I agreed with him.There should be enough space as part of my work for learning and reflections" Jen's experiences recognises the interdependency between his work and learning.They are examples of non-cognitive constructs which can be demonstrated through performance and behaviours and developed, making them malleable (Martin-Raugh et al, 2020).

This quote describes Jens interrelationship of work and learning "if we have two options that we can decide we will pick up the one that helps us to learn more.Taking a definition of leadership as "the ability to persuade followers to buy in and execute strategy " (Martin-Raugh et al, 2020, P.2), Jen's experience of learning as a tool of influence to perform the work of delivering on the growth strategy of his organisation and generating the workable solutions that is a core function of leadership (Mumford et al, 2000). Including reflection as part of the work process is critical for non-routinised learning and in changing learning to become part of the work, learning represents a boundary crossing instrument in Jen's experience promoting changes in work. Learning has been found to be subordinated towards tasks (Billet, 2001) and Jens experienced of learning. Developmental spaces that support expertise development have been identified as difficult to establish because of their complexity (Allen and Middlebrooks, 2013). Jens experience of learning has been practical, enabling him to bring cognitive processes notoriously difficult to evaluate (Eraut, 2004) closer to leadership practice, revealing and entanglement of the two concepts for him.

This quote from Mike is a description of what leadership is for him

> "I would boil it down into that and the ability to see through the mist and see that little light far away and you think that's where you should be headed to, I'm quite good at that. I think that's the biggest part of leadership for me or at least what has worked for me any-ways to Find the Future"

In this quote there is resonance with Mezirow, (2009) who describes

transformational learning as "an epistemology of how adults learn for themselves - advance and assess reasons for making a judgement" (p.23). For Mike leadership

is self-directed with positive emotions of success that resonate with latent pattern

identification that is critical for leading through crisis (Curnin, Brooks and Owen,

2020). Leadership for him generates thinking because of being confronted with

finding a way forward, a boundary. Engestrom, (1987) identifies as learning

occurring at boundaries and this further quote explicates his learning revealing the

direction his learning has shaped for him because of COVID.

> "The biggest lesson was to prepare for any situation going forward I'm going
> to need more rounded people. The focus is not online learning by the way. It
> is getting out there so taking part in industry associations, leading market
> events - all these people are now going to be out on the road"

 MIke's learning as a tool is contributing to a key leadership function "group

maintenance for task accomplishment" (Mumford et al. 2000). His view of

development activities has moved from online learning to experiential learning

where his team will need to attend the the realities of the experience in-situ (Kolb,

2015).

The further understood his experience of learning cognition and emotions are

considered. This quote from Mike resonated with a premise reflection (Mezirow,

2009),pointing to why his thinking on learning has changed

> "The biggest anecdote was my realisation that one person in particular, the
> German lady I mentioned - It was quite satisfying to see in some ways.
> Probably the realisation that all the work I have done with her has definitely
> been worth it. so I think I will have to roll it out across a bigger group of
> people"

 Mumford, et al (2000) identify creative problem solving as being a feature of

leadership which needs generate workable solutions at the right time rather than

best in class solutions and for Mike this positive performance and his input

rationalise a workable solution.

Mike and Jen's both experienced learning as a means to fulfil their leadership

duties.

For Jens and Mike, both have encountered the idea of experience as being a critical reflection to their learning, specifically amplified because of COVID: Same problem with altering perspectives, bringing their learning closer to the practice of leading.

This quote from Jens on the risk of hiring experts "being experienced in the field. Contrasting this with Mike's view on positive performance of some of his team through the initial crisis of COVID "it's very hard to find a common ribbon running through them but experience would be one thing so 15 to 20 years' experience of work. They were more rounded people generally" . This contrast is important because both leaders chose the best paths to goal attainment by deploying premise reflection contributing to their sense making and performance, (Eraut 2004, Weick 2012). (Baczynska and Kozminski, 2022) describe the concept of bounded leadership asserting that leaders are fuelled by heir emotions and are limited as to the rationality of their decision making because of this. Connecting this with learning as being the generation of knowledge through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 2015), this quote from Jens illuminates some of the reflections generating the new knowledge from COVID, "because the world is changing so rapidly I think that something that is a big challenge for me also having so many years behind that how much do we need experience"

For both facilitation of group maintenance enabled organisational achievement through the function of their leadership (Mumford et al, 2000). Their cognition influenced their decision making and subsequent actions being further influenced ny their individuality.Their reflections originate from their learning, their sense making and subsequent sense giving, defined by (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) as "the process of attempting to influence the sense-making and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (p. 442), situates their expression of learning to be a function of leadership.

COVID as a runaway object (Engestrom, 1987) transcended the boundaries of separate organisations, revealing a focus on the same object, experience but different cognitive and emotive responses. Both experts in their own field or people

who hold "comprehensive and authoritative knowledge in a particular area not possessed by many people" (Caley et al.2014 p.2) applied sense making to the object of experience of others so that they could "organize to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact that sense back to the world" (Weick et al. 1995, p. 410). These examples reflect the experience of learning as an expression of their practice (Raelin, 2020) Billet, (2001) identifies labelling on-the-job learning as learning as devaluing the experience but these expressions of experience reveal that the function of leadership could not be fulfilled without learning making Learning the work for leaders.

4.2.2 Learning is unlearning

The concepts of unlearning and relearning featured in participants' experiences. Resonating with Kolb (2015) "that all learning is relearning" (p. 1288), learning supported a reinstating of aspects of their past.

In this quote ,Mike describes what relearning entailed for him. "I had to rekindle more primal instincts of how to deal with people" This is significant because re-kindling resonates with Heron, (2009) description of a reverse cycle in learning: a ground up process of reordering that allows an assimilation and moving forward. Rushmer and Davies, (2004) identify that unlearning brings outcomes that are unexpected, bringing into question basic assumptions. In making "a radical break from the past" (p.11) the potential for "A radically open future" (Bosma et al. 2015) has been created with re-learning.

This quote from Mike reflects to the radically open future as he perceives it " I think we are going to have to relearn how to be managers and how to live in both worlds" Relearning as a process for Mike is a way to cross a boundary between two worlds. (Akkerrman and Bakker, 2011) boundary identifications requires a person to recognise themselves and a socio-cultural discontinuity creating a space which isolation or loneliness. This quote further reveals this to be the experience of Mike .

> "You never stop finding out your faults, do you. I have learned something which maybe came along at the same time as when we spoke last time. My

ability to hold people to something is not as powerful as I thought it was. Starting to see maybe my limitations too which is not fun but it's a learning event right"

Relearning held unintended consequences for Mike bring a recognition of his limitations of practice described as faults by him. Mike's reflection on himself extends to power and influence of others resonating with critical reflection (Brookfield 2009), The emotion is negative with Mike finding a limitation to be a personal fault. With this critical reflection from Mike resonating with the idea of a narratology, a retrospective reflection that has emotion connected. (Bamberg, 2006)

The proximity of the reflection to the actual experience that Mike positioned as happening between interviews being less than 3 weeks is important as an example of the type of informal learning and implicit learning often associated with experiential learning but difficult to locate (Eraut,2004) .This quote from Mike further reveals aspects of the informal learning experience "I'm 54 and have been doing this a long time you are in almost a slipstream in the organisation, and you adapt it maybe to match".

Mike's reflection on learning being implicit in nature being in a "slipstream" and that nature exactly to what has been leaned is absent (Eraut, 2004, Reber et al., 2003) has changed with his reflections changing his consciousness. As a type of learning it is difficult to research as it is embedded in informal learning and associated with expertise development (Eraut, 2004). This further validates the importance of informal learning as a place "working -as- learning is the exclusive focus of conscious learning" (Heron, 2009, p.14)

This quote reveals how informal learning has felt for Mike

"It felt very much like a 2- or 3-year-old child who learns that falling into a cold puddle is not fun". This feeling correlates with Eraut's (2004) description of how it feels when your tacit knowledge ceases to provide the support to do your work further resonating with the experience of regressing to a novice and the reference to

it "not being fun" is an example of the negative emotions associated with leadership experience and often difficult to research (Wu et al, 2021).

This quote, from Jens described unlearning and its position "I think that something that is a big challenge, people do have to unlearn so much when coming into our culture it might be easier if there is less to unlearn when joining" . In this Jens is revealing that the magnitude of role transition for new people joining is incompatible the preferred culture putting an emphasis on them unlearning to mediate the role crossing boundary transition of joining the new culture

> "Those people who are against to what our way of working and how we relate to each other and what we think about work and organisations and people, that's not the kind of diversity we are looking for"

This positions Jens as a "gatekeeper" function at a boundary (Akkermann and Bakker, 2011) between the outside world and their culture, returning him to his purpose which this quote further explicates.

> "It's really challenging to behave in a way that you don't have a position to be above others or demand the others to do something for you. No-one is, I hate the idea that someone is working for someone else, everyone is working for themselves and for the clients and for the company and not for each other".

The solution of unlearning to integrate what (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate ,2000) identify as role boundary crossing being difficult, inferring a low contrast between them and the prevailing culture in Jen's organisation. This quote describes how Jen has felt in his learning when thinking about his organisation as a context where timezones matter more than geography."I think it's a relief. It's making things a lot easier. It opens so much more possibilities" The importance of this is in the emotional essence of relaxation because he has learned that eliminating geography as a constraint has enabled him to move forward " This resonates with Illeris (2009) the emotions is often associated with accommodative learning.

Vygotsky, (1978) referred to this as double stimulation and as leaders are faced with complex problems, problem framing and scoping may resolve and "learn" by focusing on an object as a solution which is not fully connected or relevant to the underlying initial disconnect. In this case Jen's has resolved disjuncture with the

idea of no boundaries to finding the right people without necessarily resolving the bigger contradiction of the macro role transition for people is insurmountable currently.

His learning of the impact of the changing geography has alleviated the stress, giving him a direction and an object of focus to allow hime to continue with a culture that respects autonomy "I hate the idea that someone is working for someone else, everyone is working for themselves and for the clients and for the company and not for each other".

This quote from Luke as to how he perceives unlearning

> "So first of all, there is a massive unlearning for leadership to do, unlearning about heroic model, unlearning of what the normal expectation for leadership is, unlearning of…if you are a leader you have got some magical quality and act in a decisive way"

Similar to Jens, Luke's references unlearning implicates "others" indicating distance from Luke from this group. "Othering" is a phenomenon of boundary identification and in contextualising which can be isolating. (Wisse and Sleebios, 2015) when their personal self is threatened they may take refuge in their personal self and distance themselves from group which the next quote from Luke considers

> "I was happy to entertain the idea that it was something about me or the way in which I had messaged that to staff. But we did a bit of an exploration about that and we have worked together over the past 18 months to write a book that in some detail. So Gerard is my thinking partner"

Learning that requires a letting go or reframing of frames of reference on past performance can bring pain (Eraut 2004).

This quote from Luke explicates this

> "The kind of notions that blend into the décor of organisational life. you have an opportunity like this you begin to see things as if they were fresh and new to you. And I think that's a really useful way of approaching a lot of this. And that to me is the challenge of saying you are not a capital L leader;But it starts with the individual, I think"

This is significant insofar as sense making seems to convey meta-reflexivity connecting to sense giving to a broader work group and the changes or learning from their experiences.

4.2.3 Learning is social and boundaries have moved

Boundaries defined as "sociocultural differences that give rise to discontinuities in interaction and action" (Akkerman and Bakker 2011, p.139) were the places where the participants wee confronted with the disrupted patterns. This section analyses the experience of learning at these boundaries whilst considering what boundaries may have moved because of COVID or as a consequence of the participant learning.

This quote from Jens reflects how COVID context impacted him "I think maybe the strongest impact has been that I'm not travelling and I think I'm getting to know the woman who happens to be in the same address, who I never met before"

This is significant as the role transition or ritual often experienced by his habit of travelling has blurred the socio cultural boundary of work-life. An example of a micro role transitions between the 1st space of home and work (Ashforth, Reiner and Fugate, 2000) generated a new space where a new social-conversational space for learning between Jen and his wife occurred.

Jens experienced a critical reflection as to the nature of the relationship with his wife changing. "Long relationships, so you know how you can change the other and what you can offer. So, I think there could be this unutilised learning resources available pretty close"

The importance of this is two fold: intersubjectivity was strengthened between him and his wife to include learning from work suggesting integration has happened for Jens. This dimension to an existing relationship is an example of reassemblence that happens between people, is social (Latour, 2005). Jen's experience of learning has expanded the boundaries of an existing relationship.

This quote further describes how Jen's social boundaries for learning have stretched because of travel restrictions that COVID brought

> "I'm a jazz musician myself and there's a lot of in common but always when we talk like every second week, it's opening like some locks on my mind that – oh, why didn't I think about this kind of combination of things?

This is an example of how a social interaction can act as a socio-cultural springboard and prompt expansive learning. Disjuncture, expressed in "why didn't I think of that ?" A negative appraisal of Jen's past cognitive performance resonates with what (Eraut, 2004) has identified as happening before performance change.

This resonates with (Engestrom, 1987) who describes secondary instruments for expansive learning to include the social-conversational springboards transplanted from one setting into a novel circumstance introducing a broader dimension to their existing intersubjective relationship: In Jen's words "I think quite a lot of learning is like combining information and experiences from different worlds, different perspectives so it's not always like new things but its new combinations".

Parsons (1951) , identifies an organisation as being "A system of cooperative relationships" (p.72) The relationships and the learning for Jen's has broadened beyond the workforce of his work and reassembled the social-cultural constructs of spouse to include sense makers and between friend which is a third space not traditionally associated with the transition between work and home (Ashforth, Reiner and Fugate, 2000) introducing a new influencer to Jen's work practice.

For Luke, In this quote he describes how Gerard supported his understanding and sense making

> "I was happy to entertain the idea that it was something about me or the way in which I had messaged that to staff. But we did a bit of an exploration about that, and we have worked together So Gerard's my thinking partner, we kind of speak once a week at just talk about whatever might have happened."

Social configurations featured in their learning where old relationships were renewed or reassembled to become part of their learning space.

This quote reflects Luke's evaluation of the first interview "The conversation was useful for me as I said at the time in terms of clarifying some of the thinking about leadership" Further more his experience of learning reveals "othering" and in

learning with Gerard he seems to have moved away from his organisation. Intersubjectivity is the connecting of consciousness between two or more people and subsequent synthesis of meaning has been identified by (Weick ,1993) as an imperative make meaning in a crisis with him postulating maybe better to have a "partner than an organisation when you fight fires" (p.15).

(Walter,1936) describes stories to allow information to transform and survive long after the moment of experience surprises. For Luke his book is a narrative formed through COVID however his reconstructions of his experience precede that narrative could be described as "a non-linear, incoherent, collective, un-plotted, and pre-narrative speculation, a bet before a proper narrative can be constituted ", an Ante-Narrative (Boje, 2001 p.1) Offering a time travelling quality and the boundaries of the future temporarily being removed through looking at the individual stories of participants.

(Engestrom, 1987) expansive learning cycle offers a reformulated definition of a Zo-Ped - "It is the distance between the everyday actions of the individuals and the historical new form of societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to a double bind potentially embedded in everyday activities" (p.138). For Mike, his zone of proximal development stretched in three ways: His HR manager aswell as a new reassembled relationship with ex industry colleagues aswell as becoming "coach" to a broader management team. (Mumford et al, 2000) have described leadership to develop within a person's ZOPED.

In this quote, he described his revived relationship with his HR manager

> "she's putting together these plans she is telling me stuff which is hair raising for any business manager about how engaged employees might be with their employer going forward.This is causing me a lot of thought"

It distanced him from his "Organisational stakeholders," which is reflected in: "I had huge pushback on this that you can't do something that is not part of our global management programme thing, but we went ahead anyway". As Mike identified as a member of senior management with a small equity share, the pushback and the sense of Mike being separate could be seen as an example of boundary

63

identification "othering". Mike may have a sense of distancing between him and group. This could be understood that the magnetism of group and the organisational needs is towards stability and control and Mikes localised need of supporting managers and their development is more pressing. In this quote, Mike has revealed a distancing from his peer group at a time where process and reasons for doing have disintegrated simultaneously, conditions which (Weick, 1993) contends can be experienced as a crisis of high magnitude. The means back to this type of crisis a cosmology episode according to Weick is through people who are there side be side with us.

This quote describes how Mike felt at this time

> 'When I realised we were going to have to work from home, there was a part of me that just wanted to run away. Just go and buy a pack of cigarettes and sit outside a café until somebody had figured all this out but I could see they look to you for leadership"

His reference to escape as an initial response correlates to the stressors response that episodic anxiety generates (Fu et al. 2021). In understanding this cognitive drain combined with the often experienced excessive energy for the accommodative learning Mike experienced, his experience of learning was of a microcosm of episodic stressors which is further supported with this quote from Mike "the world is turning on its head and i cannot believe how quickly the generational shift is happening"

This quote Mike describes his experience of a peer group that supported him through initial sense making of COVID. It is interesting this group sat outside his organisation

> "Ex-colleagues, It was brilliant. 6 or 7 ex-colleagues who used to work together and a few others but we all know each other .It's a phenomenal learning environment. Only thing is we're all enjoying it as well. We were meeting almost every week during Covid just to chorale our thoughts and to make sure there was industry lobbying going all doing the right things together so phenomenal learning environment "

The group that Mike's learning happened could be described as a "microcosm" feature of an expansive activity: Miniatures of communities upon which a new form

of activity will be based (Engestrom, 1987, p. 232). His informal learning as being "off the charts" and this now being replicated through the Rounded Manager Programme. In this his quote Mike elaborates on his experience of learning in the group outside of work" Any recorded discussion of an hour with this group would be worth its weight in gold compared to a lot of the more formal structured things" As a boundary crossing instrument this group structure was spontaneously formed and retired when the need of solving the problem of lobbying the government was completed. The positionally if learning supported expertise development and has been replicated in part with the Rounded Manager programme.

This quote reveals the further shifting of the boundaries of workplace learning for Mike" What they want is less structure. They want maybe what you call informal learning brought into comment on a meeting and think and share on their feet"

The interconnected aspect of it to work reveals the importance of learning-in-action and the entanglement of learning and work resonates ideas conveyed by (Svane, 2019) in being and becoming. In her framework the transformational emergence of organisations is contained in world-creating lived stories that commingle to reveal organisational transformation. The shift of learning to become less formal may by indicating a recognition that the pre programming approach of learning up front is not suitable for the emerging environment and this quote could infer so much.

As learning is culturally and historically situated (Billet 2001, Engestrom 1987), for these participants their has revealed aspects of their cooperative relationships for their organisation changing shape and reconfiguring around them and because of them simultaneously.

When conceptual frameworks disintegrate and processes fail, the experience drives people to seek out social engagement.(Weick, 1993) and the experience of Mike, Jens and Luke all involved seeking out social engagement.

4.2.4 Reflection as a Skill in Learning Creates Value and Reflexivity affects the Experience

These quotes illustrate the disrupted patterns of activity that COVID generated for participants and the patterns of reflection and reflexivity that resided within their experiences.

By their own commission participants offered reflections on learning through COVID. Their reflections revealed a continuum of types of reflections found in learning: Reflection, Critical Reflection (reframing) and Integration, (Kolb, 2015); Emotions connected with the experiences were captured mediating the severe editing of emotions can happen with habitual experience (Kabat - Zinn 2003)

Reflexivity to frame reflections

For Mike in his experience of learning his reflexivity moderates to move his sense of self towards others to different positions. "I was shocked, I realised in that moment that this manager was trapped and she had no where to go in her career unless she became a more rounded manager" This disorienting dilemma resonates the first phases of transformational learning, the type of individual learning that permits people to reintegrate difficult assumptions into their frames of reference and continue.

What was interesting for both Luke and Mike that the initial reflexivity was illustrated to be fractured (Archer, 2012). These quote reflect the emotion of initially experiencing disruption because of COVID for Mike.

> "There was going to be a lot of sleepless nights and a lot of pain ahead of the next days and weeks. I just needed to steel myself and take a deep breath. I just needed to take a breath and take a minute but I knew there was no going back and we had to get through this"

Fractured Reflexivity, signified by the anxiety, hyperactivity or negative derailing emotions (Baerheim and Ness 2021) akin to crisis sense making (Weick,1993). The remedy for Mike initially to this feeling is reflected in this quote. "There was one guy, in the Netherlands who I just talked things through" This resonates with Weick(1993) identification that in crisis of large scale, social springboards bring us back. This is also important because it is a glimpse at the negative emotions

associated with leadership that have been found to be difficult to research (Wu et al. 2021).

For Jens reflexivity showed up differently and his experience of learning. This quote from Jens describe how principles guide the learning "what we are using every day are principles and one being lifelong learning" This quote further reveals how they were used in times of uncertainty as Jens experienced a disorientating dilemma "and suddenly realised in that meeting that we were talking against 50% of our principles and I said Stop!" As an example his reflections were prompted when a Principle of practice used by their firm was disrupted by the actions of his colleagues. The principles as an existing cultural artefact framed what was important, influencing collective compliance which is an example of community reflexivity (Archer, 2012).

Reflections on experience

 As reflection is "a bridge between experience and learning" requiring both cognition and feelings (Boud et al., 1985), reflexivity as a moderator of those experiences is part of cognitions . The understanding of the experiences emerged can be understood along side the continuum of reflections as posited by Kolb (2015) including: reflection, reframing and integration. These quotes represent examples of each and discussions reflect the importance of these with respect to understanding the experience of participants learning through COVID.

Learning happens when the world could no longer be taken for granted which is where (Jarvis, 2009). The experience was not the reason for change it was the active reflection by Mike

> "I screwed up a lot in this because if you don't give them the right bandwidth they are not going to know what the hell to do. I probably haven't prepared to hand this business on to somebody in the right way and i have not created rounded managers, that is the biggest learning moment and lesson"

This quote illustrates critical self reflection beyond validation of only personal as it involves evaluating others and his own impact to this circumstance. (Gray, 2007) has identified critical reflection as absent in many leadership activities.

This quote from Mike reveals a reflection on his retirement which is part of his learning experience

> "I realistically only have one more year where I have the authority to do and say this is bringing it sharply into focus for me. I want to be able to have my mark on it .There's no sense that when I leave things are in limbo or things weren't done."

Although his learning is limited his working self, his reflection goes beyond himself, bridging towards critical reflection and has reference to authority and power which Brookfield, (1991) posits as being a component of critical reflection

Luke's experience of learning revealed multiple reflections that were interconnected between when Luke was confronted with boundaries or socio-cultural disruptions caused by action or inaction as defined by Akkerman and Bakker (2011). These quotes from Luke were offered as an " flow and an ebb to COVID", offering an insight into the dynamic nature of COVID as an experience for Luke.

COVID experienced as a Flow: "there was a sense in which some people had a really good Covid because it gave them interesting licence to do things differently" This contrasting quote from Luke represents, in his own words the ebb of the COVID "to see kind of systemic working quite well pronounced as a result of that now there's some senior leader sitting in his study in his big house and now if I want to do something I've to ring him"

The emergent contradictions for Luke between a system working well in crisis only to be discontinued by a return of role boundaries seems to be a disorienting dilemma required for transformation (Mezirow, 2009). On the outset this reflection does not possess the expected emotion of a disorientating until viewed against Luke's critical reflection of his difficulty in his position as a system leader and thinking partner and being able to develop his own practice.

"I guess I find it ethical crisis for me in terms of trying to do the work I want to do, trying to do the work kind of reflects who I am in terms of the thinking. there's not that much celebration of the idea of thinking differently about the staff and increasingly, quite a bureaucratic response to the ideas of leadership"

In understanding the why for Luke's learning there is an example of what Mezirow, (2009) outlines as premise reflection, reflections of why his learning has happened. This quote from Luke illustrates how critical assumptions were reframed because of the experience of COVID

> "So, I'm no longer of the view that there's a kind of meta picture that we should be pursuing. There's some transformation that happens on the basis of a large-scale programme, whether it's political or organisational. I'm more of the opinion that as people start to think about their own personal ethics, think about what they want to do in a corporate space and reach out to others."

This quote is from Mike about the rounded manager programme he has created for his group "I had huge pushback on this from them that you can't do something that is not part of our global management programme thing, but we went ahead anyway"

This illustrates an example of autonomous reflexivity (Archer,2012, Baerheim and Ness, 2021) where Mike's actions have been independent and it gives a sense of distance between Mike and the group and his use of language of "them" is an example of othering, a process of boundary identification which once, reflected upon becomes dynamic tension

The next quote from Mike reveals further boundary condition " the next generation manager who is going to have to make sure that you have got people you can work with and see at the office and how does he keep them engaged when they are then working from home. it's a generational shift and I can't believe how fast it's happening"

This is an example of boundary identification because of meta -reflexivity and attending to critical reflections combined. This example illustrates an often difficult to locate, reflection-in-action (Kolb,2015) or implicit learning (Eraut ,2004) surfaced with premise reflections captured in the stories and reconstructed articulations of these participants.

Recognition of reflexive processes was revealed in the positioning and counter-positioning of the "I" changing as participants experienced the process of learning (Baerheim and Ness. 2021). This is an example of where the novel context COVID created acted as the catalysts for his leadership innovation (Mumford, et al. 2000).

Wisdom from the Experience of COVID

Reflection can be retrospective (narratology) or future looking (futurology) (Bamberg, 2006).This research revealed retrospective reflections as part of the sense making involved in learning and these quotes reflect some future looking reflections.

This quote from Mike reveals a reflection towards the future

> "At some moment those chickens will come home to roost and you can feel there's going to be this #me too moment for corporates. This is not the biggest thing on my mind but I can see that wave coming in the same way the me too thing happened and the social media tax on people, I can feel that happen to corporates unless we really get our houses in order. That's maybe a learning moment as well"

What is interesting for this is that the reflexivity cannot be qualified against Archer's (2012) types of reflexivity. It fits closest to the meta-reflexivity we/us however it resonates with a critical reflection that is beyond the role of immediate leadership and has a broad macro - reflexivity that moves beyond organisational boundaries, foreseeing macro challenges towards the future. This could qualify as wisdom, a type of social learning generated from experience often within leadership because of the nature of the space it occupies (Yang, 2014)

Reflexivity Framing Skills For the Future

Jens describes as "self leadership skills " the critical reflections for participants are moving the locus of control to individuals . Autonomous reflexivity is required for life long learning and would be required for this type of skill development. This quote from Luke represents a change in thinking about behaviours post COVID. "COVID is a crisis so I behaved in this way when in fact we are saying that is how to behave on an every day basis"

For Mike, the rounded manager programme is reshaping his organisation into a series of "interlocking routines, habituated action patterns that bring the same people together around the same activities at the same time and place, (Westley, 1990, p.339) whilst retaining control for Mike despite what he perceives as a generational shift.

> "You are going to have to relearn how to connect with these people to make sure that they are online, that they are doing their work I think you have to kick start your managerial behaviours all over and being even more present and more engaged and more listening manager so people feel when they return to the office oh this is where it happens"

Mike's role identity as leader was experienced as a change resonating with legitimating co-existence, a feature of boundary identification and a means of crossing (Akkerman and Bakker, 2011). The collective experience illustrates how autonomous reflexivity.

Jen's has also experienced learning because of the with the spatial and temporal discontinuities with COVID has become reconstructed knowledge around leadership behaviours. In this quote Jens' explains his perspective

> "so self-leadership skills are needed, because there are no limits, you don't have the structures that you normally have, like driving to the office and travelling back and office hours and so on - taking care of myself and to think with more in more selfish way about health issues and not just thinking about how others are doing and how the company is doing"

Mumford et al. (2000) recognise that social judgement is a factor in leadership development, which would infer that meta reflexivity, the we/us mindset (Archer, 2012; Baerheim, 2021), is a sub skill that needs to be developed as part of self leadership skills alongside autonomous reflexivity.

Reflection Precedes Action and Reflexivity Generates Impact

Their learning resonated with transformational learning and significant, positioning it within them; additionally their learning by their accounts has generated tools of practice which could be described as boundary crossing instruments as they were intended for onward coordination and use despite being generated as part of individual learning of the participants.

Luke wrote a book as part of his learning process from COVID and this quote reflects the intentionality "if it goes out there and one or two people read it and as a result of reading it starts to do things slightly differently, we have to be optimistic."

This quote reveals why Mike has created the rounded manager programme "to make sure they have a network as well rather than buried in their email and their daily work. They have sat up a little bit more by giving them these skills, project management and so on and access to the outside world that I know "

Vygotsky, (1978) describes these type tools as secondary instruments which are used to psychologically influence others and are a means of` people shaping their world. Participants' learning has potential to influence more than just themselves.

All participants actions could be viewed as influencing and attending to group needs (Mezirow, 2000) with these instruments but it paying attention to the reflexivity illustrated the disjuncture and the premise reflections reveal the gap between personal biography and perception of new need state emerging from participant learning. For Mike, his autonomous reflexivity is revealed and with Luke his diminishing belief in systems in favour of autonomous action of individuals is apparent.

Having opportunities to reflect reconstruct account of experience has elevated awareness of the disconnect between biography and experience and if "Reflection is a precursor of action " (Gray, 2007 p.4), Reflexivity as precursor to reflection is an important mediating role in the experience of learning for these participants. For all three participants their experience of learning allowed them to change their practice and do things differently.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings and discussion of the six stage IPA analysis. Chapter five expressed conclusions aswell as identified further areas of potential research from this research. Their attended to reflections of the experience

of learning, resonated with Transformational Learning (Mezirow, 2009) and Significant learning (Merriam and Clark,1993).

The learning came from reflections of personal experiences of participants which illustrated the value of reflection and reflexivity, defined as the ability to monitor and reflect on social interaction from the perspective oneself and of others (Archer, 2012) in learning.

Though the connection with reflection and learning was not new it was the revealing of the levels of reflexivity and affective dimensions that enhanced the understanding of the experience of leaders learning. There was a sense of needing to "learn to manage the unmanageable" which was realised by Mike,Luke and Jens individually. Each experiencing learning as "profoundly re-creating their personal lives and social systems" (Kolb, 2015, p.858), framing it as experiential in nature and transformational in impact.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the overall conclusions, contributions, recommendations, implications, as well as a conclusion for this research. It is presented in four sections, with the final section offering the concluding thoughts of the researcher. Aspects of this chapter illuminate what new knowledge was generated by addressing the question:

"What were the experiences of leaders learning as they responded to novel situations in the context of the COVID pandemic?"

5.2 Overall Conclusion and Contribution

This phenomenological qualitative research was not intended to contribute to a general theory and instead acted as an illustrative view into the phenomenon of leaders' learning, contextualised against the COVID pandemic; However in engaging with the research the presented several superordinate themes and the closing arguments contribute to critical discussions. The superordinate themes as reflected upon emerged as 1) Learning is the work for Leaders 2) Unlearning is Learning 3) Learning was social and boundary crossing and 4) Reflection as a Skill has resonance towards the extent of the learning.

The closing arguments and implications in this chapter involve the personal experience of learning of these leaders as well as reflections of the researcher contrasted against the literature review. Critically this exploration of the experience of Learning of Leaders illuminated the importance of reflexivity within reflected experiences. The type of reflexivity revealed whether learning was personally transformative, significant or accommodative learning with fractured reflexivity aligning with expansive or transformative learning. Brookfield, (1991) identified a potential limitation that organisational constraints impose on leaders and full critical reflection that incorporates the power and hegemony. This limitation further illuminates a critical question as to how leaders may be bounded by their

organisational narratives to really generate workable solutions towards existential challenges that extend outside the organisational parameters: these events like COVID challenge to the status quote economic or social goals of the organisations and the experience of these participants revealed that in learning, they crossed boundaries of their organisations but their learning was limited insofar as it was merited useful in the organisational context.

The scale of the disruption was larger for any organisational activity to contain and the reflected experiences involved agents outside of the organisation. These leaders found their social constellation of support them to find workable solutions to the complex problems they were facing.(Mumford et al. 2000) and in attending to them and the reflections. The difference in expertise application and leadership towards workable solutions, illuminated supports Tourish (2021) in his critique of theories of leadership being shown up to be in crisis. The experiences of these participants offered us glimpses of the future as it is arriving, an ante narrative (Boje, 2021).

Boje (2019) describes how people are part of an overarching ecosystem which is our primal position. What this research revealed was that the lens of each of the participants gave primacy to their social constructions, which for them was their purpose as leaders in that organisation. This framed their learning and corroborates with Billet (2001) identification of the situated-ness of workplace learning. The challenge for them was that they were reintegrating problematic contradictions into their work experience as opposed to reshaping their work because of COVID.

Tourish (2021) has raised the awareness to the practice and the theory of leadership as experiencing a crisis and in the experience of these leaders the immediacy of the demands connecting to their organisational purpose framed their learning; however the source of the social intersubjectivity stretched the boundary of their organisation to integrate home, friends, other institutes.This perhaps raises a potential to create a fourth space where people negotiate exogenous events like

climate change and those other runaway objects will need to span across social institutions.

5.2.1 Towards a Complex Future

In their 2021 predictions report, PWC refer to the period of emergence from COVID as the great rebound. How social patterns will reassemble post COVID is not yet understood. This research offered a lens to view the learning of leaders who dealt with novel circumstances, revealing how they made sense and reassembled social cultural discontinuities around them. This further offers examples of how leaders essence of their experience was influenced by reflection giving a window to view times of change and disruption. Situated in their practice, their learning and subsequent findings of this research illustrate how resilience came from people and learning as well as offering a view of the restorative value of learning through their actions and communicative processes. The social qualities of their experience revealed new social actors, with their proximity to organisational life being a surprise. The direction of their development supported by people but it was their reflections and critical reflections that pointed the direction of 'stretch' which was away from their organisations.

Broader importance as Engestrom and Sannino (2009) identified climate change and global pandemics to have similar features and potentiality for learning that expands our ways of being and doing beyond the current understood boundaries. The scale proved to prevent the disruptions to the social-cultural patterns at a scale or pace that was different giving them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and change aspects of their practice. Each one entered offered examples of reassembled aspects of their practice:

Boje (2019) offers a concept of lived stories of the Seventh Generation as a means of building our pre-stories towards the world that we want seven generations from now to inherit from us. Generation Alpha, (Strauss,and Howe 1991) those born between 2011-2025 will depend on the learning we have from this time as it will serve as foundations of their experience. Yang (2014) subscribes to the idea that

Wisdom extends beyond knowledge generation and must meet the criteria of having a broader social purpose and benefit beyond those who offer the wisdom that they have acquired through their experiences. In reflecting on this research a questions as to what constitutes wisdom can support closing thoughts.

Reflection is retrospective occurring because of an observation of a pattern disruption. It can be source of comfort or can cause pain. Critical reflection further amplifies the discomfort and equally offers a greater opportunity to focus those who engage to develop thoughts, ideas, questions and that will expand beyond personal experiences as it transports the implications or the resolutions to the social domain . For these participants the meaning making was supported with the researcher process and the breadth of transformational learning individually achieved has perhaps illuminated an incapacity for leaders to transform independent of their organisational demands. If leadership is taken with finding workable solutions to ill defined problems, perhaps organisational theories of business are framing these problems to look and feel like solvable puzzles as opposed to emergent mysteries. (Kay and King 2021).

Perspective matters and firstly accepting that acceptance of the primacy of experience of these leaders being a source of truth can pave the way for considering the limitations of learning and expansion that leaders find in their practice. This resonates with Tourish (2021) who asserts that COVID has put both the theory and practice of leadership into crisis and calls on the underlying theory of business to be critically evaluated. As organisational actors responsible for sense making, the experience of leaders and the constraints they have to get beyond the immediate star holder value challenge has been amplified in the reflected experiences of these participants.

5.2.2 The Experience in the Emerging Moments

Boje, (2000) described petrified narratives which form over time and through repetition and warns against the damage of not listening to the lived stories of people; they present a plurality and multi-vocality of options and perspectives rather

than a singular view if the world. This research captured some of the intensity of the emotions felt at this time of learning aswell as an understanding of the cognitive overload that extreme emotions can bring and generate unlearning. Retrospective views of learning or leader carry a danger of eliminating the emotional boundaries and capacities. Therefore this research has illustrated the value of generating spaces for leaders and people in situ to their work to catch and surface the implicit learning or unlearning that is often hard to research or understand (Eraut, 2004).

This research supports Wu et al.(2021) in their finding that the negative emotions are difficult to research in leadership. The emotions of distress, pain and regret resided for these participants expressions of unlearning and relearning aswell as the positive emotions of enjoyment, affection and satisfaction in their learning moments. The difference in reflection and critical reflection and that the discomfort needed to generate the creative tensions to help them to find the workable solutions was part of the process of change. Their experience of learning and reflections on the social springboards were overwhelmingly positive which resonates with Weick's (1993) observation that in a crisis a partner is more valuable than an organisation.

5.2.3 Keeping Semantic Transformations Close to Experience

In addition to their experience of learning being mediated by social engagement, participants revealed some of their challenges with their language and metaphors. The illustrated the mutual inseparability of leading and the imperative to learn questioning if our language and atomised descriptions of processes and steps is delineating the experience from the human experience. Wittgenstein,(1922) highlights that we are bounded by our language as much as our circumstances at times "The limits of my language are the limits of my world". Words influence shape how we perceive, reflect upon and subsequently act on the world. Connecting this to Tourish (2021) that the theory and practice of leadership needs to be re-learned perhaps considering the concepts or language of learning. The experience of these participants revealed the importance of space and in understanding nouns and verbs confine us to a time position, reshaping the verbs we use for leadership and

integrating the nouns associated with adult learning can support a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of their experience of learning towards a widely open future. (Bosma et al. 2015.) The descriptions of leading from the participants resonated with the ideas of expansive learning, transformational learning and demonstrated an entanglement of their learning being the work as a leader. The need for learning causes a creative tension when the world cannot be taken for granted d(Jarvis, 2009). Leaders are primed and tasked with generating workable solutions as opposed to abstract intellectual answers to problems (Mumford et al. 2000) which the experience of the participants revealed their work to be primarily situated in the domain of actively learning to resolve challenges.

5.2.4 Expanding the "Proximal" in the Zone of Development

Learning is situational and historical and cultural influences impact. Taking a universal social constructivist view of learning, the idea that learning generates knowledge through and between our social constructs. For children relies on more knowledgeable others to scaffold and teach them what is already known (Vygotsky, 1978). This research has revealed that reliance "knowledgeable others" do not always exist in a crisis and social connectedness supported these leaders to find workable solutions. This resonates with Engestrom (1987) reconstituted this zone of proximal development which positions everyday actions to shape future activity systems and if this is the case then our reflection patterns need to extend beyond self (reflections), social constraints (Critical reflections) towards the future, perhaps introducing a quantum reflective practice to remove the temporal boundary and expand the proximity of our zone of development to include an expanded bounded reality.

Smith,Flowers and Larkin, (2009) highlight the importance of conscious reflection to enable "exploring experience in its own terms" (P.2) .This entanglement offers a view for closing conclusions on consciously reflecting on the theory and practice of leadership and if contradiction between theory and practice could be addressed with

consolidating the expansive, transformational and significant learning pedagogies, reconstituting learning and leading to be similar phenomenon.

5.2.5 Experience of Learning for Leaders as Experts

The relational aspects of leadership and learning were illustrated in this research. Both of these social constructs can be described as non-cognitive social constructs (Martin-Raugh, 2020) which resonate with the grouping of 21st century skills that include of teamwork, leadership, communications. (Kivunja,2014.) In understanding these as boundary crossing skills like identification, coordination, reflection and transformation. (Akkerman, and Bakker 2011), dialogical learning is a meta description of these constructs. The criticality of reflection towards sense making which requires is supported and developed with an application of leadership, 21st Century skills or boundary crossing learning competences further positions dialogicality as a means of accessing the cognitive frames of reference which historically has been a hidden aspect of performance for leaders expanding the research of (Eraut, 2004) to and Derrick (2020), who identified that the phenomenon of expertise development is under researched. Learning is a lens to support this investigation.

5.3 Implications and Recommendations

This initial research and its findings could be extended and could benefit from further expansion in two specific ways: in isolating the experience of reflection as a source of understanding the zone of development for leadership and learning and secondly in expanding this research to involve a broader range of participants to explore the emerging themes.

5.3.1 Reflection and its impact on the extent of leadership and learning

To further support Tourish's (2021) critique of leadership theory. In considering the paradigm of In recognising where historical transitions of practice are starting to take place or where petrified narratives are being repeated could produce a means of creating a theory of learning for leaders involving a zone of proximal development

that extends beyond knowledgeable "others" with space to further explore why ways of knowing that support a macro "post human" thinking that Boje and Roslie (2020) are emerging leadership spaces.

Brookfield, (1991) raises a critical reflection and the potential limitations that organisational constraints impose on leaders and exploring this further for if we are to challenge underlying theory of business the environment is as much as factor as the context and the people. The research features of leaders experience resonate with aspects of a cosmology episode as described by (Weick, 1993), and that the way back for leaders was via dialogic spaces, conversational springboards which extended social actors beyond the organisational constraints of roles or employment and in considering the reflexivity is a step before reflection, focusing on reflexivity as a point of development could expand leadership and learning theories.

5.3.2 Leadership Faces Contradictions

What is critical and what this contributes is a reflection and reflexivity are hidden aspects of performance for leaders (Eraut, 2004). As a space the time spent with the participants provided a dialogic space (Gray, 2007) and allowed for "thinking space" to emerge. If the research was repeated to consider and locate the experience of reflection, the continuum of reflection to critical self reflection (Gray, 2007, Kolb, 2015) could be understood as to how contradictions are being resolved which may map the thresholds of expansive learning that is fostered in specific activity systems, focusing in on the fulcrum of power and hegemony and its impact on the capacity for critical reflection(Brookfield,1991) .

5.3.3 Expanding the Research to Involve a Broader Range of Agents

The research could be enhanced using storytelling interviews, specifically connected to the experience of leadership learning from a multi-voiced perspective enabling incorporation of a full activity system. In further identifying boundary conditions from a critical inquiry stance ,how expansive learning has been for organisational members could be researched. This would contribute to the gap in

research identified by (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) about the type of learning at boundaries being under researched.

Undertaking an extension of this exploration of the phenomenon of leaders learning. Could be enabled on larger scale with a mixed methods study. By developing an instrument to undertake a larger scale to locate and incorporate Ante-Narrative Inquiry through Quantum Storytelling Consulting as developed by (Boje and Rosaile, 2020) and expansive learning (Engestrom, 1987) to create a means of 5th generation expansive theory that moves beyond social constructs and addresses changing purpose, recognising work is learning.

5.3.4 Taking a Critical Stance Towards Leadership Theory

To build on the work of (Tourish, 2021, Derrick, 2020 and Eraut, 2004) generating a hypothesis describing the relationship between learning and leading could reveal the disabling constraints that the underlying theory of business ii.E economic advancement presents. By raising the consciousness of participants resilience with increased bounded realities could transpose across organisational boundaries.

There is a gap insofar as In situ and on the job learning experiences that can be designed to support and transform the epistemological and ontological assumptions connected with learning for leaders using C.H.A.T as a framework and focusing on extending the historical types of activity systems to understand the learning associated. Future research could add to the existing Engestrom's (1987) methodological cycle of expansive developmental research. Extending the frame of research towards research in workplace settings focused on the role of leadership a Learning by expanding approach to development could be developed Engestrom, (1987) identifies a phenomenological delineation to gain an insight into the problems experienced by members of activity systems before continuing to expand this research into broader activity systems analysis as a first step in extending this research (p. 253)

5.3.5 Expanding Learning Approaches for further Runaway Objects

Akkerman and Bakker (2011) describe how the type of learning at boundaries is under researched. This research revealed some of the boundaries and subsequent learning and crossing that leaders did aswell as illuminating some of the boundaries to expansion because of the social constructs that they were performing within. To further expand the progress of contemporary learning practice exploring the types of reflection at boundaries because this research has revealed the difference and the limitations come from the disjuncture which is fuelled by the extent of reflection.

Dialogic learning processes including identification, coordination, reflection and transformation identified as boundary crossing instruments (Akkerman and Bakker 2011) with a focus on the type of reflection to incorporate an exploration as to whether The ante-narrative generative process (AGP) as a form of practice and bring what Boje (2019) sees as " the quantum waves of what is possible turning into possibilities" (p.2) is perhaps an extensions beyond reflection or critical reflection and offers a reflective practice that brings aspects of the future to the fore-front of the moment in time we are experiencing. The literature review discussed how reflection precedes action (Boud et al. 1985) and possibilities towards the futures are contingent on the level of reflection and reflexivity applied to the experiences attended to from this time.

5.4 Conclusions

This research set out to explore the experiences of leaders and their learning through COVID and in this exploration. It has met the objectives of the research to provide a means of exploring the unexplored phenomenon of leadership learning and accessed internal aspects of performance.

Through this research Participants took precedence over the process of the research, Punch (2006) which has meant that first and foremost this research achieved its objective in allowing participants time and space to reflect upon and attend to their own reflections on their experience in a dialogic space. This in itself

was important because the research created space for leaders to reflect on the under researched hidden areas of performance for leaders (Eraut ,2004),

It set out to address specific gaps identified in the literature and has responded to specifically by: Taking a phenomenological approach to learning that leaders as practitioners needed to use novel circumstances (COVID) revealing a transformative experience for leaders and a future looking perspective where learning and leadership become more entangled as we seek to find our collective future in the learning moments that we choose to reflect upon and why those reflections are experienced as they are.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement for Participants

<u>Plain Language Statement for Research Participants</u>

1. Introduction to the Research Study

- The research working title is "*An exploration of expansive learning conditions experienced by leaders throughout COVID*"

- The research is being conducted by Jackie Brown, an MSc student in Educational Practice in the National College of Ireland.

- Jackie can be contacted at <u>x14100193@student.ncirl.ie</u>

2. Details of involvement in the Study

- Participants will be required to be available for two virtual faces to face interviews with the principal researcher.
- It is possible that the researcher may request a follow up interview.
- Interviews should last no longer than one hour.
- There researcher will request that the interviews will be recorded via Zoom to facilitate data fathering and subsequent data analysis. Participants retain the right to decline the researcher's request to record the interview.
- Interviews will take place between end of April and May 2021.

3. Potential risks to participants arising from involvement in the research study.

- It is not envisaged that there is any risk to participants arising from involvement in the study.

4. Benefits (direct or indirect) to Participants

- It is intended that the outcomes of this study will help inform research for improving workplace learning. Therefore, it is hoped that participants and future participants of workplace activity may indirectly benefit from participation in the study in the future.

5. Procedures aimed at protecting confidentiality

- Every effort will be made to respect participants' anonymity.
- The data collected will be analysed by the principal researcher alone.
- Participant's actual names will be protected.
- Interview notes and/or transcripts will be held by the principal researcher and stored in a secure location.

6. Data Destructions
- It is planned that the data collected from interviews will be destroyed within three years from the initial date of collection.

7. Voluntary Participation
- Participants may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

8. Additional Information
- It is envisaged that tin total approximately three participants will be interviewed as part of this study. All participants will be leaders in organisations.

If Participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:
The Secretary,
National College of Ireland Research Ethics Committee,
C/o Dr Leo Casey Director of Learning & Teaching and Education
National College of Ireland
Mayor Square
Dublin 1

Appendix 2: Consent Form for Participants

Participant Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

The study in which you are being requested to participant in has the working title of *"An exploration of expansive learning conditions experienced by leaders throughout COVID"* It is being conducted by Jackie Brown, an MA student of Educational Practice at the National College of Ireland.

II. Purpose of research

This research aims to gain insight into how learning happened in workplace settings when change had to happen because of the effect of COVID was happening. It aims to explore learning as a social activity between people and will generate insights from the perspective of leaders and their experience. Limited research has happened about learning through COVID times.

III. Confirmation of requirements as highlighted in the plain language statement

As stated in the plain language statement, participants in this research will be requested to participate in two virtual face-to-face interviews over a 10-day period which the researcher will request to record.

Participant - please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the plain language statement?   Yes/ No

Do you understand the information provided?   Yes/ No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?   Yes/ No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?   Yes/ No

Do you agree to have your interview recorded   Yes/ No?

Participants' involvement in the study is totally voluntary. As a participant you may withdraw from the research study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the research have been completed.

IV. Arrangement to protect the confidentiality of data

Every effort will be made to respect participant's anonymity. The data collected will be analysed by the principal researcher along. Participants' actual names will be protected, and fake names will be used if direct references are required. Interview notes and/or transcripts will be held by the principal researcher and stored in a secure location.

V. Signature

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of the consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in the research project

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Sample Interview Questions for round # 1 Semi-Structured

Interview

This schedule will be used to support semi- structured interviews undertaken as part of the research by Jackie Brown as part of her MAEP research. The interview will last one hour and will be recorded and transcribed.

Research Statement: *"An exploration of expansive learning as experienced by leaders throughout COVID -19"*

- Has their experience of learning been collaborative?
- Is there a connection between their level of understanding on learning and how their organization is learning?
- Is there a shift in learning from before

Focus Area	Questions	Additional Supporting Questions
Orientation and understanding the person and their experience of work	In your own words can you describe your work and what it is that you do in your organization	What type of work activity are you generally involved in? Who is involved in that activity? What is your role specifically, your purpose
Exploring the experience of the leader through covid	Tell me a little about your work through covid - are there any times that were particularly vivid or memorable? How did you experience this time personally in work? I would like to explore how you worked through any dilemmas or times that you had to make a decision and were not sure what to do?	How relevant were other people to you at this time? How did this change your way of working
What has been learned personally	What was important from this experience for you? Has this experience changed anything for you or for the way your role is done	What is your understanding of learning? How do we learn what you don't know the answer to something
Meaning Making	Did you experience anything like this before COVID? What does this mean for you now and into the future?	Are there any stories which connect with your experience

Appendix 4: Sample Interview Questions for round # 2 Semi-Structured Interview

This schedule will be used to support semi- structured interviews undertaken as part of the research by Jackie Brown as part of her MAEP research. The interview will last one hour and will be recorded and transcribed. – reminder to the participants

Research Statement: *"An exploration of expansive learning as experienced by leaders throughout COVID -19"*

Focus Area	Questions	Additional Supporting Questions
Opening	Welcome back and acknowledge the time gap since we last met Is there anything that you would like to pick up from when we last spoke?	What have you learned from this?
Learning / Changes	Taking from a retrospective view What has the experience been like What has changed or what have you learned.	Have you learned this year? (aspect identified by participant) - tell me more How has that felt for you
What are you taking forward from this experience	How do we extend beyond this way of being?	What is the purpose of your organisation
Elaboration on emphasised points		What difference has your learning made?
Follow up from last interview	Social connectedness Others Role of leader Source of learning	